



DISCUSSION GUIDE

GRADE: 8

MONTH: JANUARY

THEME: PLANNING FOR LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

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 8 January* 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 review their dreams for life after high school.

Help students learn more about the types of education and training available after high school.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

What will I do after high school?
How can I prepare?

WEEK 1:**REVIEW HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

Your students will soon register for high school courses. They will likely not have much flexibility in their freshman year courses, though they should be encouraged to register for advanced courses if possible (for instance, testing out of Algebra I and taking Geometry as a freshman). In any event, though, your students do need to understand two important points: **a.** First, the State of New Jersey sets minimum course requirements –which are listed on the ***HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS*** reflection – that students must meet to receive a high school diploma. **b.** But second, and even more important, to be qualified for nearly any postsecondary option, your students must do **MORE** than the minimum.

Discuss course options. Spend some time reviewing the ***HIGH SCHOOL COURSE REQUIREMENTS*** reflection and discussing these differences with your students. Ask them what types of courses they are interesting in taking – and why.

REVIEW POSTSECONDARY OPTIONS

This discussion helps students continue to explore their postsecondary options by allowing them to learn about programs and majors at one or two local colleges. This discussion will help students make the connection between careers that sound interesting and the type of education they'll need for that career. In addition, they'll be able to see how local colleges can help them prepare for a future career.

- Obtain program information from one or two local colleges (please try to find at least one community or technical college and, if possible, at least one four-year university). This information is typically easily available on the Internet, or you can obtain printed program information. Please note that you **DO NOT** need detailed course catalogs, that would simply be too overwhelming for 8th graders. Instead, you want general program descriptions of the types of degrees and majors offered at each institution.

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:**

HIGH SCHOOL COURSE REQUIREMENTS reflection, the reflection used in November.

Student portfolios must be available at every session.

WEEK 2:**REVIEW CAREER INTERESTS**

This discussion builds on the work students did exploring their interests and identifying careers that might suit them by introducing students to



the range of postsecondary options that are open to them. The important messages from this discussion are: (a) nearly every career requires some type of education after high school; and (b) there are many different postsecondary options – really something for everyone.

At last month’s advisory session, students had the opportunity to take a personality, interest, or aptitude assessment, and then to link that information to potential careers of interest. Students were asked to complete a reflection based on what they learned.

- **Review program offerings at one or two local colleges.** How will they get that education? Share information from one or two local colleges –preferably a four-year college and a community or technical college.
- **Discuss how to pay for college.** Paying for college – whether local or far away – is a significant deterrent for many students. Distribute the *PAYING FOR COLLEGE* reflection and review the basic ways of financing postsecondary education.

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:**

PAYING FOR COLLEGE reflection

Student portfolios must be available at every session.



WEEK 3:

PATERSON COLLEGE GUIDE

Among our students' choices after high school is more learning, whether it is in college or technical schools. **The Paterson College Guide** written for Paterson students by Paterson students at John F. Kennedy High School, helps students explore their options. Paterson students are pictured throughout the guide. Your students may know some of them.

The Paterson College Guide can provide the basis for many discussions. At the last advisory meeting, your students learned about different ways for **Paying for College**. In March they will further discuss **Saving Money for College**. Help students to see the reality of the need to save by reviewing with them the list of New Jersey colleges provided in the College Guide.

Discuss the reason for the differences in tuition and fees, community college vs. 4 year, public vs. private institutions. Remember these fees are for New Jersey residents, explain what happens if someone from out of state attends the state schools. Also note the increase in fees if a student decides to live on campus.

Encourage the students to surf the websites for the colleges they may be interested in. The websites for the NJ colleges are provided. They can search out of state colleges as well. Your students can even request information from the colleges to be sent to them now, the more they learn about a college, the better their decisions will be when applying.

Tell students they should take the guide home and continue to read the rest of the articles. They will obtain plenty of information from the students writing the guide specifically for Paterson students.

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:**

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

The Paterson College Guide Obtain copies from Paterson Education Fund through your Lead Advisor

WEEK 4:

DISCUSS LONG-TERM GOALS

By combining information about themselves and who they are with



Paterson Public Schools Advisory Curriculum Framework

information from their Academic Inventories, annual goals, long-term dreams, and career explorations, your students will have the opportunity to synthesize what they've explored so far during Paterson Pathways and turn it into a blueprint for the next five or six years of their lives. Help students reflect on what they've learned so far this year. How have their goals and dreams changed during their first two years of middle school? How has Paterson Pathways changed the way they think about school, or about their future? At the beginning of the school year, your students were asked to develop a set of goals for their 8th grade year.

