

Dr. Mel Levine: Connecting Learning with Behaviors, Feelings, and Aspirations

BY LISA HUFFINES

Learning, behavior and feelings interact in complex ways in our children's lives. Students can get caught in a classic negative pattern: frustration at school leads to discord at home, which fosters further academic disappointment. Parents struggling with both their child's behavioral and academic performance may find that helping their child overcome a difficulty with language, memory or organization may also do wonders for his behavior. Dr. Mel Levine untangled some of these interconnections for parents and educators at NYC-Parents in Action's annual spring seminar, co-sponsored with The Mount Sinai Children's Center Foundation.

Many in the audience were familiar with Dr. Levine's extensive scholarship on differences in learning. He is a renowned Professor of Pediatrics at the University of North Carolina Medical School and the Director of the University's Clinical Center for the Study of Development and Learning. The Co-Founder and Co-Chair of All Kinds of Minds, Dr. Levine has pioneered programs for the evaluation of children and young adults with learning, developmental and/or behavioral problems. He is the author of several best-selling books about learning and developmental issues, and an eagerly-anticipated speaker to NYC-Parents in Action audiences.

Dr. Levine explained how various mechanisms link learning, development, behaviors and feelings. Among others, he described two dimensions of mental function that have concurrent behavioral and academic ramifications: *output*, or the various forms of finished product schools expect, and *production controls*, which are the brain's "quality control" mechanisms regulating actions and decisions.

Output Failure

Output failure plagues the kids Dr. Levine describes as "better at learning than producing." These students understand concepts, but have trouble articulating what they know. They participate avidly in class discussion, but fail to complete homework. Whether they do poorly or well academically, these children are perceived as "not applying themselves." Struggles with output can result in behavioral issues and the labeling of the child as lazy, defiant or indifferent.

Expressive Language. Children who have difficulty expressing their thoughts may struggle in school and in life. Facility with language is the foundation for understanding new concepts and for moral decision-making. It is also critical to class discussion and written work. The more adeptly a child can rephrase an idea in his own words, the more quickly and completely he grasps new information. Conversely, the child whose own internal dialogue is crude or immature may make bad decisions: a teenager offered cocaine draws on his expressive language skills to talk himself into making a smart choice.

Young people who come across as angry or withdrawn may be coping with a language deficiency. While these differences are difficult to diagnose, Dr. Levine said signs to watch for include shyness (often in girls), aggression (often in boys), slow word retrieval or stalled, labored speech (speech that makes one want to interrupt the speaker to finish his sentences), and short, choppy sentences without transitions. An example of the last is the child who says "I went to the store. I got bread." A more articulate speaker would say, "I went to the store to buy bread." To help a child improve expressive language skills, Dr. Levine

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PRESIDENT'S Letter

Fall 2007

The end of August has always been my favorite transitional time. While there are still weeks of warm weather to enjoy, the crisp air and cloudless blue sky hint at fall and the coming school year, with its possibilities for reinvention. Though I'm often nostalgic about the end of summer, there is much to do—organizing, shopping for shoes, school uniforms and supplies. My own family has progressed from buying decorated notebooks and scented erasers to choosing lap top computers and calculators, but the ritual feels timeless.

Seasonal shifts are gentle and easy to embrace. The unwanted and unexpected changes that happen to us, and moving from one stage of life to the next, can be challenging. We celebrate important milestones, but that doesn't mean they are uncomplicated. Graduation is also commencement—we leave familiar surroundings and cherished friends to begin again, with higher stakes and greater responsibilities.

People who are adaptable by nature seem to speed through successive stages, red lights turning green as they approach. For some people, transitions are accomplished with more anxiety and effort. As a teenager, I found that it took half of high school for



AIMEE GARN

me to find my footing, and I had the same slow wind-up in college. But, after starting out as a person who found transitions difficult, I finally became adept at them. By the time I became a parent, knowing how I had been affected by changes in younger days, I was able to help my children approach them more easily. They switched to new schools, making new friends, learning new rules and handling higher expectations. They have encountered disappointments, losing an election or missing out on an award, but have learned how to deal with them.

