Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Session Principles

While there are a wide variety of activities that occur during PAL sessions, it is critical to focus on the basic principles that guide the activities and the decisions that the PAL Facilitator makes before, during, and after the PAL sessions.

Individual Principles	Sample of How the Principles Are Operational
1. A blend of session activities are preplanned by the PAL Facilitator and requested by the student participants during the session.	A. Facilitator completes a session planning form beforehand. Session activities are based on individual needs and student's current understanding of content, number of participants, group dynamics, and Facilitator's best judgment. B. (If applicable) PAL Facilitator prepares worksheets prior to the session. Session content and information is based on homework problems, guidance from the course instructor and best judgment. C. Students co-create the session agenda by listing items on the marker board in the room. D. Identify concepts and vocabulary not understood by a majority of students attending the PAL session. If only one student has an issue, PAL Facilitator can elect to meet privately with the student and/or direct them to the campus tutorial program for individual attention.
2. While the PAL Facilitator remains an authority within the sessions, their visibility in this role shifts throughout the academic term with more power and responsibility shared with students.	A. Power and responsibility is gradually shifted to students throughout the term. B. Students become proactive in identify essential tasks for the group to complete during PAL sessions. C. The PAL Facilitator gradually decreases their talking and modeling of problem solving. D. Students are given opportunities to talk more during both small group cooperative learning activities and large group discussions. E. Students increasingly take ownership of identifying the steps needed to solve problems. F. Students go to the marker board and serve as scribe when solving problems for the group. G. By the end of the term, due to the high engagement by all members of the student group, it is difficult for outsiders to detect who is the PAL Facilitator.
3. PAL Facilitator and participating students model productive learning behaviors that students adopt and adapt.	A. Both PAL Facilitator and session participants share strategies that are personally helpful.. B. Relate learning strategy directly to content and materials. C. Connections are made between the current course and the next one in the sequence or other courses within the major. D. Identify the most important information and concepts in the course. E. Look for "teachable moments" within the session to use a learning strategy in connection with course material. F. Preplan the use of a rotating set of learning strategies on the PAL session planning form. G. Keep these activities short and directly tied to the course material.

4. Sessions in academic content areas are different based on unique academic requirements	A. B. C.	PAL sessions appear and operate different in various academic content areas. Review PAL strategies from the manual and customize for use in the particular course. Factors that require different approaches for various academic disciplines: problem-solving, vocabulary, reading requirements, memorization, concept learning and synthesis among concepts.
5. There is high emphasis on understanding the process of solving a problem.	A. B. C. D. E. F.	In problem-solving courses, the PAL Facilitator pre-selects a representative set of problems to work during the session. Worksheets emphasize different components of the problem-solving process. PAL Facilitator works through and solves all problems on the worksheet so that they can facilitate others in the process and avoid potential errors. During the session, students generate the steps to solving a problem and discuss their approach on the marker board *before* beginning with the problem set. Students work individually and in groups to solve problems in the textbook, notes, or worksheets. Students direct the scribe at the marker board on solving the stated problem.
6. Students develop skill in self-monitoring their comprehension of course material and adapt to the learning task.	A. B.	Informal classroom assessment techniques are used to measure student understanding, help guide PAL session activities, and assess student learning. Students acquire strategies to self-test their own comprehension level with course material.
7. Multicultural sensitivity is expressed by the PAL Facilitator and the students.	A. B.	PAL Facilitator self-monitors their choices of content material, reading selections, and words spoken Session room is arranged so that students can see one another and converse easily.
8. Students are actively engaged with the course material and with each other.	A. B. C. D. E. F.	Students express behaviors that indicate involvement: taking notes, reading material, solving problems. Students work with one another through cooperative learning activities created by the PAL Facilitator PAL Facilitator preplans a variety of learning activities to use in their sessions. (If applicable) Roles and responsibilities for each member of peer group are clearly stated by the PAL Facilitator. PAL Facilitator circulates around the room to monitor the small group sessions, provide help when needed and monitor when to bring the large group back together. PAL Facilitator debriefs the peer group learning activity and checks for correct information by leading a discussion of what the purpose/focus of the activity was, and what information was learned as a result of the activity.
9. Good educational theory always guides effective learning practices.	A.	Carefully consider how individual PAL session activities and decisions made by the PAL Facilitator are guided by learning theories.