



Peer Assistance and Leadership® (PAL) I

PEIMS Code: N1290005

Abbreviation: PAAL1

Grade Level(s): 9-12

Award of Credit: 1.0

Approved Innovative Course

- Districts must have local board approval to implement innovative courses.
- In accordance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §74.27, school districts must provide instruction in all essential knowledge and skills identified in this innovative course.
- Innovative courses may only satisfy elective credit toward graduation requirements.
- Please refer to TAC §74.13 for guidance on endorsements.

Course Description:

The Peer Assistance and Leadership® (PAL) program focuses on working with elementary, middle, and high school age youth. Participants receive effective training in resiliency strategies. Course content and interactive activities combat issues like school violence, drug use/abuse, teen pregnancy, gang participation, school dropouts, and/or behavior problems.

PAL® began in 1980 as a peer mentoring program, commonly referred to as “peer helping”, by combining peer assistance and peer leadership strategies originally developed in the 1970’s. PAL® applies these basic prevention strategies by implementing the program as informal, extra-curricular activities, or as structured, evidence/curriculum- based programs.

The outcomes identified through implementation of the PAL® program in a school setting are a reduction in substance use/abuse, an increase in academic performance, a reduction of absences/truancy, a reduction of discipline referrals to the school office, and an increase in positive decision-making skills and risk resiliency. Parents and school administrators note a favorable perception of the program effectiveness.

Essential Knowledge and Skills:

- (a) General Requirements. The course is recommended for students in grades 9-12. Students shall be awarded one credit for the successful completion of this course.
- (b) Introduction.
 - (1) The Peer Assistance and Leadership® (PAL®) program focuses on working with elementary, middle, and high school age youth. Participants receive effective training in resiliency strategies. Course content and interactive activities combat issues like school violence, drug use/abuse, teen pregnancy, gang participation, school dropouts, and/or behavior problems.
 - (2) After a careful selection of PAL® candidates by school representatives, the PAL® students undergo a 4-6 week training period provided by the PAL® teacher. Using the PAL® teacher

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curriculum as a guide, teachers focus on communication skills, group dynamics, self-awareness, decision-making and problem-solving skills. Upon completion of this phase in the PAL® teacher curriculum, the PAL® students are placed in peer-to-peer situations with assigned students known as PALees® in which they employ the training components in order to develop positive, supportive, trusting, and helpful relationships. PAL® empowers students to serve effectively in specific peer-to-peer, service learning, and general leadership roles.

(c) Knowledge and Skills.

- (1) Group building. The student understands the importance of group dynamics and how to maintain good working relationships with peers. The student is expected to:
 - (A) contribute to the establishment of group norms to allow the group to work effectively together;
 - (B) compare the four behavioral styles, including promoters, directors, thinkers, and supporters;
 - (C) identify and describe the characteristics of a productive group;
 - (D) summarize and follow the National Association of Peer Program Professionals Code of Ethics, which are the character standards for all mentors and allow for structure of accountability for the group;
 - (E) describe the requirements of and limits to confidentiality in the classroom setting and in peer-to-peer or group situations;
 - (F) explain the importance of confidentiality in a peer-to-peer or group relationship;
 - (G) demonstrate inclusive behaviors by encouraging other group members to participate in activities and discussions;
 - (H) discuss and apply positive reinforcement strategies, and
 - (I) facilitate group activities such as participating in annual PAL® sponsored conferences, fundraising events, or community service projects and serving the elderly and veterans.
- (2) Leadership skills. The student applies leadership skills learned in PAL® to situations presented in class and on the student's campus. The student is expected to:
 - (A) define leadership within the peer-to-peer relationship, taking ownership of the student's PAL® class and when working with the mentee;
 - (B) identify and discuss characteristics of an effective leader such as the ability to listen to others and to take initiative as well as dependability and honesty;
 - (C) demonstrate initiative in activities and within the relationship with assigned peer;
 - (D) describe and exhibit positive character traits such as trustworthiness, honesty, and reliability;
 - (E) explain the function of a leader as a role model and describe the characteristics of a positive role model;
 - (F) initiate and model friendly relationships with persons in other social or academic groups;
 - (G) explain a leader's role in conflict resolution, decision making, implementing change in an ethical manner; and
 - (H) identify and apply redirection strategies when negative behavior is observed.