Because we feel that there is much to explore in the subject of transitions, we chose as our theme for the 2007-2008 school year **Parenting for Resilience: Mastering Change, Challenge and Transitions with Your Child**. Our first seminar on November 7th will introduce the topic by bringing together a stellar panel of doctors and educators to discuss helping your child to navigate the big changes in middle and upper school. Also in November, we will present a luncheon seminar on helping kids deal with disappointment, rejection and other bumps in the road.

To find detailed information on these programs, I urge you to save the complete calendar of our seminars at the center of this newsletter. We hope that you will also note the dates of Teen Scene and our annual seminar with Dr. Mel Levine. Our seminars—including our luncheon speaker series—are open to all parents.

As the school year begins, our facilitated discussion groups will again be in great demand. You can learn about the groups in this issue's Q&A with the head of our facilitation team, Dr. Laurie Freeman. Dr. Freeman's insights may motivate you to attend a group at your school, or even inspire you to train to become a volunteer facilitator.

This fall we will publish Focus, our parenting guide, updated for the digital age and with expanded information on drugs and substance abuse prevention.

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NYC-PIA Spring Family Benefit an "Ogre the Top" Success

The 2007 NYC-PIA Spring Family Benefit featured a private showing of the movie *Shrek the Third*. Our sincere thanks to all the donors, families and volunteers who supported this event. We extend our special thanks to Co-Chairs Lisa Borter, Nancy Hebert and Delia Schulte, and to the entire Benefit Committee, for making this event such a success.

Contributions from the Family Benefit allow NYC-PIA to offer its programs free of charge.

Understanding Kids and Stress

BY SUSAN FISHER

How do you know if your child is under too much stress? At NYC-PIA's final luncheon seminar last spring, interested parents were privileged to hear two experts address the subject of "Helping Kids Deal with Academic & Social Stress." Dr. Kim Arrington, a psychologist specializing in learning issues, and Dawn Goldring Weiner, a learning specialist, were colleagues at an independent school before each branched out to private practice. Their combined experiences are replete with a wide variety of case studies involving a range of children across all age groups.

These experts acknowledged that parents can help their children simply by making a conscious effort to focus on the level of stress one's child is experiencing—whether it is manageable or truly overwhelming. Some indicators of disruptive stress are a noticeable turn in behavior, disturbances in sleep, changes in study habits (too much or too little), unusual moodiness, changes in appetite, an increase in somatic complaints (stomach aches, headaches), obsessive thoughts (such as excessive preoccupation with trivial matters), restlessness, difficulty concentrating, behavior problems in school or at home, "acting out" and changes in friends.

Helping your child manage stress naturally will depend on the age of the child, and Ms. Goldring Weiner stated that each stage brings its own unique stressors. In lower school, there is the introduction of structure and sedentary behavior for extended periods of time, learning to cooperate, maintaining friendships and coping with social conflicts. In the younger years, the role of a parent is to set the stage for the child to take steps to help himself. For example, making sure that the child is sufficiently organized to function without anxiety. This might mean making a checklist for going to school—books, homework, pencils, notebooks, gym clothes, and lunch money—and a similar checklist for coming home from school—appropriate textbooks for tonight's homework.

Middle school stressors include the beginning of puberty and the development of a moral self; navigating the social scene, including cliques and bullies; the introduction of changing classrooms and learning to work according to the different standards of each subject teacher; and managing assignments. As the child starts to have long-term assignments, it can be helpful to use a calendar showing benchmark dates for accomplishing necessary steps to have a project completed by the due date. Include dates for exams, study dates, sports practices and games, and social plans—so that the total picture is visible to the child and he can begin to plan accordingly. It is also a good idea to enlist the teacher in helping to develop an organization plan.

