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## GRADE 6: INTRODUCTION TO PATERSON PATHWAYS

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# INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCTION & ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**GRADE: 6**

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### PATERSON PATHWAYS:

CLEAR, CAREFUL, AND CREATIVE PLANNING FOR LIFE BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

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#### WHAT IS PATERSON PATHWAYS?

**Paterson Pathways is a life skills and planning curriculum for students in grades 6 through 8. It aims to help students make clear, careful, and creative plans for life beyond high school, and:**

- **Enhance student achievement** by helping students evaluate their own skills, interests, and accomplishments; successfully make the transition between middle and high school; take more challenging courses; and understand the relationship between school and life after graduation.
- **Build meaningful relationships** between each student and at least one adult at school, thereby helping students remain engaged and motivated and lessening the chance for dropping out.
- **Involve parents or guardians** by engaging them in students' decisions, sharing comprehensive information about students' progress, and inviting them to annual student-led conferences.
- **Strengthen community** within schools and in the neighborhoods in which students and their families live by offering students meaningful service-learning and leadership opportunities.

Paterson Pathways is based on the Navigation 101 Curriculum, first developed by the Franklin Pierce School District. Because of its success there, the program was then replicated in a number of other districts around Washington State.

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### WHY PATERSON PATHWAY?

Paterson has chosen an advisory system that we feel will best meet the needs of Paterson students. It offers a personalized advisory curriculum that helps students with academic improvement; planning and goal setting; career and college preparation; community service learning and leadership; and basic life skills.

### HOW IS PATERSON PATHWAYS TAUGHT?

Paterson Pathways has been designed around monthly themes. **Paterson has adapted the curriculum into weekly advisory sessions to meet New Jersey Secondary Initiative requirements.** Each advisory session is designed to be 30 minutes long, and schools typically operate on an assembly schedule on advisory days to allow time for the advisory session. The discussion guides in this series provide easy-to-follow, step-by-step instructions for advisory sessions. Each discussion packet includes:

- **A weekly discussion guide**, with discussion goals, a list of needed materials, a summary of classroom activities, and information about students' work products;
- **Ready-to-copy student REFLECTION handout(s)**; Copies of have been placed in the back of every student's binder.
- **A Resource Guide** for advisors, with background information on the lesson's academic and guidance standards, the lesson's themes and classroom activities, suggestions for community-building and supplemental activities, and a preview of the next month's lesson.

### WHO PARTICIPATES IN PATERSON PATHWAYS?

**Ideally, each student in your school will participate in Paterson Pathways from 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade** and will be able to remain in a single advisory group (same advisor, same group of students) throughout middle school. Paterson will begin implementation in September 2007 with all 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. In September 2008, all students in grades 6 through 8 will participate.

Guidance counselors guide the Paterson Pathways effort, and they are called on frequently to provide their expertise. **But each advisory group is led by a classroom teacher or other certified staff**, who can help students see the connections between their academic work and their plans for the future, and who can build long-term relationships with students that will help them stay engaged and motivated at school.

Teachers are aided in their role as advisors by the Paterson Pathways discussion guides. Each guide is clear, simple, and easy to use; and designed so that a busy teacher can walk into the classroom and begin the advisory session with minimal preparation. Each guide has the same format and structure so that the program is easy to follow from month to month and year to year.

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### IS PATERSON PATHWAYS BASED ON STANDARDS?

**Paterson Pathways is based on both academic and guidance standards.** Each discussion guide was initially developed based on :

- **New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards** with Grade Level Expectation level of specificity;

**And**

- **American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model Standards** in the areas of personal and social, career, and/or academic development.

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### WHAT TOPICS DOES PATERSON PATHWAYS COVER?

**Each month's Paterson Pathways advisory session is based around a theme.** Each theme repeats each year to help organize the curriculum and, through this annual repetition, to help students retain key points about what they are learning. The themes cover academic preparation and improvement; planning and goal setting; career and college preparation; community service and leadership; and basic life skills, such as using money wisely.

