

PAL® Quarterly



WILLIAM M. HABERMehl
County Superintendent of Schools

PAL® PEER ASSISTANCE LEADERSHIP
ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

December, 2007 Volume 1, Issue 2

OCDE PAL Staff

Elke Petras

PAL Program Manager

Deirdre Hill

PAL Consultant

Candice King

Senior Departmental Secretary

A Message from William M. Habermehl, Orange County Superintendent of Schools

Greetings! The Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) is excited to be able to bring you this newsletter highlighting the outstanding peer-to-peer projects conducted by our young people in Orange County. The PAL® Peer Assistance Leadership Program is built upon a philosophy of students helping students. Established in 1980 by the Orange County Department of Education, the PAL Program addresses the underlying causes of violence, tobacco, alcohol, and drug use by youth. The program encourages PAL students and their peers to make healthy life decisions, and provides opportunities to create a supportive and safe school environment. Today, there are over 150 programs in Orange County public and private elementary and secondary schools. Operating a successful PAL Program takes dedication. I want to thank PAL advisors and students for their tremendous efforts to help improve their school and community, as well as school and district administrators for supporting the ideas and activities of our youth peer leaders.

*The Orange County Department of Education is Dedicated to
World Class Education Where Every Student Succeeds.*

"I feel the problem solving techniques I learned being a PAL has given me the confidence to work through any difficult situation that may come my way."

Brent Kling
Thurston Middle School graduate
Laguna Beach Unified School District

PAL Advisor Meetings

PAL Advisor meetings were held on October 10th and 11th with a total of twenty-seven advisors in attendance. The purpose of these meetings was to give advisors the opportunity to network, and share school and community activities, as well as fundraising ideas. Advisors also provided feedback on the new PAL Programmatic Standards, which will be finalized and shared in an upcoming newsletter. Veteran advisors offered support to new advisors by suggesting projects and exchanging e-mails. Funding was discussed with an emphasis on connecting with district Title IV - Safe and Drug-Free School representatives. The Orange County Department of Education will host additional advisor meetings in March, 2008.



PAL Advisors met at Sycamore Junior High in Anaheim for one of two PAL Advisor meetings in October.

SAVE the DATE

The 21st Annual
PAL Recognition Event

May 22, 2008
Disneyland Hotel

More information will be sent to schools in February, 2008, or visit
<http://pal.ocde.us>

Peer Leaders Strive to Improve School Connectedness

According to a 2005 school survey, 53% of Orange County PAL Programs implement activities designed to improve school connectedness. This includes activities such as new student transition and outreach. The Getting Results Fact Sheet, published by the California Department of Education reports that "school connectedness (feeling part of one's school and feeling close to people at school) was positively related to grade point average in major school subjects and negatively correlated with a variety of problem behaviors." In addition, the report states that "...schools can foster a positive school climate by implementing an effective science-based program that creates a supportive school environment." On the opposite page, we have highlighted some peer-led projects designed to increase school connectedness. Special thanks to Brea Olinda High School, Brea Olinda Unified School District; Dr. Peter Marshall Elementary School, Magnolia School District; and St. John's Episcopal Middle School for contributing to this newsletter.



New Student Transition

Sarah Ward, PAL Advisor
Monica Read, Assistant Principal
St. John's Episcopal Middle School

PAL® PEER ASSISTANCE LEADERSHIP ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The new student transition at St. Johns Episcopal Middle School lasts two weeks. It starts with partnering the new student with a PAL peer leader. On the first day of school the PAL "buddy" takes the new student on tour of the campus, and introduces him or her to the

Headmaster, Principal, secretary, office staff and school Chaplain. For the following two weeks, the PAL peer leader hangs out with the new student during lunch, introduces fellow students, and answers any questions the new student may have. The PAL advisor and assistant principal follow-up with the PAL student periodically to monitor how things are going. Approximately one week into the transition, the new student, PAL student, PAL advisor, Principal, and Assistant Principal take a trip to Starbucks, which is located across the street, as a "Get to Know You," excursion which gives them time to chat and answer any questions the new student may have in regard to their school.

Parent's Guide to Kindergarten



Guide to Kindergarten

Kristin Shepard, PAL Advisor
Dr. Peter Marshall Elementary School , Magnolia School District

Each year the Dr. Peter Marshall Elementary School PAL team creates a "Parent's Guide to Kindergarten" book to give to the parents of incoming kindergarteners for the upcoming year. The PAL students brainstorm to create a list of things that all parents of kindergarteners should know. A typical list might include: "teach your child to say please and thank you," "make sure your child eats a healthy breakfast everyday," "limit television time at home," and "make sure your child has a habit of washing his or her hands after using the

restroom." Once the suggestion list is complete, our bilingual PAL students work with their parents to translate the list. We usually end up with at least five languages: Spanish, Tagalog, Arabic, Korean and Vietnamese. PAL students create pictures to go with each of the suggestions. Each page includes the English piece of advice on the top of the page, the picture in the middle, and the translations around the picture. The book is usually about 12 to 16 pages long. The kindergarten parents appreciate the book. It is a good story to read together at home, so that the kindergarteners themselves know what the expectations are. It also reinforces that it is good to know how to read more than one language. The PAL students feel that they have used their individual talents to help the community directly.

Every PAL peer leader at Brea Olinda High School (BOHS) is assigned approximately 10 ninth grade students prior to school beginning in the fall, so that every 9th grade student is connected to a PAL student. The PAL

students make their first contact with their assigned freshmen (which they call their "pals") over the summer prior to school beginning. They talk to them about what to expect at freshman orientation and answer any questions the "pals" might have. In addition, they provide contact information, and encourage their "pals" to call or email them anytime if they have questions. The PAL students meet their "pals" for the first time during freshman orientation, when they take them on a tour of the campus. Once the semester begins, the PAL student follows up with their "pals" at least once a month during the school year to check in on how they are doing. They also provide calendars with upcoming events, holiday goodies, final study tips, etc. BOHS peer leaders report that friendships are often started this way, and the relationships continue after the freshman year.

Freshmen Outreach

Mark Shimamoto, PAL Advisor
Brea Olinda High School, Brea Olinda Unified School District

- Do you want to start a PAL Program at your school?
- 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