



DISCUSSION GUIDE

GRADE: 6
MONTH: FEBRUARY
THEME: BUILDING COMMUNITY

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 single, weekly “advisory” class period.

This *Grade 6 February* packet includes:

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

DISCUSSION GOALS:

Help students become involved with the school community.

Build community with older students.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

How can I get involved?

How can I contribute?



WEEK 1:

REVIEW POSTSECONDARY OPTIONS

At last month's advisory session, students learned about the importance of receiving education beyond high school (two year or four year college, or other specialized training). They then researched the type of education they'd need to realize their long-term goals.

- Ask students to bring their completed ***POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION REFLECTIONS*** to the discussion.
- Discuss what they learned about the type of education they will need to pursue their dreams. Were they surprised? Will they need more education – or a different kind – than they imagined? What will their educational needs mean for them in middle and high school?

Students learned that there are very few career opportunities that do not require some type of education beyond high school.

- Give students time to finalize their reflections if needed.

UPDATE PORTFOLIOS Ask students to add their ***POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION REFLECTIONS*** to their portfolios (*Career Section*) and check them off on their portfolio checklists.

Then ask them to review their portfolio checklists and see if they have anything else that should be added. Have they done any work for any of their classes over the last month that they'd like to add?

Remind students that they will be presenting their portfolios to you and their parents or guardians in just a few months. Are they happy with the condition of their portfolios?

Tell students that next advisory you will be discussing Community Building. Ask students to come in with ideas on how to Build A Community within your own school.

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:**

Student portfolios and *PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST REFLECTION*.

Students will need access to their portfolios at each advisory session.

***POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION REFLECTIONS* from January.**

Students should bring their goal reflections to this discussion.

WEEK 2:

DISCUSS COMMUNITY BUILDING

This discussion is fundamentally about building community. For 6th grade students, community-building focuses around their school community. They will be given information about school activities and encouraged to join them; and they may have the opportunity to meet with older students to hear about school traditions and activities from their perspective.

Think about ways you can follow up on this discussion to encourage each student in your advisory group to join a school activity. What will make each student feel “at home” at school? How can they become involved? How can they contribute?

You might also want to think of ways your advisory group, as a group, can participate in the larger school community. Can your group serve the school in some way – by picking up litter, by holding a bake sale, by organizing an assembly, by sponsoring an after-school study session? Does your group want to give itself a nickname or start a new club together? How can you use the small community of your advisory group to help students venture out into the larger community of the school?

- **Plan an activity as a group.** What can your group do to help the school? Can you put on a skit for a school spirit assembly? Participate in a school clean-up? Hold a bake sale and donate the money to charity? Think about activities your group can take on to build team spirit and help your school.

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:**

Student portfolios and *PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST REFLECTION*.

Students will need access to their portfolios at each advisory session.

WEEK 3:

DISCUSS SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

The research is clear: **students who are engaged and involved in their school communities do better academically and are less likely to drop out of school or skip classes.**

Because becoming involved in the life of the larger community is so important – both for students’ immediate academic prospects and also as a long-term life skill – the Paterson Pathways curriculum offers many opportunities to help students think about their role within the larger community, to get involved, and to take on leadership roles.

The students in your advisory group are new to middle school. They may not be aware of all the opportunities this school offers, or they may be a little intimidated about joining.

Of course, some of the students in your advisory group may have already joined sports teams, orchestra or band, or other clubs and activities this year; but it is likely that many have not.

Distribute a list of **all extracurricular activities** to each student. Review the list briefly with students, noting which activities require some type of prerequisite (such as music ensembles, which may require musical training or registration in a music class), and which activities are open to anyone. Also note which activities are already underway and too late to join this year (such as fall sports), and which are still open for enrollment.

Then ask students why it’s a good idea for them to join at least one extracurricular activity. You might want to help the discussion along by noting that joining activities benefits students by:

- **Helping them get to know the school** and get to know teachers and other students better.
- **Helping them stand out (in a good way!)** by making a positive contribution to the school.
- **Helping them pursue their interests** and get better at something they already enjoy (soccer, chess, or photography, for instance).
- **Helping them prepare for life in high school and beyond** by demonstrating their interests and skills.

