



Playground Activity
Leaders in Schools



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Checklist

Getting Started

- Sign PALS Partnership Agreement at first teacher meeting
- Provide school with signed copy of the Partnership Agreement
- Have school place ad about PALS recruitment assembly in school newspaper
- Send out email re: confirmation of dates and what will be needed from the school
- Provide school with PALS Application & Parent Permission sheet to photocopy
- Provide school with the PALS Student Commitment Sheet to photocopy
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Training /Meeting Dates

- PALS Recruitment Assembly
- PALS Leader Training Workshop
- Conflict Resolution Training
- First PALS follow-up meeting
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Training Preparation and Delivery

- Book out PALS Activity Bag
- Prepare flipcharts
- Bring PALS Leader handbooks
- Bring PALS Pinnies to the school with sheet to sign for them
- Bring Games Book to the school with sheet to sign for them
- Bring Prizes for Bingo Activity
- Provide school with the signed PALS certificates
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Notes for PHN

In order to present and implement the P.A.L.S. program in your schools, you will need to have a thorough understanding of the background information and processes contained in this section.

How much of the information you choose to present will depend on your audience and their needs. If you are presenting an overview of the program to a parent council or at a teacher staff meeting, it is suggested that only the main points of the program are covered.

If you are training a group of supervisors to implement the program, then all the details of the program will need to be shared and discussed. All of these details are contained in the Supervisor Handbook (SH). Throughout this background information, reference will be made to consult the SH for further details.



Introduction and History of P.A.L.S.

Playground leadership programs are not a new concept. The Canadian Intramural Recreation Association produced a playground leadership guide in 1998. Since this time many schools and health departments have adapted the program to meet their needs.

“Playground play should be for everyone.”* The intent of the program is to offer games and activities which will allow all children to participate regardless of their gender, size, shape, or ability.

The P.A.L.S. program is offered to schools who are interested in increasing physical activity, decreasing conflict on the playground, and presenting students with leadership opportunities.

P.A.L.S. was implemented and evaluated in 20 pilot schools from January - June 2003. Changes were made to the program to improve training, marketing, and sustainability.

The P.A.L.S. program offers:

- an opportunity for a few key adults to work with a group of student leaders
- senior students the opportunity to gain valuable communication, leadership and conflict resolution skills as playground leaders
- structure and activities during recess while still having fun
- an anti-bullying message and conflict resolution
- an opportunity for students to be physically active and engaged at recess

*Source: Playground Leadership Program, Canadian Intramural Recreation Association



Objectives

1. Increase physical activity

- Amount of physical activity children participate in has significantly decreased over last 15 years.
- The average Canadian child is inactive for three to five hours a day in front of the TV alone. This does not include the five to seven hours most children spend sitting in school five days a week.
- The amount of time spent playing video games by Canadian children is among the highest in the world.
- 2/3rds of Canadian school-aged children are not active enough for optimal development and they become more inactive as they get older.
- 30 minutes of daily activity is linked to a 30% reduction in health risks related to mortality.
- Daily physical activity has a positive effect on student performance and academic achievement in terms of memory, observation, problem-solving, and decision-making.
- Physical education has been linked to improved academic performance, particularly in mathematics, with elementary school children, as well as significant improvement in attitudes, discipline, behaviour and creativity.

Sources: OPHEA update: Canadian Medical Association, 2000
 The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyles Research Institute, 1998
 Canadian Journal of Public Health, Vol.86, Nov. 1



Obesity

The prevalence of overweight and obese children is increasing in Canada as a whole.

- Definition. of overweight = Body Mass Index (BMI) greater than 85th percentile. Definition. of obese = BMI greater than 95th percentile. – Child Health Report, 2002
- “BMI is an internationally-recognized method used to determine if an individual’s weight is within a healthy range. It is calculated by dividing weight in kilograms by height in meters squared.” - Child Health Report, 2002
- Childhood Obesity is a growing public health concern.
- Obesity is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease, hypertension, type II diabetes, high cholesterol, gallbladder disease and cancer.



