



**Playground Activity Leaders in Schools**

**Facilitator Handbook and  
Student Leader Training Guide**

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## Acknowledgement

PALS was originally developed by Peel Public Health in 2003 after a review of existing playground leadership programs and consultations with other health departments.

PALS was adapted from the Recess Recreation Leaders program by Deb Cockerton, Behaviour Therapist and Child and Youth Practitioner. All content has been reproduced with permission.

Since the program's inception, many public health units in Ontario have adapted it for use in partnership with local school board partners. In 2023 a Provincial working group was formed to refresh the PALS program based on current public health evidence and standards for accessibility, equity, diversity and inclusion.

### **This program has been updated with contributions from:**

- Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit
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- Niagara Region Program Specialist–Indigenous Health
- Niagara Region Youth Advisory Committee
- Niagara Region Youth Engagement Specialist
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# PALS program

Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) is an elementary school, student leadership program. It provides opportunities to help foster a sense of belonging and inclusion among students, while engaging them in physical activity in the school yard. The program motto is “There’s always room for one more.”

## Program objectives

### Provide opportunities for student leadership

Involving junior and intermediate students as PALS leaders provides them with opportunities to improve their leadership skills by working through problems using positive communication, compromise, and co-operation.<sup>1</sup>

### Increase students’ sense of belonging and inclusion

A child’s self-esteem and sense of social well-being can be enriched by playing with other children in an environment that encourages positive interactions through sharing, cooperation and communication.<sup>2</sup>

Bullying prevention and intervention promotes the development of healthy, safe, respectful and caring relationships between students, allowing them to be successful in school and in their relationships with peers.<sup>3</sup> A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included, and accepted and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario), M.D. (2014). *Evidence Brief: the positive impacts of physical activity on the whole child*. Toronto, ON: Queen’s Printer for Ontario. Retrieved from: [bit.ly/publichealthontario-pe](http://bit.ly/publichealthontario-pe)

2 Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). M.D. (2014). *Evidence Brief: the positive impacts of physical activity on the whole child*. Toronto, ON: Queen’s Printer for Ontario. Retrieved from [bit.ly/publichealthontario-pe](http://bit.ly/publichealthontario-pe)

3 Bullying Prevention and Intervention in the School Environment: Factsheets and Tools Dr. Debra J. Pepler and Dr. Wendy Craig, 2014. Accessed from: [bit.ly/prevent-facts-tools.pdf](http://bit.ly/prevent-facts-tools.pdf) (page 41).

4 PPM 145 – Progressive discipline and promoting positive student behaviour. Ministry of Education, October 17, 2018 and PPM 128 – The provincial code of conduct and school board codes of conduct. Ministry of Education, August 29, 2019/November 4, 2019.

## Increase opportunities for physical activity to improve students' physical literacy

The program will provide opportunities for students to voluntarily engage in a variety of physical activities that allow them to practice fundamental movement skills and learn game strategies.

- Through their participation in structured and unstructured physical activities, students may gain the skills, competence and confidence required to explore a wide variety of physical activities that benefit their healthy development.<sup>5</sup>
- Physical literacy and physical activity positively impact a child's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development.<sup>6</sup>

To see how physical literacy is embedded in the Vision and Goals of the Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum, access: [bit.ly/ON-vision-and-goals](https://bit.ly/ON-vision-and-goals).



5 *Play in Peel*, (2021), Retrieved from What is Physical Literacy?: [playinpeel.ca/what-is-physical-literacy](https://playinpeel.ca/what-is-physical-literacy)

6 [playinpeel.ca/what-is-physical-literacy](https://playinpeel.ca/what-is-physical-literacy)

# PALS approach

The PALS program follows a train-the-trainer model.

School staff are trained as PALS program facilitators. The role of PALS facilitators is to coordinate PALS student leader training and provide ongoing facilitation support.

Students from junior and intermediate grades who are interested in becoming PALS student leaders are trained to lead playground games with students in primary grades. PALS provides meaningful opportunities for student leaders to contribute to a positive school climate by promoting inclusivity, safety, and acceptance.<sup>7</sup>

Consult your local public health unit to inquire about supports available.



<sup>7</sup> Education. M. o. (2021, June 17), *Policy/Program Memorandum 128*. Retrieved from Government of Ontario: [bit.ly/ON-memorandum-128](https://bit.ly/ON-memorandum-128)

# Facilitator responsibilities

PALS facilitators can be school administrators, teachers, or other education staff. A brief description of their responsibilities is below; additional details can be found in pages 6 to 11.

## Program coordination and support

It's suggested to have more than one adult facilitator to share the workload and ensure there is coverage if one facilitator is away. Rotate responsibilities for facilitating the program as capacity allows. You can also consider training parent and guardian volunteers, or secondary school, college or university students to support the program.

## PALS leader recruitment

Determine the grades from which students will be eligible to apply. PALS leaders are generally students in grades 4 to 6; grade 7 and 8 students may also be considered to act as mentors for new leaders. Promote the program with potential PALS leaders and explain the commitment involved. Provide interested students with an application form, parent or guardian information letter or parent or guardian permission form (optional).

## PALS leader selection

Collect completed student application forms and parent or guardian permission forms, if applicable (Appendix A to C). Then, select and appoint PALS leaders.

## PALS leader training

Refer to Appendix D for the training preparation checklist. Consider enlisting additional staff or volunteers to support the training sessions.

## Program launch

Launch the program in your school. Assign PALS leaders to read PA announcements.

## Program implementation

Provide support and mentoring during regular meetings with PALS leaders. Consider meeting weekly for the first month, and then adjust frequency as needed. Create a schedule for the PALS program and PALS leaders. If you're incorporating additional games, select games with principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility.

## Program sustainability

Maintain the program through healthy incentives, recognition and celebration. Offer refresher training for PALS facilitators annually and early in the school year to ensure an adequate number of trained school staff or volunteers are available to support the program. Include PALS as a part of your school's comprehensive school health action plan or Healthy Schools Certification.



# PALS student leader recruitment

The PALS student leader recruitment process can be handled in a variety of ways. Use the suggestions below or develop an alternative plan that meets your school's needs.

- Invite all junior and/or intermediate grade students to an assembly.
- Have the PALS facilitators meet with each class.
- Prepare an information sheet outlining how the PALS program will run in your school and schedule time to answer questions.

## Best practices for recruiting leaders

### Be enthusiastic about PALS

- Highlight PALS as a leadership opportunity and a chance for students to make a difference in their school.
- Review the program motto and objectives.
- Talk about the role of PALS leaders in leading games with younger students.
- Share and demonstrate some of the games (refer to 'PALS Games Guide').

### Review program commitment

- Provide an overview of the training.
- Emphasize how other children will look up to leaders and the importance of role modeling positive behaviour every day.
- Share when the program will run (i.e., noon hour recess or during nutrition breaks).

