



Space Science Outreach and Research

In 2004, the Space School Partnership (SPACESHIP) was established for the purpose of creating space exploration-themed public schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. SPACESHIP consisted of four partners:

- The Cesar E. Chavez Foundation
- NASA Ames Research Center
- Space Science Outreach and Research (SSOAR)
- University of California, Berkeley

The effort is headed by SSOAR – a Berkeley-based nonprofit organization. Based on demographic and geographic considerations, as well as prior experience, SSOAR chose to locate the schools in West Oakland. SSOAR was awarded ~\$1.3 million to establish two public charter schools – a middle school and a high school. These schools were named *The Space Exploration Academies*. The schools were opened on September 29, 2006.

The demographic breakdown for the schools is as follows:

African American: 67%	Male: 67%
Hispanic: 33%	Female: 33%

Nearly all students qualify for free/reduced-price lunches. Moreover, the average academic ability of students entering the Space Exploration Academies was far below basic in mathematics and English/language arts. Preliminary data indicate that the majority of students progressed to basic competencies in core subject areas in the first year of instruction. However, much work still needs to be done in order for student to reach their full potential. Faculty and staff are working throughout the summer to redesign curricula and hone teaching strategies. These adjustments are made to ensure the success of all students at the Space Exploration Academies.

In addition to academic successes, the Space Exploration Academies have offered a variety of supplemental programs for its students:

- Four (4) students were able to attend a VIP viewing of the June 8, 2007 launch of Space Shuttle Atlantis, in Cape Canaveral, Florida.
- NASA and The W Foundation sponsored a Space Artifact Exhibit, which drew 200 visitors from seven (7) Oakland public schools.
- Space Exploration Academy high school was one of three (3) Bay Area schools selected to participate in the MATCHES mentorship program, through the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
- Space Exploration Academy participated in a weekly music program, offered by a teacher from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Students learned music practice and theory and were able to provide local community groups with recitals. Some students wrote original musical pieces.
- Students received daily after-school tutoring in mathematics and English/language arts.
- Selected students and parents received free counseling from the West Oakland Mental Health Clinic.
- The Space Exploration Academy school site has been established as a remote Educator Resource Center for NASA Ames Research Center. This allows local educators to receive free NASA educational materials.

The accomplishments of the Space Exploration Academies are tremendous, and there is great promise for future improvements. This is an excellent educational opportunity for Bay Area children.