Objectives

2. Decrease conflict and reduce the incidence of playground bullying

- The most common place for bullying is on the playground. One study showed that 81% of all bullying occurs on the playground with a bullying incident occurring every 7 minutes, on average. (Debra Pepler)
- Peers are present in 85% of bullying episodes but intervene in only 11%. (Pepler)
- Playgrounds are a prime area for bullying because:
 - Less supervision compared to classroom
 - Crowded play areas; massive and barren play areas
 - Multiple age groups together
 - Isolated areas
 - Boredom – lack of interesting things to do
 - Childhood games and activities have not been passed down generation to generation
- “Bullying is a crime of opportunity”; if children are bored, there is a lot of opportunity for them to engage in bullying behaviour. (Pepler)
- Organized and fun things to do at recess can decrease bullying incidents. Games teach children social skills and playing with others helps them to have a positive view of themselves.
- P.A.L.S promotes skill development amongst the student leaders, such as
 - Communication skills
 - Problem-solving skills
 - Team work/fair play
 - Conflict resolution
 - Responsibility
- These skills can then decrease the frequency of teacher intervention in resolving conflict and lead to less bullying incidents on the playground.



Goal - inclusiveness

A major goal is to provide opportunities for the traditional victims of bullying. Make a special effort to include kids that are/have:

- Shy, quiet
- Poor social skills, difficulty making friends
- Isolated – “different”, don’t fit in
- Lower self-esteem
- Playing alone

Motto – “Always room for one more.”



Objectives

3. Provide leadership opportunity for students

- Students learn that leadership is about getting people to work together to accomplish something.
- Self-esteem is enhanced when children are provided with opportunities to explore and develop their competencies. This is important for growth and development.
- Skill development provided through the program includes communication, problem-solving, organization, co-operation as well as leadership.



Program Implementation Steps

- Meet with administration. Have administration sign the **Partnership Agreement** (*see Appendix A*).
- Solicit supervisors and review program
- Leader selection and training
- Launching the program
- Scheduling
- Getting participants started
- Program sustainability
- Evaluation



Responsibilities of Supervisor(s) – an overview

(Each point is discussed in more detail throughout the presentation)

- The supervisor(s) can be the principal, vice principal, teacher, child and youth worker or parent volunteers
- Promote program with potential P.A.L.S. leaders
 - Provide the students with information about the program and outline the required commitment during an upbeat informative assembly.
- Select the P.A.L.S. leaders
- Arrange the leader training dates
 - One of the supervisors must attend the training sessions.
 - Book space for the trainings including the gym.
- Launch the program in your school.
- Develop a schedule for the leaders.
- Provide support and mentoring during regular meetings with P.A.L.S. leaders.
- Supervise and support leaders on the playground.
- Maintain the program through incentives, recognition and celebration.
- Evaluation
 - Assist the PHN with the evaluation process.



Selecting Leaders

- Recommended age is Grades 4 to 6
- Recruit 30 - 50 students for each training group-take into consideration how many days per week leaders will be on the playground and the ratio of leaders to participating students.
- Plan for 10-15 leaders on the schoolyard at each recess
- Choose a mix of students
 - Assertive
 - Sociable, enthusiastic
 - Bullying behaviours in the past
 - Target of bullying or marginalized
- Mix of males and females
 - Male leaders tend to choose more physical games
 - Female leaders tend to choose the quieter activities
 - Having a mix of leaders will offer a variety of activities for males and females
- Select students who have the ability/willingness to role model positive behaviours
- Select students with a willingness to learn problem solving skills
- Build on existing leadership programs offered in the school



Selecting and Recruiting P.A.L.S. Leaders

(For more detail, see page 4 of SH)

Options

1. Consider inviting all grade 4-6 students to an upbeat informative assembly.
2. Have the P.A.L.S. supervisors meet with each class.
3. Prepare a one page information sheet and schedule time to answer questions.