### Application and selection process

- Communicate the number of leaders that will be chosen.
- Distribute copies of the student application, parent/guardian information letter, parent/guardian information and/or parent/guardian permission forms (Appendix A to C).
- Provide due dates if distributing student application forms and/or permission forms.
- Share when and how leaders will know if they have been selected.

### Alternative option

Schools may consider training a specific class to become PALS leaders as part of their Health and Physical Education curriculum education.

# PALS student leader selection

Generally, we recommend training students in grades 4 to 6 who are interested in becoming a PALS leader to facilitate games with grades 1 to 3. Students in grade 7 to 8 may also show interest and can be trained to support the PALS leaders. Consider having previous PALS leaders provide mentorship to support transitions between student leader groups and build program sustainability.

## Additional considerations for recruiting and selecting student leaders

Every school is unique. Consider your own school population and align PALS leader selection with principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Invite and encourage participation from students of varied:

- Ages and grades.
- Genders and gender identities.
- Race, ethnicity, cultures or languages.
- Leadership abilities (new and experienced).
- Leadership and learning styles.
- Abilities.
- Classrooms or existing groups.



# PALS student leader training

Schools may choose to host an initial “training day” or may break up the sessions over multiple days. The total training time can take up to four hours. Work with your school administrator to determine the best way to facilitate training. Refer the *Training Preparation Checklist* (Appendix D) and the *PALS Student Leader Training Guide* starting on page 17.

After the initial training is complete, shorter weekly or biweekly meetings are recommended for problem solving, encouragement, and learning new games.

## Sample Training Plan Template

Session	Content	Game(s)
Training Session #1		
Training Session #2		
Training Session #3		
Training Session #4		
Training Session #5		

# Program launch

Each school may choose to launch the program in a different way. Here are a few ideas:

## Raise awareness in your school community

- Share the motto: “There is always room for one more.”
- Communicate plans to start the PALS program, including program objectives and a brief overview, at a staff meeting or by memo to ensure all staff are aware.
- Provide an update about the PALS program to your school or parent council.
- Introduce the program and PALS leaders to other students at an assembly. Use this as an opportunity for the leaders to increase their visibility within the school (hats, cones, pinnies, arm bands, flags, vests, etc.).
- Schedule PALS leaders to read PA announcements (Appendix H) to encourage student participation in the program.

## Increase game familiarity with students

- Encourage primary and junior teachers to incorporate some of the PALS games into their Health and Physical Education curriculum or Daily Physical Activity (DPA) requirements.
- Consider having the PALS leaders go class to class to introduce the games during Health and Physical Education or DPA, or showcase them during a school assembly.



# Program implementation

Every school operates differently and will require flexibility to meet their individual needs. Here are a few points to consider when implementing the program.

## Hold regular leaders “team” meetings

- Set up weekly meetings to check in with the leaders, if needed.
- Consider facilitating team building activities using the PALS Team Building Activities (Appendix E).
- Encourage students to celebrate successes and share challenges.
- Spend time problem-solving and include them when making decisions.
- Ensure students have opportunity to eat their lunch and/or snacks if meetings occur during regular break times. Consider offering nutritious snacks for students to access, if needed.

## Create a schedule

- Consider running the program in six-week blocks e.g., fall, winter, spring.<sup>8</sup>
- Consider the number of days per week you want to run the PALS program and the ratio of PALS leaders to participants you will need.
- Establish a PALS schedule that will work with each leader’s availability. Make note of other commitments that the leaders may have.
- Ask PALS leaders to submit their choice of days and the names of one or two individuals they would like to work with.
- Create PALS leader teams and have each team select a name. The number of groups should be based on how often the program is running.
- Consider having experienced PALS leaders offer mentorship to new leaders.
- Supervise and support PALS leaders on the playground.
- Use the PALS Weekly Planning Tool (Appendix F) and/or PALS Monthly Planning Tool (Appendix G).

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<sup>8</sup> McNamara, L. (2023). *The Recess Project Changemaker’s Guide*, retrieved from The Recess Project: [bit.ly/RP-guide2023](https://bit.ly/RP-guide2023)

## Schedule back-up leaders

- Plan for back up teams to fill in if another PALS leader or team is away.
- PALS Leaders should notify their facilitator if they plan to be away.

## Provide games training and equipment

- Introduce new games during meeting with PALS leaders (refer to PALS Games Guide).
- If introducing additional games, align game selection with principles of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.
- Designate areas of the playground for each game, if running multiple games.
- Ensure each team knows what equipment they will need and where to pick up or drop off equipment.
- Consider keeping the equipment in a space that would require PALS leaders to touch base with the facilitator when picking up/dropping off equipment.
- Refer to relevant school board policies, and Ophea for safety ([bit.ly/ophea-safety](https://bit.ly/ophea-safety)) considerations while playing games.

## During inclement weather, consider indoor games

- Plan indoor games for inclement weather days (e.g., due to air quality, extreme heat or cold, etc.).
- Utilize spaces in the school, where available, such as classroom, education commons, library, gymnasium, etc.
- Ensure your school administrator, classroom teachers, and PALS leaders are aware of inclement weather plans and indoor games options.



# Sustaining PALS

Building on the initial excitement and early momentum of the PALS program will be important to keep the program running. Here are a few suggestions to help build and maintain momentum:

## Provide opportunities to connect

- Host regular meetings for PALS leaders to learn new games, share successes and concerns, learn to problem solve, invite guest speaker(s) (For example, public health professional, teachers, principals).
- Create a PALS bulletin board and post the *PALS Schedule* (Appendix F and G) and game(s) of the week.
- Encourage idea sharing and participant feedback: students can help shape PALS for their school.
- Share updates/information about the program on the school website, newsletters, social media, and with your parent or school council.

## Give recognition

- Provide certificates for PALS leader training completion and PALS leader outstanding contribution recognition (Appendices I and J).
- Communicate student acknowledgment during announcements and assemblies.
- Use the PALS bulletin board for leader recognition (For example, leader of the week), student pictures, etc.
- Provide incentives for student leaders. Include non-food rewards such as pencils, erasers, stickers, school plaques, etc.
- Hold a term-end or year-end celebration.

## Encourage student leaders in the school to become PALS ambassadors

- Schedule PALS leaders to read PA Announcements (Appendix H).
- PALS leaders can create games, messaging, and activities for their team to use.
- Leaders can visit younger grades to promote physical activity or act as mentors for new leaders to help build program sustainability.
- They can also be engaged as peer leaders for other topics that promote health and well-being. For example: to lead mindful awareness activities – quieter activities for indoor recess.

## Provide opportunities for additional learning.

- Seasonal games, especially winter games.
- Inclement weather games and activities.
- Leadership and conflict resolution.
- Invite opportunities for other staff and/or volunteers to become PALS facilitators.



# PALS student leader training guide

PALS leader training may take up to four hours to complete. The training can be divided into multiple sessions. The PALS Leader activity sheets (found in the PALS Leader Handbook) can be printed as individual sheets or as a booklet. The activity sheets will be used for the training. Consider incorporating games training into each leader training session to allow for role playing and practicing of skills. This also helps to break up sedentary time with movement.

