

PAL® Quarterly



PAL® PEER ASSISTANCE LEADERSHIP
ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

May, 2008

Volume 1, Issue 4

OCDE PAL Staff

Elke Petras

PAL Program Manager

Deirdre Hill

PAL Consultant

Candice King

Administrative Support Assistant II

"I still use the mediation skills I learned in PAL today. Whether it is when I am working with students, colleagues, or even in my personal life."

Sheryl Chariton-Kirshenbaum
1996 Graduate
Huntington Beach HS, HBUSD

21st Annual PAL Recognition Event May 22, 2008

Join us for this great opportunity to meet PAL students/advisors from other schools, gather project ideas, and celebrate the great work of our PAL leaders.

To register, visit <http://pal.ocde.us>. Click on the 'Recognition Event' link.

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!



Peer Conflict Mediation

Peer Conflict Mediation is a process where elementary, middle, and high school students help fellow students resolve disputes in a peaceful manner. The goal is to help the students clarify the nature of their dispute and reach a mutually agree upon solution. **Conflict Managers (sometimes called Conflict Mediators) are not there to solve other's problems, but to help their peers solve it on their own.**

Beginning in 1990, many PAL Programs started to incorporate Conflict Mediation as a component of their program. For some PAL programs, Conflict Mediation is their main focus. That is one reason that PAL and Conflict Mediation are sometimes thought of as synonymous. While Conflict Mediation may be a component of a PAL program, it is one of many prevention activities that fit under the umbrella of PAL. Some schools choose to separate the Conflict Mediation and the PAL programs which provides even more opportunities for student involvement on campus.

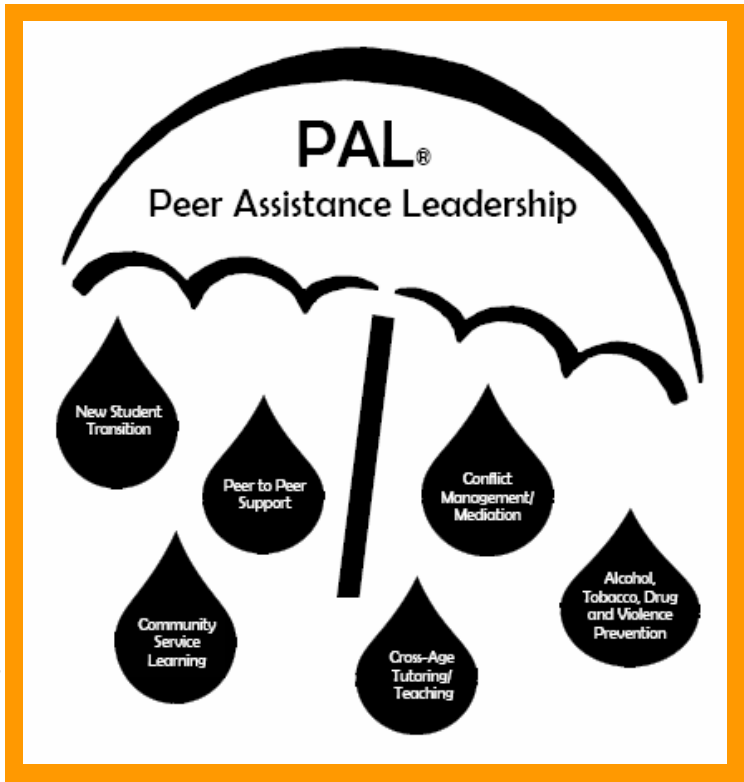
PAL advisors or other school staff who are interested in starting a Conflict Mediation Program receive extensive training in the

conflict mediation process, and in turn, train the peer Conflict Managers. Students trained as Conflict Managers are instructed to follow a protocol and script that should not be deviated from.

There are two ways to implement this program on an elementary campus. One option is to have all third through sixth grade teachers teach the communication and problem-solving skills in their classrooms. Then, a group of Conflict Managers are selected and trained in the mediation process. The second option is to train the selected group of Conflict Managers in the mediation process. Once the group of Conflict Managers have completed their intensive training, they are paired up to work on the playground at recess and lunch to help resolve problems.

In middle and high school, disputants are scheduled for a Conflict Mediation session with a pair of student Conflict Managers. Disputants can refer themselves, but Conflict Mediation can also be offered as part of the school's disciplinary procedures. It is clarified at the beginning of a Conflict Mediation session by the student mediators that both disputants are there voluntarily and agree to work to solve their conflict.