For each option:

- Review the objectives of the program.
- Highlight P.A.L.S. as a leadership opportunity and a chance to make a difference in their school by decreasing bullying behaviour and increasing physical activity.
- Outline the commitment required to be a leader.
- Have the students interested in becoming a P.A.L.S. leader complete the **Student Application Form** and return it to a supervisor *(See Appendix B and SH)*.
- Provide selected P.A.L.S. leaders with a copy of the **Parent Permission Form** *(See Appendix C and SH)*.



Leader Training

Training is approximately 3 - 4 hours in length: (*see Chapter 5-Student Leader Training*)

Use the **Training Confirmation and Checklist** to assist supervisors to prepare for training sessions (*see Appendix D*).

- Initial training day: two and half hours plus a break
- Lunch meeting: one week after initial training day

Initial training day:

Part One: 1 hour

- **Leader handbook** (in the library or room with tables)
 - Welcome and ice breaker activity
 - Safety on the playground
 - Qualities of a leader and leadership styles
 - Communication skills
 - Bullying

-Recess or lunch break-

Part two: 1 ½ hours

- **Games** (gym or outside)
 - Set up 3-4 stations (skipping, tag, ball games, etc.) with equipment.
 - Divide the P.A.L.S. leaders into 3-4 equal groups.
 - Allow an equal amount of time at each station.
 - Each group will rotate through all the stations.
 - Teach approximately 4 games at each station.

Lunch meeting

- Conflict resolution scenarios and discussion
- Introduce more games.
- Leader commitment and schedule



Playground Equipment List

When organizing the playground equipment consider, using a mesh bag or small tote. Ensure what ever you choose is light weight and easy to carry. Organize the equipment according to how you have designed your playground. For example, if you have a skipping station, place all the skipping ropes in one bag with the game cards. Repeat the same process for ball, jumpsie ropes and tag games.

- Skipping Ropes - 7 foot rope (4 or 5)
- 14 foot rope (8-10)
- balls - tennis balls (4 or 5)
- plastic balls or dodge balls (4 or 5)
- red/white/blue bouncy balls (8-10)
- Jumpsies/Yoki Ropes - 3 or 4 (make from sewing elastic)
- Kerchief or plush toys (2 or 3)
- Marbles (2 or 3 bags)
- Jacks (3 or 4 sets)
- Smooth Stones (1 bag)
- Whistles - one for each leader (optional)
- Bag to store the equipment

Approximate cost of the equipment is \$100.00



Launching the program in your school

(For more detail, see page 6 of SH)

Every school may choose to launch the program in a different way. Suggestions:

- Introduce the program and the P.A.L.S. leaders at an assembly.
- P.A. announcements *(for examples, see pages 7 and 8 of SH)*
- Arrange a play day for the school to orientate the students to the various games.
- Introduce games during gym time or to one class at a time during recess.
- Introduce new P.A.L.S. game at each assembly.



Leader Visibility

Bring a sample of the pinnie to show during presentations and training sessions.

It is important to ensure the leaders are visible while out on the playground. For this purpose, the Health Unit created a one size fits all pinnie. Schools interested in using the pinnies for their P.A.L.S. program will receive 12 pinnies, one time only. Our Health Unit will not be responsible for replacing lost pinnies.

PHN is asked complete a **Request for Pinnies form** (*see Appendix E*).

