

A staff guide to utilizing PALS and Volunteer Resources

2025-26

INTRODUCTION

You cannot use a resource if you do not know it exists. And no one has time to hunt things down. This is a guide to various services and resources that you may find useful throughout the year for yourself, or for your students.

PALS Coordinator/Parent Liaison/Student Services

Never having been able to settle on a single duty title, please allow me to introduce myself and what role I play for staff, students, and families at Oakstone. I play different roles for staff, parents, students, and the school community.

Parent Liaison:

As the parent liaison, I act as a conduit of communication between Oakstone and the families of our students. Parents can contact me with questions or concerns, and I do my best to provide them with answers/resolution/clarification or find them the right person to address their needs or concerns. I can also coordinate responses for families facing hardship. Here are a few ways this role has been utilized:

- Communication resources including newsletters, website, social media, enhanced calendars, and updates
- Meal trains for illness/bereavement

- Resources for task assistance sought out within the community
- Material resources obtained (ie. coats/hats, gift cards for groceries/meals)
- Question resolution and clarification

PALS Coordinator:

As the PALS coordinator, I provide top cover and support for PALS members as they plan, coordinate, and implement the projects, events, and initiatives they have chosen in their focus area.

Student Services:

For students, I am able to provide assistance with various day to day issues like forgotten lunches, upset stomachs, ripped clothing, or cuts and scrapes. I maintain a cache of problem solving items and I am here to help. Having solutions accessible helps mitigate calls home, missed classes, and generally crummy days.

Care Cabinet Fundamentals

The care cabinet is there for everyone - staff and students - to use as they need it. Even small problems can derail your day and I want to help avoid that by providing accessible solutions.

Please check out the [care cabinet inventory](#) to see what is available so that when a student issue arises, you will know a solution exists. Some items listed in the care cabinet are actually in my office either for safety or because they require assistance.

In short, the care cabinet has food, clothing, first aid items (including magical honey drops for sore throats and coughs, and strangely effective peppermints to soothe an upset stomach.) We have school supplies, earbuds, noise blocking headsets, and so much more.

Last year there was some trial and error - finding the right balance of independent and private accessibility, and enough supervision to prevent misuse. With my relocation, I think we now have the best possible balance as it is in clear view of my workspace but out of view of prying eyes. I want people to use the cabinet, even if it's just a 'minor' need. This prevents stigmatization and makes them feel comfortable asking for help. So whether it is a hangry kid, or someone who doesn't have a coat or groceries - there is no shame.

Staff Services:

And for staff, I am here to help in any way I can. Over the last year and a half, staff have allowed me to assist them in a wide variety of ways. Here are some examples:

- Funds Collection
- Volunteer recruitment
- Project preparation
- Sign up/forms creation
- Acquisition of project materials
- Research and Idea generation
- Assistance with communication (website, calendars, announcements, graphics)
- Sharing organization/project coordination methods with students
- Hospitality requests (coffee/supplies)
- Filling in where needed (classrooms, lunch, front desk)

If you come across something that I can help you with, please do not hesitate to reach out! Submit your requests using the portal or stop by my hallway office! (You can also call or email me.)

PALS Priority Groups

PALS is divided into 4 smaller groups, each with a designated focus. Members are assigned to their groups based on their personal passions, interests, and talents. This ensures that projects receive the best possible attention from those with the drive to produce excellent results. There are also two positions with a special focus outside of the priority groups: Fundraising and Mentor Program Coordinator. These are overseen by one PALS member who can work effectively with all priority groups.

Engagement - This priority group (PG) is one that you are likely most familiar with. Members of this group organize and lead activities that bring our families and staff members together outside of the academic environment, encouraging familiarity and positivity. Engagement programs include a range of activities from individual mentorships to events for all families and staff. Rolled into our engagement team, we have a subgroup specifically assigned to gratitude efforts (thank you notes and acknowledgements.)

Staff Support - Staff support is responsible for responding to the needs of our staff members. Their responsibilities range from ensuring that buildings have adequate supplies of coffee to organizing staff appreciation events.

Community Support- Community support, a new priority group this year, will be focused on providing projects that support the needs of families. This includes the meal train program, coat/hat drives, Christmas gift drives, and other service projects. Community support also includes campus improvement initiatives (ie. groundskeeping.)

Athletics - The Athletics priority group is responsible for organizing volunteers in support of home athletic events (scorekeepers, time clock keeper, line judges, concessions) and fundraising efforts that directly benefit athletic programs.

Oakstone Parent Volunteer Program

The families of Oakstone Academy parents are asked to participate in 50 hours of service to the school each year. For a two parent family, this is 2.5 hours each month. These hours can also be met through cash or material donations with one hour being equivalent to \$10. In addition to the annual 50 hours, families that have student athletes are asked to volunteer at two events during each season their athlete participates.

The Parent Volunteer Program is meant to facilitate this volunteerism by finding opportunities, coordinating recruitment, tracking hours, and providing accountability. There are roles provided on a recurring basis as well as standalone events and seasonal activities coordinated within the program. Any staff member coordinating an activity can request assistance in obtaining volunteers and can set the parameters for those volunteers based on the needs of their event. Parents also have the opportunity to request new roles using the [Volunteer Role Request](#).

All volunteers are asked to track their hours. For Oakstone Academy families, this allows us to ensure that families of student athletes fulfill their commitment to ensure eligibility for sports, and helps families keep track of how many service hours they have completed. Tracking service hours is important to the school because verifiable parent involvement is often consideration criteria in grant and program applications. But more than anything else, tracking hours provides me situational awareness concerning who is volunteering so that I can extend gratitude to those individuals.