It is easy for parents to feel helpless in the face of social stressors, but simply being there to listen is more helpful than it might appear.

In the later years, the role of the parent can be more ambiguous—when do you manage for you child and when do you use the opportunity to help the child learn "the hard way" by reaping the rewards and consequences of managing on his own? At the same time, the stressors of upper school can be significant and include parental expectations regarding grades and college placement; dealing with teenage pressures involving parties, drugs, alcohol and sex; moving towards greater independence and self advocacy; and defining one's values as the same or different from one's family.

Dr. Arrington and Ms. Goldring Weiner acknowledge that, during the teen years, it is easy for parents to feel helpless in the face of social stressors, but simply being there to listen is more helpful than it might appear. Listen, and perhaps ask non-judgmental questions. Dr. Arrington and Ms. Goldring Weiner reminded parents that even if your child doesn't seem to want parental help, he does.

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Why Parents Should Get Together and Talk

BY CAROL SCHATZ PAPPER

Parent discussion groups are central to NYC-PIA's mission of increasing communication among parents. Parents of one grade at a school gather to talk frankly about what's going on with their children in that grade, with two trained facilitators present to ease their way into discussion. This past year, NYC-PIA scheduled a record 250 groups for its 44 member schools. NYC-PIA newsletter writer Carol Schatz Papper talked to Laurie Freeman, the chair of the facilitation team, about what happens in these groups and the rewards of becoming a volunteer facilitator. Dr. Freeman is also a psychologist in private practice and the parent of three children, ages 9 to 17.

Q NYC-PIA: Why does Parents in Action offer parent discussion groups?

A FREEMAN: The groups create an opportunity for parents to get to know each other and discuss parenting and childhood development issues. We hope that having specially trained facilitators from NYC-PIA creates a safe, confidential atmosphere where parents can hear or share different points of view, and also learn a little about what's going on in the grade that their child is in.

Q NYC-PIA: When and where are the meetings?

A FREEMAN: They are held either at the school or in a private home. We have meetings mostly right after morning drop-off or in the evening at about 6:00 or 6:30 pm. We invite all parents in the grade to come. More working parents seem to be able to go to the evening meetings and we also see more fathers at those meetings. It's an hour and a half either way.

Q NYC-PIA: Do all the member schools hold meetings?

A FREEMAN: Most, but not all. Historically there have been some administrators who have been concerned that there might be discussion of school policies and curriculum that could cause a problem for the school. We try very hard in our discussion group guidelines to emphasize that we are not there to talk about how schools should change their policies, but only about social, developmental, and parenting issues.

Q NYC-PIA: How are meetings scheduled?

A FREEMAN: We have parent representatives in each school who schedule the meetings. If there's a parent who wants to explore having a meeting or check on scheduling, he can speak to the school representative.

Q NYC-PIA: How big are the groups?

A FREEMAN: The largest meeting this year had 60 people, and the smallest just a handful. We encourage as many parents to come as possible, because hearing from more of the class offers a broader perspective. Small groups can be productive, too. The feedback will typically be that people wished that more parents had shown up, but that the meeting was surprisingly interesting and meaningful for those who came.

Q NYC-PIA: Are there common themes per grade at meetings? Are there any common themes for all grades?

A FREEMAN: Yes to both questions. For example, independence is a theme that starts in kindergarten and continues through high school—ranging from whether you drop your child off at a birthday party, to traveling around town, to curfews. The internet is another big theme in every grade, from how much time should be spent on computer games in earlier grades to IM-ing and online bullying in middle grades, to Facebook and MySpace profiles in later grades.

In seventh grade there can be talk about how kids are socializing at Bar and Bat Mitzvah parties. Many meetings in later grades center around adolescent sexuality and cigarette and alcohol use, and there's information-sharing about possible drug use. When it comes to alcohol use, a common area of debate among parents is whether they should insist on abstinence or teach their older teens to drink responsibly.

