

LAS VEGAS HIGH SCHOOL

PAL (PARTNERSHIP AT LAS VEGAS) PROGRAM

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PAL history

Founded in 1995, PAL was the brainchild of Bill Slobody, former LVHS Social Studies Department Chair. Slobody believed the typical high school student needed assistance bridging the gap between the worlds of employment and education. He had read about a public school in New York where students attended weekly internships in order to become familiar with the real life expectations of employers. Slobody floated a unique “school within a school” concept to then-principal Barry Gunderson. Welcoming innovation in education, Gunderson gave permission for PAL students to travel off campus on a regular basis in order to gain experience at internships in every imaginable career area. A team of five teachers was assembled, and a smaller learning community known as PAL (Partnership at Las Vegas) was born. Junior and senior students were accepted to the program based on attitude education and trustworthiness, but not grade point average. A wide range of students including special education and ELL students made up PAL’s first class.

Over twenty years later, PAL is a permanent fixture at LVHS continuing to thrive with a long waiting list of students hoping to gain acceptance. PAL was selected by the US Department of Education as one of the nation’s top five drop-out prevention programs and was inducted into the Clark County Excellence in Education Hall of Fame.

Kirk Wallace, former PAL Program Director and original founder, taught social studies to PAL students for 15 years. He praises his students who have taken advantage of the opportunities provided by nearly 200 job site partners in the Las Vegas community. “My students have witnessed the demands of adult employment and made a connection with the relevance of their high school education and the necessity of post-secondary training.” In fact, PAL students outpace the Clark County School district statistics in the measures of college matriculation, high school attendance, punctuality, discipline, referrals, high school proficiency exam passage, and high school graduation. “Our students are able to envision successful futures with the support of community job site mentors and a team of dedicated teachers,” said Wallace.

The success continues today with the addition of an additional teacher and a counselor since it was founded in 1995. The success of PAL graduates continues to amaze and delight their former teachers.