

Peer Assistance and Leadership, PAL[®] I

PEIMS Code: N1290005

Abbreviation: PAAL1

Grade Level(s): 9-12

Award of Credit: 1.0

State 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:

Peer Assistance and Leadership[®] (PAL[®]) I is an introductory peer mentoring elective designed for high school students in grades 9-12. In this course, students are trained to serve as peer mentors, offering guidance and support to their classmates on campus as well as to students in feeder schools. The *PAL[®] I* course focuses on building meaningful relationships, addressing key challenges like academic struggles, bullying, violence, suicide, and substance misuse, while also cultivating fundamental leadership skills.

Through training in prevention education, character building, and leadership development, *PAL[®] I* equips students with foundational skills in relationship-building, communication, decision-making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. The *PAL[®] I* course teaches concepts such as structural leadership, a growth mindset, and mutual support. *PAL[®] I* students cultivate essential skills such as teamwork, adaptability, and public speaking, preparing them for success in college, careers, or military service.

Essential Knowledge and Skills:

- (a) General Requirements. This course is recommended for students in grades 9-12. There are no prerequisites for this course. Students shall be awarded one credit for successful completion of this course.
- (b) Introduction.
 - (1) *Peer Assistance and Leadership[®] (PAL[®]) I* is an introductory peer mentoring elective developed for high school students in grades 9-12. In this course, students are trained to serve as peer mentors, offering guidance and support to their classmates on campus as well as to students in feeder schools. The *PAL[®] I* course focuses on building meaningful relationships, addressing key

challenges like academic struggles, bullying, violence, suicide, and substance misuse, while also cultivating fundamental leadership skills.

Through training in prevention education, character building, and leadership development, *PAL® I* equips students with foundational skills in relationship-building, communication, decision-making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. The *PAL® I* course teaches concepts such as structural leadership, a growth mindset, and mutual support. *PAL® I* students cultivate essential skills such as teamwork, adaptability, and public speaking, preparing them for success in college, careers, or military service.

- (2) *PAL® I* students learn the character standards expected of all mentors and help establish a framework for group accountability. *PAL® I* 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® I* empowers students to serve effectively in specific peer-to-peer, service-learning, and general leadership roles.
 - (3) Statements that contain the word "including" reference content that must be mastered, while those containing the phrase "such as" are intended as possible illustrative examples.
- (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) demonstrate participation to the establishment of group norms, including taking part in the required number of community service projects, maintaining the minimum class attendance rate, and interacting with the mentee on a regularly scheduled basis, thereby promoting effective teamwork;
 - (B) compare the four behavioral styles, including promoters, directors, thinkers, and supporters;
 - (C) identify and describe the characteristics of a productive group, including fostering a safe and inclusive environment with clear goals and open communication where students demonstrate empathy, serve as positive role models, commit to regular engagement, develop leadership skills, and support personal growth;
 - (D) summarize and follow the National Association of Peer Program Professionals Code of Ethics;
 - (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, including encouraging other group members to participate in activities and discussions; and
 - (H) discuss and demonstrate positive reinforcement strategies.
 - (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) identify and explain the key characteristics of an effective leader, including honesty, dependability, effective communicator, and the ability to take initiative;

- (B) define leadership within the peer-to-peer relationship, including modeling positive behavior, actively listening, fostering open communication, and empowering a mentee to build confidence, skills, and make informed decisions;
 - (C) demonstrate initiative in activities and within the relationship with the assigned peer, including being on time, actively participating, and taking the lead in community service efforts;
 - (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, including being responsible, adaptable, respectful, empathetic, supportive, and resilient;
 - (F) initiate and model friendly relationships with persons in other social or academic groups, including promoting a sense of belonging, involving individuals from various backgrounds in activities and discussions, engaging in friendly conversations with new students, and offering help;
 - (G) explain a leader's role in conflict resolution, decision making, and implementing change in an ethical manner; and
 - (H) explain and demonstrate redirection strategies to be used 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, including active listening, clarity, tone of voice, open-ended questions, constructive feedback, eye contact, gestures, body language, facial expressions, silence and pauses;
 - (B) identify personal ideas, feelings, and intentions when communicating;
 - (C) give examples of facilitative responses, including questioning, clarifying, and summarizing and demonstrate proper usage of these responses;
 - (D) explain active listening skills, including being attentive, summarizing the speaker's words, asking questions, showing empathy through understanding and validation, and fostering a supportive and trusting environment;
 - (E) identify and explain de-escalation techniques, including maintaining a calm presence, active listening, using positive and supportive language and body language, setting clear boundaries, and staying solution oriented;
 - (F) demonstrate effective communication in various situations such as when meeting new students and interacting with students from different countries and cultures;
 - (G) explain the procedure and reasons to notify school officials of student information requiring a report;

