



## Tips to Sustain Your Healthy P.A.L.S. Team

### Make It Easy on Yourself!

After the first few months, it can be challenging to continue the early momentum of your Healthy P.A.L.S. team. With some creativity and some careful use of your precious time, you will not only sustain your team, but you can also build those new relationships and watch your team grow increasingly confident and more self-sufficient as the months pass. Here are suggestions:

1. Meet after the first week and then every few weeks (depending on your team) for check-ins and rewards.
2. Look for opportunities to create a team experience (i.e., deliberately use the word “team”, celebrate the Healthy P.A.L.S. team at assemblies with opportunities for them to lead the school in a cheer of the motto, call “team meetings”). When students feel that they are on a team, they begin to understand that they are connected and feel special. Further, the word “team” carries status.
3. Easy shopping suggestions for those quick gathering meetings: share a bag of apples or a couple of bunches of bananas.
4. Present your team with the materials needed to make a personal games book. Keep a copy of the book in your equipment bin for those last minute game ideas. Ask leaders what game they have planned for the day when they pass you in the hall.
5. Welcome students who want to become a leader later in the year. Pair them with an experienced leader. Call them “apprentices” and hold a couple of experienced leaders responsible to bring apprentices up to speed. The experienced leaders LOVE responsibility and new leaders love a title.
6. Allow for Fridays - or another day(s) - off. Leaders like to know that you value their time and free play opportunities, too. Plus, you need a Healthy P.A.L.S. break!
7. Consider working your Healthy P.A.L.S. team for only one recess per day. It makes it easier on you and on them.
8. Balanced day? Split grade recesses? Make a plan to allow students to eat with the younger students. Brainstorm with your administrator to create options.
9. Take time to explain the program to your noon hour supervisors. Without their buy-in, Healthy P.A.L.S. leaders can sometimes get “in trouble” for things they are not doing wrong. As well, noon hour supervisors can be an important source of praise for your team, if the supervisors have been informed of your vision.

10. Chat with your administrator to decide:
  - which grade levels will play the Healthy P.A.L.S. games outside
  - whether you will use the leaders indoors on inclement weather days (Check-out the 'Snowed In' section of the Healthy P.A.L.S. Games Book for indoor recess games ideas.)
  - how you might get some occasional release time to take care of Healthy P.A.L.S. business.
11. I highly recommend that Healthy P.A.L.S. leaders make routine morning announcements. This serves four purposes:
  - leaders appreciate the responsibility and opportunity and this leads to greater engagement
  - it reminds leaders about who is working that day thereby reducing missed shifts
  - it "forces" leaders to think ahead and plan for their activity
  - it builds excitement with the younger students who might purposefully seek out a leader in order to play a particular game.

Example Announcement:

*Good Morning Saint Gabriel's Students! Here are your Healthy P.A.L.S. activities for the day: Look for Maria and Jessica in the primary yard for a fun game of Duck, Duck Goose. Join Jordan and Daniel if you want to throw the football around. In the junior yard, look for Erin to play a surprise game. Don't forget, we are looking for the next Smartie Award winner! Try a new game and you might win! And remember, there's always room for one more!*

- You can add the Health Unit's announcement chants to the beginning/end of the student-generated announcement.

\* I recommend creating some example announcements for the first few weeks and then passing the responsibility of writing the announcements to a pair of your independent leaders who will LOVE to take 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.

12. Morning announcements can also be easy if you make it part of the scheduling (i.e., have a pair of leaders commit to doing Healthy P.A.L.S. announcements for a month) and if you make use of a few fill in the blank templates. Set the templates in a place where leaders can independently access them. Allow leaders early access to the office upon arrival to school when they will check the schedule and prepare and practice the announcement.
13. Allow maximum flexibility in your scheduling of leaders.
14. Occasionally, invite students to make changes in their original schedule commitment. This acknowledges their other interests and commitments (i.e., they may have joined a new extra-curricular group and think that quitting Healthy P.A.L.S. is the only option; they might want to change their partnerships as relationships change over the months).
15. Prepare templates of your schedule and tape one to the equipment bin or post it on the Healthy P.A.L.S. bulletin board. Keep another on a clipboard for yourself. This will make it easy for students to review what they have committed to do and help you to monitor student movement.
16. Invite responsible leaders to take the schedule on your clipboard and visit other Healthy P.A.L.S. leaders in order to make changes to the schedule and to record commitments to playing particular games. They LOVE the responsibility and this makes life simpler for you. It will also make the morning announcements more accurate and easier for students to prepare.

17. Invite your leaders to nominate participants for monthly awards (i.e., Healthy P.A.L.S. Leader of the Month, or any other invented acknowledgement you might create). Keep blank slips of paper near the equipment bin so that leaders can jot down names when they return the equipment. This streamlines the process for you. Further, leaders LOVE having a voice – another important element in keeping the leaders committed over the year.
18. Gradually release responsibilities to the leaders. It is good for them.
19. Look for ways to make your team shine: spirit assemblies, newsletters, Web stories, etc.
20. Consider keeping the equipment bin with you in your workspace. It builds in a regular connection between you and the team.
21. Look for additional durable items to add to your bin as the year passes. It's nice to have a few stuffed toys, stickers, small size Nerf footballs, sidewalk chalk, small pylons, etc., to add novelty. Your leaders will enjoy this even more than the student body.
22. Be creative and easy on yourself concerning the supervision of the leaders. You might switch duties with a colleague to multi-task a visit with your leaders with your weekly duty obligation. You might want to carry a camera or an iPad to take some photos or video as you move about. (Check for the waiver prior to sharing those images.)
23. Celebrate at the end of the year. You might be able to join another group that has planned a trip away (i.e., bus patrollers). Have an end of the year party. At your final assembly, consider giving certificates to the team. Take that opportunity to invite students to think about joining the team in September.