Each month's theme includes several "Essential Questions." These questions inform the content of the discussion guide and the student assignments, building on the theme to help students remember the key points from the discussion. These essential questions are also used each year to help students organize their presentations for their student-led conferences. The Paterson Pathways themes and essential questions are:

| <b>Month</b> | <b>Theme</b>                          | <b>Essential Questions</b>   |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| September    | Setting Goals                         | What do I want to do with my life?<br>What do I want to achieve this year? |
| October      | Improving Academically                | How am I doing academically?<br>How can I do better?                       |
| November     | Planning for Next Year                | What are my academic goals?<br>How am I doing with my academic plan?       |
| December     | Exploring Careers                     | What are my interests?<br>How can I pursue them?                           |
| January      | Planning for Life After High School   | What will I do after high school?<br>How can I prepare?                    |
| February     | Building Community                    | How can I get involved?<br>How can I contribute?                           |
| March        | Using Money                           | What are my financial goals?<br>How do I use money wisely?                 |
| April        | Preparing for Student-led Conferences | Who am I?<br>How can I present myself clearly?                             |
| May          | Updating the Four-Year Plan           | What do I want to do in the future?<br>How can I prepare?                  |

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### HOW DOES PATERSON PATHWAYS FOCUS STUDENTS ON THE FUTURE?

As part of their Paterson Pathways advisory sessions, students are asked to develop a number of different plans for the future each year. By thinking carefully about different aspects of their goals for the future, students learn how to connect what they are doing now to what they hope to achieve... and then have the incentive to do better in school. Paterson Pathways plans include:

- Goals for each school year, prepared each September for the year ahead.
- Plans for extracurricular and service-learning activities.
- An academic improvement plan, prepared after reviewing first quarter grades.
- College and career plans based on what those goals require in terms of academics.
- Financial plans, focused on how to budget, use, and save money.
- A coursework plan to help guide the student in registering for academic courses each year.
- A four-year plan, updated each year, to allow students to think big about the longer term.

### HOW DOES PATERSON PATHWAYS ORGANIZE STUDENT WORK?

Each Paterson Pathways advisory session refers students to their **PORTFOLIOS**, which are their records of their accomplishments in school. Portfolios include samples of students' work, grades, test and assessment results, educational and career plans, community service records, honors or awards they've received, and notes from their student-led conferences.

Each Paterson Pathways advisory session includes time for students to review and update their portfolios, based on checklists students are provided at the beginning of each year (as part of the October Paterson Pathways discussion guide). Portfolios should be organized so students can collect material in the following categories, which are based on the ASCA standards:

- **Academic Development (*Learner*)**. This section of the portfolio includes students' grades and transcript information, test and assessment results, and samples of work from each of their classes. It also includes the plans students develop for their academic performance each year.
- **Career Development (*Career*)**. This section of the portfolio includes research students do on careers that interest them, as well as their resumes and information about any summer or part-time jobs they hold while they're in school.
- **Personal and Social Development (*Citizen*)**. This section documents students' involvement within the school community and within the larger neighborhood community. It includes information on school clubs and sports that students are part of, community service they've completed either individually or as part of a group, and other extracurricular activities, such as select sports teams, music or drama ensembles, or clubs. It also includes information about the student-led conference each student is asked to organize each year for his or her parents or guardians and advisor.

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### HOW DOES PATERSON PATHWAYS FOCUS ON ACADEMICS?

A significant part of each year in Paterson Pathways is focused on academics: keeping portfolios, reviewing grades and exam results, developing academic improvement plans, and planning for academic coursework, in middle school, high school, and beyond.

One key difference between Paterson Pathways and students' other classes is that Paterson Pathways doesn't necessarily teach new academic content, but rather **helps students reflect on their academic performance and then plan for the future**. Students are encouraged to improve their academic performance based on their strengths and weaknesses. They're given information about the coursework required for four-year or community college and then urged to enroll in advanced and "gate-keeping" courses while in middle and high school. And they're frequently asked to make connections between what they're currently learning and how they will use those skills after high school.

In the Franklin Pierce School District, where Paterson Pathways was initiated, students participating in Paterson Pathways improved their academic performance and enrolled in more challenging courses thanks to the encouragement and help they received from their advisors.

### DOES PATERSON PATHWAYS MEET GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS?

Paterson Pathways can help your students meet the New Jersey graduation requirements for graduation from high school. Students' work throughout the years will be saved and organized in their portfolios. The end result will help students meet their graduation requirements as follows:

- **High School and Beyond Plan.** The plans students will prepare each year (as described above) when organized in a portfolio and presented as a coordinated unit will meet New Jersey Secondary Initiative advisory and portfolio requirements.
- **Credit Requirements.** Paterson Pathways' regular "credit checks" and attention to student transcripts and academic performance will help students ensure that they have the credits needed to graduate.
- **Certificate of Academic Achievement.** Paterson Pathways' annual Academic Improvement Plans will help students who need help with the NJASK receive it... and will help all students improve their academic performance.
- **Culminating Project.** Although schools may choose to organize students' culminating projects in a forum other than Paterson Pathways, the Paterson Pathways discussion guides include everything you need to help students propose and organize a culminating project work through Paterson Pathways.

