

January 13, 2004

STAFF REPORT

MEMO TO: SUTTER COUNTY CHILDREN & FAMILIES COMMISSION

FROM: DEB COULTER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE EXPANSION OF THE SMART START PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the recommendation of the Executive Director that the Sutter County Children and Families Commission indicate its willingness to enter into an expansion of the Smart Start program to include existing sites within the Yuba City Unified School District and additional sites outside of the Yuba City Unified School District. An expanded program will be designed to:

- Prepare students for kindergarten
- Assist students with behaviors needed to be successful in kindergarten
- Offer parent education on needs of children starting school
- Measure academic growth of students

BACKGROUND:

Kindergarten readiness was selected by the Sutter County Children and Families Commission as one of the focus areas for further research and investigation for need of services. This focus was based on the evaluation of previously Commission funded Smart Start programs, discussions and surveys of kindergarten and pre-kindergarten teachers, and discussions at the State First Five Commission regarding the importance of "being ready to learn".

The Sutter County Children and Families Commission has directly supported the Smart Start program for the past two fiscal years. The evaluation of this program from Duerr Evaluation Resources has shown the participation by children in Smart Start has created a positive attitude toward education in the families of the students, a high degree of change in the social development and willingness to separate from their parents by the children, high parent satisfaction of the program, gains by children in seven areas of ECE pre and post assessment, positive gains in the Walker Survey (determines level of change in behavioral adjustments) by enrolled children and experienced a high degree of satisfaction with assistance in health related issues.

As the Commission moves towards the strategic goal of school readiness, the expansion of the Smart Start program to 9 locations throughout Sutter County would offer the program to approximately 180 children.

The Yuba City Unified School District has expressed its willingness to act as fiscal agent for any program enhancements.

Should the Commission decide to expand the opportunity for participation in the Smart Start Pre Kindergarten Program, all school districts within Sutter County would be offered the opportunity to participate, thus making this proven effort available to all children in the county who have not had pre school experience regardless of income or location of residence.

CURRENT PROPOSAL:

It is requested the Commission allocate a maximum of \$150,000 for the 2004 Calendar year to establish Smart Start Pre Kindergarten educational efforts at nine locations throughout Sutter

County, the locations to be determined by the various school districts in Sutter County acting through the Sutter County Office of Education. At no time would there be more than three Smart Start Pre Kindergarten locations within the Yuba City Unified School District.

IMPACT ON COMMISSION RESOURCES:

\$150,000 from budget line 53100 for fiscal year 2003-2004

POLICY ACTION REQUESTED: Approval of recommendation.

DC:bd