## PALS leader training outline

Please complete the training based on the content below.

Topic	Reference
Welcome and congratulations	Page 3 <i>Student Leader Handbook</i>
Getting to Know You Bingo	Page 4 <i>Student Leader Handbook</i>
Leadership skills	Page 5 <i>Student Leader Handbook</i>
Communication skills	Page 6 <i>Student Leader Handbook</i>
Communicating as a PALS leader	Page 7 <i>Student Leader Handbook</i>
Conflict resolution	Page 8 <i>Student Leader Handbook</i>
Conflict scenarios	page 28
Fair play	Page 9 <i>Student Leader Handbook</i>
Games training	Refer to <i>PALS Games Guide</i>
PALS leader commitment	Page 10 <i>Student Leader Handbook</i>
Certificates	Appendices I, J, K, and L

# Welcome and congratulations

## Introduction

It is important to welcome and acknowledge the PALS leaders for their participation in the program and ensure the training space is safe for all.

## Instructions

**Activity** PALS Student Leader Handbook, page 3: *Congratulations! You are a PALS Leader in your school.*

### Part 1: Congratulate the leaders and welcome them to the training.

Review and facilitate discussion about the role of a PALS leaders and the program motto:

#### **As a PALS leader you will:**

- Become a more confident leader.
- Learn how to help solve problems on the playground.
- Help younger students to be more physically active, play fairly and have fun.
- Make new friends, learn new games, and have fun.
- Be part of a positive school environment where everyone feels included.

#### **“There is always room for one more.” is the PALS motto and it means:**

- Everyone is included and everyone belongs.
- We are welcoming.
- We always make space for others to join.
- We invite all to come play with us.

### Part 2: Establish group expectations

Develop group expectations that everyone can follow throughout all the training sessions. Encourage students to participate in the creation of the expectations. Write them on a poster board or a chart paper that can be posted in every session.

# Getting to Know You Bingo

## Introduction

This activity is designed to provide an opportunity for PALS leaders to learn interesting facts about their fellow PALS leaders.

## Instructions

**Activity** PALS Student Leader Handbook, page 4: *Getting to Know You Bingo*.

Ensure each PALS leader has a copy of the *Getting to Know You Bingo* activity sheet.

### To play Bingo

- All the PALS leaders will stand and begin walking around the room.
- PALS leaders will take turns approaching another leader and asking them a question found in one of the Bingo squares.
- If the leader who is asked the question, answers **yes** they sign their name in that square.
- If they answer **no**, the leader who asked can ask them another question on the Bingo card.
- Each PALS leader can only sign the other leader's Bingo card once.
- Bingo is achieved when a PALS leader gets a horizontal, vertical or diagonal line and they can yell out "Bingo."

Decide how many rounds of Bingo you will play. This activity can end when three people get Bingo or when everyone gets Bingo depending on how much time you have.

# Leadership skills

## Introduction

It is important that the PALS leaders can identify the skills they already have and the skills they would like to work on.

## Instructions

**Activity** PALS Student Leader Handbook, page 5: *Leadership Skills*.

Ask the PALS leaders to refer to the *Leadership Skills* activity sheet. Read through the list of leadership skills and provide a brief explanation if required. Do not provide a detailed explanation. You will be asking the PALS leaders to do this in the discussion following the activity.

### Part 1: Individual exercise

Have the PALS leaders review the list of leadership skills. Ask each PALS leader to put a check mark beside three skills they already have and a star beside two skills they hope to learn by being a part of the PALS program. When they are complete divide leaders into groups.

### Part 2: Group exercise

Have the PALS leaders work in small groups. To select groups, try using one of the examples from *Fair Play – Forming teams* (page 32). In the small groups, have the members select the three leadership skills that the group has in common.

### Discussion

Debrief with the PALS leaders which three skills their groups chose.

- Write their responses on a flip chart paper.
- Have PALS leaders provide examples of how these skills may help them as PALS leaders on the playground.

# Communication skills

## Introduction

This section will explore the three components of communication:

- **Listening:** How well I listen.
- **Speaking:** What and how I say it.
- **Non-Verbal:** What I do.

## Instructions

**Activity** PALS Student Leader Handbook, page 6, *Communication*.

For each of the three components of communication there is an activity that demonstrates the key information you want to share. Demonstrate the activities outlined. Ask the group to identify what component of communication you were demonstrating then share some of the key points you feel you need to highlight.

### Activity 1 - Listening: Hand to Chin

#### How to play

Ask the group to follow you as you demonstrate these actions:

1. Extend your arms in front of you, parallel to the floor.
2. Make a circle with your thumb and forefinger.
3. Bring your hand to your **chin** and as you do this, say: "Bring your hand to your **cheek**."
4. Stand still and observe, most of the group will have followed what you did and brought their hand to their **chin**.

#### Discussion

It is important to make sure that what we say matches what we do when demonstrating games. Sending mixed messages can lead to confusion.

Review and discuss tips for '*Listening: How well I listen*' from the handbook:

- This is the most important part of communication.
- Pay attention to others' feelings.
- Give others a chance to talk.
- Let others finish speaking, don't interrupt.
- Ask questions if you don't understand.

## Activity 2 - Speaking: Broken telephone

This activity demonstrates the importance of speaking clearly and using simple, concise language to communicate, as well as the importance of listening.

### Setup

- Decide on a message that has 2 or 3 main ideas. For example, “*Meet me on the playground, at the basketball nets at recess, and bring a basketball.*”
- Have all PALS leaders participate.
- Tell the group that the activity is called “Broken Telephone.”
- Ask each person to speak clearly and slowly. Determine ahead of time whether you will allow the message to be repeated if the person did not hear it the first time.

### How to play

1. Whisper the message to the first person and then ask them to whisper it to the next person, and so on.
2. The last person to receive the message tells the large group what they heard.
3. Ask the first person to repeat the message you told them.

### Discussion

The message usually is different than the original message. It is important to give clear instructions when leading a game.

Review and discuss tips for ‘*Speaking: What I say and how I say it*’ from the PALS Leader handbook:

- Speak clearly.
- Use simple words.
- Pay attention to the volume and tone of your voice.
- Use your words to encourage others.



### Activity 3 - Actions: Leading a game

This activity demonstrates the importance of how your body language and enthusiasm affects group participation.

#### How to play

1. Use the following or similar statement: "Hi my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a PALS leader, does anyone want to play SPUD with me? It will be lots of fun."
2. **Say the statement** using a **monotone** voice and with your **eyes looking down** at the ground. **Bounce the ball** while you are speaking. Refrain from using gestures to encourage them to join you.
3. Ask the PALS leaders to provide feedback about how they felt about your invitation to play SPUD. For example, no eye contact, lacks enthusiasm, did not make them feel welcome, bouncing the ball made it difficult to hear.
4. **Say the statement again**, this time, face the group, use arm gestures to encourage them to join while using a tone that is enthusiastic and excited, and do not bounce the ball while talking.