- (3) Communication techniques. The student demonstrates communication skills that facilitate discussion, trust, and open lines of communication. The student is expected to:
 - (A) describe strategies for effective verbal and nonverbal communication in peer-to-peer interactions;
 - (B) communicate personal ideas, feelings, and intentions;
 - (C) give examples of facilitative responses, including questioning, clarifying, and summarizing, and demonstrate proper usage of these responses;
 - (D) demonstrate active listening skills such as being attentive and empathizing;
 - (E) explain strategies to maintain composure and disengage from conflict with the mentee;
 - (F) communicate effectively in a variety of situations such as when meeting new students, interacting with students from different countries and cultures, or expressing indications of trouble or concern that might require intervention for safety of student or others;
 - (G) monitor personal communication in order to avoid conveying judgment and maintain confidentiality; and
 - (H) receive constructive feedback and apply the feedback to future activities and interactions.
- (4) Problem solving/decision-making skills. The student analyzes conflicts and resolves them sequentially. The student is expected to:
 - (A) reconstruct and analyze conflicts as problem-solving opportunities;
 - (B) summarize decision-making models and strategies;
 - (C) explain the components of the conflict cycle, including beliefs, conflict, response, consequences, and beliefs reinforcement;
 - (D) articulate multiple perspectives and develop alternatives or compromises;
 - (E) predict the possible consequences of each alternative solution;
 - (F) develop and apply an individual action plan; and
 - (G) evaluate results of the action plan.
- (5) Self-awareness/esteem skills. The student explains components to developing a positive self-concept. The student is expected to:
 - (A) identify basic human needs such as security, love, acceptance, a sense of belonging, and feeling in control of one's life;
 - (B) define self-esteem and describe its relevance in a helping relationship;
 - (C) describe the importance of self-worth in both personal and academic contexts;
 - (D) identify the characteristics of a positive self-concept; and
 - (E) summarize self-esteem factors at different stages of human development, including early childhood, early adolescence, teenage years, early adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood.
- (6) Risk and protective factors. The student identifies the skills and factors that can help an individual avoid unsafe or unhealthy situations. The student is expected to:

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- (A) identify the foundations of a healthy relationship which is developed through trust, openness, comfort, empathy, and genuineness;
 - (B) discuss the concept that peer pressure can be used in a positive way to encourage peers to succeed and make good decisions;
 - (C) identify and apply techniques to promote prosocial behaviors;
 - (D) identify and describe strategies to avoid negative types of peer pressure;
 - (E) describe how negative peer pressure can adversely influence healthy relationships;
 - (F) determine when to share confidential information with a school official or adult;
 - (G) identify safe and healthy resources within the community; and
 - (H) contribute to making the school and community environments more positive.
- (7) Cultural competency. The student analyzes personal attitudes and actions regarding cultural awareness. The student is expected to:
- (A) demonstrate cultural awareness by taking part in celebrations of culture on campus;
 - (B) identify and apply strategies to improve cross-cultural communication such as acknowledging others' strengths or looking for common interests or qualities;
 - (C) identify multiple perspectives about a situation or topic;
 - (D) define and identify examples of stereotypes;
 - (E) examine personal prejudices and biases; and
 - (F) collaborate in diverse groups by facilitating various ideas and perspectives.
- (8) Service learning. The student assesses community needs. The student is expected to:
- (A) communicate with community stakeholders such as the student body, community leaders, police, government officials, parents, and others;
 - (B) distribute and collect the current community needs assessment to stakeholders;
 - (C) analyze and summarize collected data to determine areas of greatest need;
 - (D) discuss various options for meeting an identified need;
 - (E) determine the best project to implement in order to meet a specific need;
 - (F) research and use available community and school resources to develop a community referral resource directory;
 - (G) prepare and implement a tailored community action plan based on the findings of the current community needs assessment survey;
 - (H) participate actively in the community by applying personal skills to the action plan;
 - (I) distribute and collect a service-learning evaluation to stakeholders in order to collect data regarding the success of the project; and
 - (J) assess the effectiveness of the project and use data as a point of reference for future service-learning projects.
- (9) Knowledge of prevention issues. The student describes the risks associated with substance abuse. The student is expected to:

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- (A) describe and discuss the nature and risks of drug misuse and abuse;
- (B) analyze the harmful effects such as the physical, mental, social, and legal consequences of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, including prescription drugs, and other substances;
- (C) analyze the continuum of substance use to chemical dependency;
- (D) identify the warning signs of substance abuse;
- (E) identify substance abuse referral resources in the school and community;
- (F) analyze the importance of alternatives to drug and substance use;
- (G) model a healthy and appropriate lifestyle and encourage peers to make healthy choices; and
- (H) practice refusal skills and educate fellow students on the relevance of practicing these skills.

Recommended Resources and Materials:

Curriculum, Teacher's Manual and Student Handbook

The curriculum for PAL® I and PAL® II is described in detail in the High School Teacher's Manual. Since 1989, the PAL® curriculum has undergone rigorous field testing, including extensive review and evaluation of its Teacher's Manuals and Student Handbooks by education and prevention experts. The curriculum is based on program standards and the Code of Ethics established by the National Association of Peer Program Professionals (NAPPP).

High School Teacher's Manual

The 3rd edition of the High School Teacher's Manual was updated in 2002 and is available from Worker's Assistance Program. This manual is designed to give PAL® teachers a comprehensive guide to training peer helpers, facilitating their service delivery, and evaluating their performance.

Section One of the manual focuses on information for the PAL® peer helping teacher. It begins with an introduction and overview of peer helping programs and discusses aspects of peer helping programs that are essential for success. Section One also takes the teacher from program implementation to evaluation and prepares him/her for the all-important task of training PAL® peer helpers.

Section Two of the manual consists of the PAL® peer helper plan. Units in Section Two are taught sequentially. Student training units address each of the eight lesson focus areas in considerable detail. A variety of information, strategies, and activities designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of peer helping students are offered in each area. All pertinent handouts and worksheets needed for students to complete an activity are presented with the activity. Training units in this manual are designed to address the core components for initial training of the students. It is recommended that the information in Section Two be a launching ground for further investigation and training in each topic area.

Section Three of the manual is made up of supplemental materials for both teachers and students. This section includes numerous forms for recruiting, supervising, and evaluating peer helpers, as well as additional reading and resources for teachers. Many of the supplemental

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materials and activities included in this section can be used as enrichment texts for PAL® II students.

For a complete overview of the curriculum/Teacher’s Manual, please see “Attachment A, Table of Contents, High School Teacher’s Manual”.

High School Student Handbook

The High School Student Handbook is correlated to Section Two of the High School

Teacher’s Manual and provides instruction, resources, activities, and forms for the PAL® and PAL® II students. For a complete overview of the High School Student Handbook, please see “Attachment B, Table of Contents, High School Student Handbook.”

Recommended Course Activities:

Student Training

PAL® students go through extensive training before they are put in a position to be a peer helper. It is recommended that students receive 20-30 hours of initial in-class training over a period of 4-6 weeks prior to providing peer helping services. Additionally, supplemental training should be provided during the course of the school year. Key elements of the PAL® student training include the following:

- Initial Training
- Role of the PAL®/peer helper
- Confidentiality/liability issues
- Group dynamics and trust-building
- Self-awareness
- Basic principles of human behavior
- Listening and communication skills
- Helping strategies
- Decision-making/problem solving skills
- Knowledge of limits; when to refer
- Knowledge of school and community referral resources and services
- Additional issues or services such as guidelines and logistics for off-campus service, peer service tutoring, conflict resolution, peer pressure reversal, substance use/abuse prevention, at-risk youth, gang association prevention, teen pregnancy and other sexuality issues, suicide prevention, working with special needs students, coping with grief and loss, discussion group facilitation, and cultural competence

Service Delivery for PAL® I

One of the most unique aspects of the PAL® I and PAL® II classes is that students have the ability to apply skills taught in the curriculum. PAL® students are usually ready to begin delivery of peer assistance services in the field at the end of the initial 4-6-week training period.

