



DISCUSSION GUIDE

GRADE: 6

MONTH: SEPTEMBER

THEME: SETTING GOALS

PATERSON PATHWAYS:

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

USING THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE:

Paterson Pathways is a life skills and planning curriculum for students in grades 6 through 8. This discussion guide is part of the Paterson Pathways series. It has been designed to be taught in a weekly “advisory” class period.

This *Grade 6 September* packet includes:

- A **weekly Discussion Guide**,
- Ready-to-copy **student Reflection(s)**, and
- A **Resource Guide** with background information for advisors.

DISCUSSION GOALS:

Get acquainted with the students in your advisory group and help them get to know you and each other.

Help students understand the value of keeping a portfolio.

Help students set goals for the year

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

What do I want to do with my life?

What do I want to achieve this year?

WEEK 1: GET ACQUAINTED

Introduce yourself to the students in your advisory group. Welcome them to the school (or new school year) and let them know that you and they will be meeting together in the same advisory group until they graduate.

Before you describe the advisory process or the Paterson Pathways curriculum in more detail, **help the students get to know each other and you, their advisor, through a fun icebreaker exercise.** Several possible icebreakers are listed in this guide, or you can choose one of your own.

The 6th graders in your advisory group may be awkward and unsure of themselves. Use your get acquainted time to have a little fun, help them relax, and help them get to know each other and you, their advisor. Serve donuts or cookies, or play Pictionary or charades. Here are several additional suggestions for icebreakers, or feel free to use an icebreaker of your own.

Icebreaker Exercise Idea #1: Student Interviews

Divide students into pairs (if you have an uneven number of students, you can work with one student or you can create one group of three). Ask one student in each pair to interview the other to learn the major points of the other student's life: name, siblings, pets, summer vacation activities, favorite color, favorite food, etc. After about two minutes, have students switch roles and interview the other person in the pair. After another two minutes, have each student introduce his or her partner to the class. Who has learned the most fun facts?

Icebreaker Exercise Idea #2: Trivia Musical Chairs

Arrange chairs in a circle so that there are one fewer chairs than people. Have each student sit in a chair. You, the advisor, should be in the perimeter of the circle of chairs, but should remain standing. Call out a trivia fact and ask every student for whom that fact is true to quickly find a chair (you, too!) (For instance, you might call out, "Everyone with brown eyes, find a new chair!" Or "Everyone who's taking Spanish in school this year, find a new chair!") You should sit down during this first round, so that one of the students is standing. That student should introduce him- or herself, and then should call out a new trivia fact (you may prompt students if they need ideas – hair color, shirt color, take the bus vs. walk, etc.). Play for several rounds. Then, with the students seated and the advisor once again standing, go around the room again and have each student introduce him- or herself along with one piece of trivia (for example, "My name is Katie and I take the bus to school.")

Icebreaker Exercise Idea #3: Name Game

Have your students stand or sit in a circle. Introduce yourself again. (“Hi, my name is Mrs. Baker.”) Then ask the student to your right to introduce him- or herself and also to repeat your name. (“Hi, my name is Reggie and her name is Mrs. Baker.”) Repeat, until each student has introduced him- or herself and repeated the name of the person ahead.

Icebreaker Exercise Idea #4: Name Game with Movement

Have your students stand or sit in a circle. Introduce yourself again and make a movement as you do so. (For instance, say “Hi, my name is Mrs. Baker,” while you hop on one foot.) Then have the students greet you while repeating your movement. (They respond, “Hi, Mrs. Baker!” while all hopping on one foot.) Go around the circle. Have each student introduce him- or herself while making a movement (flapping arms, jumping in place, etc.). For each introduction, have all the students repeat the name and the movement. After you’ve gone around the circle, you can point at individual students and see how many can remember their names and movements.

EXPLAIN THE ROLE OF ADVISORIES

After you’ve all introduced yourselves, explain that each student will meet with his or her advisory group once a week. Then explain that:

- Each **advisory group will stay the same** throughout each student’s time at school (same advisor, same group of students).
- Advisories will help students make **clear, careful, and creative plans** for life beyond high school.
- Advisories will help students **reflect on what they are learning** and how they are doing in school.
- Advisories will help students **get more involved** at your school and in the larger community.