Conflict Managers at all levels (elementary through high school) meet bi-weekly or monthly in order to build cohesion among the Conflict Managers and to reinforce their conflict resolution skills. Well trained Conflict Managers not only help school staff spend less time on discipline and problem-solving, they also gain confidence in their leadership and communication abilities and are role models for their peers.



PAL® PEER ASSISTANCE LEADERSHIP
ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**Students Resolve
Playground Disputes**
Thomas Edison Elementary
Anaheim City School District
Written by Jill Schutte, PAL Advisor

The PAL program at Thomas Edison Elementary School has been training students in the use of Conflict Management skills since 1991. Each new school year, the 4th, 5th, and 6th grade teachers select students to be in PAL who are good listeners, team workers, helpers, dependable, and trustworthy enough to attend PAL meetings. PAL meetings are held at 7:30 a.m. on Wednesdays (before school) each week. The Conflict Management training begins

with activities and games that teach active listening skills. The second step is to learn the role of the Conflict Manager using the process outlined in the training manual.

Once all the students are trained, (we have 60 PALs) partners are selected. The Conflict Management partners spend their time during recess roving the playground asking disputants what they can do to resolve the problem. PALs often encourage groups of children to play a game in a different way. The PAL students fill out a report form and those forms are discussed at the weekly meetings as a collaborative group. This gives the students the opportunity to validate each other's feelings and process their experiences. By working together, the students learn the best method to help others find the best resolution to their conflicts.

Solving Conflict Peacefully
Shorecliffs Middle School
Capistrano Unified School District
Orla Murphy, PAL Advisor
Written by Sarah, 7th Grade PAL student

Shorecliffs Middle School has recently adopted Conflict Mediation as a new way of solving problems peacefully. Several students from our PAL class were trained in the TALK method and now serve as neutral arbitrators between students having conflicts. We have utilized these new skills through several positive learning experiences. In February, our PAL mediation team was sent to a local elementary that was having trouble with bullies and gossip. The group of four mediators addressed a group of fourth grade

Tell your story

Ask for what you need

Look for solutions

Keep the best solutions

students and demonstrated negative outcomes of bullying and inconsiderate actions through skits and relative experiences. The mediators also shared the TALK method to prevent further conflict.

Several students from our school have also benefited from the program. Any student who is faced with a problem can apply for mediation. They are set up privately with a pair of mediators and can discuss their concerns with the disputing student. Many students have already been able to work through problems with their peers and have gained the skills and understanding necessary to achieve this among themselves when future arguments arise. The Conflict Mediation program has not only helped broaden the perspective of PAL students but has also spread the virtues of peace and unity to our community.

Every PAL student at Huntington Beach High School is issued a "Conflict Mediator Student Handbook" that contains guidelines and information about how to handle Conflict Mediation. Using the handbook, our advisor, Mr. Ostrowski, goes over the different stages of a mediation with his students. The class discusses what things to say or do (such as active listening) and what not to do (take sides). After going over the guidelines of a mediation, students then practice role playing in which they work in groups of four and practice mock simulations of a mediation. There are always two mediators, two disputants, and sometimes one observer. Once everyone learns the roles of a mediator, Mr. Ostrowski usually selects a group every week to practice role playing in front of the rest of the class. Two students act as the disputants and create a problem for the two other students to mediate while the rest of the class observes. Afterward, the observers comment on what the role players were doing right or wrong and what they could improve on.

Practice Makes Perfect at HBHS
Huntington Beach High School
Huntington Beach Unified School District
Ken Ostrowski, PAL Advisor
Written by Joyce, 12 grade PAL Student

PAL members generally get the opportunity to participate in real mediations once they have finished a semester of training. Mediation is offered as an alternative to Saturday school for students who have gotten into trouble. There are approximately six mediations per semester. If the students choose the mediation, a date is set up for the meeting in which two mediators and usually one observer is assigned to each mediation. Mediations tend to last around fifteen minutes, depending on the type of conflict.

- Do you want to start a PAL Program at your school?
- Would you like OCDE staff to present PAL to your school or district?
- Are you a PAL Advisor who is retiring this year?
- Need help to improve your program?
- Do you know of a former PAL student that we could feature in future issues of the newsletter?

Call OCDE PAL today! (714) 966-4358

PAL is a registered trademark of Worker's Assistance Program, Inc., and is used under license.

For more information contact:
PAL® Peer Assistance Leadership
Orange County Department of Education
200 Kalmus Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92628
(714) 966-4358
pal@ocde.us