



## **Proyecto Avance: Latino Mentoring Association Handbook**

### **What is PALMA?**

PALMA (Proyecto Avance, Latino Mentoring Association) meets twice-weekly, Tuesday and Thursday. We focus on helping Latino students in the Ann Arbor area with their schoolwork and adults with English as a Second Language instruction. Our primary goal is to promote academic excellence by encouraging the students to learn and monitoring their progress. We also hope working in a university environment will promote the importance of a post-secondary education.

PALMA is a registered student organization at the University of Michigan, and receives funding from the Michigan Student Assembly as well as the Ginsberg Center for Community Service and Learning.

### **Who are we?**

Mentors, who work in PALMA, are mainly from University students who can communicate in Spanish and work with Latino children of all ages as well as adults.

### **When and where does PALMA meet?**

PALMA meets from 6 to 7:30 pm on Tuesday and Thursday at the Ann Arbor District Library (located at 343 S 5th Ave).

### **Interested in working with PALMA?**

Although PALMA primarily recruits at the beginning of each term, PALMA is always looking for new mentors who will be dedicated to our goal of promoting academic success and are comfortable communicating in Spanish.

Most of our mentors have permanent positions, meaning they work with the same student twice a week for the whole semester. If you are unable to make a commitment to work twice a week, we also frequently need substitute mentors who work with any student whose mentor is unable to attend a particular day. Permanent mentors with PALMA are expected to attend twice-weekly mentoring sessions, to communicate with the parents of their student about their child's or adult's progress as well as evaluate their own work. During each mentoring session, mentors of children work with students on their homework, typically in English, or use academic materials to create new learning activities, depending on their students' needs.

Mentors who work with adults have less structure during the mentoring period since adults generally do not come with work to finish like K-12 students. PALMA encourages the mentor to communicate with their student in order to come to a consensus on what learning goals will be set for the semester. Many times it is helpful to set learning goals for the mentor as well as the student, for example: what can you learn from

your student? Maintain these goals and work with your student to come up with new and creative ways to learn. PALMA provides general resources to aid their students in acquiring a basic understanding of English. See the PALMA website and click on “Educational links” for more information.

We are currently working in partnership with the Ann Arbor District Library. The Ann Arbor District Library provides invaluable resources to the participants of PALMA, including library card registration, librarian assistance, and quiet places for individual and group study. PALMA’s success is the product the commitment and passion of the mentors, students, parents, and library employees. We hope to continue developing as an organization and as a component of the greater education and social justice community.

If you have any comments or ideas about PALMA please contact us at the e-mail mentioned.

### **Important Dates**

See the Calendar on the website: <http://sitemaker.umich.edu/palma/calendar>  
[http://sitemaker.umich.edu/palma/info and forms](http://sitemaker.umich.edu/palma/info_and_forms)

### **Events:**

As an effort to maintain and grow the PALMA community, we have “Community Meetings” about once per month at the beginning of normal meeting times to receive feedback from tutors and participants as well as to present information pertinent to the growth of our community and organization.

A formal evaluation meeting occurs before the last day of tutoring.

We have a PALMA picnic to thank the tutors and to celebrate our community before the end of each semester.

### **Policies**

#### **Commitment**

PALMA has been an exceptional example of student activism and willingness to serve the community. This success is largely due to the general dedication with which the mentors view their role. As an organization, PALMA has taken great pride in the number of student participants, and in the passion with which each of them approaches their opportunity to help others with their studies.

Your role as a PALMA mentor requires a lot of time, energy, enthusiasm, and commitment. As students, our schedules are inevitably filled to capacity and as the semester picks up, mentoring may seem like less of a priority than other obligations. However, choosing to mentor with PALMA means that you are dedicated to your student and plan to maintain the effort that mentoring requires. For many of the people who

come to PALMA for help with English or homework, the time spent with their mentor is an integral part of their success. As a mentor, you are depended upon by your students for assistance with some of the skills that are most critical to living in the US. Throughout the semester, remember the importance of this position and the commitment with that you are expected to demonstrate.

