

# PLUS Program, Stockton Unified School District

## Basic Course Information

Title:  
PLUS Peer Resource

Transcript abbreviations:  
Plus/Peer Resource / 808500

Length of course:  
Full Year

Subject area:  
College-Preparatory Elective ("g") / Interdisciplinary

Integrated (Academics / CTE)?  
No

Grade levels:  
9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

UC honors designation?  
No

Course learning environment:  
Classroom Based

## Course Description

### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

The PLUS/Peer Resources course is a two-semester course that combines high-level critical thinking, writing, and analytical skills with project experiences and implementation, while giving students an opportunity to explore interpersonal and mass communications as they identify and address critical issues related to school climate. Through this class students will become more empowered peer leaders as they hone their communication and problem solving skills. Students will participate in Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) projects which includes: research and evaluation, project planning and execution, as well as leadership and critical thinking-based activities in order to further develop these key skills in tandem with mentorship and peer education. This class will require students to synthesize information obtained in core classes as well as work both individually and collaboratively. Findings from these experiences will lead students to become empathic and responsible citizens who can apply their knowledge to larger-scale future projects as their ages, resources, and scopes increase.

The PLUS/Peer Resource coursework extends and enhances the traditional Peer Leaders Uniting Students (PLUS) program (a program designed under its parent company, The Vanden Corporation) above and beyond its primary intended purpose to protect, connect, and educate students in an effort to create a culture on campuses and in communities where inclusion is a reality for young people. The PLUS Program utilizes the natural channels of peer influence to address critical issues that impact positive youth development, as outlined in the Research Findings on Evaluations of Positive Youth Development Programs conducted by the Social Development Research Group School of Social Work at the University of Washington. PLUS Leadership trains carefully selected members of 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades to be PLUS Team members. As positive role models, PLUS Team members are student leaders who facilitate healthy relations with peers and foster actions that establish pro-social involvement. PLUS's goal is to create and maintain a positive campus environment in which students make real connections with each other, resulting in the following long-term benefits: 1.) increased attendance and graduation rates, 2.) improved academic performance, and 3.) expanded opportunities for pro-social bonding. PLUS empowers students to have a voice in discussions that identify critical issues on campus and serves as the foundation for the overall development of a safe school campus environment.

## **COURSE OVERVIEW: PEDAGOGICAL METHODS**

Each unit contains a framework that encompasses presentation of essential questions, intended learning outcomes, and meaningful assignments. Information for students will be in a practical, obtainable manner. Essential questions will be discussed within each assignment/activity/discussion during a given unit so that students understand how the work they are doing is meant to answer said questions.

In order for learning goals and outcomes to be achieved, the teacher will provide scaffolded lessons that include critical reading and writing exercises, facilitated discussions, and visual examples such as films and/or guest speakers. Due to the diversity of topics, it is important to use this wide range of instructional methods and strategies so that the material can be delivered in the most current, authentic, and meaningful way for students. Every effort will be made to present particular topics in relevant ways so that students feel consistently challenged, motivated, and inspired to learn. This method of instruction will enable students to connect deeply with the theoretical information and enable them to articulate opinions, analysis, and connections with the material. In addition, this diverse range of instructional methods will reach a wide range of learning modalities.

In addition to being provided with teacher-generated content, students will conduct YPAR projects where they do their own research to further the ideas that are presented in class. As such, they will take ownership of their learning, deepening their classroom experiences by drawing their own conclusions, making inferences, and connecting ideas within their research topic(s).

Students will also be given ample opportunity to reflect personally on the information presented in class. This will occur in both written and oral form. Personal connections with the material must be made for students to retain the knowledge shared in class; thus, this vital piece of pedagogy will be included frequently in every unit of study.

