About the PALS Group...

The Physical Activity and Life Skills (PALS) Group at NIU is supported by the NIU Collaborative on Early Adolescence (NIU-CEA) and is headquartered in the Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education.

The PALS Group is committed to promoting healthy development and teaching life skills through physical activity. In the past two years, the PALS Group has been successful in establishing a local, national, and international presence as well as securing internal and external funds to support our efforts.

We have an impressive list of interdisciplinary affiliates, a national advisory board, and a network of international collaborators. We have active partnerships with local school districts and youth serving organizations with whom we offer youth programs, consult, and offer evaluation services.

Paul M. Wright
The PALS Group has been busy!

Director, Dr. Paul Wright, has represented the PALS Group in presentations and trainings in Canada, Mexico, and Spain in the past two years and by the end of May 2013 he will have also visited New Zealand, Germany, Finland, and Belize.

Since August 2013, the PALS Group has been hosting a visiting Fulbright Scholar, Dr. Barrie Gordon, from Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand.

Within NIU, the PALS Group has received support for students in the form of a NIU – Collaborative on Early Adolescence (NIU-CEA) Research Fellowship, a Great Journeys Assistantship, and an Undergraduate Research Assistantship as well as a research travel grant from the Office of International Affairs. These and other forms of support have enabled the PALS Group to deliver on its mission and achieve early success in terms of securing external funding.

In 2012, the PALS Group received a $5,000 grant from the C. Charles Jackson Foundation to support a local outreach/action research project.

Over the summer, Dr. Wright, through the NIU-CEA network, was invited by Dr. David Valentiener to serve as a co-PI on an NIH grant proposal for $427,911 to study a shyness mindset intervention to facilitate the transition to middle school.

The PALS Group’s largest success to date involves a recently awarded grant for $224,956 from the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. This grant will fund a three year project, to support youth sport organizations in Belize to integrate youth development into their programs and coaching practices. The Belizean Youth Sport Coalition (BYSC) Project will involve two-way exchange, training for program directors and coaches, as well as ongoing consulting and evaluation. Dr. Paul Wright, Director of the PALS Group, is the project director. His co-directors include Drs. Jim Ressler and Bill Pitney from the Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education as well as Dr. Lina Ong from NIU’s Office of International Affairs.

The NIU-CEA has supported the PALS Group’s success through networking opportunities, administrative support, website development, and hosting high profile guests as NIU-CEA Colloquium speakers, Dr. Tom Martinek in April 2013 and Dr. Barrie Gordon in November 2013.

For more information about the PALS Group, please visit www.niu.edu/cea/pals/.