



DISCUSSION GUIDE

GRADE: 8

MONTH: APRIL

THEME: PREPARING FOR STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES

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 April* packet includes:

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

DISCUSSION GOALS:

Review the purpose of the Student-led Conference.

Review conference logistics and evaluation.

Help students plan for their conferences.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

Who am I?

How can I present myself clearly?

WEEK 1:

REVIEW THE STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE

One of the highlights of the Paterson Pathways curriculum is the student-led conference, at which students share their accomplishments and goals with their advisor and parents or guardians.

As noted before, 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 careers while also gaining organizational and communications skills.

The student-led conference will allow students to summarize their accomplishments from the school year; present their plans and goals for the coming years; and explain who they are and what makes each of them unique. The conference also provides a way to involve parents or guardians in their children’s lives at school, by ensuring that they understand what their children are studying and how they are doing.

To empower students about the student-led conference, stress that their conferences are about them: **they are in charge**. Therefore, no two conferences will be the same. Instead, each conference should be the student’s opportunity to explain who he or she is.

- Distribute a *PLANNING YOUR STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE REFLECTION* to each student.
- Review the information about the student-led conference. Explain that the goal of students’ conferences will be to answer three questions: **What have I accomplished in school this year? What do I hope to do in the future? Who am I?**
- Supplement the information in the reflection with material your school has prepared. Ask if students have questions.

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:**

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

Information on the format for student-led conferences at your school. (OPTIONAL) If your school has conducted student-led conferences in the past, information to share with your students (a video, slide show, or written materials) will be a helpful supplement to the materials provided in this discussion guide and *Resource Guide*.

PLANNING FOR YOUR STUDENTS LED CONFERENCE?

Reflection. Please make a copy for each student.



STUDENT

Students will be expected to create one product based on this discussion:

PRODUCTS:

PLANNING FOR YOUR STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE
reflection should be completed by each student.



WEEK 2:

REVIEW CONFERENCE LOGISTICS AND EVALUATIONS

After you've reviewed the concept of the student-led conference, review the basic logistics and explain how the conference is evaluated. Ask students to invite their parents, guardians, or other guests, using the protocol for your school (phone call, form, or handwritten letter). Review with students the ***ORGANIZING YOUR STUDENT LED CONFERENCE*** reflection. Discuss with students:

- **The purpose of the conference** (answering the three questions listed above: What have I accomplished in school this year? What do I hope to do in the future? Who am I?);
 - **The date(s) or time(s) of the conference;** and
 - **What the parents or guardians should do to confirm that they'll be attending** (or to select a preferred date and time).
- **Plan what you want to say.** Show students the reflection that follows the week 3 discussion guide. Remind them again that their goal is to answer three questions: What have I accomplished in school this year? What do I hope to do in the future? Who am I?

Show students that the outline for the conference is organized the same way as their portfolios to make it easy for them to include materials from their portfolios. Tell them that they can use materials from their portfolios, and can also (*depending on your school's logistics and the set-up in the room where you'll hold the conferences*) create a slide show, a poster, or reflections. Students should bring their notes to the conference with them. Tell them that the conference will last about 15 minutes and that they should plan to talk for 10-12 minutes, and leave the rest of the time for introductions and questions.

- **Dress and behave appropriately.** Ask students to wear business or dress clothes to the conference. Remind them that this is an important part of the school year and they want to look and act like professionals.
- **Be prompt and prepared.** Remind students to make note of the time, date, and place of their conferences. Explain that it will be their responsibility to make sure they arrive on time for their conference, and make sure they have all the materials they need with them. (*You may want to e-mail your students and ask them to remind their guests of the time and place for the conference the day before.*)
- **Be polite.** Remind students that they should start their conferences by introducing their guests to their advisor (you). And they should



end their conferences by thanking their guests for taking the time to attend.