- (H) monitor personal communication by keeping a student journal and participating in group learning discussions in order to avoid conveying judgment and maintain confidentiality; and
 - (I) explain the process of receiving constructive feedback and applying such feedback to applicable scenarios.
- (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, including Pros and Con List, Consensus Decision-Making, and Voting or Majority Rule;
 - (C) explain the components of the conflict cycle, including beliefs, conflict, response, consequences, and beliefs reinforcement;
 - (D) identify and explain the importance of considering different viewpoints, experiences, and priorities which helps to uncover needs, encourage creativity and innovation, reduce bias, enhance problem-solving, and foster collaboration;
 - (E) identify and describe the possible consequences of each alternative solution;
 - (F) develop and implement 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 and describe 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:
- (A) identify the foundations of a healthy relationship, including trust, openness, comfort, empathy, and genuineness;
 - (B) describe the positive aspects of peer pressure, including encouraging success and good decision making;
 - (C) identify and demonstrate 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) explain when to share confidential information with a school official or adult;
 - (G) identify safe and healthy resources within the community; and
 - (H) participate in both school and community group activities designed to foster positive environments, including attending service-learning projects, events, and workshops.
- (7) Cultural Competency. The student analyzes personal attitudes and actions regarding cultural awareness. The student is expected to:
- (A) demonstrate respectful and inclusive behavior in daily interactions, such as treating everyone with kindness and consideration;
 - (B) reflect on a student's cultural awareness and identify strategies that can be applied 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) identify and define examples of stereotypes;
 - (E) identify and discuss personal prejudices and biases by reflecting on individual beliefs and behaviors; and
 - (F) identify and discuss ways to foster teamwork among students from different backgrounds to work on projects that celebrate diversity and foster understanding.
- (8) Service Learning. The student assesses the community to identify a need, ,and design and implement a solution to meet the need. The student is expected to:
- (A) identify community stakeholders to collectively participate in a community needs assessment;
 - (B) analyze and summarize collected data to determine areas of greatest need;
 - (C) discuss solutions for meeting an identified need;
 - (D) analyze and determine the best project to implement in order to meet a specific need;
 - (E) research and use available community and school resources to develop a community referral resource directory;
 - (F) prepare and implement a tailored community action plan based on the findings of the current community needs assessment survey;
 - (G) maintain a participation log documenting community involvement, including dates, activities, and hours;
 - (H) distribute and collect a service-learning evaluation to stakeholders in order to collect data regarding the success of the project; and
 - (I) 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 is expected to assess prevention issues and describe the physical, mental, social, and legal risks associated with substance use and misuse, as well as strategies for prevention, and available support resources. The student is expected to:
- (A) define substance use and misuse;
 - (B) describe the risks of substance use and misuse, including the physical, mental, social, and legal consequences;
 - (C) analyze the continuum of substance use to chemical dependency;
 - (D) identify the warning signs of substance misuse;
 - (E) identify substance misuse referral resources in the school and community;
 - (F) analyze and discuss the importance of alternatives to substance use;
 - (G) discuss substance misuse prevention knowledge with peers to help create a supportive network; and
 - (H) describe and demonstrate refusal skills and how to use clear, confident communication and positive body language when refusing substances.

Recommended Resources and Materials:

- I. Workers Assistance Program, Inc., *PAL® Peer Assistance and Leadership High School Teacher's Manual*, 3rd ed. (Workers Assistance Program, Inc., 2002).
- II. Workers Assistance Program, Inc., *PAL® Peer Assistance and Leadership High School Student Handbook*, (Workers Assistance Program, Inc., 2003).
- III. PAL® Peer Assistance and Leadership. "PAL® Peer Assistance and Leadership". Accessed October 17, 2024. <https://palusa.org/>.
- IV. National Association of Peer Program Professionals (NAPPP). "National Association of Peer Program Professionals". Accessed October 17, 2024. <https://peerprogramprofessionals.org/index.html/>.
- V. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). "Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration". Accessed October 17, 2024. <https://www.samhsa.gov/>.

Recommended Course Activities:

Activity: PAL® I Student Training

PAL® I students receive a comprehensive introduction to peer mentoring and leadership. PAL® I students acquire fundamental skills for delivering effective peer support and developing into strong leaders.

Objectives Include:

- Understand the basic principles of human behavior.
- Develop strong listening and communication skills.
- Utilize decision-making and problem-solving skills.

