

BECAUSE
NICE MATTERS



*"You must be the
change you wish to
see in the world."*
-Mahatma Gandhi

ADVISOR:
MRS. LISA
BALKA

Who Are Peer Leaders?

Built on the belief that students can help students succeed, Peer Leaders guide students toward academic and social success in their role of supporters, peer mentors, and role models. Our program provides the structure for students to receive support and guidance from juniors and seniors who have been through the challenges that high school poses and understand that high school can sometimes be overwhelming. The goal of the **Peer Leaders class** is to provide a supportive campus community and an enhanced school environment, resulting in the of all students here at Great Oak High School. Through this program, students make real connections with each other and learn that people at school care about them and their success.



"A person is not given integrity. It results from the relentless pursuit of honesty at all times."
-unknown

Services

Freshman Orientation — we love meeting with our freshmen and making them feel a part of our "Pack" before school starts!

New Student Welcome — we welcome all new students, provide them with school tours and follow up to make sure they are making their way at their new school.

Peer Mentoring — members of our Peer Leaders class are trained in peer mentoring and peer mediation so that we can assist all students on campus during those challenging times.

Alerts — We are here to help our students when they are struggling academically, socially, mentally. If staff members are concerned about students, they will drop us an "Alert" indicating a student might be facing some challenges. Our goal is to work with students so that they can achieve success. We are here for them! Parents are also welcome to drop us a line if they know their child is facing some challenges.

Freshman Meeting Place (FMP) — Every Friday during FMP, we visit all of our Freshman classes and talk to kids about issues that relate to them. Training takes place on Thursdays. Lessons on Friday.

Social Follow-ups — Our goal is to plan events this year where we can spend time getting to know our students, and, most importantly, we want them to get to know their fellow classmates! We want them to challenge themselves to meet lots of new people!

Lessons/Forums — Each week we will be visiting our local elementary/middle schools where we work with students through using a variety of assemblies, interactive discussions and activities in an effort to break down the walls between students. The lessons/forums serve as a means for students to develop an understanding of themselves and those around them.

Synergy — Synergy puts together a diverse group of students and staff through a day-long experience that changes their lives. Students who normally do not interact on a day-to-day basis begin to realize how much they have in common with other students and adults on campus. The Synergy Workshop reveals that although we notice exterior differences, we are more alike than we think as we experience similar struggles, similar feelings, and similar desires.

SADD — Students Against Destructive Decisions — awareness program dedicated to preventing students from making destructive decisions, particularly underage drinking, other drug use, risky and impaired driving, teen violence, and teen suicide.

Campaigns — Based on voices of students, we run monthly campaigns informing students about various relevant topics including bullying, alcohol and drug awareness, healthy relationships, and more.

Community Outreach: volunteerism within the community, Riverside and San Diego Counties.



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Expectations of Peer Leaders

Peer Leaders are known for their:

- Integrity
- Accountability
- Responsibility
- Trustworthiness
- Commitment to serving others
- Willingness to take a *positive* risk
- Presence as a positive role model at school and within the community.

“Only a life lived for others is worth living.”

—Albert Einstein

“I feel the capacity to care is the thing which gives life its deepest significance.”

—Pablo Casals (1876-1973)
Cellist, Conductor,
Composer



Students are an invaluable and untapped resource. At the heart of the Great Oak High School's Peer Leaders Program is the belief that our students on campus are capable of incredible things. P.L. asks members of its class to be a presence on campus as models of positive behavior, and facilitators of learning experiences, providing students with valuable lessons on how to be successful in high school. Peer Leaders act as lifelines for students. And, because of who you are, Peer Leaders also act as a catalyst for change on our campus. Peer Leaders do not necessarily have to be the most known or the most popular students on campus. Neither do they have to be the ones with the best grades or most involved. Peer Leaders are a cross-section of the student body, representing all types of students at the school, thus giving as many students as possible a Peer Leader to identify with. Through connection with a Peer Leader, the belief is that, ultimately, all students will know they have a constant support system on our campus.

Thus, an important note:

Peer Leaders are chosen for their maturity, trustworthiness, and positive attitudes toward others. They represent both themselves and Great Oak High School, and as such will be held to a standard of behavior that reflects their leadership positions. Any Peer Leader who demonstrates behavior which does not adhere to the values and objectives of the program will be subject to a review by both myself and Great Oak's administration, which could result in a dismissal from the program and an F. It's about "walking the talk". (See contract.)

Responsibilities/Commitments:

Class Meetings:

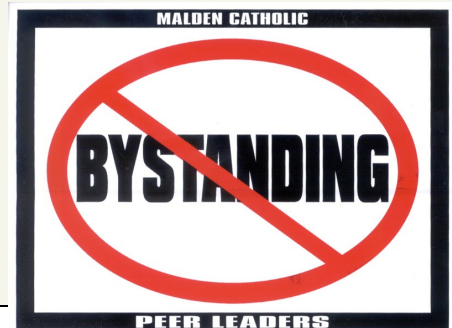
Peer Leaders is not just an elective class; it is a leadership movement to impact change on our school campus. During this class you will develop skills to become a strong leader as you embark on various experiences which develop your communication skills, your teambuilding skills, your peer mentoring skills, as well as your overall character. I will act as your advisor as well as teacher, offering suggestions for the direction of the class, but I hope to empower you to take the reins. You will control the majority of our direction. Every day is a work day where you and your committee dedicate yourselves to making the world a better place. Your attendance is vital to the success of our program. Frequent absences will result in a lowered grade as what we do cannot be made up.

Out of Class Requirements:

First and foremost, you are a leader and will need to represent yourself as one. Whether you are at lunch or at the movies, how you act reflects how people perceive all of us. Act accordingly. You will be required to spend assigned time offering services to other students, conducting student forums and participating in events that you plan and organize. Each Peer Leader must attend the following out of class events. Please mark your calendars accordingly: Community service events, Back to School Night and Spring Showcase, a service learning volunteer commitment, Because Nice Matters Rally, Synergy set-ups, and a few other obligations in preparation for campaigns. You will always be given ample time to make arrangements. You will receive a grade for attendance which canNOT be made up.

Peer Leadership Committees:

Each class member will serve on a specific committee. We will be introducing committees and discussing the responsibilities during the first few weeks of class.



“Most of the shadows of this life are caused by our standing in our own sunshine.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Grading: All grades are Calculated based on a point system. Students will receive points for each assignment or activity.

- Class work (speaking and writing component)
- Speeches
- Group Presentations
- Essays
- Journal Writing
- Participation:
 - committee participation
 - assisting other committees
 - noontime events
 - class participation
 - Mandatory events (see out of class requirements)
- FMP training and FMP Fridays Participation
- Elementary/Middle School Weekly Participation
- Community Service Hours
- T-shirt Tuesdays — wearing shirt entire day — part of our Peer Leaders uniform

Absence Policy

Due to the activity-based and service-oriented nature of this course, most class experiences cannot be re-created in the case of absence. Excessive absences in this course will result in a lack of class contribution and are a disruption to the community-based learning environment that this course requires. Excessive absences are grounds for removal from the Peer Leaders Program. In addition, absences on FMP OR elementary/middle school days will result in a lowered grade if not approved by me. Absences are the EXCEPTION. Please contact me at home the night before if you know you are going to be absent for an important event. In addition, you must contact your committee's council member. If you know you will be absent frequently, this class is NOT for you.



CLASSROOM POLICY

- Be on time, in your seat **BEFORE** the bell rings (failure to do so will result in a tardy.)
- Clean up around your desk daily before you leave.
- Do NOT take out cell phones unless you have permission. Only class materials should be on desk. EVERYTHING else should be placed underneath your desk.
- Do NOT talk while others are speaking.
- Do NOT EAT or DRINK in the classroom! (Water bottles will be allowed.)
- Ask to use bathroom pass during appropriate times only; do not ask to use the pass during instruction time. Do not make this class a "designated" bathroom class. Remember to go before or after classes, or during your morning or lunch breaks. Great Oak's policy states, "No bathroom visits during the first or final 10 minutes of a class period.
- Respect your teacher and fellow classmates!
- Participate! Get involved in your education becoming an active participant.
- Work hard! Always give your personal best!

COURSE MATERIALS

- 1 DESIGNATED PEER LEADERS NOTEBOOK WHICH WILL REMAIN IN THE CLASSROOM.

“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”

*-Tenzin Gyatso —
14th Dalai Lama*

Peer Leaders Committees

1. Because Nice Matters (BNM)
2. Students against Destructive Decisions (SADD)
3. Freshman Meeting Place (FMP)
4. Peer Mentors
5. Publicity

During our first few days of school, students will be introduced to our committee overviews and expectations. Each student will record their top three preferences, and I will do my best to place them accordingly!

Leadership opportunities available!!

WE CAN CHANGE
THE WORLD



With KINDNESS

"The purpose of life is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience."

-Eleanor Roosevelt

Our Course emphasizes:

- Team Building Skills
- Leadership Skills
- Communication Skills
- Organizational Skills
- Peer Mentoring Skills
- Service Learning Projects

"If you wanna make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and then make a change."

Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror"



LETTER FROM MRS. BALKA

Welcome to Great Oak High School's Peer Leaders Course. I am very excited to have the opportunity to work with all of you this year to ensure the success of our incoming Freshman Class as well as our entire student body, and even our elementary and middle feeder schools! You have taken on an immense commitment as you help all students here at Great Oak in your role as "Peer Leader". Being a Peer Leader can be very challenging as you work with all types of students who can sometimes be resistant to your support. Do not get discouraged!! You cannot give up as these kids are relying upon you, whether they believe so or not. You will make a difference – maybe to 10 kids, maybe to 1. Your effort, presence, and commitment matter most. Your peers must know that you are always there for them. So I want to thank you for being a part of making a difference in the lives of others. You must remember that being a part of the Peer Leaders program is very honorable; therefore, you must live up to our high standards. You must be a positive role model at ALL times who makes good choices both IN school as well as OFF campus. Remember, as you support Great Oak students, I will be supporting each one of you. Please see me any time you need to

chat! I am always here for you! Let's have an amazing year together and make sure our students know they are part of our "Pack"!!



Please feel free to contact me anytime at:
lbalka@tvusd.k12.ca.us
(951)294-6450 ext. 3312