Next, explain advisory logistics, such as how your school’s schedule will work on advisory days; and discuss your expectations for students’ behavior. See if students have questions.

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:**

Icebreaker supplies (if desired). Depending on the icebreaker exercise you select, you may need materials or props.

WEEK 2:

EXPLAIN PORTFOLIOS

Distribute a copy of the *KEEPING A PORTFOLIO REFLECTION* from this discussion guide to each student.

Explain that each student's portfolio will be a record of his or her accomplishments at school. The portfolios will contain students' grades, work samples, plans for the future, and a record of community service, awards, and honors. Explain that portfolios are important in several ways:

- **They help students organize important information.** Employers, colleges, and even sports teams or music ensembles will all want information on students' academic records. With a portfolio, those records will be easily available and already organized.
- **They help students plan for the future.** By letting students see how their work has progressed from year to year, portfolios help students determine what they are good at and what they want to do.
- **They help students market themselves.** Portfolios keep students' academic work close at hand. **Students will need their portfolios each year at their student-led conferences (*and stress this point, as it should be a good incentive for students to keep an up-to-date portfolio, knowing that their parents or guardians and advisor will see their work!*).** In addition, students may need information from their portfolios when applying to join organizations, get a job, or go to college.

Ask students if they have any questions about why they'll be keeping portfolios. **Mention again the fact that they will present their portfolios to their parents or guardians and advisor next spring during a student-led conference.**

Next, explain the logistics of creating, maintaining a portfolio, and what materials they will need.

Hand each student a portfolio and allow students to take a few minutes to examine the portfolio.

Next, take a few minutes to help students set up a portfolio by explaining binder dividers. Paterson Pathways suggests an overall structure that includes three categories based on the American School Counselors Association (ASCA) standards:

- **(Learner) Academic Development.** This section of the portfolio will include students' grades and transcript information, test and assessment results, and samples of work from each of their

classes. It will also include the plans they develop for their academic performance each year.

- **(Career) Career Development.** This section of the portfolio will include the results of the career cluster interest survey they will complete in December, research students do on careers that interest them, as well as, when they are old enough, their resumes and information about summer or part-time jobs.
- **(Citizen) Personal and Social Development.** This section will document students' involvement within your school community and within the larger neighborhood community. It will include information on school clubs and sports students participate in, community service they have completed either individually or as part of a group, and other extracurricular activities. It will also include information about the student-led conference they'll be asked to organize each year.
- **Allow the students to write their names on the Portfolio cover insert.**

Next month, students will be given a checklist of items they will be expected to add to their portfolios over the course of the year; for this week, the focus will be on setting up the portfolio so that it is ready for them to start adding materials, starting next week with their goal statements

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:**

KEEPING A PORTFOLIO REFLECTION included in this guide. Please make each student a copy.

Portfolio supplies. Binders, paper, etc.

WEEK 3 & 4:

SET GOALS FOR THE YEAR

After students have set up their portfolios, they will create the first thing that will go in their portfolios: a **goal statement** for the school year.

Ask them this question: **What do you want to do this year?** Explain that if they set **goals** they will be more likely to succeed.

Before students begin writing their goal statements, lead them in a discussion of what they'd like to accomplish this year. Ask students if they want to get good grades, to join any clubs or go out for sports, or to make new friends. Ask them what would make this a good year.

Then ask students to think about what they can **DO** to accomplish these goals. Getting good grades or making a team won't just happen: what will it take?

Explain to students that if they set **goals** they will be more likely to have a good year. And if they write those goals down and are very clear about what it will take to achieve them, they will be more likely to succeed.