Knowledge and Skills (KS)

Group Building

Student Expectations (SE)

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

Knowledge and Skills (KS)	Student Expectations (SE)
Leadership Skills	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H
Communication Techniques	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I
Problem-Solving/Decision-Making Skills	A, B, C, D, E, F, G
Self-Awareness/Esteem Skills	A, B, C, D, E
Risk and Protective Factors	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H
Cultural Competency	A, B, C, D, E, F
Service Learning	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I
Knowledge of Prevention Issues	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

- I. **Activity:** "Identifying Defense Mechanisms: Why Do People Act That Way?"
 PAL® I students explore human behavior through defense mechanisms. Participants engage in role-play to understand why people act as they do, promoting empathy and reflective listening.

Objectives Include:

- Understand defense mechanisms and their relevance.
- Develop empathy through role-play scenarios.

Knowledge and Skills (KS)	Student Expectations (SE)
Group Building	B, C, G
Leadership Skills	F, G
Communication Techniques	A, C, D
Problem-Solving/Decision-Making Skills	A, D
Self-Awareness/Esteem Skills	A, B, D
Cultural Competency	A, C, D, E, F

- II. **Activity:** "Drugs and Alcohol: Your Opinion"
 PAL® I students examine diverse perspectives on drug-related issues. Through discussion and collaboration, students develop critical thinking skills as they articulate and defend their opinions on controversial statements regarding drugs and alcohol.

Objectives Include:

- To form differing opinions on drugs and drug-related issues.
- To discuss how varying viewpoints influence decision-making.

Knowledge and Skills (KS)	Student Expectations (SE)
Group Building	C, G
Leadership Skills	F, G, H
Communication Techniques	A, B, C, D, E
Problem-Solving/Decision-Making Skills	B, D, E, F
Risk and Protective Factors	B, C, D, E
Cultural Competency	C, E

Knowledge and Skills (KS)
Knowledge of Prevention Issues
Student Expectations (SE)

A, B, D, F

III. Activity: "Community Vision"

PAL® I students engage in a collaborative exploration of their community by creating a collective drawing. Working in small groups, students illustrate their perceptions of the community, including its strengths and weaknesses, while fostering dialogue about what community means to them.

Objectives Include:

- To visually represent and discuss the elements of a community.
- To encourage collaboration and communication among students.

Knowledge and Skills (KS)
Group Building
Student Expectations (SE)

C, G, H

Leadership Skills

F, G, H

Communication Techniques

A, B, C, D, F

Problem-Solving/Decision-Making Skills

B, C, D, G

Self-Awareness/Esteem Skills

A

Cultural Competency

A, C, F

Service Learning

B, I

IV. Activity: Community Service-Learning Activities Survey

PAL® students engage in a collaborative effort to identify existing community service activities and gather information on how these efforts are structured, implemented, and supported. This activity will help PAL® students build skills in outreach, data collection, and collaboration while fostering a deeper understanding of their community.

Objectives Include:

- Develop skills in conducting surveys to collect relevant information.
- Identify and analyze existing community service activities.
- Build communication and collaboration skills through outreach and engagement.

Knowledge and Skills (KS)
Group Building
Student Expectations (SE)

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

Leadership Skills

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

Communication Techniques

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I

Problem-Solving/Decision-Making Skills

A, B, C, D, E, F, G

Self-Awareness/Esteem Skills

A, B, C, D, E

Risk and Protective Factors

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

Cultural Competency

A, B, C, D, E, F

Service Learning

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I

Knowledge of Prevention Issues

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

Suggested methods for evaluating student outcomes:

Student Outcomes

Suggested evaluation of *PAL® I* student performance can include a number of the following factors:

- assessments covering curricular content areas to ensure the academic rigor of the course;
- participation in program-related activities, projects, and services;
- performance in role-playing scenarios where they simulate real-world peer helping situations to demonstrate their skills and understanding;
- individual student journals documenting on-going *PAL® I* activities and services, reflecting personal growth and contributions;
- 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 of their own performance, encouraging self-reflection and ownership of their progress.

Teacher qualifications:

An assignment for *PAL® II* is allowed with a valid secondary teaching certificate.

Additional information:

- 14-Hour Certification/Renewal Teacher Training
- \$500 Teacher Certification/Renewal Fee
- \$200 Curriculum Fee (Per each teacher curriculum training manual.)
- \$10 Handbook Fee (Per each student handbook.)
- Workers Assistance Program, Inc./ PAL® provides all applicable training.

Please email PAL® for implementation guidance and general questions at: contact@palusa.org or by phone at: 800-522-0550.