## **COURSE OVERVIEW: ASSESSMENT**

**Each unit contains:**

**Academic writing prompts/essays:** Students will be asked to complete a variety of writing tasks to demonstrate their learning and critical thinking. Short responses (approximately 250 words) will be used for students to comment and reflect on current class topics. These shorter responses will prove useful for reinforcing course concepts and giving students the opportunity to make personal connections with the material. Longer responses (approximately 1000-3000 words) incorporating research will be assigned for students to demonstrate in-depth knowledge on a specific topic. This writing will work to reinforce concepts taught in class as well as extend students' knowledge about chosen topics in a personally meaningful way. All writing will enable the instructor to ensure students firmly grasp the course material, are forming personal opinions about the material, and are able to view the topics from multiple perspectives.

**Presentations:** Students will be asked to give both individual and group presentations in order to sharpen their public speaking and peer education skills. These presentations will be given in both planned and impromptu manners. Students will not only be required to demonstrate their knowledge of the subject matter about which they are presenting, but also to demonstrate their expanding mastery of speaking to a variety of audiences.

**Self-reflection and assessment:** As a result of the introspective nature of much of this course's materials, giving students multiple opportunities to self- and group-assess will deepen their connections with the course objectives. As students begin to sharpen their mentoring, personal leadership, and management styles, they will need to critically examine these styles for ways in which to improve. Reflection on plans, implementation, and collaboration with respect to every project undertaken will lead them to personal growth. Students will learn to articulate personal strengths and weaknesses, taking responsibility for their actions and internalizing for future use the knowledge gleaned from said reflection. Personal connection with their own growth will prove monumental in encouraging positive behavior in students; this self-made meaning is far more meaningful than teacher feedback alone. Written (individual) and verbal (group discussion) assessments will be implemented so students feel comfortable both with anonymity and peer-sharing.

**Project/event implementation:** Students' leadership projects (PLUS forums and other events) will be evaluated for their organization and efficiency of implementation. Students will be asked to complete their projects in a timely manner, within an established budget and to the satisfaction of their intended audience. Students will also be assessed in light of their initially indicated project goal. Within groups, students will be evaluated individually for their contributions within said group, which will ensure positive group interactions. Project implementation will be scored using a rubric, which will ensure that all parts of the project are evaluated commensurately; students will also be

able to discern from this rubric areas of exemplary achievement from areas that need additional amelioration. Students will then work to pay close attention to any areas needing further development in future projects.

**Informal observations and discussions:** Throughout the semester, the teacher will informally observe the class to ensure that all students are fully participating in the learning process. Students will be expected to contribute in positive and meaningful ways to all course debates, discussions, peer sharing, and feedback opportunities. This will ensure camaraderie between classmates, which will assist while working together during events and will enable peers to build positive working relationships regardless of project situation or personality type.

### **Grading Scale**

Students will be graded using the following grading scale:

90 – 100% = A

80 – 89.99% = B

70 – 79.99% = C

60 – 69.99% = D

59.99% and below = F

### **Types of Assignments**

Forums/PLUS Events (20%)

Participation (informal) (20%)

Presentations (Formal) (25%)

Reflections/Writing (25%)

Final (10%)

Prerequisites:

Interview and Application (Required)

Co-requisites:

None

Course content:

## **Unit 1: Pre-Training Basics**

### **Lessons 1-6: Communication Skills & Relationship Building**

Nonverbal, Open-ended questions, Paraphrasing, “I” messages, Confidentiality and Duty to Inform, and Relationship Building

These lessons are formed around effective communication including nonverbals, open-ended questioning, paraphrasing, “I” messages, and confidentiality versus duty to inform. Students will learn how to communicate nonverbally. Students will be given examples and learn how to create their own open-ended questions to insure that when they support their peers they are guiding without giving advice. They will learn the fundamental essentials of communication and trust by developing the skills of active listening, “I” messaging, and paraphrasing. Rules of Confidentiality versus Duties to Inform will be explicitly taught and practiced through research, instruction, and role play. Students will also engage in team building activities to strengthen positive relationships with in the class.