Distribute a copy of the **ANNUAL GOALS REFLECTION** to each student and ask each student to use it to create a goal statement for the school year. Goals can be for academic achievement, extracurricular activities, or anything else the student finds meaningful. The goal statement should start: **"This year, I will..."** Each goal should be **"SMART,"** that is:

- **Specific:** A goal that is specific has a much greater chance of being accomplished than one that is vague. A vague goal would be, *"I want to do well in school this year."* But a specific goal would be, *"I want to get above a 3.0 GPA."*
- **Measurable:** A measurable goal includes concrete criteria for measuring progress. When students measure their progress (through their grades, classes taken, clubs joined, attendance, or homework completed), they are more likely to stay on track and keep working toward their goals.
- **Achievable:** Students' goals must be realistic and achievable for 6th grade. Learning to play the violin this year by participating in the school orchestra would be a realistic goal; learning to drive this year would likely not.
- **Rewarding:** Students' goals should be positive rather than negative and, if possible, fun to achieve. Each goal should list something the student wants to do or wants to make happen.

- **Time-oriented:** Goals are more likely to be achieved when there is a target date. Students will have many opportunities to develop long-term goals for their lives. For this exercise, though, their goals should all be for this school year, and each goal should be able to be accomplished by the end of the school year.

Students should begin their goal statements now and finalize them at next week's advisory meeting. They will add their goal statements to their portfolios next month.

MATERIALS NEEDED: *ANNUAL GOALS REFLECTION* included in this guide. Please make each student a copy.

Portfolio supplies. Binders, paper, etc.

STUDENT PRODUCTS:

Your students will be expected to create one product from this lesson:

Each student should complete an *ANNUAL GOALS REFLECTION*



REFLECTION

KEEPING A PORTFOLIO

WHAT IS A PORTFOLIO? WHY DO I NEED ONE?

SEPTEMBER – 6TH GRADE

WHAT IS A PORTFOLIO?

A portfolio is your record of your accomplishments in school. It includes samples of your work, your grades, your test and assessment results, your educational and career plans, a record of your community service, honors or awards you've received, and your notes from your student-led conferences.

WHY IS A PORTFOLIO IMPORTANT?

Your portfolio will be an important part of your life at school. It will help you in many ways:

- **To organize important information.** Your portfolio will store information from school, so it will always be available when you need it. You won't have to scramble to find an old report card, or proof of how many credits you have, or that paper you got an 'A' on. The information will all be right there. You'll also be able to use your portfolio to store photos of your artwork, video of your achievements on the sports field or the stage, or recordings of your musical performances.
- **To help you plan for the future.** The information in your portfolio will help you track how you're doing in school each year, and that will help you set goals for each year and figure out what you're good at. Keeping track of how you do will help you plan for life in high school and beyond. It will also show you how you've improved each year.
- **To market yourself.** You'll need to present the contents of your portfolio to your parents or guardians and your advisor at your student-led conference next spring. Your portfolio will let them know how well you're doing. In addition, having a good portfolio will help you present yourself professionally to high schools, employers, colleges, and other organizations. Make sure you keep your portfolio updated and keep the information in your portfolio well organized.

HOW DO I ORGANIZE MY PORTFOLIO?

Your portfolio will be organized to include information about three different aspects of your life:

- **(Learner) Academic Development.** This section of your portfolio will include your grades and transcript information, test and assessment results, and samples of work from each of your classes. It will also include the plans you create for your academic performance each year.
- **(Career) Career Development.** This section of your portfolio will include the results of the career cluster interest survey they will complete in December, research you do on careers that interest you, as well as (when you're in high school) your resume, a sample job application, and information about any summer or part-time jobs you hold while you're in school.
- **(Citizen) Personal and Social Development.** This section will document your involvement within your school community and within the community where you live. It will include information on school clubs and sports you're part of, community service you'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 will also include information about the student-led conference you'll be asked to organize each year.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

Your school has provided a binder for your portfolio.

Your advisor will explain how portfolios are kept, and will give you any supplies you need to get started.

You'll be given a checklist of items that you'll add to your portfolio over the course of this school year. You'll have an opportunity to add to your portfolio each week.

You'll start your portfolio by developing a list of goals for yourself for this school year. What do you want to accomplish this year? How will you do it? Dream big... and then save it in your portfolio!



REFLECTION

ANNUAL GOALS

SEPTEMBER – 6TH GRADE

Name: _____

Advisor: _____

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH THIS YEAR?

You'll do better in school this year – and in life, generally – if you have clear goals you're working to achieve. What do you want to accomplish?

Take a few minutes to write down a few goals for the school year ahead of you. Your goals can be about academic achievement, extracurricular activities, or anything else important to you.