Discuss students' goals for the year. Have students retrieve the Annual Goals they developed from their portfolios. Lead students in a discussion about their goals. What did they hope to achieve this year? Have they succeeded? What kind of help do they need to achieve their goals?

Complete the High School & Beyond Plan. This is an opportunity for your students to rethink the goals they have set for themselves this year. They can change them or update them if they like. They will take all they have learned this year and begin a plan the next 4 years. Students need to set some long term goals to work toward.

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:**

HIGH SCHOOL & BEYOND PLAN reflection

Student portfolios must be available to students at every session.

**STUDENT
PRODUCTS:**

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



REFLECTION

PAYING FOR COLLEGE

JANUARY – 8TH GRADE

Whether you hope to go to a private college across the country or to the community college in your neighborhood, college is expensive. Concern about money keeps many students from going to college. **But don't let money stop you.** No matter what you want to do, there's probably financial aid available to help you. Here are some resources for you and your parents.

SAVINGS

Saving money ahead of time is a good way to pay for college. But it's also the most difficult. Yet if you or your family have a little money to put aside for college each month, there's a program that can help.

The **NJBEST 529 College Savings Plan** allows your family to put some of the money they earn away for your college expenses at a later date. Learn more at <http://www.njbest.com>.

NEED-BASED FINANCIAL AID

If you can't save enough money for college, you might qualify for **need-based financial aid**. Many colleges help students with their expenses, and the federal government has many aid programs as well. Usually, students get aid based on what their family can afford. To learn how much aid you might qualify for, you and your parents can use the **FAFSA 4caster** at <http://www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov>. There are several kinds of need-based financial aid.

- **Need-based grants and scholarships:** Grants and scholarships that don't have to be repaid.
- **Student loans:** Loans do need to be repaid – after you graduate and are earning money on your own. But student loans have lower interest rates than car or home loans.
- **Work-study:** Many colleges have part-time jobs available on campus for students who qualify. These jobs might involve working in the cafeteria or the library, helping a professor with research, or even serving as a teaching assistant for younger students. Work-study jobs can help you pay your living expenses while you're at school.

MERIT-BASED GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Not all aid is based upon need. You can also get help with your college expenses because of your grades, or test scores, athletics, being in the military, or because of your background, parent's employer, or interests.

Merit-based grants and scholarships may come with conditions (for instance, you may get an athletic scholarship only if you play on the college team) but they do not need to be repaid.

You can learn more about scholarships at the College Board's website. Log on to <http://www.collegeboard.com>, then click on either "*For Students*" or "*For Parents*" and then click on "*Pay for College*." This section of the web site has information about all types of financial aid links and links to several "Scholarship Finder" sites. You can also learn more from the New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority: <http://www.hesaa.org>, which includes information in Spanish





REFLECTION

HIGH SCHOOL & BEYOND PLAN JANUARY – 8TH GRADE

Name: _____

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THIS YEAR?

Using the Annual Goals Worksheet you filed in your portfolio, please think about the goals you developed for 8th grade, and then copy them here. You can update them or change them if you want.

GOAL 1 (Academic): This year I will _____

GOAL 2 (Career): This year I will _____

GOAL 3 (Citizen): This year I will _____

WHO ARE YOU?

What you do after high school will depend on what you're interested in. What do you like to do?

I am interested in _____. When I grow up, I want to _____

HOW DO YOU LEARN BEST?

You are in your last year of middle school. How are you doing? What can you do to improve?

To do better in school, I can _____

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO IN HIGH SCHOOL?

What do you hope to accomplish when you are in high school? Check all that apply.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Join a sports team | <input type="checkbox"/> Join other clubs and activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Play a musical instrument |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get a ____ GPA | <input type="checkbox"/> Take honors classes | <input type="checkbox"/> Take four years of math |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take four years of science | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a foreign language | <input type="checkbox"/> Get a part-time job |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be in school government | <input type="checkbox"/> Be a mentor to other students | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer in the community |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learn more about careers | <input type="checkbox"/> Learn more about postsecondary | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate on time |

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?