Pinnies will be made available to schools that have:

- completed the P.A.L.S. training.
- signed the partnership agreement

Other options (schools responsibility) to consider for leader visibility include:

- Arm band
- T-shirt, vest
- Sash
- Banner/Flag in area of playground designated for P.A.L.S. leaders



Scheduling Leaders

(For more detail, see page 9 and 10 of SH)

- Determine how many days per week the leaders will be out on the playground.
 - Consider running the program 4 days/week with a meeting on the off-day.
- Decide if the program will run at recess and lunch or just at lunch.
 - Most schools run their program once per day during the longer lunch recess.
- Ask leaders to sign up for one or two days per week.
- Create teams based on the number of days the leaders are assigned each week, e.g. 4 teams of 12 - 15 leaders/team.
- Create games stations (e.g. an area for ball games, one for skipping, etc) and designate areas of the playground for each station.
- Assign each team a day with 3 - 4 students leading each station.
- Allow friends to work together.
- Back-up leaders
- Decide if the P.A.L.S. leaders will be involved if there is indoor recess.



Incentives, Recognition and Celebrations

Recognizing the contributions of those involved can be a formal celebration or an informal thank you with a pat on the back. “Recognition is a valuable motivator, since positive reinforcement enhances self-esteem, personal growth, and a sense of belonging”. When participants and leaders are recognized they show greater commitment to the program and you are likely to see increased participation.

Leader Recognition

Certificates

- Certificate of recognition for completing training for P.A.L.S. presented by PHN on leader training day (*see Appendix F*).
- Certificate for outstanding contribution to P.A.L.S. presented by PHN at end of program (*see Appendix G*).

Playground Leader of the Week

- Certificates
- Announcements (assemblies or PA)
- Classroom and/or Bulletin Board Posting
- P.A.L.S. Flower in School (every leader is a petal of the flower)

Material Awards - Monthly prize draws for leaders who have consistently fulfilled their obligations.

- Prizes (Monthly or Weekly) – pencils, notebooks, erasers
- Coupons, ribbons, stickers
- Clothing – t-shirts, hats, sash
- Team Achievement Award

Year End Pizza Party -May include leaders, consistent participants

Celebrations

Celebrate small successes at leader meetings to keep the group motivated:

- Share success stories and ideas
- Picture wall/prag book
- “Self-fulfilling prophecy” statement

Participant Recognition

Recognition of those who consistently participate in the program (play games, assist leaders with clean-up, organization, etc).

- P.A.L.S. Tree in School (every consistent participant is a leaf of the tree)
- Announcements at Assemblies
- Participant Stickers
- Spot prizes – random prizes given to students participating at a particular recess.



Sustaining the Program

Incentives, recognition and celebrations help sustain the program. However, through the evaluation of P.A.L.S., we learned other ways to ensure the program has a long and happy life at a school. Here are a few more suggestions:

- Weekly leader meetings – teaching the leaders new games to keep the program fresh for participants is very important. Leaders must have a repertoire of games.
- The school needs to have lots of equipment available. Request funding from the parent council.
- Keep announcements going throughout the year to remind participants of the games, the rules, and the fun.
- The program should be open for as many grades as possible to participate in.
- Flexibility – allow the leaders and participants to play the games that interest them most.
- Have interesting challenges and awards.
- Have students ask their parents to submit a favourite game from their childhood or from their family history.
- Game of the week – announce the game and where it came from
- Spot prizes for participants and leaders when seen playing the games – once per week on playground.
- Introduce games during gym time.
- Introduce new P.A.L.S. game at each assembly.
- Keep it going in the winter with winter games.



Evaluation

Evaluation is a vital part of any program we offer. Please see Chapter 7-Evaluation for additional information.

Appendix A

Playground Activity Leaders in Schools - P.A.L.S.

Partnership Agreement

_____ would like to welcome you as a partner in implementing the P.A.L.S. program at your school.

The objectives of the P.A.L.S. program are to:

- Increase physical activity
- Decrease conflict and reduce the incidence of playground bullying
- Provide a leadership opportunity for students

To ensure success of the program, a mutual understanding and agreement between both parties is essential.

This partnership agreement outlines the following commitment in implementing the P.A.L.S. program.

- Public Health Nurses (PHN) will provide training to staff supervisor(s).
- PHN will provide approximately 3 -4 hours of training to student leaders; an initial training day of two and half hours plus a follow-up lunch meeting.
- School personnel will supervise the program and co-ordinate program logistics.
- PHN will provide ongoing support to school supervisors following staff and student training, attending P.A.L.S. meetings if requested.
- The school is responsible for purchasing equipment.