Student Referral

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PAL® peer helping students may work with students both in both individual and/or structured group situations. In either case, great care is made to match up PAL® students with students needing assistance. This is done in such a way as to maximize the development of a compatible and constructive helping relationship. In many cases, this matching will consider common interests and experience, in order to help ensure that PAL® peer helping students will be able to relate effectively to the student whom they assist.

There are a number of ways in which students can be referred to the services of the PAL® peer helping program:

- by school administrators, counselors, and/or teachers at feeder schools
- by requests from parents
- by student self-referral

Supervision

Once they have begun their peer assistance services in the field, PAL® students must be provided with regular, supportive supervision, including not only direct supervision by the PAL® teacher or another adult representative, but also peer support and supervision from their fellow PAL® students. Regularly structured (i.e., at least weekly) in-class supervision sessions not only enable PAL® students to share with and learn from one another in connection with their peer assistance activities, but also help to prevent “burnout” on the part of the PAL® students.

Scheduling

After the initial training period (20-30 hours), the typical schedule for a standard PAL® class (one-hour per day, five days per week) is as follows:

- 3-4 days per week: PAL® students are in the field, delivering peer assistance services to students on their own campus and/or feeder schools.
- 1-2 days per week: PAL® students are in the classroom, engaging in supervision sessions and/or supplementary training activities.
- (Note: Adapted schedules based on block or accelerated block would be adjusted accordingly.)

Supplemental Training

To augment the initial student training described above, supplemental training activities may be provided during the course of the semester/year. The current recommendation is that students receive 10-20 hours of supplemental training per semester. Supplemental training may be provided by PAL® peer helping teachers, school counselors/guidance personnel, guest speakers, representatives of youth-serving programs with relevant background or expertise in issues being addressed through the PAL® program, and through distance learning methods such as videos.

PAL® High School Conference

The annual PAL® High School Leadership Conference, hosted by PAL® Services of Workers Assistance Program, Inc., provides an opportunity for PAL® students and teachers from around the state to meet, network, and enhance their skills. The conference provides an adult track for PAL® teachers and an additional track for students. Participants benefit by updating their

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knowledge of topics such as violence prevention, drug prevention, school to work transitioning, peer mediation, resiliency, community service-learning, and multicultural understanding in workshops provided by practitioners from the regional, state and national levels.

Suggested methods for evaluating student outcomes:

Student Outcomes

Evaluation of PAL® student performance is based on a number of factors, including the following:

- paper and pencil tests covering curricular content areas; which serve to ensure the academic rigor of the course.
- participation and performance in program-related activities, projects, and services.
- individual student journals documenting on-going PAL® activities and services.
- feedback from administrators, teachers and counselors at feeder schools/classrooms with regard to the effectiveness of peer assistance services.
- research projects, presentations, self- evaluations, and other written or oral assignments as directed by the teacher.

Self-evaluations by PAL® peer helping students.(Note: Congruent with the goal of student ownership/empowerment, it is recommended that PAL® peer helping students themselves have input with regard to the determination of grading policies and procedures in their PAL® peer helping class.)

Program Outcomes

In addition to student evaluations, participating programs conduct end-of-year formative and summative evaluations. These program evaluations document program-related activities, services, and impacts with regard to attainment of programmatic goals and the social and academic progress of the students served.

Teacher qualifications:

- An assignment for PAL I or II is allowed with a valid secondary teaching certificate.

Additional information:

Teachers of this course must successfully complete PAL® Teacher Training conducted by PAL® Services of Workers Assistance Program, Inc.

- 14-Hour Initial Teacher Training
- \$500 Certification Fee
- \$200 Curriculum Fee

Districts must contact the owner of the course, Workers Assistance Program, Inc., directly. Please contact Dwayne Smetzer, Chief Executive Officer, dsmetzer@workersassistance.com or 512-328-8518 for information regarding these courses. www.palusa.org