

Making the Case for Play It Smart and Title I

A large majority of Play It Smart member school districts and schools are eligible for and are currently receiving Title I funding as regulated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The purpose of Title I, as stated in NCLB: “. . . is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments.”

In summary, Title I of NCLB provides school districts and schools funding resources and flexibility to implement initiatives that will help disadvantaged students achieve at a high academic standard, close the academic achievement gap, present opportunities for parents to build a stronger connection to schools and invest in their child’s academic success, improve staff development and quality, and provide accountability by measuring progress through proven methods of research and evaluation.

The objectives of the Play It Smart program are closely aligned with the purposes and principals of Title I and NCLB. In an effort to help solidify and expand the program’s reach to more student-athletes, several school districts across the country are currently utilizing and/or exploring ways to utilize Title I funding to create and sustain the position of Academic Coach. Outlined below are supporting rationale for school districts and school personnel to consider when evaluating their strategies for funding the Play It Smart Academic Coach position through the utilization of Title I funds.

I. Play It Smart Helps Close the Academic Achievement Gap

In the 2007-08 school-year, **95%** of Play It Smart senior student athletes **graduated on time** vs. **76% of their peers**, and **80%** of those student-athletes **planned for college enrollment** compared to **63% of their peers**.

Past studies, research and data collection from Play It Smart schools have shown that student-athletes involved in the program have performed better and show higher proficiency on respective state tests than their school aged peers across all subjects.*

*A Pilot Study Examining State Achievement Tests of Play It Smart Participants, prepared by the NFF Center for Youth Development through Sport at Springfield College, June 2006 (MCAS); Play It Smart New Haven Public Schools Report, as presented to the School Board, Spring 2004 (CAPT).

II. Play It Smart Helps Parents Invest in their Child’s Academic Achievement

There were more than **30,000 hours of Parental Involvement** across the network of Play It Smart schools in the 2007-08 school year. With an average of more than **200 hours per school**, more than **1 hour per day** is spent engaging parents and families.

Play It Smart schools actively engage parents innovatively and provide parents and families another avenue to communicate with school personnel regarding their children’s success.

Examples include: Direct communication with academic progress tracking, group and individual parent meetings, volunteer opportunities at study hall, community service events, parent and family

social gatherings, awards and recognition events, college fairs, and targeted workshops in the areas of financial aid, college selection, NCAA eligibility and recruiting, etc.

III. Play It Smart Provides Support in Identifying Quality Staff

Hiring the Position, Ensuring Quality and Providing Flexibility

Play It Smart works directly with district and school administrators in the recruiting and hiring of the Academic Coach position. Play It Smart's candidate screening process can **complement** a district or school's need to ensure Academic Coaches meet the district's certification requirements and **"Highly Qualified" standards**, as outlined in **Title I**.

Professional Development Opportunities

Play It Smart offers Academic Coaches the opportunity to attend a yearly national conference and training, which brings together professional speakers and resources from the world of secondary education and college academia.

IV. Play It Smart is Research Driven

Tools for Accountability and Evaluation

Play It Smart provides each member school with expectations and guidelines to follow each year. Schools are required to submit strategic planning documents, mid-year reports, self-evaluations, survey evaluations on programming components, training evaluation, and end of year reports.

Data Collection

Through Play It Smart's online reporting system, ORBIT, member schools systematically track their progress in the following areas:

- Senior Graduation Rate
- College Planning and Matriculation
- SAT and ACT Test Taking and Performance;
- Community Service and Service Learning Hours
- Parental and Family Involvement Hours
- Life Skills Education Hours through the *Smart Skills* Platform

Play It Smart also engages in ongoing local and national research projects that include:

- School and Academic Coach Demographics
- Peer Comparisons
- Alumni Tracking