#### Discussion

Ask PALS leaders what specifically was better about the second statement. The exact same words, said with different body language, equals a different message. The same message will be interpreted differently by the participants depending on how it is communicated.

Review and discuss tips for 'Actions: What I do' from the PALS Student Leader handbook:

- Face the people you are talking to.
- Be aware of your facial expressions.
- Pay attention to your body language.
- Make sure what you say is the same as what you do.



# Communicating as a PALS leader

## Introduction

The statements below show many ways a PALS leader might talk to PALS participants. This activity provides an opportunity for the PALS leaders to reflect on how they should be communicating when leading game/activity during recess.

## Instructions

**Activity** PALS Student Leader Handbook, page 7, *Communicating as a PALS Leader*.

1. Select five PALS leaders to volunteer to read the statements out loud to the group.
2. Facilitate a discussion after reading each example leader statement in the following table.

Consider using these questions to facilitate the discussion.

- What message is being communicated?
- How would you feel if someone spoke to you that way as a PALS leader or as a PALS participant?
- Can you suggest a different way to say the statement?

Example leader statement	Facilitator alternate example and rationale
“OK, everyone, we’re supposed to work together to put away the playground equipment. You put the equipment away and let me know when you’re done.”	“Thank you for playing [game]. Would everyone please help clean up?”
“Today we are going to learn a new game. First, we’ll read the instructions so we know how to play. Then we’ll pick teams. Then we can practice. Does that sound good to everyone?”	This is positive communication. Remind PALS leaders that participants may lose interest if all their time is spent learning vs. playing, so keep instructions short and clear.

Example leader statement	Facilitator alternate example and rationale
<p>“I’m the leader, so you HAVE to do what I say, or I won’t let you play.”</p>	<p>“Today we are going to play [game]. Everyone is welcome to join in. Let’s all follow the rules to play fair and keep everyone safe.”</p>
<p>“You’re the best runner. Do you want to be IT? Does anyone know a tag game we can play?”</p>	<p>“Let’s take turns being IT.”</p>
<p>“I’m not sure what to do. Just do whatever you want.”</p>	<p>Remind PALS leaders that clear instruction is important.</p> <p>“Today we are going to play [game]. I’ll explain instructions and then we can play.”</p>



# Conflict resolution

## Introduction

Conflict is a natural part of everyday life. Conflict happens when two or more people think differently about a situation or idea. It is often the result of unclear communication or a misunderstanding. The PALS program allows facilitators and leaders opportunities to learn effective strategies to manage conflict on the playground.

Note: Please refer to your existing school and board policies regarding conflict resolution and modify the activities below, if needed.

## Instructions

**Activity** PALS Student Leader Handbook, page 8, *Conflict Resolution*.

Lead a discussion with PALS leaders about how conflicts can arise. Ask them to share examples of situations they think they might encounter as PALS leaders.

Explain that there are many ways to help work through a conflict. Discuss ways to resolve conflict so both sides feel their needs are being met, and when it is necessary to seek the help of an adult (For example, if they have tried two of the strategies below and the situation has not changed). Refer to the table below.

### Strategies for cooling down a conflict<sup>9</sup>

Strategy	Effect
Wait and work through	Allows time to pause and reflect.
Make a deal	All sides feel their needs have been met.
Apologize	Acknowledge your action may have impacted someone else.
Talk it out*	Allows all sides to be heard.
Ask them to stop	This helps prevent further escalation.
Ask an adult for help	Some problems require the help of an adult.

\*The following section provides steps for using this strategy.

<sup>9</sup> Reference resources, [kelsoschoice.com/stop-tattling-starter-kit-resources](https://kelsoschoice.com/stop-tattling-starter-kit-resources)

## 5 steps for Talking it Out

1. **Identify the conflict** – what do we disagree about?
2. **Listen** to each other.
3. **Speak** calmly, using “I” statements to clarify.
  - Describe the problem or behaviour in a non-threatening way. “When you do this...I feel...”
  - Use eye contact.
4. **See the issue from multiple perspectives** – think about the disagreement from all sides.
  - How would you feel? What might be important to others?
5. Try to **stay calm** until you have a solution where all sides feel their needs have been met.<sup>10</sup>



<sup>10</sup>Ontario, S. M. (2023). Healthy relationship skills/Conflict resolution/Finding solutions. Retrieved from School Mental Health Ontario and the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, 2023, Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource: [bit.ly/smho-solutions](https://bit.ly/smho-solutions)

# Conflict resolution – practice scenarios

## Introduction

It is important for the PALS leaders to have an opportunity to practice using the conflict resolution steps and strategies they have just learned. The scenarios provided are examples of conflict the PALS leaders may encounter while leading the games.

## Instructions

**Activity** PALS Leader Student Handbook, page 8, *Conflict Resolution*.

1. Divide the PALS leaders into small groups.
2. Assign each group a scenario from the *Conflict Resolution – Practice Scenarios* (starting on page 29).
3. Ask each group to identify what is happening in their scenario and to choose possible strategies they feel would be appropriate and effective to resolve the problem.

The PALS leaders may use strategies from *Conflict Resolution* or a strategy of their own.

4. **Option A:** When each group has had a chance to decide on their approaches, have them read their scenario out loud and share the problem-solving approaches they feel would help to resolve the situation.

**Option B:** Provide the group with a few minutes to create a role play. Ask them to select two PALS leaders to play the PALS leader roles. Have the members of the group take on the other roles. The PALS leaders would role play the two problem-solving approaches chosen by their group.

## Scenario 1

A group of students are playing a skipping game and a few students are pushing other students while they are waiting for their turn.

### Role play script

Student to PALS Leader: “**They were pushing me while I was in line.**”

#### Examples of what the PALS Leader can say to the group of students

- **Ask them to stop:** “Please stop pushing others because someone could get hurt.”
- **Make a deal:** “Please wait for your turn, everyone will get a turn.”
- **Ask them to apologize:** “If you want to apologize, you can say: ‘I am sorry for pushing. I will wait for my turn.’ ”

## Scenario 2

You are telling a group of students the rules for a new tag game. While you are trying to explain the rules, a few students want to share a different way to play the same game.

### Role play script

Student to PALS Leader: “I want to play this game in a different way.”

#### Example of what the PALS Leader can say to the students

- **Make a deal:** “We are going to play the game this way for now because we don’t have a lot of time. We can play your game at lunch so that you will have more time to explain the rules.”
- **Talk it out:** “I am interested in hearing more about your tag game. Could you please wait until I have finished explaining the rules for this game, so we can get the game started? We can chat afterwards.”

## Scenario 3

You are playing a ball game and one of the students has been seen cheating several times. You can see the others are becoming frustrated with this person.

### Role play script

Student to PALS Leader: “That student keeps cheating in the game. This is not fun anymore.”

