



NYC-Parents in Action Guide for School Representatives

September 2007

NYC-Parents in Action

Guide for School Representatives

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<i>Below are descriptions of forms that are presented at the end of this guide. They can be photocopied for use in planning Facilitated Discussions, and can also be found on our Web site to download or send by e-mail.</i>	
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If you have any questions, please call your School Liaison committee contact or the committee chair, **Tessa Namuth** at (212) 772-6974:

Carolyn Cohen (212) 876-6237

Phyllis Emanuel (212) 794-2398

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About NYC-Parents in Action

NYC-Parents in Action is a nonprofit, volunteer organization founded in 1980 to serve parents of New York metropolitan area independent schools. Parents in Action recognizes that effective parenting in early childhood is a primary form of substance abuse prevention for children and teenagers. We provide parenting education, information and a communications network to help parents prepare their children and teenagers to cope with social pressures and to make sound choices toward a future free of alcohol and drug abuse.

Programs

Focus, our parenting guide, is published to help parents guide children who must deal with the complex social issues facing them. Our premise is that children's basic values come from the home. Focus has been distributed to over 100,000 parents.

Our Newsletter is published three times a year and has a print and email circulation of 26,000. It covers our seminars, featuring information on child and adolescent development, health, and the effects of alcohol, tobacco and drugs on children and adolescents. It also provides news of our events.

Our Web site, www.parentsinaction.org, provides information about our programs, events and publications. Parents who register on the Web site can make online reservations for seminars and receive early email notification of upcoming activities.

Parent Discussion Groups help in the development of parent-to-parent and parent-to-child communication. Parents are encouraged to share their ideas, experiences and concerns to promote better understanding and awareness.

Our Seminars are held as an educational service for parents and educators. Seminars discuss such topics as adolescent alcohol and drug abuse, parent-child relationships, parent communications, and social and learning issues.

Guidelines for School Representatives

General Responsibilities

- To bring information about NYC-Parents in Action to your school at Parent Association meetings.
- To arrange distribution of the Parents in Action newsletter and flyers to each family in a way appropriate to the school.
- To arrange parent discussion groups for each grade.

Announcements

- Please make a brief announcement about NYC-Parents in Action at the first Parents Association meeting, describing the mission of the organization and encouraging Class Reps to schedule facilitated group discussions for their grade.
- At subsequent Parents Association meetings, when feasible, please announce upcoming seminars and lectures organized by PIA, and continue to encourage classes to set up parent discussion groups.
- If your school has Class Rep meetings, ask if you may attend to explain the Class Rep's role in scheduling discussion groups and in disseminating PIA announcements.

Newsletter

- The Newsletter is published in the fall, winter, and spring. You will be notified when the newsletter is to be delivered to your school.
- **Please establish an individual contact at the school who can coordinate distribution**, to insure that the newsletter will be sent in the next parent mailing, or sent home in backpacks, or distributed electronically through a link on the school Web site.

Facilitated Discussion Groups

Parent discussion groups are central to NYC-PIA's mission of increasing communication among parents. Parents meet to share their experiences, questions, concerns, and suggestions regarding parenting. There is no pre-arranged agenda; parents bring up topics of current interest. Although some topics commonly occur at specific ages, parents are free to choose any topic. Sometimes a class decides to meet in order to address a specific incident or a situation of concern. Most classes have one facilitated discussion group a year, although two can be arranged.

Parents and facilitators attend discussion groups; school administrators are not present. At the opening of the meeting, the facilitator will specify that this is a forum for discussing *social and developmental topics only*. Parents are advised not to discuss any issues related to school policy, as such issues are better addressed directly to the school. Facilitators are there to guide the discussion, not to give advice or suggest topics.

We encourage parents to start meeting in kindergarten. It takes time to create an environment of trust in which parents feel comfortable conferring with one another. Substance abuse prevention begins long before an actual discussion of drugs and alcohol is timely.

