



Peer Assistance and Leadership® (PAL) II

PEIMS Code: N1290006

Abbreviation: PAAL2

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

Peer Assistance and Leadership® (PAL) II

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 demonstrates how to maintain good working relationships with peers and enhance or improve group dynamics. The student is expected to:
 - (A) explain and facilitate the establishment of group norms critical to helping a group's success;
 - (B) apply methods and strategies that are effective for welcoming a new person to a group;
 - (C) summarize the stages of relationship development;
 - (D) summarize and follow the National Association of Peer Program Professionals Code of Ethics, which are the character standards for all mentors and allows for strong structure of accountability for the group;
 - (E) evaluate how a group's work can be improved or enhanced;
 - (F) use constructive techniques to resolve conflict such as supporting positive attitudes and group participation and encouraging group members to formulate positive and helpful responses to issues and concerns rather than destructive responses;
 - (G) coordinate and summarize the flow of information within a group; and
 - (H) 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 to situations presented in class and on the school campuses. The student is expected to:
 - (A) exhibit the characteristics of a positive role model;
 - (B) conduct interviews with perspective PAL® students and provide feedback to the instructor;
 - (C) discuss the traits of an effective mentor and serve as a mentor to students in PAL® I;
 - (D) define service-learning and evaluate how leaders use academic knowledge and critical-thinking skills to address community needs;
 - (E) evaluate characteristics of an effective leader such as the ability to listen to others and to take initiative as well as dependability and honesty;
 - (F) analyze the effectiveness of redirection strategies and suggest alternate strategies for future use; and
 - (G) create and implement a plan to provide services such as tutoring and mentorship to student mentees and to the campus.
- (3) Communication techniques. The student communicates in a way that facilitates discussion, trust, and open lines of communication. The student is expected to:
 - (A) demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication in interactions with peers and others;

Peer Assistance and Leadership® (PAL) II

- (B) summarize accurately and objectively the content of written messages and feelings of the sender;
 - (C) identify and explain communication factors that impact a helping relationship;
 - (D) analyze influences on communication behaviors within the context of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs;
 - (E) exhibit strategies to maintain composure and disengage from conflict with the mentee;
 - (F) provide constructive criticism to mentees and PAL® I students and receive constructive criticism from peers and instructors that can be applied to future activities; and
 - (G) use effective facilitative techniques such as clarification and summarization when leading reflection sessions with PAL® I students.
- (4) Problem solving/decision-making skills. The student analyzes conflicts and resolves them sequentially. The student is expected to:
- (A) evaluate the effects of personal values and peer pressure on decision making;
 - (B) discuss the steps in the decision-making process with younger students, and propose how those steps can be used to make choices in day-to-day situations;
 - (C) analyze aspects of the conflict cycle and apply them to different scenarios;
 - (D) translate problems into goals through examination of choices and development of strategies to overcome obstacles;
 - (E) explain the pace differentiation and integration phases of the problem-solving process;
 - (F) develop and execute a systematic group action plan; and
 - (G) evaluate the results of the action plan.
- (5) Self-awareness/esteem skills. The student understands the role that one's individuality plays in fostering a positive self-concept. The student is expected to:
- (A) define and create a positive self-inventory, which includes physical, mental, emotional, and social growth;
 - (B) identify how a positive self-concept supports health decision-making and the ability to refuse negative influences; and
 - (C) identify and apply strategies to positively influence self-esteem in one's self and peers.
- (6) Risk and protective factors. The student analyzes community factors, including risks, as a component of healthy relationships. The student is expected to:
- (A) assess community needs and ways to become involved to address those needs;
 - (B) categorize scenarios that might be encountered at school or in the community according to the degree of risk involved;
 - (C) analyze and roleplay risk avoidance strategies;
 - (D) explain how healthy relationships and community involvement contributes to inclusive behaviors;
 - (E) analyze how peer, school, and family relationships can be used in a positive way to encourage peers to make good decisions;