#### Examples of what the PALS Leader can say to the students

- **Talk it out:** “Hi everyone, I noticed that some of us are not following the rules of the game. It is important that we play by the rules.”
- **Ask them to Stop:** “It is hard for everyone to play the game if you do not follow the rules. If you cannot follow the rules, you will have to find another game to play.”

## Scenario 4

You are playing a game of Hopscotch and the students are laughing and making fun of a student who is having difficulty not stepping on the lines.

### Role play script

Student 1 while laughing says to Student 2: “You’re stepping on the line, haha.”

#### Examples of what the PALS Leader can say to the group of students

- **Ask them to stop:** “Please stop. It is not ok to make fun of other students. It can take time to become good at hopscotch or skipping. If you want, you can help others to learn how to do it well.”
- **Apologize:** “It is not ok to make fun of people and please apologize to the person.”

## Scenario 5

A group of students refuse to let another student join their game of tag because they have already started.

### Role play script

Student 1 to Student 2: “You cannot join because we already started the game.”

### Example of what the PALS Leader can say to the group of students

- **Make a deal:** “You are welcome to join the tag game after the next person gets caught. ‘There is always room for one more.’”

## Scenario 6

A group of students are playing a ball game. An older student grabs the ball and refuses to give it back.

### Role play script

Student 1 grabs the ball from Student 2.

### Examples of what the PALS Leader can say to the group of students

- **Ask them to stop:** “Hi there, we were playing a ball game here. You are welcome to join us in the game if you want to play.”
- **Apologize:** “You keep grabbing the ball from the game, please apologize to the group for disrupting the game.”

## Situation 7

A group of students are playing four square. One of the players misses the ball but refuses to leave the game to allow other student to have a turn.

### Role play script

Student 1 misses the ball but refuses to leave the game. “I’m not done yet.”

### Examples of what the PALS Leader can say to the group of students

- **Talk it out:** “Hi, if you want to continue playing, you should be following the rules. I can review the rules again if you want.”
- **Wait and cool off:** “I see that you are not following the rules, please leave the game and take some time to think about how others are affected when the rules are not followed.”

# Fair play

## Introduction

Knowing ways or having strategies to quickly divide students into groups will help PALS leaders be more effective when organizing game play.

## Instructions

**Activity** PALS Student Leader Handbook, page 9, *Fair Play*.

Lead a facilitated discussion on some fun ways to find a partner or form a team.

Below are some examples. Students may also come up with some ideas of their own.

### Choosing partners

- Count off and repeat the number pattern 1/1, 2/2, 3/3, 4/4... around the room until everyone has a partner
- Hold up from zero to ten fingers. Find a partner whose fingers, when added with yours, make an even (or odd) number.
- Find a partner whose first name starts with the same letter as yours.
- Find a partner with the same favourite colour.
- Find a partner who was born in the same month as you.

### Making teams

- Decide how many groups you need. Then count off and repeat the number pattern around the room. Each number becomes a group e.g. (1,2,3, then repeat 1,2,3. Until each student has a number).
- Decide how many groups you need. One animal name for each group needed. Let the students decide which animal they want to be, e.g. If you want to be an elephant, go over there. If you want to be a giraffe, go over there.

When choosing partners and/or making teams, ensure to select strategies that enable participation by all students. For information on providing inclusive environments ([bit.ly/ophea-positive](http://bit.ly/ophea-positive)), refer to Ophea, where you can also find resources on disability-centred movement ([bit.ly/ophea-inclusive](http://bit.ly/ophea-inclusive)) and physical activity programming outside the classroom and in community settings ([bit.ly/ophea-community](http://bit.ly/ophea-community)).

Practice some of the strategies together. Ask the students to write down their favourite strategies for choosing partners and making teams in the space provided in their Leader Handbook.

### Discussion

Some key points to share with the PALS leaders when choosing partners or teams include:

- If choosing partners or team members takes too long, there won't be time to play.
- Use strategies everyone can take part in. Avoid using captains to select team members.
- Ask the group what has worked for them in the past.



# PALS leaders and participants' responsibilities

## Introduction

The review and outlining of responsibilities for all participants on the playground will help establish expectations.

## Instructions

Review the motto to help lead a discussion on what leaders may consider for everyone to have fun and play fair.

Here are some questions to help with the discussion:

- As PALS Leaders what do you think will help everyone have fun and play fair?
- Do you have any suggestions for tips that would help everyone to have fun and play fair?
- How can we share the tips and expectations with the younger students when they participate in PALS?



## Example

### PALS leader responsibilities

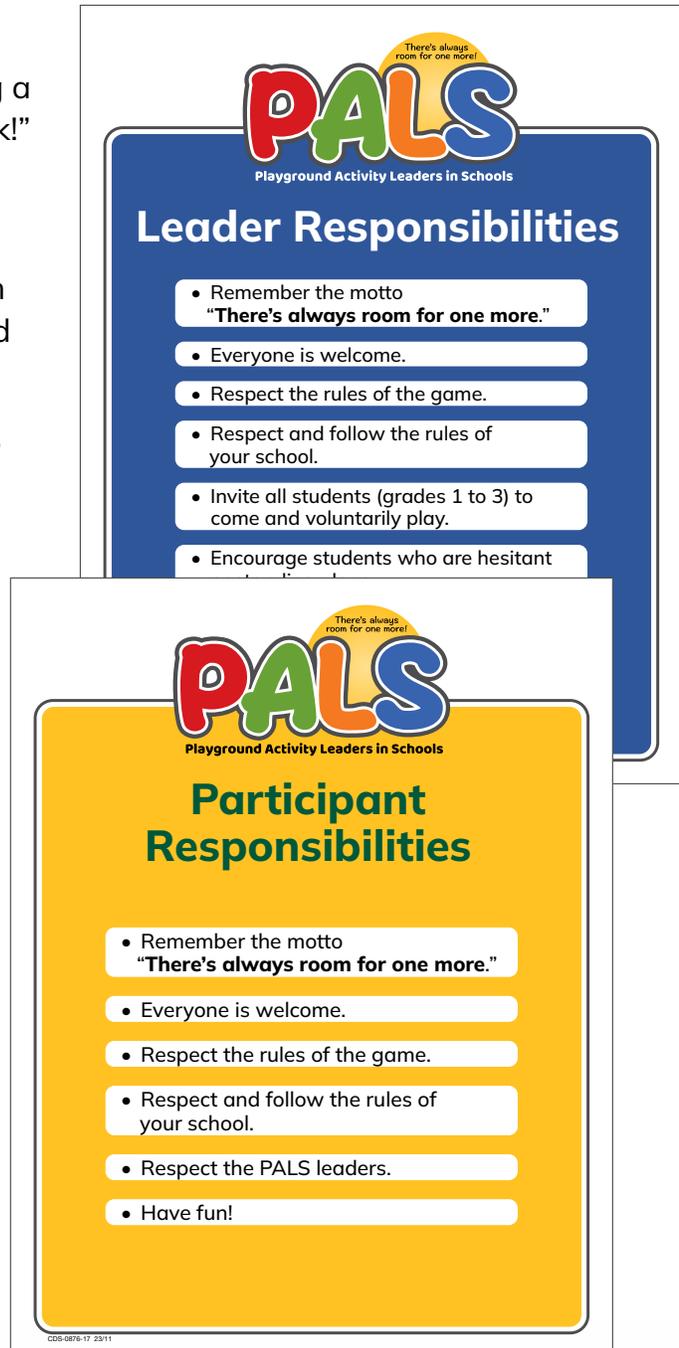
- Remember the motto “There’s always room for one more.”
- Everyone is welcome.
- Respect the rules of the game.
- Respect and follow the rules of your school.
- Invite all students (grades 1 to 3) to come and voluntarily play.
- Encourage students who are hesitant or standing alone.
- Tell students when they are doing a good job. For example, “Nice work!” or “You’ve got it!”
- Have fun!