Based on what you know today, what do you think you'll do after high school? Check all that apply.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get a job right away | <input type="checkbox"/> Find an apprenticeship | <input type="checkbox"/> Get a 2-year degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get a 4-year degree | <input type="checkbox"/> Go to graduate school | <input type="checkbox"/> Join the military |

My ideal job is: _____



RESOURCE GUIDE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR LEAD ADVISORS AND INTERESTED TEACHERS ON:

GRADE 8 – JANUARY PLANNING FOR LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

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 **Planning for Life After High School**. The Essential Questions are:

- What will I do after high school?
- How can I prepare?
- How can I plan?

This month, students will explore their plans and dreams for life after high school and then **learn how to connect their dreams to what they are doing now**.

For 8th grade, that will mean learning about the opportunities beyond high school – and understanding both that they will need some level of postsecondary education to realize their dreams and also that they will need to work hard during high school to succeed.

Students will have the opportunity to dream big during this lesson, and then to explore where those dreams might take them.

The Paterson Pathways curriculum is fundamentally about planning for the future. And this discussion, coming as it does in the middle of the school year, will help students balance their short-term plans and goals with their hopes and dreams for the longer term.

Your students are almost at the end middle school. Their decisions are important. Their performance at school matters. This discussion will help them realize that.

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 has a somewhat introspective focus because it is about students' individual dreams for the future and then about their academic plans to realize those dreams. By considering their dreams for the future – and then thinking carefully about what it will take to achieve those dreams – your students will have greater incentive to make good use of their time in middle and high school.

Although this Discussion Guide is based around an individual activity, there are many ways your group can help support your students.

- **Shared dreams.** Do your students have any goals or dreams in common? Can you think up any “advisory group dreams” (such as all committing to graduate on time, or all committing to register for honors courses)?
- **Common support.** One of the findings of districts that have implemented Paterson Pathways is that the support provided by the advisory group structure actually results in students doing better academically and registering for more challenging courses. How can the members of your group support each other in this way?

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:

- **Obtain detailed information about a postsecondary educational program of interest.** Students will do preliminary research to complete their Reflections. As an additional assignment, you could ask them to prepare a detailed, one- to two-page essay on a specific academic program that interests them, based on what they discovered from the College Board site or another resource. Where is it located? What would they study? What could they do after completing it?
- **Share information about the Passaic County Community College “College Bound/Gear Up” program with students and their families.** Eligible students and schools may benefit from the program’s pre-college enrichment activities, students can sign up for at the end of 8th grade and can continue to take part in throughout their high school years. Speak to your school guidance counselor to obtain more information.
- **Host a discussion for students and their parents or guardians with a guidance counselor or college admissions officer.** If you did not invite a college admissions officer to your advisory session, perhaps you could arrange for a lunch or after-school meeting



between your students and their parents or guardians and a college admissions officer or guidance counselor to discuss educational options. It would be particularly helpful if students could volunteer their own interests and then hear what type of education they should acquire.

PREPARING FOR NEXT MONTH:

Next month's Paterson Pathways session is focused on helping new students become a part of the school community through sports, clubs, or other activities. Here's how you can plan ahead for next month:

- **Get a list of school clubs and activities.** Your school should have a list of all clubs, sports, and activities that are open to students. Get a copy or have your lead advisor work with school administrators to compile this information. This list will be used next month to help make your students aware of the opportunities open to them and encourage them to join.

NJCCCS: LANGUAGE ARTS

LISTENING

- 3.4.8A1 Listen actively for a variety of purposes such as enjoyment and obtaining information.
- 3.4.8A2 Listen attentively and critically to a variety of speakers.
- 3.4.8A3 Acknowledge the speaker through eye contact and use appropriate feedback and questions to clarify the speaker's message.

SPEAKING

- 3.3.8A5 Participate in class discussion appropriately.
- 3.3.8B5 Reflect and evaluate information learned as a result of the inquiry

WRITING

- 3.2.8.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)
- 3.2.8.D2 Gather, select and organize information appropriate to a topic, task and audience.
- 3.2.8.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)

- 9.2.8.B1 Develop and implement a personal growth plan that includes short- and long-term goals to enhance



development.

**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:B2 Plan to achieve goals (Identify post-secondary options consistent with interests, achievement, aptitude, and abilities).