There's often a lot of discussion about academic stress, with parents sometimes questioning how they affect the degree to which their kids feel stress. Other times, a meeting is called because there's a specific issue going on, like bullying, cliques or other meanness.

By 11th grade, there's a fall-off in requests for meetings as kids are transitioning towards college. That's a shame, because it's a great opportunity for parents to get together and talk about what it feels like to be letting go of your child: the worries, the fears, the pride and all the intense feelings. There's a lot of pressure on kids as they're applying to colleges and they're going through

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NYC-PARENTS IN ACTION 2007-2008 CALENDAR

“Parenting for Resilience: Mastering Change, Challenge and Transitions with Your Child”

SEMINARS

Reservations may be placed for seminars by email to reservations@parentsinaction.org or by phone to NYC-Parents in Action at 212-987-9629 except as noted below. Teen Scene and all seminars will be moderated by Lucy Martin Gianino.

Life Skills 101: Mastering the Big Transitions in Middle and Upper School

Thursday, November 8, 2007, 6:00-7:30 pm
Temple Israel, 112 East 75th Street

Co-sponsored with KiDS of NYU

Panelists:

- **Benard Dreyer, M.D.**
NYU Professor of Pediatrics and Vice-Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics
- **Kimberly Williams, Psy.D.**
NYU Child Study Center
- **Edes Gilbert**
Retired Head of the Spence School and President of Resource Group 175
- **Bruce Breimer**
Principal Emeritus of Collegiate School

Teen Scene XXII

Monday, February 4, 2008, 6:00-8:00 pm
Trinity School, 139 West 91st Street

Co-sponsored with Parents League

Panelists:

- **Independent school teenagers**
- **Lucy Martin Gianino (moderator)**

Seminar with Dr. Mel Levine

Thursday, April 17, 2008, 9:00-11:00 am
92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Avenue

Co-sponsored with Mount Sinai
Children's Center Foundation

LUNCHEON SPEAKER SERIES

To reserve a place at a luncheon, please contact your School Representative. Space is limited.

Coping with Rejection and Building Resiliency

Tuesday, November 13, 2007, 12:00-2:00 pm
Temple Israel, 112 East 75th Street

Speaker:

- **Geraldine Downey, Ph.D.**
Psychology Professor at Columbia University

Appropriate for all ages.

Sex, Drugs and Rap 'n Roll: What Parents can do about Tweens, Teens and Experimentation

Wednesday, January 23, 2008, 12:00-2:00 pm
Temple Israel, 112 East 75th Street

Speaker:

- **Reverend Debra W. Haffner**
Author of "Beyond the Big Talk" and "From Diapers to Dating"

Ready, Set, Go: Preparing for Transitions in Childhood and the Tween Years

Tuesday, May 6, 2008, 12:00-2:00 pm
Temple Israel, 112 East 75th Street

Panelists:

- **Jean Mandelbaum**
Head of All Souls Preschool
- **Jeanette Friedman**
Consultant and therapist focusing on the causes and effects of substance use in teens and families