### **Confidentiality Policy**

One of PALMA's main goals is to foster an environment based on trust and mutual respect between the mentor and the participant. In order to do this we implore PALMA mentors to keep all information that your participant shares with you strictly confidential, meaning information should not be discussed casually with other PALMA mentors or people outside of PALMA. However, if any issues or concerns arise that you are unsure of how to deal with or that make you uncomfortable, it is our policy that you first contact a member of our executive board or our faculty advisor, Cristhian Espinoza.

### **Attendance**

Please try not to miss mentoring sessions unless you have a direct schedule conflict that evening, an emergency or sickness. Your commitment is a personal one—it's not to PALMA, but to your student who will undoubtedly be saddened by your absence.

If you absolutely have to miss a day, please take the following actions:

1. Tell your student! You should have already exchanged phone numbers with your student. Contact him/her if you won't be able to go.
2. We do not have a substitute list, so please make an arrangement with a replacement tutor and/or your participant.
3. Email the e-board at [contact.palma@umich.edu](mailto:contact.palma@umich.edu) at least 2-4 days in advance or preferably as soon as you know of your schedule conflict.

Questions or Problems: e-mail [contact.palma@umich.edu](mailto:contact.palma@umich.edu).

### **Attendance Sheet**

The attendance sheet is an important tool that allows the e-board to evaluate which students and mentors consistently attend. Please sign in before each PALMA session.

### **Punctuality**

Although we have all become accustomed to operating on "Michigan Time," your students are not familiar with this policy. Make sure to arrive **by 6:00** or a few minutes before in order to allow as much time as possible for your mentoring sessions.

### **Cancellation of PALMA**

If Ann Arbor Public Schools do not have school due to poor weather conditions, then PALMA will not meet. See their homepage for information about school cancellations: [http://www.aaps.k12.mi.us/aaps.home/aaps\\_home](http://www.aaps.k12.mi.us/aaps.home/aaps_home). Also check your e-mail and the PALMA website: [sitemaker.umich.edu/PALMA](http://sitemaker.umich.edu/PALMA), for more information. If you do not see any indication of cancellation due to poor weather from the above mentioned mediums, PALMA will meet. Bundle up and please attend.

## **Mentoring**

### **Your Role as a PALMA Mentor**

#### **1. Mentorship**

Regardless of your student's age or goals for your sessions together, it is imperative that you get to know him/her. Break the ice. Establishing a relationship makes it easier for you to help your student. He/she will feel more comfortable and confident in their abilities if there is a trusting relationship between you. Discover things that you have in common, show an interest in their job, in their family, and in their story. Not only will this increase probability of the student's eventual success, it will also help both of you to gain an understanding of someone with a different background. You are here to help them gain the skills they need to live in Ann Arbor, get to know the person who you'll be spending so much time with!

#### **2. Instruction**

PALMA was originally created as a homework help resource for K-12 Spanish-speaking students in the Ann Arbor area. Since its establishment, it has become a resource for adults to learn English as a second language as well. As a mentor, your primary tasks are to establish an understanding of your student's needs and desires for your sessions, and to utilize the methods and resources necessary to best assist them in the learning process.

#### **3. Methods**

The methods used in the mentoring sessions vary widely among students. Kids and adults have very different goals and motivations for their participation in PALMA. As a mentor, it is your responsibility to plan the sessions in the way that will be most beneficial to your student.

### **Prek-12**

Students that are currently in schools should bring the homework with which they have difficulty. When your student remembers to do this and wants help with his/her schoolwork, this should be the focus of your lesson. However, many students forget to bring their homework or claim that there was none assigned.

Because of the frequency of this occurrence, it is important to have a backup lesson for each session.