Remember that each goal should be "SMART," that is:

- **Specific** rather than general (*Such as: "I want above a 3.0 GPA"*).
- **Measurable** by the types of classes taken, or grades, or attendance.
- **Achievable** or realistic for a 6th grade student.
- **Rewarding** or positive, rather than negative, and fun to achieve.
- **Time-oriented** and able to be finished by the end of the school year.

SIXTH GRADE GOALS:



RESOURCE GUIDE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR LEAD ADVISORS AND INTERESTED TEACHERS ON:

GRADE 6 – SEPTEMBER SETTING GOALS

USING THIS RESOURCE GUIDE:

Each Paterson Pathways discussion guide includes a *Resource Guide* for advisors. The *Resource Guide* has been prepared as a handy reference to give you more information on the following topics:

- **Essential Questions.** Each Paterson Pathways discussion guide is built around a monthly theme, and each theme includes two Essential Questions. Focusing on these Essential Questions will help your students retain information from this discussion.
- **New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards.** Each Paterson Pathways discussion guide is based on NJCCCS from the relevant grade's Grade Level Expectations.
- **ASCA Standards.** Each Paterson Pathways discussion guide is based on American School Counselor Association (ASCA) standards.
- **Community-building Opportunities.** The *Resource Guide* suggests several community-building opportunities related to each discussion. You and your students can pursue them if you wish.
- **Additional Activities.** The *Resource Guide* also suggests supplemental activities for your group if you have more time, or if you want to devote more attention to a particular theme.

**ESSENTIAL
QUESTIONS:**

Each Paterson Pathways discussion guide is built 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 the lessons they are learning.

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 guide. These essential questions will also be used later in the year to help students organize their presentations for their student-led conferences.

This month's theme is **Setting Goals**. The Essential Questions are:

- What do I want to do with my life?
- What do I want to achieve this year?

As students begin the school year, they'll be encouraged to think about their goals for the future and, specifically, about what they can do during the school year to achieve those goals. Through their goal statements, students will be encouraged:

- To think about their interests and dreams for the future;
- To plan ways to do better academically;
- To take on more active leadership roles at school and in the community;
- To become better citizens through active participation at school and volunteer service in the community; and
- To explore the skills and attributes that will help them identify their career interests and then secure the training and education they need to succeed in that career.

The goal-setting exercise in this discussion guide builds on the Essential Questions with more specific questions and instructions for the students.

However, feel free to weave these Essential Questions into every part of the guide, helping students see the start of a new school year (and a new school) as a chance to reassess and start fresh. What would make this year a success? What can they do to make sure they succeed? These questions are particularly important as your students adjust to middle school. How can they make the transition successfully?

As you discuss the guide think about how you can help students make the connection between their actions this year and their goals for the years ahead.

COMMUNITY-BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES:

Part of the aim of the Paterson Pathways curriculum is to help students grow into a larger role in their community.

“Community” here includes both the community of the school (in which students can join clubs, play sports, or take on a leadership role in student government) and also the larger community in which they live (in which students can perform volunteer service or join community organizations, such as select sports teams, music or drama ensembles, or other groups).

Each discussion in the Paterson Pathways curriculum highlights opportunities to help students think about or actually take on a larger role in one of these two communities.

In this guide, the main community-building opportunity is helping students in your advisory group get to know each other and you, their advisor. Some students are new to the school and all are new to middle school generally. They may not know many of their classmates. They may be nervous about the beginning of a new school year. By introducing yourself and helping them get to know you and each other, students will be able to become more comfortable at school. They will know that they have a group of people – an adult and other students – who know them and whom they’ll see every month until they graduate. Studies have shown that the presence of these types of connections, particularly with a trusted adult, can help keep students engaged and motivated at school and help keep them from dropping out. Hopefully you’ll be able to build these relationships over the next several years, making your advisory meetings a place where students feel safe, respected, and trusted.

In addition, if you have more time, you may wish to help students get to know the school and school community better. You might want to have students take a tour of the school (if they haven’t taken one already during a new student orientation). You might want to organize presentations on school clubs and sports. Or you might want to reinforce rules and expectations at the school, by reviewing the student handbook, for instance. This could also be a time to go over school policies on computer and Internet use, use of cell phones and electronics on the school campus, and rules of behavior toward others.