NYC-PARENTS IN ACTION

Participating Schools and School Reps

Alexander Robertson School.....	TBA
Allen-Stevenson School.....	Pamela D’Arc
Berkeley Carroll School.....	Susan Bargman
Birch Wathen Lenox School.....	Amy Sessa
Brearley School.....	Nancy Orenstein
Brooklyn Friends School.....	Lisa Sack
Browning School.....	Lea Bendo LS, MS
Buckley School.....	Elizabeth Goss
Caedmon School.....	Robyn Kajon
Calhoun School.....	Debra Haylor
Chapin School.....	Robyn Joseph, Barbara Knowlton
Claremont Preparatory School.....	Gwen Dordick
Collegiate School.....	Keren Coplan-Rigler
Columbia Grammar & Preparatory School.....	Lucy Weintraub, Pat Stockhausen
Dalton School.....	Jennifer Wideman-Green LS; Linda Heinberg, Denise Connolly MS; TBA US
Dwight School.....	Stefani Langel
Epiphany School.....	Catherine Coluzzi-Jacob LS; Kathleen O’Keete US
Ethical Culture Fieldston School.....	Lanie McNulty
Friends Seminary.....	Miriam Mayerson
Gateway School.....	Dana Tedone
Grace Church School.....	Ariadne Calvo-Platero, Camilla Campbell
Abraham Joshua Heschel School.....	Alison Granowitz LS, MS; Merle Wolff US
Hewitt School.....	Melissa Stoller LS; Laura Adam MS, US
Horace Mann School.....	Suzan Kremer
Loyola School.....	TBA
Little Red Schoolhouse & Elisabeth Irwin High School...	Carol Pratt
Lycée Français de New York.....	TBA
Marymount School.....	Helen Lynch, Ellen de Rocco
Nightingale-Bamford School.....	Angela Hopenhajm
Packer Collegiate Institute.....	Tara Dixon LS; Patricia Veconi MS, US
Professional Children’s School.....	Maria Checa-Rosen
Ramaz School.....	Judy Kahn
Riverdale Country School.....	Donna Steinberg Stern LS; Carolyn Cohen MS, US
Rodeph Sholom School.....	Barbara Friedlander
Convent of the Sacred Heart.....	Ellen Bellet LS; Rebecca Lainovic MS; Sophia Brenner US
Saint Ann’s School.....	Rachel Coates
Saint David’s School.....	Nancy Hebert
Spence School.....	Denise Hurley
St. Bernard’s School.....	Sheila Aresty LS, Maureen Sherry Klinsky MS, US
Town School.....	Maria Canale
Trevor Day School.....	Karen Urban
Trinity School.....	TBA
United Nations International School.....	Jodi Gumas
Winston Prep.....	Stacy Archibald
York Preparatory School.....	Sylvia Parab

List complete as of June 2007. Please contact your school and/or NYC-PIA with any additions or changes.

Q&A: WHY PARENTS SHOULD GET TOGETHER

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a big growing up time. I would like to work on making those meetings better attended.

Q NYC-PIA: Do your facilitators give parenting tips?

A FREEMAN: Absolutely not. Facilitators are specifically required not to come in as experts, even if they have that expertise. The parents who attend the meetings offer advice to each other and have a chance to think through the issues together as parents. We strive to make the meetings a space that is open for multiple perspectives and for there to be respect for different ways of handling situations.

Q NYC-PIA: How do people have the courage to reveal themselves?

A FREEMAN: It takes time for trust to build in a class of parents. If parents can establish trust in each other early, they will have a network of parents to support them as their children go through the upper grades. That's why we hope that meetings will start in kindergarten, when the issues may be less intense and parents can get to know each other and see that this is a place where they will be respected for their different views. We have discussion guidelines for each meeting, and a confidentiality policy that specifies that when people leave a meeting, they should talk about its general topics and themes but not give names or reveal specific details.

Q NYC-PIA: What do you like best about the meetings?

A FREEMAN: This organization is really special in that we give parents all over New York City an opportunity to connect with each other and really look at very important issues about their children. There's real work that gets done at some of these meetings. It doesn't happen every time, but there are some meetings that people walk out of and they feel changed as a result of them. And when that happens, it's very magical.

Q NYC-PIA: Where do you get your facilitators from and how are they trained?

A FREEMAN: We have about 60 trained facilitators and **urgently** need many more. We know that we will get even more requests from the schools for meetings this year and we send two facilitators to each meeting! Many of our volunteer facilitators are parents in the independent schools with an interest in parenting, psychology, mediation, child development or simply an intellectual challenge. We also have some facilitators who have

never been parents and some whose children are in public schools.

Q NYC-PIA: What do you get out of being a facilitator?