- **Be passionate.** A key point for students is that this conference is their chance to share who they are – and what they want to get out of school – with their advisor and guests. Remind them not to talk in a monotone or shuffle through their portfolios. Instead, inspire them to make the most of this opportunity.
- **Reflect on your conference.** After the conference, students and their parents will be asked to complete feedback forms reflecting on the student led conference:
 1. **Complete a *PARENT FEEDBACK*** form (found at the back of this *Resource Guide*) to provide feedback to your school, district on how valuable the conferences were.
 2. **Complete a *STUDENT FEEDBACK*** form (found at the back of this *Resource Guide*) to provide feedback to your school, district on how valuable the conferences were.
 3. **Complete a *CONFERENCE EVALUATION RUBRIC reflection*.** Students will complete the reflection during next month’s advisory session to reflect more fully on how they did.

Please note that the *Resource Guide* for this discussion guide also includes an *ADVISOR FEEDBACK* form that you can complete at the conference, as well as information on collecting feedback from faculty and staff and assessing the overall success of your school’s conferences.

Next, ask students to work individually to develop their own outlines for their conferences. Move among students to help them. Remind them to use their portfolios to give them examples of work they want to share and to help them plan what to say. Also, it is important to remember that this is the second time most students are hosting their conference. Have students think about what worked and what did not work in last year’s conference.

In addition, you may want to print a copy of the rubric (reprinted on the next page for your convenience) for each of your students.

Complete a rubric for each student during the conferences. Compare your assessment and their self-assessments.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

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

Information on the format for student-led conferences at your school. (OPTIONAL)



ORGANIZING YOUR STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE

reflection. Please make a copy for each student.

RUBRIC FOR THE STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE reflection.

Please make a copy for each student.

**STUDENT
PRODUCTS:**

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

ORGANIZING YOUR STUDENT LED CONFERENCE

Outline. Each student should prepare an outline for his or her student-led conference (and then assess his or her performance the day of the conference by completing the rubric on the reflection).

WEEKS 3 & 4:

PRACTICE FOR THE CONFERENCE

Practice, practice, practice! Remind the students that they should also practice on their own. Ask them to practice making eye contact with their guests, to practice speaking in complete sentences, and to practice speaking with plenty of expression. You can suggest that they ask a friend to listen and ask questions, and then practice answering them.

After your students have had time to create a preliminary outline, ask them to pair up and practice their presentations.

- Ask each pair to take turns. One will be the student, the other the guest.
- Tell students you will give them 10 minutes for each turn.
- Remind students to look at their “guest,” to speak in complete sentences, and to speak with expression.
- Ask your students how they did. What did they learn from practicing?

What can they do to be better prepared?

**MATERIALS
NEEDED:**

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

Information on the format for student-led conferences at your school.

ORGANIZING YOUR STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE reflection.

RUBRIC FOR THE STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE reflection.





REFLECTION

PLANNING YOUR STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE

APRIL 8TH GRADE

Name: _____

PLANNING A STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE

WHAT IS A STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE?

The **Student-led Conference** is your chance to share your progress this year with your advisor and your parents or guardians. You'll use your portfolio to answer three questions:

- What have I accomplished in school this year?
- What do I want to do in the future?
- Who am I?

The student-led conference is truly student-led: that means **YOU** are in charge. It's up to you to prepare well, introduce your parents and advisor, lead the discussion, and conclude the conference.

HOW WILL THE STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE WORK?

Here is a checklist of what you'll need to do before and during your conference.

- Invite your parents, guardians, or other guests.** Following your advisor's instructions, invite your parents, your guardians, or other guests for the date and time you've been assigned.
- Plan what you want to say.** Using the outline on the next page, plan what you want to say during your conference. Plan both what you'll say and what you'll show from your portfolio.
- Practice, practice, practice!** You'll have some time in advisory to practice for your conference, but you should also practice on your own. Get a friend to listen and ask you questions.
- Dress and behave appropriately.** Plan to wear dress clothes to your conference. You want to look and act your best!