In some schools, students in advisory groups take on group volunteer projects, either within the school or in the larger community. Volunteer service is covered later in the Paterson Pathways curriculum; however, if you have the time and inclination, you might want to engage your students in volunteer projects from the start as a way to help them build bonds with each other and with other people in their community.

**ADDITIONAL
ACTIVITIES:**

If you have accomplished all the activities outlined in the discussion guide and want supplemental activities for your students, you may wish to:

- **Invite older students to talk about their goals for the year.** The Paterson Pathways curriculum suggests inviting older students to talk with younger students next month. But, you could ask older students to regularly “advise” younger students on their progress, or partner with an 8th grade group for regular meetings.
- **Ask your students to share their schedules with their parents or guardians.** Ask your students to introduce their parents or guardians to their new school by sharing their course schedule for the fall and discussing their classes. This could be good preparation for Back to School Night.
- **Have lunch together as an advisory group.** As another way of helping the students in your group get to know each other, order pizza or have students bring sack lunches, and have lunch together.
- **Take a walking/cleaning tour of the neighborhood.** Give each student a trash bag and pair of plastic gloves. Walk the perimeter of the school picking up garbage and talking about the school and the neighborhood.
- **Host a computer tutorial.** If your school is computer-oriented, host a tutorial to help 6th graders learn how to accomplish basic functions on your computer system.

**PREPARING FOR
NEXT MONTH:**

Next month’s Paterson Pathways session is focused on helping students understand assessments and use information from their grades and test scores to improve their academic performance. Here’s how you can plan ahead for next month:

- **Obtain a copy of each student’s NJASK scores.** Students’ NJASK scores from spring of 5th grade should be available during October. Students will need their NJASK scores for the October advisory session, and will then add their scores to their portfolios.
- **Obtain a copy of each student’s first progress report.** Students will also review their first progress report during the October session, and will then add their report to their portfolios.
- **Obtain copies of *ANNUAL GOALS REFLECTION*, *PROTFOLIO CHECKLIST REFLECTION*, and *LEARNING STYLES REFLECTION* for each student.**

**N.J.C.C.C.S.
LANGUAGE ARTS LITERACY****Writing**

- 3.2.6.D.1 Write for different purposes (e.g. to express ideas, inform, entertain, respond to literature, persuade, question, reflect, clarify, share) and a variety of audiences (e.g. self, peers, community).
- 3.2.6.D.2 Gather, select, and organize information appropriate to a topic, task, and audience.
- 3.2.6.D.10 Use a variety of strategies to organize writing, including sequence, chronology, cause/effect, problem/solution, and order of importance.

Speaking

- 3.3.6.A.2 Present ideas and opinions spontaneously in response to a topic or other speakers.
- 3.3.6.C.1 Paraphrase, illustrate, clarify, and/or expand on a topic or idea.
- 3.3.6.C.2 Develop and use advanced vocabulary related to a topic.
- 3.3.6.C.3 Use language that stimulates an audience's interest.

Listening

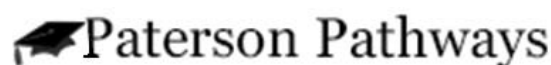
- 3.4.6.A.1 Listen actively for a variety of purposes such as enjoyment and obtaining information.
- 3.4.6.A.3 Acknowledge the speaker through eye contact and use appropriate feedback and question clarify the speaker's message.

**CAREER EDUCATION AND CONSUMER, FAMILY AND LIFE SKILLS
(grades 5-8)**

- 9.1.B.2 Develop an employment package that includes a job application, letter of interest, and resume.

**ASCA
STANDARDS:**

The Paterson Pathways curriculum is based on the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model, to provide teachers and students with a clear way to integrate school counseling and academic achievement. This discussion guide focuses on the following ASCA Standards:



ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

- A:A2 Acquire skills for improvement learning (demonstrate how effort and persistence positively affect learning).
- A:B2 Plan to achieve goals (develop and implement an annual plan of study to maximize academic ability and achievement)