Ask students what types of activities they participated in during elementary school. What activities seem interesting to them this year? Do they have an idea for a new activity that is not currently offered at your school? Would any of them like to try to start a new club?

After the discussion, ask your students to think about the activities you’ve discussed. Then distribute a copy of the **ACTIVITIES REFLECTION** to each student, and ask your students to complete it by



identifying an activity they are interested in joining. They should explain why they are interested in that activity and how they can go about joining it (or, for a new activity, how they can start it).

Students will discuss their “activity plans” at next month’s advisory session and then add them to their portfolios.

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:**

Student portfolios and *PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST REFLECTION*.

Students will need access to their portfolios at each advisory session.

List of clubs, sports, and other activities at your school. Please provide a list of all school activities along with information about how to join, and what each activity does.

***ACTIVITIES REFLECTION*.** Please make copies for each student.

**STUDENT
PRODUCTS:**

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

Activity Action Plan. Each student should complete an ***ACTIVITIES REFLECTION***, which covers how to get involved in a school activity he or she is interested in joining. Students will discuss these at the next advisory meeting.

WEEK 4:**MEET WITH OLDER STUDENTS**

Building community is key to students' success at school. This next activity will help your students forge new bonds in the school community by introducing them to a group of 8th graders.

You and the 8th grade advisors will need to decide before this discussion how to organize it. This Discussion Guide is structured around the assumption that each 6th grade advisory group will team up with an 8th grade group. It also assumes that your school's lead advisor will organize each 6th and 8th grade group into partner teams.

However, there are many other ways you could structure this discussion if you wish (you could have all the 6th and 8th graders meet in an assembly format and have only student leaders speak; or you could have students talk together in small groups of two or three).

Regardless of the format you use, the 8th grade students should be prepared to discuss the same set of topics:

- **What's best about our school?** The older students can share their school spirit and some of the school traditions.
- **What activities can you join?** By sharing their own experiences, the 8th graders can serve as positive role models for the younger students.

Make sure that all the students have a chance to introduce themselves. And make sure you have time for the 6th grade students to ask questions about school activities or traditions.

Tell students that the next meeting will be a Work Sample Roundup.

Ask students to bring in work from every class and anything else they would like to add to their portfolios

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:****Student portfolios and *PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST REFLECTION*.**

Students will need access to their portfolios at each advisory session.

Eighth grade students! As noted below, this discussion guide includes a discussion between 6th and 8th grade students. You'll need to coordinate this visit with your 8th grade advisor partner.



REFLECTION

ACTIVITIES

FEBRUARY – 6TH GRADE

Name: _____

Advisor: _____

WHY SHOULD YOU GET INVOLVED IN ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL?

You're new to middle school, you've got a lot of homework, and a lot to do. So why should you join an extracurricular activity at school? There are a number of reasons to get involved:

- You'll get to know the school better, and teachers and other students will get to know you.
- You'll build skills in areas that interest you (sports, photography, music, etc.).
- As a well-rounded student, you'll be more interesting to colleges and employers in the future.

ACTIVITY PLAN: *(Please complete)*

I'm already participating in the following activity at school. *(Name the activity and explain why.)*

I haven't joined any activities yet, but here's what I'm interested in doing *(also explain why)*:

Activity date/time:

What I need to do to join:

I want to start a new club or activity at school *(explain why)*. Here's what I'll do to get started:



RESOURCE GUIDE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR LEAD ADVISORS AND INTERESTED TEACHERS ON:

GRADE 6 – FEBRUARY BUILDING COMMUNITY

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 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 discussion. 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 **Building Community**. The Essential Questions are:

- How can I get involved?
- How can I contribute?

As students begin the school year, they'll be encouraged to think about both how they can become more involved in the school community and how they can become more involved in the larger community in which they live. The focus for 6th grade will be on becoming involved at school, as students are new to middle school and may need some encouragement to join clubs, sports, or other activities.

Learning how to contribute to a larger community is a crucial life skill, one that students will rely on for the rest of their lives. It's also important to academic success: numerous studies have shown that students who are engaged and involved in their school communities do better academically and are less likely to drop out of school.