- Be prompt and prepared.** Make sure you arrive on time for your conference, and make sure you have your portfolio with you.
- Be polite.** Start your conference by introducing your guests to your advisor. End your conference by thanking them for taking the time to attend.
- Be passionate.** This conference is your chance to share who you are – and what you want to get out of school – with your advisor and your guests. Make eye contact, and don't talk in a monotone!
- Reflect on your conference.** After your conference, use the **Conference Evaluation Rubric** to reflect on how you did. Your advisor will complete one too and will share your rating with you.
- Let us know what you think.** After your conference, complete an anonymous **Feedback Form** to help us plan for next year.





REFLECTION

ORGANIZING YOUR STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE

APRIL 8TH GRADE

Name: _____

HOW SHOULD YOU ORGANIZE YOUR STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE?

Here's a sample outline for a student-led conference. **You don't need to cover every point in this outline.** Instead, use it as a guide. Take notes on the next page.

You'll have about 15 minutes for your conference. Plan to speak for about 12 minutes and leave the rest of the time for introductions and questions.

INTRODUCTION

- Introduce your parents, guardians, or other guests to your advisor.
- Introduce yourself to anyone you do not know.
- Thank everyone for attending.

EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE

- Explain that the purpose of the conference is to answer three questions:
 - *What have I accomplished in school this year?*
 - *What do I hope to do in the future?*
 - *Who am I?*

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT (*What have I accomplished in school this year?*)

You should show and discuss at least three things from your portfolio

- Discuss your classes and teachers (don't forget to share work from your portfolio).
 - Which classes have you enjoyed? Which are the most challenging?
- Explain your plans to improve academically (share your Academic Inventory).
- Discuss the classes you plan to take next year.
 - Why do you want to take these classes? What do your electives say about you?
- Review your course registration form for next year.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT (*What do I hope to do in the future?*)

You should show and discuss at least three things from your portfolio

- What do you want to do when you grow up? What are your interests?
- Explain what you’ve learned about life after high school and postsecondary education.

PERSONAL & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (*Who am I?*)

You should show and discuss at least three things from your portfolio

- Discuss what’s most important to you:
 - The activities you do in your free time.
 - The activities you’re involved in at school. (Which activities? Why?)
 - Your contributions to the larger community (Volunteer Service).
- Explain what you’ve accomplished this year that is important to you.

ASK YOUR GUESTS IF THEY HAVE QUESTIONS FOR YOU

- Listen carefully to their questions.
- Answer respectfully and as completely as you can.

THANK YOUR GUESTS FOR ATTENDING YOUR CONFERENCE

Use the outline on the previous page as your guide. Take notes below. Remember that you don’t need to cover every point but you should talk about three different things in each area. Use Post-it notes or paper clips to mark the pages you want to show from your portfolio.

Topic Area	What I should say	What I can show from my portfolio
<p>ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT</p> <p><i>What have I accomplished in school this year?</i></p>	<p>Example 1: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Example 2: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Example 3: _____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>For Example 1: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>For Example 2: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>For Example 3: _____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>CAREER DEVELOPMENT</p> <p><i>What do I want to do in the future?</i></p>	<p>Example 1: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Example 2: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Example 3: _____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>For Example 1: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>For Example 2: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>For Example 3: _____</p> <p>_____</p>

<p>PERSONAL & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT</p> <p><i>Who am I?</i></p>	<p>Example 1: _____ _____</p> <p>Example 2: _____ _____</p> <p>Example 3: _____ _____</p>	<p>For Example 1: _____ _____</p> <p>For Example 2: _____ _____</p> <p>For Example 3: _____ _____</p>
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REFLECTION

CONFERENCE EVALUATION RUBRIC

APRIL 8TH GRADE

Name : _____

DIRECTIONS: Students are expected to be proficient in each of the following areas. Please evaluate each student’s performance in each area. Please also discuss with each student what the student did very well and how the student can improve.