A FREEMAN: The facilitation group is a really interesting, stimulating group of people to meet and belong to. Unlike some volunteer jobs, this one has a very flexible schedule and demands active thinking. You can make a difference, develop and maintain professional speaking and listening skills and get a sense of satisfaction while still having control over your own schedule.

Q NYC-PIA: When is the training?

A FREEMAN: We will be training new facilitators this October. But anyone who is interested should call us and put their name on a list, because we may also train new facilitators in the beginning of 2008.

Train to Be a Discussion Group Facilitator

Are you looking to give back the support and shared experience other parents have given you during the child-rearing years? If you are, here's a way:

VOLUNTEERS WANTED!

NYC-Parents in Action provides facilitated discussion groups free of charge to member schools. To serve an increasing number of requests for discussion groups, we need to train parent volunteers from as many schools as possible. **We are looking for parents who are articulate, comfortable speaking in groups, and have an interest in parenting issues.** Our goal is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and concerns among parents and to create a comfortable communications network that will be in place through lower, middle and upper school. Facilitators receive professional training, and become an integral and valued part of the NYC-PIA community. If you would like more information about becoming a discussion group facilitator or about our upcoming training, please call NYC-PIA at 212-426-0240 or e-mail facilitation@parentsinaction.org.

DR. MEL LEVINE

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suggested that parents insist on full sentence responses to questions, from about second grade on. Make sure children understand the word “elaborate,” then make a habit of asking them to elaborate on what they say in conversation.

Writing and Memory. Some children who struggle with written output—papers, tests, class notes—are dealing with an expressive language difficulty, but what about the kids who speak better than they write? Their main problem may be memory. Writing a paragraph is what Dr. Levine called a “big simultaneous memory strain:” the writer must hold his own train of thought from beginning to end while simultaneously remembering spelling, grammar and punctuation rules. This is far from automatic for many people, particularly middle school students. The memory feels overstrained, and the whole task simply feels like too much effort. Students can cope with memory deficiencies by breaking tasks down into smaller steps. Getting ideas onto the page may be a first step; sentence structure, spelling and punctuation may need to be approached later as three separate, deliberate tasks.

To help children with organizational difficulties, first identify and discuss exactly where breakdowns occur.

Organizational Deficiencies. For students labeled “slackers,” getting to work is the biggest hurdle to successful output. Some kids labor under a sincere inability to measure, estimate and allocate time. Others can’t keep track of the materials they need, such as books, notes and classroom hand-outs. Some students have difficulty organizing their ideas. Difficulty prioritizing tasks can have devastating effects on progress in school and, later, career paths. Some students don’t even get to prioritizing tasks because they can’t determine what is involved in completing any given one. Task integration is the skill of pulling components of a complex project together; it requires long-term thinking, and can be a huge challenge for some minds.

Teaching a child concrete ways to stop and evaluate options before taking action, and how to draw from past experience, can help both learning and behavior.

To help children with organizational difficulties, first identify and discuss exactly where breakdowns occur. If time management seems to be the issue, sit down with a calendar each Sunday night to list assignments and estimate the time required for them. If prioritization is difficult, practice ranking tasks in order of importance or on a scale of 1 to 10. Task integration difficulties can be helped by breaking projects down into manageable steps.

Production Controls

Production controls include foresight, self-monitoring, self-pacing, the ability to learn from past experience, and control over first impulses. All these “quality control” mechanisms emanate from the brain’s prefrontal cortex, and all of them can affect learning and behavior in parallel and simultaneous ways.

A student who has difficulty with “previewing,” or foresight, does not automatically picture the end results of her actions. She will likely have trouble with predicting the possible outcomes of a chemistry experiment, and may also fail to foresee the consequences of words spoken in anger. “Response inhibition” refers to the brain’s ability to inhibit first impulses long enough to consider alternatives; a child who acts impulsively when someone bumps into him in line may well be the same child who blurts out an incorrect answer to a teacher’s question without seeing its nuances. Behavior issues and academic problems have a common source in both these situations—identifying deficiencies in production controls can be the first step in helping a child to compensate for them. Teaching a child concrete ways to stop and evaluate options before taking action, and how to draw from past experience, can help both learning and behavior.