Poster is available for download can be posted on the bulletin boards and reviewed at team meetings.

### PALS participants’ responsibilities

- Remember the motto “There’s always room for one more.”
- Everyone is welcome.
- Respect the rules of the game.
- Respect and follow the rules of your school.
- Respect the PALS leaders.
- Have fun!

These sample posters are available for download from your local Public Health Unit and can be shared at assemblies, or the list can be used during announcements.



# Games training

## Introduction

This is the part when all the skills come together. PALS leaders will learn to facilitate game play using leadership skills, communication skills, conflict resolution skills, and fair play.

This is the part of the PALS program the students enjoy the most.

## Instructions

**Activity** the *PALS Games Guide* .

Plan time during each training session to allow students to learn new games and practice communication skills. This training is best done in the gym or outside, dependent on weather and space.

- If you have a large group of PALS leaders being trained you may want to divide the group into smaller groups.
- Have each group select games from different sections of the *PALS Games Guide*. For example, team, tag, ball, and skipping.
- Allow PALS leaders the opportunity to introduce and lead a game.
- Allow PALS leaders to rotate through the different games.
- You may also invite PALS leaders to share some of their own ideas and suggestions for new games.
- Have fun!

# PALS leader commitment and certificates

## Introduction

It is important to acknowledge the new PALS leaders for their participation in the training and their commitment to the program. At the end of the last training session leave time to discuss the PALS leader commitment.

## Instruction

**Activity** PALS Student Leader Handbook, page 10: *PALS Leader Commitment*.

Ask students to refer to the *PALS Leader Commitment*. Ask for volunteers to read each statement.

### **As a PALS leader, I will help to or I will:**

- Encourage all students to join in and play the games.
- Lead activities and explain the rules clearly to everyone.
- Make sure I have all the equipment needed for the activity.
- Continue to learn new games.
- Attend meetings arranged for PALS leaders.
- Be responsible to show up when I am scheduled.
- Ask for help to find a back-up if I cannot be a PALS leader on my day (except for illness).
- Role model fair play, good listening, and have fun.

Ask students to sign the commitment in their handbook.

### **Discussion**

- Conclude the training by exploring what the PALS leaders are looking forward to.
- Review important next steps (upcoming meetings, location of bulletin board, team groupings, scheduling, PALS promotion with the younger grades).
- Hand out certificates to acknowledge completion of training.

# References

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## Appendix A – Student Leader Application

Sample of the application follows. You can download a full size printable and fillable pdf version of this certificate from your local Public Health Unit.



### Student Leader Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Your teacher's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you want to be a PALS Leader?

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

What do you think PALS can do for your school?

Student applicant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Teacher reference:** Please have a teacher complete this part.

I think \_\_\_\_\_ would do a good job as a PALS leader because

Teacher signature \_\_\_\_\_

CDI-0876-08 23/10

## Appendix B – Parent/Guardian Information Letter

Sample of the letter follows. You can download a full size printable and fillable pdf version of this certificate from your local Public Health Unit.



### Parent/Guardian Information Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian,

\_\_\_\_\_ is starting a **'Playground Activity Leaders in Schools' program (PALS)**.

Your child is interested in being a leader in the PALS program. The PALS facilitator(s) 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 other students in Grades 1 to 3.

As a PALS leader, your child will have the opportunity to:

- Become a more confident leader.
- Learn how to help solve problems on the playground.
- Encourage younger students to be more active and play fairly.
- Make new friends, learn new games, and have fun.
- Contribute to a positive school environment where everyone feels included.

If you have questions, contact a **PALS** Facilitator(s).

Sincerely,

**PALS** Facilitator(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PALS** Facilitator Contact(s)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C – Parent/Guardian Permission Form**

Sample of the permission form follows. You can download a full size printable and fillable pdf version of this certificate from your local Public Health Unit.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Parent/Guardian Permission Form**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

\_\_\_\_\_ is starting a **Playground Activity Leaders in Schools program (PALS)**.

Your child is interested in being a leader in the PALS program. A PALS program facilitator 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 other students in Grades 1 to 3.

As a PALS leader, your child will have the opportunity to:

- Become a more confident leader.
- Learn how to help solve problems on the playground.
- Encourage younger students to be more active and play fairly.
- Make new friends, learn new games, and have fun.
- Contribute to a positive school environment where everyone feels included.

Please sign the application form and return it to: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have further questions, feel free to contact a PALS facilitator.

Sincerely,  
**PALS** Facilitator(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I give permission for my child to be a PALS leader.

Student name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D – PALS Training Preparation Checklist**

Sample of the checklist follows. You can download a full size printable and fillable pdf version of this certificate from your local Public Health Unit.



**Training Preparation Checklist**

**Please review the checklist prior to the PALS leader training session.**

- Collect student leader applications.
- Distribute parent/guardian information letters and/or collect parent/guardian permission forms (optional).
- Confirm number of PALS leaders.
- Book a location with tables and chairs (e.g., library, learning commons, classroom).
- Book a location for games training (e.g., gym).
- Print off PALS leader activity sheets or confirm number of student leader handbooks required.
- Gather equipment needed to play the games.
- Flip chart paper and stand.
- Tape and flip chart markers.
- PALS Leader Training PowerPoint* Presentation (if applicable).
- Remind PALS leaders to bring a pencil on training days.
- Remind PALS leaders to wear running shoes on training days.

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
Training session 1			
Training session 2			
Training session 3			
Training session 4			
Training session 5			

## Appendix E – PALS Team Building Activities

Team building activities are a fun way to start off a PALS leaders meeting. Below you will find a few examples of activities that can be used. You can also create your own or find other team building activities online.

### What's in a name?

- Have participants introduce themselves by picking a descriptive word that starts with the same letter as their first name.
- Some examples may be Athletic Amanpreet or Creative Cory.

This activity provides opportunity for participants to use one word to share something about themselves with the group.