### **Example Assignments:**

**Project/event implementation:** Confidentiality is at the crux of this unit. Students will learn the necessity of both confidentiality and duty to inform within the PLUS program through a whole class discussion on past experiences of confidentiality, secrets, and trust. After researching several laws that are related to the duty to inform (age of consent, etc.), students will present their findings through reciprocal teaching to the class.

**Self-reflection and assessment:** After team building activities, students will be asked to reflect on their level of participation, level of comfort, and assess what they learned from others in their class. They will journal their experiences to include questions like: what happened? What did you notice? What were some commonalities? What personalities emerged? What is the difference now that you know more about your team? Why did we do this activity? What was it like to participate in this activity?

## **Lesson 11-26: Values and Judgments**

What are values, judgments, and Frames of Reference?

Students will engage in a study of values, judgments, and frames of reference. Through readings that are meant to inspire reflection, students will discover how values are developed through investigation and analysis of social, cultural and familial influences, as well as individual inspirations and experiences. Through journal writing, they will reflect on the people, situations, memories, and influences in their past that have shaped who they are and how sociological influences shape individuals in society. They will analyze life experiences for what they can understand about themselves and others from these assessments. They will also uncover what is important to them now and how those values can affect their future. They will share their values publicly through creative expression.

### **Example Assignments:**

**Academic writing prompts/essays:** Students will keep a journal where they will write daily, reflecting on issues ranging from personal goals and challenges to larger social justice issues and responses to articles, media, music, and current events. More drafted pieces of writing include: a synthesis collage, editing several viewpoints on a cultural or social issue to show the multifaceted perspectives of a given topic; an essay based on a famous quote that inspires them as a motto to live by; a letter, story, or poem about someone who has been a lifeline for them; a letter to someone they need to apologize to or make amends with; and an essay that outlines their beliefs and values. Students will also complete work in the PLUS Student Workbook that aligns with values and judgments.

**Presentations:** Students will be asked to give presentations in both groups and as individuals about social topics they come across through their journals. Each presentation will contain: What is the issue? What does the research say? How does it impact teens on campus? What can students do to help other students with this issue?

**Informal observations and discussions:** At the end of each Unit, the teacher will meet individually with student leaders in the class to discuss their progress and debrief their participation in activities. Students will have the opportunity to ask clarifying questions, and discuss personal barriers to content acquisition with the teacher.

## **Unit 2: PLUS Forum Basics**

### **Lesson 1-6: PLUS Forum Facilitation**

A core component of the PLUS course is the PLUS Forum. Student PLUS leaders lead a diverse cross-section of students through a series of activities that are both meaningful and designed to break down barriers to increase engagement for participants. This pro-social bonding creates dialogue between participants which helps to build a stronger understanding for each other and builds respect and empathy toward one another. PLUS forums are held monthly on school campuses to provide the student population restorative opportunities to discuss, and seek student insight to student led solutions for student issues. PLUS teams are responsible for setting the environment for the forum. In order to lead successful Forums, students must have excellent facilitation skills. This unit will train

students to facilitate the forum activities with confidence, proper vocabulary, how to identify themes in statements, identify forum participants, and enhance their skill level in communication skills from unit 1.

**Example Assignments:**

**Presentations:** PLUS Leaders will group up into teams of 5 or 6. They will each become an expert in the forum activities and the different roles that are required in each one. These groups will then run a mock-forum for the rest of the class.

**Academic writing prompts/essays:** Students will provide the rest of the class with a written guide on how to run a PLUS forum including: key terms, tips for facilitation, and how to identify forum participants. They will also provide written examples of how to facilitate restorative conversations around student issues and student led solutions.

**Project/event implementation:** As a culminating project, PLUS Leaders will utilize their skill set to facilitate a real forum for a group of students on campus. They will identify and invite the participants, prepare an appropriate location, facilitate the activities, and debrief the content of the forum afterwards.

**Self-reflection and assessment:** After the mock forum and the actual forum implementation, students will participate in group and self-reflection processes. They will identify their strengths and weaknesses, as well as give helpful feedback for others in their class. This peer to peer assessment will prepare them to be even more prepared for the next forum.