Peer Assistance and Leadership® (PAL) II

- (F) discuss scenarios in which defense mechanisms are used and propose strategies for reacting to defense mechanisms;
 - (G) explain and, if needed, follow established protocols, to refer situations regarding behavior or abuse to appropriate school staff; and
 - (H) evaluate the effectiveness of techniques to promote prosocial behaviors and suggest alternatives if needed.
- (7) Cultural Competency. The student analyzes personal attitudes and actions regarding cultural awareness. The student is expected to:
- (A) demonstrate cultural awareness by organizing or leading celebrations of culture on campus;
 - (B) identify opportunities to participate in multicultural community work;
 - (C) apply and analyze strategies to improve cross-cultural communication such as acknowledging others' strengths or looking for common interests or qualities;
 - (D) explain how cross-cultural conflict can provide an opportunity for cultural learning;
 - (E) identify and differentiate between dimensions in systems of shared knowledge; and
 - (F) differentiate between different types of learning needs and disabilities and describe types of accommodations.
- (8) Service learning. The student analyzes individuals' skills and learning styles and how these align to the needs in the community. The student is expected to:
- (A) define locus of control and discuss how the attribution of success or difficulties either to internal factors such as effort or external factors such as chance apply to individual learning;
 - (B) define how multisensory learning as an instructional approach combines auditory, visual, and tactical elements into a learning task;
 - (C) identify and apply metacognitive strategies to academic and service-learning assignments;
 - (D) apply knowledge of learning styles to peer-helping activities such as tutoring, making presentations, and activity facilitation;
 - (E) review and evaluate the previous community action plan and propose amendments based on community feedback;
 - (F) review and evaluate the existing community referral resource directory and propose amendments based on new information from the community;
 - (G) complete a community service-learning activities survey to avoid duplication of community service-learning projects;
 - (H) propose community service placements for PAL® I students;
 - (I) identify and interview potential service sites;
 - (J) categorize service-learning projects based on thematic issues; and
 - (K) develop plans for the implementation of service-learning projects.
- (9) Knowledge of prevention issues. The student identifies substance abuse risk factors and early warning signs. The student is expected to:
- (A) participate in school-related efforts to address health-risk behaviors;

Peer Assistance and Leadership® (PAL) II

- (B) design and deliver presentations on substance misuse and abuse issues;
- (C) evaluate the impact of laws relating to prescription and over-the-counter drug misuse and the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other substances;
- (D) apply effective communication skills for building and maintaining healthy relationships which mitigate the risks associated with substance abuse;
- (E) examine the influence of culture and society on the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs in school, sports, or entertainment;
- (F) model a healthy and appropriate lifestyle and encourage peers to make healthy choices;
- (G) categorize different kinds of refusal statements; 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

Peer Assistance and Leadership® (PAL) II

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® II

Unlike new PAL® students who undergo a 4-6-week initial training period prior to delivering peer assistance services, PAL® II students may be assigned to helping roles with students as soon as they have reviewed and demonstrated mastery of the essential elements in the Peer Assistance and Leadership (PAL®) course. This fieldwork may take place on their own campus and/or in middle or elementary schools.

Peer Assistance and Leadership® (PAL) II

Assistance with the Training of New PAL® students

PAL® II students may be utilized to assist the PAL® teacher in the orientation and training of PAL® I students. Among the areas in which PAL® II students can assist with training are the following:

- Role of the peer helper
- Group Dynamics
- Self-awareness
- Listening and communication skills
- Problem-solving and decision-making strategies
- Additional areas as determined by teacher

Peer Mediation/Conflict Resolution

PAL® II students may be assigned to mediation/conflict resolution roles at the discretion of the PAL® teacher, with input from school administrative and guidance staff. Prior to serving in this role, PAL® II students must receive training in mediation/conflict resolution provided by a qualified adult representing an appropriate community agency or school-based program.

Group Facilitation

PAL® II students may assist with the facilitation of school-based discussion groups focusing on issues of interest or concern to members of the school community.

Community Service/Service Learning

PAL® II students may be assigned a leading role in the involvement of themselves and/or other students in a variety of community service opportunities, both in the school setting and in the broader community. Technical assistance for service learning projects is available through PAL® Services of Workers Assistance Program, Inc.

Special Assignments

In addition to the roles described above, PAL® II students may be assigned to a variety of other assignments or projects with the potential for contributing to a more positive and productive school environment. These assignments shall be made at the discretion of the PAL® teacher, with input from the school or district's administrative, instructional, or guidance staff.

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

Peer Assistance and Leadership® (PAL) II

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 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

Peer Assistance and Leadership® (PAL) II

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