Dr. Levine's Practical Advice

Dr. Levine had plenty of advice for helping children find sources of resiliency and to do their best within the scope of their individual learning styles:

- Encourage true affinities and passions.
- Leverage areas of strength over weakness. Figure out ways your child can use her strengths to compensate for weaknesses.
- Help your child to get to know his mind and how he can make it work best for him.
- Help your child find his “contributive” advantage by stressing contribution over competition.
- Do offer help, but never mix help with criticism.
- Cultivate your child’s interest in adults. Dr. Levine cited a study of successful adults that indicated many had spent significant portions of their childhood in the company of adults. Children need adult interaction and company to learn about life and prepare for adulthood.
- Don’t over-emphasize getting into college. Neither school nor adolescent social success should appear to be the be-all and end-all of life. Dr. Levine notes seeing a “post-admittance” let-down among students once they reach college, and cites the prevalence of campus binge drinking as a consequence. Discuss the future, but stress careers rather than college.
- Strive not to make childhood and adolescence an impossible act to follow.
- Well-roundedness is overrated. A specialized mind is an asset in adulthood, yet specialized individuals often struggle in school.
- Have your child evaluated if appropriate, and approach the process as a highly educated consumer. Medication may need to be considered, but never let that end the discussion. Attention issues, for example, almost always coincide with other learning problems, and all of them must be addressed for any long-term benefit to occur.

NYC-Parents in Action, Inc. invites speakers to present their opinions and expertise on specific topics. Their opinions and comments are not necessarily those of NYC-PIA.

While helping a child overcome learning and behavioral difficulties can be stressful for parents, Dr. Levine reminds us to acknowledge and understand each child’s individual profile of strengths and weaknesses. And he asks parents to remember—working through challenges will help to prepare your child for life. ●

KIDS AND STRESS

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Things to Consider in Helping your Child Manage Stress

- Each stage of school (lower, middle & upper) is a big transition, and not all children adapt easily.
- Social standards at school may be quite different from those at home.
- Over-scheduling extracurricular activities leaves little room for downtime.
- Parents need to demonstrate good strategies for coping with stress—exercise, talk, hobbies, healthy eating and adequate rest. Families should plan enjoyable activities and outings, and eat meals together.
- Keep boundaries as to what children can handle regarding “adult matters”—emotional and financial. Including children in the discussion of family matters should be deliberate, not accidental.
- Monitor your child’s phone, television and internet use. Exposure to external events and violence in the media can be stressful.
- The less a child believes he can cope, the greater the anxiety. It is important for the child to realize that there are always options, there is always a way out.

Ms. Goldring Weiner and Dr. Arrington emphasize that communication—preferably daily communication—is key. When you suspect that something is awry, talk to your child and listen to your child’s concerns. Offer your observation that something seems to be upsetting her and help your child to think of what to do. Being there and being patient are the basic elements to getting through the tough times. ●

To learn more about kids and stress, visit our Web site.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

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To learn how you can receive a copy of Focus, visit our Web site, www.parentsinaction.org, or consult your school representative. Our Web site is a great source of information on our programs, other parenting resources and announcements of upcoming Access sales events, where leading designers support NYC-PIA by donating a portion of event proceeds.

Our board members, all volunteers, work hard to provide our programs—seminars, publications, and discussion groups—free of charge to the independent school community. We hope that you will take advantage of them this year, and wish you a happy transition to the exciting school year ahead. ●

COMING SOON . . .

FOCUS, a parenting guide—
revised and expanded.

Because “Effective Parenting is
Substance Abuse Prevention.”

Look for details on our Web site or ask
your school representative.

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FALL 2007 ISSUE

PROGRAM CALENDAR ENCLOSED