

PAEA Project Access Toolkit

Step 1: Find a Host School or Community Organization

Select a place and audience that you would feel comfortable with.

- Would you prefer a classroom or assembly format?
- Would you like to speak to children in an after-school program or Sunday school class?
- Would you rather speak to younger or older students?
- Begin your search by speaking with school administrators or counselors, parents, or community leaders.
- A number of organizations can be helpful in locating local avenues: NAMME (National Association of Minority Medical Educators), health advisor organizations, and state or country education departments.

The goal of your visit is to provide information and inspiration to underrepresented minority students. In particular, you'll want to give the students a better idea of what PAs do and help the students recognize that they can become successful members of our profession. Stress the importance of preparation for higher education, whether as a PA or another professional role.

Most schools and organizations that serve large numbers of minority students will be very receptive to this goal and will work with you to provide a forum that works for you and the students.

Contact the administrator of the school or organization:

- Provide them with information about the PA profession.
- The principal or director at your host organization should be able to shepherd the project through any administrative channels on his or her end or at least direct you to the proper people.

Example Script for Setting up a Project Access Presentation

Hello, my name is _____. I am a PA (or PA educator or PA student) who lives and works near your organization. We have a program called Project Access where PAs and PA students such as myself go into community schools to encourage minority children to consider becoming a PA. I'd like to talk to someone about setting up a time for me to visit some of the students at your school. When would be a good time to talk more about this and to set something up? I can send you more information about Project Access if you would like.

2. Pre-Visit Checklist

If you are speaking to multiple groups of students, make sure you have specific times and room numbers for each group.

Ask about policies regarding questionnaires and photos. Sharing photos of the class helps spread the word about Project Access, but many schools restrict photography in classrooms. Send photo release forms to the school or organization 2-3 weeks before your presentation.

Bring some “show and tell” items to engage the students. Good props and equipment include:

- Stethoscope
- Scrubs
- X-ray images
- Lab coats
- Surgical masks
- [PA coloring book](#)
- [Medical word search](#)
- [Medical trivia questions](#)

3. Make the Presentation

The day of your visit:

- Arrive early, and familiarize yourself with the room beforehand.
- Be prepared for questions by any media personnel covering your visit.
- Have someone, such as the teacher, introduce you to the students, to help establish a connection.
- Involve your audience by asking and encouraging questions.
- Remember to capture the event with photos (in compliance with the organization’s policies about in-class photography).
- Distribute and collect evaluation forms.

For a successful presentation:

- Know your audience, including age, demographics and experience with PAs
- Know your presentation well.
- Concentrate on the message, which is to spark interest in medicine and help students see they are capable of becoming PAs themselves.
- Relax and be yourself.
- Enjoy your presentation!

Common questions that will be asked during your presentation include:

- How is a PA different from a nurse, nurse practitioner, or a doctor?
- How long does a PA have to go to school?
- How do you pay for school?
- How much money do you make?
- Did you ever goof off in school or get bad grades?
- Did you always want to be a PA?
- What do PAs do?
- To become a PA, what classes should we concentrate on?
- What's your normal workday like?
- Are you happy with your decision?

4. After the Presentation

Within one week after your presentation:

- Send the teacher and principal a thank you note.
- Set up a time for interested students to visit your hospital, office, clinic, or PA program.

For ongoing impact:

- Ask your colleagues to schedule additional Project Access visits.
- Establish a special fund at your alma mater for "future PAs."
- Educate through volunteering at community health centers
- Be a mentor, wherever you are.

Appendix: Challenges of a Majority Group Presenting to a Minority Audience

Consider the following situation:

A group of 15 PA students visit a local high school that is comprised of 98% minorities for a Project Access event. The demographics of the PA student group include 13 Caucasians, 1 Hispanic, and 1 African American.

The presentation appeared to have gone well, but there was a reoccurring comment in the post-presentation survey. “Why was an almost exclusively ‘white’ group of people was sent to a predominately minority filled school to talk about increasing diversity in the profession?”

How might you proactively address this concern in your Project Access presentation?

- Focus on the diversity of the group presenting (gender, age, previous professions, etc.)
- Discuss why diversity is important to patient relations.
- Understanding some of the cultural norms and historical perspectives of the population to be encountered.
- Discuss the importance of the message — not the messenger.