After the first few weeks you will have some understanding of the student's level of English and what they are studying in school. In addition to helping your student with his/her homework, you can:

1. Find resources online or in the library that will be useful in helping them in learning English or reading if the student still has room to grow in these areas
2. Spend five to ten minutes at asking your student about his/her day/family/school/favorite activity, etc. Finding a subject on which you can connect will make your student feel comfortable and more eager to converse with you in later sessions.
3. Prepare a lesson plan surrounding a subject that your student is studying if you have a firm grasp on the subject for days when no homework is assigned.
4. Read a book from the library. Allow your student to choose a book and read it together. This will promote the growth of his/her vocabulary, sharpen his/her literacy skills, and help form a relationship between the student and you.
5. Ask your student to write a summary of the reading or a letter to a friend. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the writing.
6. Practice speaking Spanish with your student. This is beneficial for several reasons: Obviously, it helps to improve your Spanish (yay!). Additionally, studies show that if a person doesn't know his/her mother tongue very well, it is much harder for him/her to learn another language. Also, it will give your student a sense of authority and comfort, which will help develop your relationship. It also reassures the student that being a Spanish speaker is OK. They may face discrimination at school or elsewhere, but should be reminded that speaking Spanish is a valuable skill and a part of their culture and family to be proud of.
7. Feel free to utilize the computers at the library but make sure that you **don't** just give your student a computer and get started on *your* homework. During the 90 minutes that you are with your student, he/she should be your focus.

It is also helpful to be in contact with your student's parents and teachers. It is likely that you will meet his/her parents during PALMA. When you do so, ask them how you can best help their child, and for contact information for their teachers. The Ann Arbor public schools system is familiar with PALMA and is usually very enthusiastic about the help that it provides to its students. E-mail the student's teacher to find out about what the student is studying and in which areas they are struggling.

## **Adults**

Most of the adult participants in PALMA are motivated to learn English out of necessity. They live in a world that requires them to speak and understand the language competently. Mentoring adults can be very challenging, but becoming comfortable with your students learning to prepare for your lessons will prevent you from feeling lost or overwhelmed. As you become familiar with your student's English abilities and learning style, you will develop your own ideas about how to best spend your sessions. Some ideas for teaching adults include:

1. Using online ESL resources (worksheets and grammar lessons) to help teach the mechanics of the English language
2. Referring to the textbook (Side by Side) and assigning homework to discuss in future sessions
3. Asking your student to write a letter to fully engage them in the creation of complete thoughts, and talking about areas that need improvement
4. Reading newspaper/magazine articles or books together and discussing the content
5. Using a tape recorder to record the student speaking and discussing issues of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar
6. Preparing vocabulary lists of words that are necessary in the student's daily life and using the words in sentences in the lessons (these lists could include vocabulary surrounding the bank, a restaurant, the doctor's office, the home, or the student's profession)
7. Working together with other mentor/participant pairs. This is a great way to build community among the participants in PALMA, and encourages students to learn from and teach each other.
8. **Talking!** Having a genuine conversation is the best way to engage your student in the language that they will use daily. This will also help them to build confidence with the use of English.

## **Online Educational Resources:**

A google search for “free ESL resources,” “elementary social studies activities,” etc. will pull up thousands of pages to work with. A few that we have found to be helpful are listed below.

### **PreK/Elementary/Middle School/High School/Resources**

<http://members.learningplanet.com/directory/index.asp>

List of activities by grade level

<http://www.funbrain.com/>

Good elementary school math games

<http://www.starfall.com>

Great reading/writing activities for elementary students

### **Adult ESL Resources**

<http://www.ielanguages.com/lessonplans.html>

Includes a variety of lesson plans and worksheets

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/spanish/learn\\_english/](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/spanish/learn_english/)

BBC provides english articles with spanish titles and definitions for important within the article. These are very helpful for teaching older students about grammar and sparks discussion about current issues.

<http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/330/grammar/index.htm>

A great resource for the mechanics of English grammar

<http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwesl/egw/verbs.htm>

Lists irregular verbs in English

<http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwesl/egw/rules.htm>

Provides info about English verbs and other grammar rules

<http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwesl/egw/rules.htm>

Online grammar lessons/worksheets. A great way to use the computers during PALMA.