RATING	Distinguished	Proficient	Emerging (Comments)
Introduction	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 of 4 boxes checked	<input type="checkbox"/> Greets guests <input type="checkbox"/> Introduces self <input type="checkbox"/> Makes eye contact <input type="checkbox"/> Explains purpose of conference <i>(Need 3 of 4 boxes checked)</i>	
Appearance	<input type="checkbox"/> Wearing dress clothes	<input type="checkbox"/> Clothing is acceptable for presentation	
Academic Development <i>(Base assessment on student's grade level)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Shows and discusses at least three samples to describe academic performance <input type="checkbox"/> Explains why these samples were chosen	<input type="checkbox"/> Shows and discusses at least three samples to describe academic performance	
Career Development <i>(Base assessment on student's grade level)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Shows and discusses at least three samples to describe career exploration <input type="checkbox"/> Explains why these samples were chosen	<input type="checkbox"/> Shows and discusses at least three samples to describe career exploration	

<p>Personal & Social Development <i>(Base assessment on student's grade level)</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Shows and discusses at least three samples to describe personal interests or achievements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Explains why these samples were chosen</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Shows and discusses at least three samples to describe personal interests or achievements</p>	
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> PLUS has a neat, high-quality portfolio</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Answers questions promptly</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Thanks parents and advisors</p>	

Please circle student's rating:

Distinguished

Proficient

Emerging





RESOURCE GUIDE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR LEAD ADVISORS AND INTERESTED TEACHERS ON:

GRADE 8 – APRIL PREPARING FOR STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES

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 (NJCCCS).** Each Paterson Pathways discussion guide is based on NJCCCSs 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

Each Paterson Pathways discussion guide is built around a theme. Each

QUESTIONS:

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.

This month's theme is **Preparing for the Student-led Conference**. The Essential Questions are:

- Who am I?
- How can I present myself clearly?

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 is held each spring, summarizes students' accomplishments in the year to date; showcases their plans and goals for the coming years; and lets them share what makes them unique. The conference allows students to take responsibility for directing their own educational careers and 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, how they are doing, and why their studies matter.

As you help students prepare for their student-led conferences, the essential questions for this lesson illustrate what you are trying to help them achieve: knowledge about themselves and the ability to articulate that knowledge clearly. Focus on the two essential questions as you help your students prepare for their conferences: Who am I? How can I present myself clearly?

In addition to these essential questions, the instructions for the student-led conferences ask students to organize the content of their presentations around three additional questions: **What have I accomplished in school this year? What do I want to do in the future? Who am I**



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 community focus because it is ultimately about helping students present their dreams and goals to a larger audience. Their conferences this spring may be the first time your students have to “sell” themselves or their dreams to others... but certainly not the last. Thus, it is crucial that students understand the importance of presenting themselves and their dreams clearly and creatively.

There are a number of ways your group can use this guide as a community-building experience.

- **Have students take responsibility for inviting their parents, guardians, or other guests.** The discussion guide suggests that students invite their guests to the conference. You can build on this activity by having students take responsibility for ensuring that their guests RSVP for the conference and understand its purpose. Have students share the reflection with their guests and explain why it is such an important part of the school year.
- **Have students coordinate conference set-up or logistics.** Where will your school hold the student-led conferences? What equipment (such as projectors) will be needed? What about refreshments? How can students help organize for their guests?
- **View video of successful conference presentations.** If your school has video available of a successful presentation, give your students an opportunity to view it. Help them understand their role in relation to their guests.

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:

- **Prepare A/V presentation materials to supplement each student’s portfolio.** Students are encouraged to use their portfolios as the basis for their presentations. But how can they present the content of their portfolios most effectively? If you have the opportunity, have students prepare slide shows or other A/V presentation materials to supplement their presentations. How can they use photos, video, or their own work (artwork, music, words) to explain who they are and what they care about?
- **Ask students to discuss their dreams and goals with their**



families. The student-led conference will hopefully be just the beginning of ongoing discussions students will have with their parents and families about their long-term goals. Ask students to follow up on their conferences with a discussion at home about their goals for the future.