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### HOW DOES PATERSON PATHWAYS FOCUS ON CAREERS?

**Paterson Pathways includes time each year to help students investigate career options.** Each year, the Paterson Pathways curriculum features two back-to-back advisory sessions – in December and January – that are focused on exploring careers and planning for life beyond high school. These sessions give students information about career opportunities and the education and training they'll need to pursue them.

The Paterson Pathways discussion guides suggest that each student take an interest or skills assessment once a year. *One is included in the curriculum, or you can use a free service, such as [www.careervoyages.gov](http://www.careervoyages.gov).* The guide also suggests job shadows for older students, to give them firsthand experience in a career area of interest.

### HOW – AND WHY – DOES PATERSON PATHWAYS FOCUS ON COMMUNITY?

**A significant part of each year in Paterson Pathways is focused on community-building:** getting involved in sports, clubs, and leadership activities at school; engaging in service-learning in the community; mentoring younger students; and participating in activities as a member of an advisory group.

Becoming involved in a community, learning to be of service, and learning how to lead are all lifelong skills that will benefit students no matter what their chosen academic or career paths. The Paterson Pathways curriculum helps students explore each of these roles in time. As new students at school (or in 6<sup>th</sup> grade) students are encouraged to become involved in the school community. Next (as 7<sup>th</sup> graders) they're guided through service-learning activities in the community. And then, as older students (in 8<sup>th</sup> grade) they become leaders, taking on responsibility for mentoring a group of younger students. These efforts lead to students' culminating projects in high school, in which they demonstrate what they have learned through a project in the community.

### HOW CAN OUR SCHOOL MANAGE COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES?

**Each off-campus or community-based activity suggested as part of Paterson Pathways is optional for your school.**

Paterson Education Fund has put together a cadre of community volunteers to help with identifying community resources. One Paterson Pathways community volunteer has been assigned to each school. Your Paterson Pathways Lead Advisor has contact information for that person.

In each case in which Paterson Pathways suggests an off-campus or community-based activity, the discussion guide gives advisors and schools a number of different options for implementing it:

- **You can pursue the activity using your school's materials and guidelines.** Some schools have already prepared detailed approaches to community-based activities such as service-learning or culminating projects. If this is the case for your school, feel free to replace the Paterson Pathways materials with your school's materials.

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- **You can pursue the activity using a combination of your school’s materials and the materials provided by Paterson Pathways.** Feel free to supplement the Paterson Pathways reflections and materials so that they will fit within your school’s traditions and practices.
- **You can contact your school’s Paterson Pathways Community Resource Volunteer** through the Lead Advisor and have him/her help you identify resources
- **You can choose not to pursue the activity at all**, substituting an alternate activity from the ones listed in the resource guide.
- **Of course, you can also use all the Paterson Pathways materials.** They’ve been prepared for your convenience, and have been designed to be as flexible as possible. These materials might help your school start a new activity or embark on new traditions.

### WHAT IS THE PATERSON PATHWAYS STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE?

**A focal point for the Paterson Pathways year is each student’s student-led conference for his or her parents or guardians and advisor.** One of the central tenets of Paterson Pathways is that, by middle school, students are capable of becoming full partners in their education. The student-led conference – which students organize, present at, and then reflect on – gives students a regular opportunity to direct their own educational paths while also gaining organizational and communications skills.

The student-led conference, which is held each spring, summarizes students’ accomplishments in the year to date; showcases students’ plans and goals for the coming years; and concludes with students’ plans for their course selections for the following year. The conference also provides a tangible way to involve parents or guardians in their children’s lives at school, by ensuring that they understand what their children are studying in school, how they are doing, and why their studies matter.

### WHAT IS THE PATERSON PATHWAYS FOCUS FOR SIXTH GRADE?

**The sixth grade focus in Paterson Pathways is adjusting to middle school.** The transition from elementary to middle school is a key one for students and is difficult for many: the coursework is more challenging, with more reading and more difficult assignments; students are often in a bigger school with a different teacher for each class; and it’s easy to get lost or overwhelmed.

By assigning students to an advisory group with other 6<sup>th</sup> graders and with an advisor who will come to know each of them, students gain a “home” in their new school. And by focusing, each month, on the basics of their performance at school – from their grades to the clubs they can join – they have a support network that will help them adjust to the new school, become engaged, and thrive.

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### WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Each advisor has been provided a CD with the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Paterson Pathways Curriculum. For more information about Paterson Pathways, please contact Rosie Grant at Paterson Education Fund at [rosieg@paterson-education.org](mailto:rosieg@paterson-education.org) or visit the PEF web site at [www.paterson-education.org](http://www.paterson-education.org).