How to Set Up a Discussion Group

1. Set a Date, Time and Place for the Meeting:

- Ask the Class Rep to suggest two possible meeting times that are in two different weeks and are at least five weeks away.
- Identify a time for the meetings. Meetings are usually either in the morning, after school drop-off (8:30am) or in the early evening, between 6pm and 7pm. The discussion lasts 1-1/2 hours from the scheduled starting time.
- Choose a location for the meetings. Meetings are sometimes in a school classroom or a parent's home. Make sure the room allows for privacy. Schedule spaces which are self-contained and where other people won't be sitting or passing through. If the meeting is in the evening, we ask that alcohol not be served.
- Call NYC-PIA's Discussion Group Coordinator at 212-426-0240, or email her at facilitation@parentsinaction.org with **ALL** of the following information:
 - **two possible dates**
 - **the time and place**
 - **the Class Rep's name, address, email and phone numbers**
- The Discussion Group Coordinator will check the calendar and confirm with you one of these dates within two days. If there are 3 or more Class Reps, one Rep should be designated as the contact person and that name be given to NYC-PIA.
- **If you wish to schedule more than one meeting at once:**
 - Review your FULL SCHOOL CALENDAR when choosing meeting dates.
 - Remind the Class Rep 30 days before the meeting to remind her to send invitations to parents.
 - If a conflict arises after a date has been set, contact the discussion Group Coordinator at 212-426-0240 or e-mail her at facilitation@parentsinaction.org.

2. Confirm the Meeting:

- Get back to the Class Rep with the confirmation. Let her know that she will receive a confirmation by email no later than two weeks before the meeting.

3. Ask the Class Rep to Arrange the Meeting:

- Send announcements (samples attached) to the Class Rep for emailing, mailing or sending home in backpacks. The Class Rep should feel free to add information.
- Let the Class Rep know that the facilitators will call to confirm meeting and ask if there are any questions. The Class Rep should call the facilitator if he/she doesn't receive a call.
- Ask the Class Rep to make follow up calls, which we have found to boost attendance. Remind the Class Rep to bring nametags and a marker.
- Please advise Class Reps that in the interest of confidentiality participants are to refrain from note taking during the meeting as well as from circulating any written recaps after the meeting.

Discussion Group Request Form

School Name:

School Grade:

School Rep Name:

Proposed dates and time of day for PIA meeting:

1.

2.

Meeting place (room if at school):

Host name, address, phone nos., email (if applicable):

Class Rep/s name address, phones and email:

If there are more than two Class Reps, please note a main contact to accept RSVPs and to talk with our facilitator:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Memo to Class Representative

From: _____ (PIA School Rep)

To: _____ (Class Rep)

Re: **NYC-Parents in Action, Inc. Facilitated Discussion Group**

Parents Talking to Parents

Many times we wonder how other parents address issues related to their children, or we wish we had the benefit of another parent's creativity in problem solving. NYC-Parents in Action, Inc., a 27-year-old not-for-profit organization in the independent schools, sponsors parent discussion groups led by trained facilitators to help build a stronger community of parents. NYC-Parents in Action, Inc., recognizes that effective parenting begins with good communication within the family and between families.

Each meeting is spent discussing topics that are brought up by the parents themselves. Topics vary widely, depending on the age group. For example, parents of kindergarteners might discuss bedtimes and play dates. Lower School parents often bring up after-school activities and over-scheduling. Middle School parents are concerned about street safety and the Internet. By Upper School, parents are interested in balancing the logistics of city living with concerns about children's increasing demand for independence. Of course, your class may have completely different interests, and the discussion of any non-academic topic is welcome. Anything academic is beyond the scope of these meetings and should be taken directly to the school administration.

I will be calling you within the next few weeks to schedule a parent discussion group for your class at a convenient date and time, or you can contact me.

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

**You are Cordially Invited
To Attend Our Parent Discussion Group
Facilitated by NYC-Parents in Action, Inc.**

Date: _____

Time: _____

The Parents in Action Facilitated Discussion will begin promptly at: _____

Place: _____

RSVP: _____

Telephone: _____ **E-mail:** _____

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NYC-Parents in Action, Inc. recognizes that effective parenting begins with good communication within the family and between families. We will have an opportunity to experience the benefits of this first hand when our class meets.

The meeting will only last an hour and a half, so please be prompt. Please note that attendance at this meeting is for parents of this grade only. We look forward to having this time together.

Reminder

You Are Cordially Invited To Attend Our Parent Discussion Group Facilitated by NYC-Parents in Action, Inc.

Date: _____

Time: _____
The Parents in Action Facilitated Discussion will begin promptly at: _____

Place: _____

RSVP: (if you haven't already) _____

Telephone: _____ **Email:** _____

At this meeting, you are invited to discuss topics of interest to you and to hear what is on the minds of your fellow parents. NYC-Parents in Action, Inc. tells us that the most lively meetings occur when a large percentage of parents in a grade attend, allowing a sharing of many different experiences and approaches to parenting.

NYC-Parents in Action, Inc. recognizes that effective parenting begins with communication among families and within families.

Please join us in helping to build a parent network in our class based on communication, respect, and trust. Please encourage other parents to attend, too.

The meeting will only last an hour and a half, so please be prompt. Please note that attendance at this meeting is for parents of this grade only. We look forward to having this time together.