EVALUATING CONFERENCES:

Districts that have conducted student-led conferences have found it helpful to measure success through four key indicators:

- **Number of student-led conferences that have at least one adult parent or guardian present.** Each advisor should keep track of his or her students and the attendance of their parents or guardians.
- **Number of students who say the student-led conferences are worthwhile.** This discussion packet contains a *STUDENT FEEDBACK* form that asks students to evaluate the overall concept of the student-led conference. In addition, the *Grade 8 April* discussion guide contains a more detailed student reflection exercise.
- **Number of parents who say that student-led conferences are worthwhile.** The *PARENT FEEDBACK* forms included at the back of this *Resource Guide* ask parents about the overall success of the student-led conference concept and assess how well parents understood their children's presentations (a good measure of students' success!).
- **Number of staff who say that student-led conferences are worthwhile.** Feedback from faculty and staff is crucial. After you've had a chance as a staff to complete the student-led conferences and study student and parent feedback, take your own internal survey. How did the conferences work? How could they be improved? Do faculty or staff members have suggestions for next year? Please share comments and suggestions with the district as well as within your school.

NJCCCS

LANGUAGE ARTS

SPEAKING

3.3.8 D1 Use writing to prompt discussion and enhance planning of formal and informal presentations.

3.3.8 D2 Use visual aids, media, and/ or technology to support

oral communication.

- 3.3.8D3 Give oral presentations to different audiences for various purposes, such as summaries of books and articles, narratives, and persuasive tools.
- 3.3.8 D4 Acknowledge the audience with eye contact and use appropriate verbal responses to clarify questions and inquiries.
- 3.3.8 D5 Incorporate peer feedback and teacher suggestions for revisions in content, organization, and delivery.
- 3.3.8 D7 Use a scoring rubric to prepare, evaluate, and improve the oral presentations of self and others.
- 3.3.8 D8 Read aloud with fluency.

ACSA 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:

PERSONAL and SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- PS: A1 Acquire self-knowledge (Identify personal values, attitudes and beliefs).
- PS: A2 Acquire interpersonal skills (Use effective communications skills).

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

- A: A3 Achieve school success (Demonstrate dependability, productivity, and initiative)



PARENT FEEDBACK

STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE

Student's Name (OPTIONAL):

Student's Grade:

P A R E N T C O N F E R E N C E F E E D B A C K

*PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE SCHOOL
THANK YOU!*

DEAR PARENTS: Thanks for taking the time to attend your child's conference. Please let us know what you thought, and how we can improve. And thanks for everything you do to support your child!

OVERALL COMMENTS

Was your child's student-led conference worthwhile?

- Yes No Don't know

Should the school hold student-led conferences next year?

- Yes No Don't know

LEARNER DEVELOPMENT *(What have I accomplished in school this year?)*

Did the conference help you learn what your child has accomplished in school this year?

- Yes No Don't know

Were you able to see samples of your child's work from different classes and subject areas?

- Yes No Don't know

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Did you learn about your child's plans for academic improvement and graduation?

Yes

No

Don't know

Did you learn about your child's plans for next year's classes?

Yes

No

Don't know

CAREER DEVELOPMENT (*What do I hope to do in the future?*)

Did you learn about your child's plans and goals for the future?

Yes

No

Don't know

Did you learn about your child's hopes for education after high school?

Yes

No

Don't know

CITIZEN (*Who am I?*)

Did your child share what makes him or her unique and what is most important to him or her?

Yes

No

Don't know

Did you learn about your child's involvement in activities at school and in the larger community?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please share additional comments

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO YOUR ADVISOR
THANK YOU!**





STUDENT FEEDBACK

STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE

Name (OPTIONAL):

Advisor's Name (OPTIONAL):

DEAR STUDENTS: Congratulations! You did it!

You organized a student-led conference to showcase your work. How did it feel? What did you learn?

Don't forget to complete your performance rubric to assess how you did. And please answer the two questions on this form and return it to your advisor today.

OVERALL COMMENTS

Overall, was your student-led conference worthwhile?

Yes No

Should the school hold student-led conferences next year?

Yes No

Please share additional comments about your conference below:



ADVISOR FEEDBACK

STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE

Name (OPTIONAL):

Advisor's Name (OPTIONAL):

DEAR ADVISORS: Thank you! We made it! We've completed student-led conferences.

Let us know what you think about the conference structure.

Overall, were the student-led conferences worthwhile?

Yes

No

Should the school hold student-led conferences next year?

Yes

No

Please share additional comments about your conferences below: