



DISCUSSION GUIDE

GRADE: 8

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 8 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 STUDENTS' CITIZENSHIP GOALS

At September's advisory session, students were asked to draft a goal statement for their 8th grade year. The goal statement was to include goals for the year that were specific, measurable, achievable, rewarding, and time-oriented; and could cover academic, social, athletic, and/or extracurricular activities.

- **Discuss how students have become involved at school.** Your students are now in their last year of middle school. How have they gotten involved in the school? What are their plans for their remaining time? You might want to suggest activities for students who are not yet that involved in school. How can they get involved... and why should they?
- **Plan a service activity.** Next discuss how being contributing citizens also involves helping others. How have your students contributed by volunteering at school? How can they? Carry out a short volunteer service activity with your students at school – make posters for an event, pick up litter, organize an activity, etc – and discuss ways your advisory group can continue to be of service to the school.
- **Have students update Citizenship Goals.** Last year, your students focused on how they could get involved at school. How should they adapt their Citizenship Goals this year? What can they do to become contributing citizens at school? Distribute the *CITIZENSHIP GOAL* reflection. Ask each student to complete the goal statement. Note that being contributing citizens of your school means they have a responsibility to participate.

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:**

CITIZENSHIP GOAL reflection

Student portfolios must be available to students at every session.

**STUDENT
PRODUCTS:**

Students will be expected to create one product from this lesson:

CITIZENSHIP GOAL reflection



WEEK 2:

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 the school. They may not be aware of all the opportunities your 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. Stress the importance of extracurricular activities in high school next year. Mention the benefits of listing these activities on college applications. 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?



- **Plan and carry out an activity with your group.** It's important for your students to find ongoing ways to contribute to the life of the school – and to the community of your advisory group. How can they do that? Think of activities your group can carry out. You might want to make a video or slide show about your group, make posters, find an activity at school you can help, or volunteer to help at a nearby elementary school or childcare. Complete part or all of the Service Worksheet reflection depending on stage of activity planned.

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:**

SERVICE WORKSHEET reflection

Student portfolios should be available to students at every session.

**STUDENT
PRODUCTS:**

SERVICE WORKSHEET reflection.



WEEK 3:**SOLIDIFY THE GROUP**

Today's discussion offers advisors an unstructured opportunity to help strengthen the community within their groups. Based on advisors' preferences, students can participate in team-building activities within the classroom or participate in a group volunteer service activity at the school. Recent Paterson Pathways lessons have focused fairly intensely on academic progress and career and postsecondary exploration. Today's discussion gives students the chance to focus on personal and social development, helping solidify the bonds they've developed with their classmates and advisor.

Build community. Paterson Pathways has focused a great deal recently on serious topics: academic development, career exploration, etc. But the interpersonal aspect of Paterson Pathways is just as important. Make today's lesson a chance to honor that. You may wish to celebrate your time together as a group: make a video together, create awards for your students, take photos, make posters celebrating your group. Alternatively, you may wish to gather the 8th graders to plan a class gift to the school – or a class volunteer service project that will benefit the school.

Check in and see how students are doing. How are you students doing this year? Not just academically, but socially and personally – how have they done this year and how are they preparing for high school next year? See how your students are feeling about their experiences in middle school and what they've accomplished.

Work Sample Roundup: At the next meeting your students will be updating their portfolios. Ask them to bring anything they want to add.

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:**

An activity at school your group can carry out during your advisory time. Your lead advisor will have suggestions for you.

Any materials desired to celebrate your group and build community. You may want to create a video or posters with your students, take photos, or take on a school project.

WEEK 4:**UPDATE PORTFOLIOS ACTIVITY**

Review the *PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST* reflection with students. This list itemizes the documents that should be in their portfolios by the end of 8th grade. They should keep track of their portfolios on these checklists as they add new materials.

Remind students that they will be responsible for adding the items themselves and for keeping track of those items. Make sure students understand their responsibilities with respect to keeping their portfolios up to date. This procedure will be different depending on whether your school is keeping electronic or paper portfolios. Make sure students understand how to add additional items to their portfolios.

Ask students 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?

- Work sample roundup: you might want to have students devote extra time to checking items on their checklists. Have them make sure their portfolios are organized.
- 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?**

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:**

Student portfolios must be available to students at every session.





REFLECTION CITIZENSHIP GOAL

FEBRUARY – 8TH GRADE

Name: _____

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CONTRIBUTING CITIZEN?

To be a citizen means to be a **member** of a community. You may be a citizen of a country, of a local community, even of a workplace or school.

But being a citizen also means you have a **responsibility** to contribute to that larger community.

As a student at school, being a contributing citizen means you've got a responsibility to be involved in the life of the school, by joining a club, playing a sport, or getting involved in student government.

Being a contributing citizen also means serving the school as a volunteer. You might help a teacher, tutor a younger student, help keep the school grounds clean, prepare for events, or volunteer in other ways.

How do you participate in activities at school? _____

How do you volunteer at school? _____

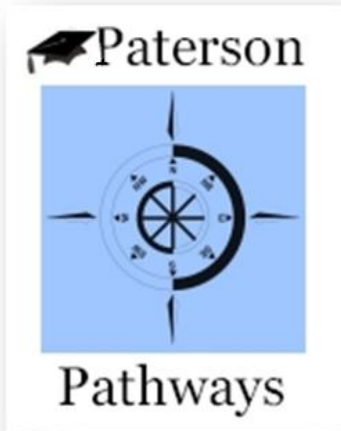
CITIZENSHIP GOAL

Think about these questions as you update your Citizenship Goal.

CITIZENSHIP GOAL:

I will participate in activities at school this year by _____
_____.

I will volunteer at school by _____
_____.



REFLECTION

SERVICE WORKSHEET

FEBRUARY – 8TH GRADE

Name: _____

HOW CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY?

One way to contribute is through volunteer service. By helping others, you build your own skills and serve the community.

Think about these questions each time you begin a volunteer service project.

PREPARATION and ACTION:

How did you prepare for the project? Did you spend time thinking about what kind of help was needed? Why did you think you could be helpful? (If you have not yet done a project, What will you do? How will you prepare? How will you be helpful?)

REFLECTION and DEMONSTRATION:

(Complete AFTER your activity): What did you do? What did you learn? What will you do next time?



RESOURCE GUIDE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR LEAD ADVISORS AND INTERESTED TEACHERS ON:

GRADE 8 – 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 NJCCCS from the relevant grade's Grade Level Expectations.
- **ASCA Standards.** Each Paterson Pathways discussion guide is based on American School Counselor Association Standards (ASCA).
- **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 8th grade will be on becoming involved at school and in the community, students 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.

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 and the community.

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 8th grade students, community-building focuses around their school and community. They will be given information about school activities and encouraged to join them.

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 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.

- **Plan an activity with 6th or 7th grade advisory groups.** Share your wealth of information after 3 years of middle school. Tell the younger grades what to expect in 8th grade.
- **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.** 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 understand how to use and save money as many 8th graders are or will soon be eligible to find employment. Here's how you can plan ahead for next month:

Review the *SAVING MONEY* reflection.

Arrange internet access for your group and review

http://www.practicalmoneyskills.com/english/pop/games/p_road_trip.html to play a game about saving money.

Or, if you do not have computer access during your advisory time, choose one of the printable activities at

http://www.practicalmoneyskills.com/english/at_school/students/teens.php and make copies of it for you and your students.

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.

9.2.8.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).

PERSONAL and SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

PS:A1 Acquire self-knowledge (demonstrate cooperative behavior in groups).

PS:B1 Self knowledge applications (develop an action plan to set and achieve realistic goals).