Risk Mitigation

In the past, certain volunteer roles have been tried and eliminated due to a variety of issues. We want to provide a variety of options to parents and provide as much support to staff as possible. The volunteer catalog provides a description of each role as well as the boundaries and expectations that apply to that role and to volunteers in general. All families will be required to complete the [Volunteer Handbook acknowledgement](#) on FACTS. The handbook provides volunteers with clear guidelines concerning all aspects of volunteering within the school environment including confidentiality, ethics, role boundaries, and consequences for any failure to adhere to said guidelines.

For safety and security, a volunteer log in IPAD will be at the front desk of building 941 and 939 for volunteers to use when signing in and out of their activity. Paper logs may also be used at other locations. Volunteers will sign in and out, recording their times, activity, and area. When signing in, the volunteer will get a badge denoting them as an authorized volunteer, and will return the badge at the end of their activity. PALS members have special badges that will remain with them.

[Oakstone Families and Volunteers Webpage](#)

The website is an excellent resource for families and staff to stay on top of things going on around our schools and access tools and resources. The website calendars are linked to FACTS to maintain continuity and the website content is updated frequently to include announcements and relevant information. Whenever possible, events and announcements will be accompanied by links to applicable documents and forms.

It is helpful if staff members include a link to the website in their communications with parents concerning events, teams, clubs, etc. We want to encourage families to check the website when they find they have misplaced needed information.

[Staff Page](#)

When you select staff resources you will see the resources created especially for you. There are quick links to wish lists, this guide, t and a contact link. Below those, you will see the following tools:

Care Cabinet Inventory

The care cabinet is a resource for all students and staff. It contains quick solutions to those day ruining problems as well as resources for students who might be experiencing difficulties at home. Knowing how easily a kid's day can be derailed, this is a cabinet full of solutions! When you or a student is having one of those left footed moments, you can check this inventory and see if there is a solution to the problem. This is updated as new items are added.

PALS Portal

The portal is a simple form that allows staff to make requests for materials and funds, add items to wishlist, obtain volunteers, and give feedback. When you make a submission through the portal, your requests are recorded in our database, prioritized, and assigned to the most appropriate priority group for action. The portal is accessible through the link above or on the Staff Resources tab of the web page.

Hospitality Request

We understand how important coffee is to the functionality of an academic institution. Should you find your supply lacking, please fill out the form. Upon submission, our staff support priority group members will be alerted to your caffeinated crisis and will respond accordingly.

DVD Library

The DVD Library currently has 268 DVDs available for you to borrow. You can view the titles and information on each title including its type, the year it was made, the rating, a suggested age range, and a content description. As an additional resource, I have included a link to doesthedogdie.com and commonsensemedia.org in case you need more information.

In addition to the DVDs, I have a USB disk drive available to borrow in the event that the school drives are not available.

Staff Support Programs

Classroom Parent (Pre-K to Grade 5)

The Classroom Parent role is meant to provide teachers who chose to utilize it with consistent volunteer assistance. There are two ways to go about getting a classroom parent. If you happen to already have a parent in mind, you can request them (you can send me their name or ask them directly.) In the event that you do not have a person in mind (or if a parent requests the role) we have a classroom parent application. Once completed, the [application](#) will be submitted first to administration (to verify eligibility) then to the classroom teacher for vetting. The teacher may choose to conduct an interview, or may approve the application.

The role played by the classroom parent is at the teacher's discretion. Some examples of ways to utilize a classroom parent include: reward/holiday party planning, field trip planning and chaperoning, communication with other parents, preparation of materials.

Cut and Paste (Pre-K-Grade 5, art classes)

Because of the volume of hands-on projects, worksheets, and visuals utilized by the lower grades, it can be helpful to use volunteers for the completion of routine or repetitive tasks. Laminating, sorting, preparing worksheets, cutting out shapes - these are just a few examples of things that can be handed in to the cut and paste crew. Cut and paste will, hopefully, begin mid-September. Teachers wishing to take advantage of this service should have their items and instructions ready for pickup on Wednesday mornings. Cut and Paste will run from 9:30-11 and volunteers will deliver their finished items at the end of the session.

Project Preppers (Grades 6-12, specials)

Teachers at the MS/HS and those who teach specials can request project preppers. Similar to cut and paste, these volunteers can help prepare materials for projects, experiments, and other activities. Utilizing these volunteers can help you use your time more efficiently by doing preparatory steps in advance. Or, perhaps you could use an extra set of hands when you execute your activity - you could have a volunteer on hand. This is a great option for art and science teachers! You can submit your request in the portal.

Lunch and Recess Monitors (Bldg 941)

This program gives parents the opportunity to provide supervision, alongside at least one staff member, for recess and lunch. Volunteers for this activity must sign up in advance. Parent volunteers are always used in conjunction with staff supervision, but can free up a staff member for a much needed break.

Parking Lot Monitors

We got started with this during the 4th quarter last year. Parents have the opportunity to assist with supervision in the parking lot. I know this is an area where more help is always needed and we have been able to generate some parent interest.

Special Event Support

Any staff member organizing a special event (or acting as supervisor for a student organization planning an event) may request special event support through the portal. Special Event volunteers can provide planning support, set up and tear down assistance, assist with the acquisition of materials (refreshments, decorations, etc.) and even boost chaperone numbers.

Conclusion

I hope you find this information useful. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out. I can be reached at 614-749-7160 or by email at rgrady@ccde.org or just stop by 101. I will give you fruit snacks and let you play with the stress cheese.