### Create a story

- One participant in the group begins a story. For example, “I was walking home last night, and I stepped in a puddle.”
- Other group members continue the story until everyone has had a chance to contribute.

The activity provides a fun opportunity for participants to practice group skills such as listening, co-operation, communication and respect.

### PALS commonalities

- Have the participants form small groups.
- Each small group to think about 3 to 5 things they have in common with each other.
- Small groups then present back to the large group.

This activity provides opportunity for participants to get to know each other and discover things they have in common.

Source: Region of Peel–Public Health (2007). Child to Child Facilitators'Workbook14P

### That's me

Someone starts with an appropriate statement about themselves – what they like to eat, their favorite hobby, TV show, book, etc. If the statement is true for someone else, they stand up and say: “That's me!” Repeat until everyone has the opportunity to participate and share a statement.

A follow up discussion can include:

- Did you learn something new about your classmates?
- How did it feel to be standing at the same time as others?
- What about standing alone or only with a few students?
- Sometimes we like to be a part of a group, but there is always value to being unique.

NOTE: In the unlikely event of a disclosure, be aware of your internal process to access services for the student.

Source: School Mental Health Ontario [bit.ly/smho-thats-me](https://bit.ly/smho-thats-me)

## Railroad tracks

Lay out two long ropes parallel to each other and have students line up in the middle. Call out a set of opposites like sweet or sour, day or night, cat or dog. Students will jump over the left rope if they prefer the first one or over the right rope if they prefer the second one. Give them a minute to look around, then have everyone return to the middle. This activity is a good way to get to know classmates better and to see who they have preferences in common with.

Source: [weareteachers.com](https://weareteachers.com)

## Line up

The objective is to have students line up in order of their birthdays—January 1 through December 31. To do this, they will need to know the order in which the months fall as well as their own birthday. They will also need to talk with one another in order to figure out who goes in front of whom. To make it super challenging, tell them they must do it without speaking at all, only using hand signals. Other ways to line up include by height, alphabetically, or by foot size.

Source: [weareteachers.com](https://weareteachers.com)

## Spider web

This team-building game will teach your students that even though they may be different in many ways, they are still connected to one another. Gather in a circle, standing or sitting. The game begins when the first person, holding a large ball of twine, tells the group a funny or embarrassing story about themselves. Once they finish, they will hold on to the end of the twine and throw the ball to someone else in the circle. That person grabs hold and tells a funny or embarrassing story about themselves and then passes it on to another student. Play continues until the twine has been passed to each person. The end result will produce a “spider web” out of the twine, connecting each student to all of the others.

Source: [weareteachers.com](http://weareteachers.com)

## Human alphabet

If you have a large open space for your team-building games and activities, try this idea. Have students spread out and guide them through a few rounds of forming letters with their bodies. For instance, “Use your body to make a T ... now make an O!”

Next, call out a simple short word, such as “so” or “dog.” Students will have to team up to form the word, with each student using their body to form one of the letters. Start with two-letter words, then three, then four. If students want a challenge, come up with a phrase that will take the whole class to complete.

Source: [weareteachers.com](http://weareteachers.com)

## Appendix F – PALS Weekly Planning Tool

	<b>PALS group</b> (leader names)	<b>Game(s)</b>	<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Facilitator(s)</b>
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				

Scheduled PALS days to be modified as needed by school (e.g. M/W/F, T/Th)

## Announcements

	<b>PALS leader</b>	<b>Announcement</b>
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		

**Appendix G – PALS Monthly Planning Tool**

A simple way to organize and keep track of activities is to use a weekly or monthly chart such as the example below.

Month \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

## Appendix H – PA announcements

Invite PALS leaders to make routine morning announcements. PALS leaders appreciate the responsibility and opportunity, this leads to greater engagement.

- It reminds PALS leaders about who is working that day thereby reducing missed shifts.
- It encourages PALS leaders to think ahead and plan for their activity.
- It builds excitement with the younger students who might purposefully seek out a PALS leader.
- It reminds students what games are being played and where to find the PALS leaders.

Create some example announcements for the first few weeks and then pass the responsibility of writing the announcements to a pair of your independent PALS leaders who will enjoy taking this on. Give them a copy of the weekly schedule so they can source-out the students and confirm their planned games in order to write the announcements.

## Sample announcements

### PALS cheer

Gimme a P! Gimme an A! Gimme an L! Gimme an S! What have you got?

PALS!

What's that again? PALS!

The PALS leaders will be out on the playground today at (time) so look for them in (fill in blank).

Join them to play some cool games!

### PALS chant

We're PALS leaders and we're here to say, we offer fun and games most every day. Out on the playground, we're meeting new friends. The fun never stops, and the games never end. So, come out and meet us, we're always around. We'll be out at recess, all over the playground.

## PALS two-way conversation

**Announcer 1:** Hey (name)!

**Announcer 2:** What is it (name)?

**Announcer 1:** Have you heard of this great new thing at our school? It's called PALS

**Announcer 2:** PALS? What's that?

**Announcer 1:** Well, today at (time) the PALS leaders will be out on the playground in (fill in blank) to teach us lots of cool new games.

**Announcer 2:** Really? That sounds great!

**Announcer 1:** Yeah, and they'll be out on the playground (specify when) to show us even more games. They play tag and ball games and jump rope and more.

**Announcer 2:** Wow! Well now that I know what it is, I'll be there for sure! I hope everyone comes out for this! It sounds amazing!

## PALS poem

You know our name and you know our motto.

There is always room for one more, so join in you've got to!

The PALS leaders help make our recess swing. Come on out, and don't miss a thing!

PALS leaders are here and we love to play. We make the most of every day!

We play great games and have tons of fun. And we love to play with everyone!

Come on over and join the games. Meet new people and learn new names!

PALS leaders can't wait to run and play. So come and see us, don't delay!

That's right everyone, the PALS leaders will be out today on the playground from (time) to (time) doing our PALS thing. Look for the (fill in blank) and come on over to have some major fun!

## PALS have returned

Guess what everybody? The PALS leaders are back! We will be out on the playground for another fun filled session of (specify today's activity). We'll be out today from (time) to (time) teaching excellent new games. Just look for the (fill in the blank) and come out and join the fun!

