

Stop-Idling Day at PS 292

The Dilemma



When PS 292* first set out to win the *Asthma Friendly Schools Award*, staff was thrown by Criteria #8. *How can a school enforce laws on people other than their students?* Particularly laws that most people are not familiar with? The school had received their **Asthma Free School Zone** “No Idling” signs from the Environmental Intervention Kit, but these signs only met the ‘publicize’ criteria, not the ‘enforce.’

Planning Ahead

PS 292’s principal contacted the AFSZ office. She learned that other schools had organized ‘Stop-Idling Days’ in their school zone. She enlisted the coordinator of the science club to oversee a similar day for their school. He planned an idling lesson for their next club meeting. Several science club members had asthma and were excited to learn that they could help improve the air quality in their own neighborhood. They took the message to their homerooms where classmates were encouraged to join in the stop-idling day activities. The school PTA ordered Idle-Free t-shirts and Stop-Idling palm cards from the AFSZ ‘Stop-Idling’ order sheet.



The younger students made posters and assembled car fans to display on the school walls; a first grader was said to have lingered on the sidewalk as his classmates climbed on an idling bus, explaining to the teacher that he couldn’t ride because the driver was breaking the law.

The school chose a Wednesday, the day of their town hall meetings, for ‘Stop-Idling Day.’ For the week prior, daily PA announcements reminded students about asthma and idling. All students took home No-Idling Pledge Cards and a letter explaining the upcoming ‘Stop-Idling Day’. The science club made flyers to leave with neighborhood businesses. The PTA made a special bulletin board. Several parents signed on to be volunteers during drop off and pick-up on Stop-Idling Day.



Stop-Idling Day

Students hung colored car fans on the fence surrounding the playground. A press release drew a reporter and photographer from the neighborhood paper. Parents, teachers and students wore matching Idle-Free School Zone t-shirts. They handed out “No Idling” palm cards to drivers, explaining that tailpipe exhaust hurts the students with asthma. Some parents noticed which neighboring businesses had idling delivery trucks and gave “No Idling” change drop pads and posters to the managers, asking them to put them on the counter where customers can see them.



At the town hall meeting that morning, the drama club put on the Idling skit and parent volunteers spoke to other parents in attendance about not idling in the school zone.

In the end...

- ✓ PS 292 met *Asthma Friendly Schools Award* Criteria #1, 8, 9, 12 and 16.
- ✓ A new group of parents joined the PTA.
- ✓ Attendance improved because students with asthma had fewer symptoms, trips to the school nurse or family doctor, or hospital emergency room.

How the PTA raised money for Stop-Idling Day

- 1) Donations from neighborhood businesses
- 2) Parent-teacher night fund-raiser raffle
- 3) Grant from local Councilmember
- 4) Bake and book sale

*PS 292 is fictitious and represents the collective experience of several NYC elementary schools.