Involvement in school and community activities will also benefit your students over time, as employers and colleges tend to favor "well-rounded" students who have participated in a range of activities.

This discussion includes two activities focused around becoming more involved in the school community. One of these will be led by a group of 8th grade students, to help 6th graders make connections with older students.

As you prepare to discuss the theme, think about how you can help students build on their interests and skills in ways that benefit the school community and engage them in life at school.

COMMUNITY-BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES:

Part of the aim of the Paterson Pathways curriculum is to help students grow into a larger role in their community. Each discussion guide in the Paterson Pathways curriculum highlights opportunities to help students think about or actually take on a larger role in either the school community or the larger community in which they live.

This guide is fundamentally about building community. For 6th grade students, community-building focuses around their new school community. They will be given information about school activities and encouraged to join them; and they will have the opportunity to meet with older students to hear about school traditions and activities from their perspective.

Think about ways you can follow up on this discussion to encourage each student in your advisory group to join a school activity. What will make each student feel “at home” at school? How can they become involved? How can they contribute?

You might also want to think of ways your advisory group, as a group, can participate in the larger school community. Can your group serve the school in some way – by picking up litter, by holding a bake sale, by organizing an assembly, by sponsoring an after-school study session? Does your group want to give itself a nickname or start a new club together? How can you use the small community of your advisory group to help students venture out into the larger community of the school?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

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

- **Spend additional time reviewing sample portfolios.** Students might benefit from more time to review sample portfolios to see how material has been organized and stored.
- **Take photos of your advisory group members and create a poster or slide show.** Create a little team spirit by taking photos of each other (In wacky hats? Wearing school colors? Or collect baby photos of each group member?) Then use the photos to create a poster for the room where you meet or an electronic presentation (video, slide show, etc.). Name your group, adopt a mascot or set group goals for the year.
- **Plan an activity with your 8th grade partners.** Extend the mentoring opportunities started with your group’s meeting with 8th graders by inviting your partner group to join you for a pizza lunch or other activity.
- **Ask your students to discuss school activities with their parents**



or guardians. Ask your students to share what they learned about school activities and clubs with their families and discuss how they can become involved in the school. Ask them to ask their parents about the activities they were involved in during middle school and high school. What did their parents do in school?

- **Take on a group community service project.** Volunteer service in the community is covered more extensively later in the Paterson Pathways curriculum (specifically in *Grade 7 February*, if you'd like more information). But, in many schools, advisory groups take on service-learning projects as a group, in addition to students' individual service work. Think about ways your group could volunteer.

PREPARING FOR NEXT MONTH:

Next month's Paterson Pathways session is focused on helping students learn how to use money wisely. Here's how you can plan ahead for next month:

- **Review the *BUDGETING HANDOUT* that is included with next month's guide.** Make copies for each of your students. Your students will learn about the value of budgeting and will then be asked to prepare a simple budget for a school activity.
- **Dream up a possible budgeting activity for your students.** The reflection suggests several possible activities and lists sample prices for items so that students can understand the choices they need to make to develop a budget. *If you wish*, use a real activity underway at your school (a play, a field trip, a school dance) and ask your students to develop a budget for that activity.

NJCCCS: LANGUAGE ARTS

LISTENING

- 3.4.6A1 Listen actively for a variety of purposes such as enjoyment and obtaining information.
- 3.4.6A2 Listen attentively and critically to a variety of speakers.
- 3.4.6A3 Acknowledge the speaker through eye contact and use appropriate feedback and questions to clarify the speaker's message.

SPEAKING

- 3.3.6A5 Participate in class discussion appropriately.
- 3.3.6B5 Reflect and evaluate information learned as a result of the inquiry



WRITING

- 3.2.6.D1 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.D2 Gather, select and organize information appropriate to a topic, task and audience.
- 3.2.6.D3 Develop and use knowledge of a variety of genres, including expository, narrative, persuasive, poetry, critiques, and everyday/ workplace writing.

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

- 9.2.6.B1 Develop and implement a personal growth plan that includes short- and long-term goals to enhance development.
- 9.2.6.B2 Demonstrate responsibility for personal actions and contributions to group activities.

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:C1 Relate school to life experience (Seek co-curricular and community experience to enhance the school experience).