Date _____

Signed _____

Date _____

Signed _____



Playground Activity
Leaders in Schools

Appendix B

Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (P.A.L.S.)
STUDENT APPLICATION

Name: _____

Grade: _____

Your teacher's name: _____

1) Why do you want to be a Playground Leader?

2) Some activities I helped with (at school, home or elsewhere) before are:

3) What do you think **P.A.L.S.** can do for your school?

Applicant's signature: _____

TEACHER REFERENCE: Please have a teacher complete this part.

I think _____ would do a good job as a Playground leader because:

Teacher's signature: _____

Adapted from: Playground Leadership Program, Canadian Intramural Recreation Association & Peers Running Organized Play Stations (P.R.O.P.S.), Durham Region

Appendix C

Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (P.A.L.S.)
Parent Permission Form

Date: _____

Dear Parent/Guardian,

_____ is initiating a '**Playground Activity Leaders in Schools' program. (P.A.L.S.)**

Your child has expressed an interest in being a leader in the **P.A.L.S.** program. A Public Health Nurse will provide a leaders training workshop. The workshop will teach the student leaders how to plan and lead fun and safe activities on the playground for students in Grades 1-5. We believe the opportunity for young people to participate in structured playground activity:

- **Promotes physical activity during leisure time**
- **Reduces bullying behaviour on the playground**
- **Provides children with leadership opportunities**

Please sign the application form and return it to : _____

If you have further questions, feel free to contact a **P.A.L.S.** supervisor.

Sincerely, **P.A.L.S.** Supervisors and the Public Health Nurse

- _____
- _____
- _____

I give my permission for my child to be a part of **P.A.L.S.**

STUDENTS NAME: _____
(Please Print)

PARENT SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: ____/____/____

Appendix D

Playground Activity Leaders in Schools -P.A.L.S.

Training Confirmation and Checklist

Please accept this as confirmation of the upcoming P.A.L.S. training. This information will help better prepare you to ensure success of the training. If you have any further questions, please contact me.

School:

Administration Contact:

P.A.L.S. Coordinator/Supervisor(s):

Training Dates and times:

Initial training –

Conflict Resolution training -

Public Health Nurse (PHN):

Telephone Number:

School Supervisor Checklist

Please review the checklist prior to the P.A.L.S. leader training session.

- P.A.L.S. equipment purchased
- Location booked for the training of games (e.g. gym)
- Locations booked for initial training and conflict resolution training with tables and chairs setup - handbook exercises
- Pencils for P.A.L.S. leaders
- Flip chart paper and stand
- Tape and flip chart markers
- Remind students of training dates and times
- Remind students to wear appropriate clothing and running shoes for games training



Playground Activity
Leaders in Schools

Appendix E

Playground Activity Leaders in School - P.A.L.S.

Request for Pinnies

The P.A.L.S. pinnies were produced to increase the visibility of the leaders while on the playground.

Pinnies will be made available to schools that have:

- completed the P.A.L.S. training
- signed the partnership agreement

Schools will be provided with 12 pinnies one time only. The Health Unit will not be responsible for replacing lost pinnies.

Name of School:

Date of Distribution:

Number of Pinnies: 12

Name of person receiving Pinnies:

Signature of person receiving the Pinnies:

Public Health Nurse:



Playground Activity
Leaders in Schools



Playground Activity
Leaders in Schools

P.A.L.S.

This Certificate is presented to

In recognition of completing training for
P.A.L.S.

(Playground Activity Leaders in Schools)
at



Signature

Date

Signature

Date



Playground Activity
Leaders in Schools

P.A.L.S.

This Certificate is presented to

In recognition of completing training for
P.A.L.S.

(Playground Activity Leaders in Schools)
at



Signature

Date

Signature

Date