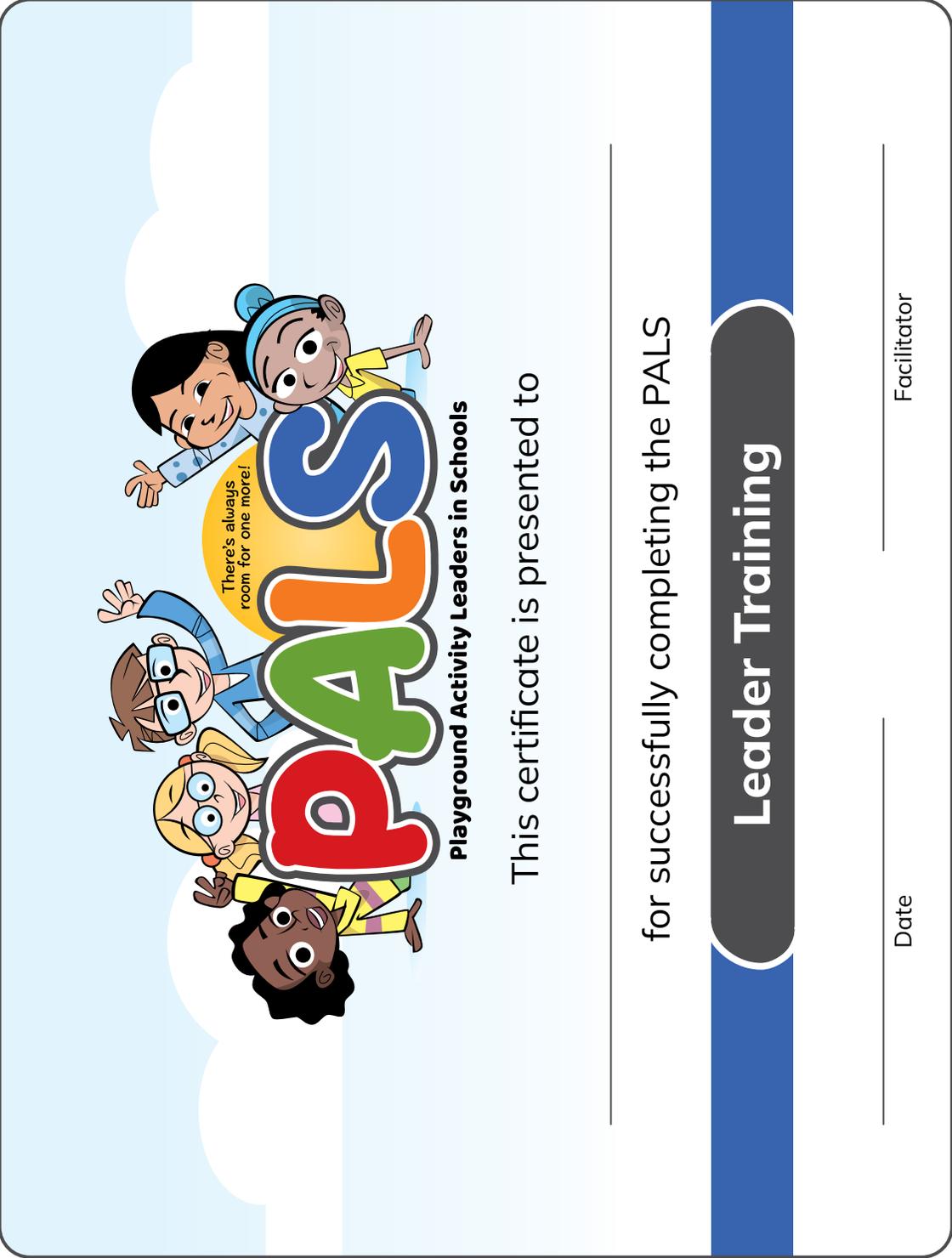
## School announcement

Good morning (School Name) students! Here are your PALS activities for the day:

- Look for (Student Name) and (Student Name) in the (location) for a fun game of (fill in the blank).
- Join (Student Names) in the (location) if you want to (fill in the blank with activity 2).
- In the (location) look for (Student Name) to play a surprise game. Try a new game and you might win a prize! And remember, “There’s always room for one more!”

**Appendix I – PALS Leader Training Certificate**

Sample of the PALS Leader Training Certificate follows. You can download a full size printable and fillable pdf version of this certificate from your local Public Health Unit.



The certificate template features a header with the PALS logo and the text "Playground Activity Leaders in Schools". Below this is a large blank space for the recipient's name, followed by the text "This certificate is presented to". A second large blank space is provided for the reason for the award, such as "for successfully completing the PALS". A blue horizontal bar contains the text "Leader Training". Below this bar are two lines for "Date" and "Facilitator".

**PALS**  
Playground Activity Leaders in Schools

There's always room for one more!

This certificate is presented to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ for successfully completing the PALS

**Leader Training**

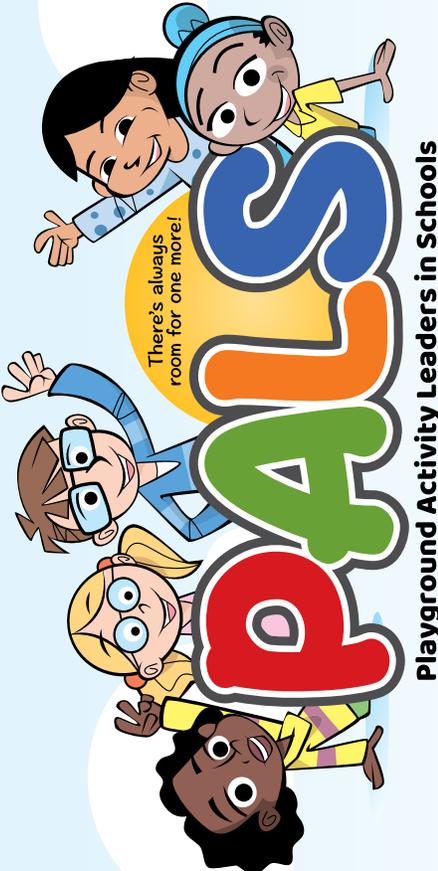
\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Facilitator

CDS-0076-12G 2/11

**Appendix J – PALS Leader Outstanding Contribution Recognition Certificate**

Sample of the Certificate follows. You can download a fillable pdf version of this certificate from your local Public Health Unit.



This certificate is presented to \_\_\_\_\_

at \_\_\_\_\_ for their

## Outstanding Contribution as a PALS Leader

\_\_\_\_\_ School year \_\_\_\_\_ Facilitator

CDS-0876-13G 2/3/11

**Appendix K – Facilitator Training Certificate**

Sample of the Facilitator Training Certificate follows. You can download a fillable pdf version of this certificate from your local Public Health Unit.



The certificate template features a header with the PALS logo and the text "Playground Activity Leaders in Schools". Below this is a line for the recipient's name. The main body contains a line for the reason for the award, followed by a large orange and grey banner that reads "Facilitator Training". At the bottom, there are lines for the recipient's "Date" and the "Trainer's" name.

**PALS**  
 Playground Activity Leaders in Schools

There's always room for one more!

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ for successfully completing the PALS

**Facilitator Training**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Trainer

CDS-0876-14G 2/11

**Appendix L – Outstanding Contribution Recognition Certificate**

Sample of the Outstanding Contribution Recognition Certificate follows. You can download a fillable pdf version of this certificate from your local Public Health Unit.



This certificate is presented to \_\_\_\_\_ for their **Outstanding Contribution as a PALS Facilitator**

\_\_\_\_\_ School year \_\_\_\_\_ Representative

CDS-0876-15-G 23/11