**Informal observations and discussions:** The teacher will meet individually with each PLUS leader to review peer feedback, and to provide an opportunity for discussion on their contributions to the class and project.

**Lesson 7-10: Principles of Survey Design and Data Analysis**

The PLUS program relies on student surveys to identify critical issues and to track improvement in those areas. To collect reliable data that will accurately reflect trends related to school climate, PLUS students will participate in lessons on survey design and data analysis. Through sample surveys, students will learn: best practices for creating a meaningful survey, understand how questions might be biased and how to construct neutral, non-leading questions, examine different types of questions and vocabulary associated with survey construction (likert, qualitative, quantitative, variance), evaluating survey results by determining the quality of the data and examining the survey participants, and how to share survey results.

PLUS Leaders will examine survey questions used by The PLUS Program and Georgia Southern University's National Youth-at-Risk Center (NYAR). The PLUS Program has a researched based data bank of questions that capture different elements of school climate and connectedness. PLUS also has partnered with NYAR, so students will have opportunity to examine survey questions used by the center as well.

**Example Assignments:**

**Presentations:** After students have explored best practices for creating a meaningful survey, they will work collaboratively in small groups to utilize the PLUS Program database as well as the NYAR questions to create a proposed list of questions for approval at their school site to measure school climate. This list will be presented to the rest of the class and all proposals will be critiqued and voted on. The final list of survey questions will be utilized at each PLUS Forum and for school-wide surveys.

**Project/event implementation & Academic Writing:** Students will research and evaluate the results of PLUS Surveys issued school-wide and during each forum. Students will write a summary of the data and research a critical social issue that is highlighted in the data. Through the YPAR process, PLUS leaders will define the issue, determine what the research about the issue, identify how this issue impacts students, and find ways that students can help other students deal with this critical issue. Each student will present their findings to the class and schedule a time to formally present to other groups on campus (cross-age groups, clubs, administrators, teachers, etc...).

**Self-reflection and assessment:** After the YPAR Project presentation, students will participate in group and self-reflection processes. They will identify their strengths and weaknesses, as well as give helpful feedback

for others in their class. This peer to peer assessment will prepare them to be even more prepared for their next YPAR project.

### **Unit 3: Developing Service Options**

#### **Lesson 1-10: Conflict Resolution**

What is conflict? Different Types – Inter and Intra, Conflict Cycle, Conflict Mediation: Coming to Resolution

Understanding conflict and how to resolve it comes next as we explore what conflict is, the different types of conflict, and conflict mediation and resolution. Students will discuss how conflict is a natural and in fact necessary part of life, and that conflict challenges us to grow. Students will be able to identify the different types of conflict and how they each call for a different style of conflict resolution. After being trained in the essentials of conflict resolution through interactive role-play and instruction, they will act as mediators to help facilitate peaceful resolution between peers who have real-life differences. For example, after two students are suspended for fighting on campus, the peers will facilitate a formal contract and agreement between the parties involved.

#### ***Example Assignments:***

**Presentations:** PLUS Leaders will practice the procedures of mediation through various role plays and skits, where they will act out the stages of conflict mediation: outline the norms and rules of the mediation itself; understanding both side's point of views; brainstorming solutions of preferred outcomes from both disputants; arrive at agreements that each disputant can agree upon.

**Academic writing prompts/essays:** PLUS Leaders will journal throughout the process of learning about conflict. They will reflect on their personal reactions to conflict and their role in solving conflict on campus.

**Project/event implementation:** Once students are trained to mediate conflicts, students will demonstrate their skills by mediating a real conflict between other students. This will be monitored by teacher and/or other PLUS Leaders for support.

**Self-reflection and assessment:** Once the PLUS leader has successfully mediated their first conflict, they will go through a peer-review process to identify their strengths and weaknesses, as well as give helpful feedback for others in their class. This peer to peer assessment will prepare them to be even more prepared for their next mediation session.

**Informal observations and discussions:** The teacher will meet individually with each PLUS leader to review peer feedback, and to provide an opportunity for discussion on their contributions to the class and project.

### **Unit 4: Community Leadership & Final Project**

#### **Lesson 1-10: Educational Outreach**

In the 4<sup>th</sup> unit student will participate in additional community leadership opportunities. They will choose one of our district's prevention programs that are important to our student body and "get the word out" through public outreach, freshman orientation, classroom presentations, or school-wide awareness projects. Students collaborate in groups on one of these topics: Freshman readiness, Wellness Centers, Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Campaign, Community Service or/and other awareness projects to educate younger peers through outreach. They will create curriculum and instruction to carry forward the following school year outreach. The students will learn how to facilitate as cross-age mentors for freshman as well as students at the elementary level.

#### ***Example Assignments:***

**Presentations:** PLUS Leaders will present their YPAR project to classmates before they present the final version in outreach efforts.

**Academic writing prompts/essays:** Students will provide the rest of the class with a written guide on how to present their YPAR project to others with recommendations as to which age group the presentation is geared toward.

**Project/event implementation:** Each group of students will put together a YPAR presentation on Educational Outreach aspect they chose. Through the YPAR process, PLUS leaders will define the issue, determine what the research about the issue, identify how this issue impacts students, and find ways that students can help other students deal with this critical issue. Each student will present their findings to the class and schedule a time to formally present to other groups on campus (cross-age groups, clubs, administrators, teachers, etc...).

**Self-reflection and assessment:** After the YPAR presentation to the class, they will go through a peer-review process to identify their strengths and weaknesses, as well as give helpful feedback for others in their class. This peer to peer assessment will prepare them to be even more prepared for their next mediation session.

**Informal observations and discussions:** The teacher will meet individually with each PLUS leader to review peer feedback, and to provide an opportunity for discussion on their contributions to the class and project.

## Final Project: PLUS Portfolio

**Part I:** Include all PLUS assignments from the year

**Part II:** Impactful Activities Reflection

Of the activities you completed throughout the year, select two of the most impactful activities and write a reflection.

- Why you chose these particular activities as the most impactful?
- What did you learn?
- What did you enjoy about completing these activities?
- How did these activities give you a better sense of what it takes to be a leader?

**Part III:** Overall Leadership Reflection

In your reflection, please include the following components:

- How do you feel your leadership skills have changed throughout the PLUS class?
- What do you consider your greatest leadership successes? What areas did you struggle with?
- Would you change any aspect of your PLUS experience? Why or why not?
- How will you use what you learned about yourself and the high school community throughout your remaining time as a student?
- What additional leadership skills would you like to improve beyond your time in the PLUS class?

## Course Materials

### Textbooks

Title	Author	Publisher	Edition	Website	Primary
Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP)	Alternatives to Violence Project, Inc.	Omlet Publications	2002	[ empty ]	Yes

### Manuals

Title	Author	Publisher	Edition	Website
Peer resources: A youth to youth peer advocacy and restorative practices model for secondary school youth	Roberts, H.	Peer Resources Training and Consulting: San Francisco, CA	2014	[ empty ]

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Edition</b>	<b>Website</b>
Peer helping, peer education, peer counseling training of trainers.	Sachnoff, I.	Peer Resources Training and Consulting: San Francisco, CA	2014	[ empty ]

## Other

<b>Title</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Course material type</b>	<b>Website</b>
PLUS Student Workbook: Developing the PLUS Team Member	The Vanden Corporation	2010	Workbook	[ empty ]
PLUS Program Development	The Vanden Corporation	2010	Workbook	[ empty ]
Establishing a Commitment to Actions, Identity, and Purpose.	The Vanden Corporation	2010	Workbook	[ empty ]
A Guide to Ongoing Actions	The Vanden Corporation	2010	Workbook	[ empty ]