



Belong, believe, become.

🎓 **Welcome, Pathwise Mentor** 🚀

Your Playbook for Learning, Laughing &
Lifting Students



Hey there, Mentor Extraordinaire ❤️

First things first: we're so excited you're here. By opening this playbook, you've officially joined a crew of caring, curious, and ridiculously dedicated people who believe in the power of connection, curiosity, and a good old-fashioned "aha!" moment.

As a Pathwise, you're not just helping students tackle math problems or reading skills (though you'll do that, too)—you're helping them build confidence, think critically, and believe in themselves as learners and leaders.

Inside this playbook, you'll find strategies, conversation starters, and quick wins to help you support your student's academic journey *and* emotional growth. You'll also find reminders that it's okay to make mistakes, ask questions, and learn alongside your mentee. In fact, that's kind of the point.

This is more than tutoring—it's co-creating. We're not just handing students answers; we're helping them ask better questions, stretch their thinking, and feel proud of their progress.

So grab a pen, a highlighter, and your best encouraging smile. Let's help students dream big, try hard, and learn with heart.

Welcome to the team—we're so glad you're here!

The Pathwise Team ❤️❤️❤️

<https://www.pathwise.org/>

Student-Mentor Engagement

Why 🤔

To keep your session engaging, supportive, and productive—sounds cool?

How ?

Follow these 5 easy steps.

- ✓ Greeting: Page 3-4
- ✓ Check-in: Page 5-6
- ✓ Set session goals together: Page 7-8
- ✓ Clarify standards and support: Page 9-11
- ✓ Identify students' preferred learning style: Page 12-18
- ✓ Collaborative troubleshooting: Page 19-22
- ✓ Student encouragement and motivation: Page 23-24
- ✓ Accountability: Page 25

 Acknowledgment: Page 26



Greeting—What are some creative and effective ways to greet students to build rapport ?

⭐ Sensory & Imaginative Prompts

- On a scale of 1 to taco, how ready are you to learn today?
- What superpower are you bringing to tutoring today?
- What animal matches your energy right now?
- If your brain had a weather forecast today, what would it say?
- If today was a color, what would it be and why?

🎭 Pop Culture-Inspired

- If today was a movie title, what would it be?
- Which character (cartoon, superhero, or YouTuber) matches your mood today?
- Which emoji are you feeling right now? No words, just emojis!
- If your brain were a song right now, what would it be?

Cultural/Seasonal Greetings

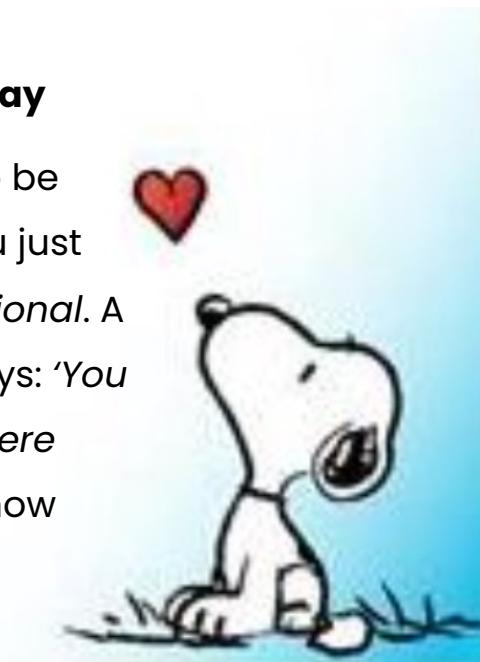
- Guess what holiday is celebrated somewhere in the world today?
- What's a holiday or tradition from your culture that you really enjoy?
- Have you ever tried a dish from another country? What was it like?
- What's a word or phrase in your family's native language that you love?
- Tell me about a festival or celebration you think is really cool.

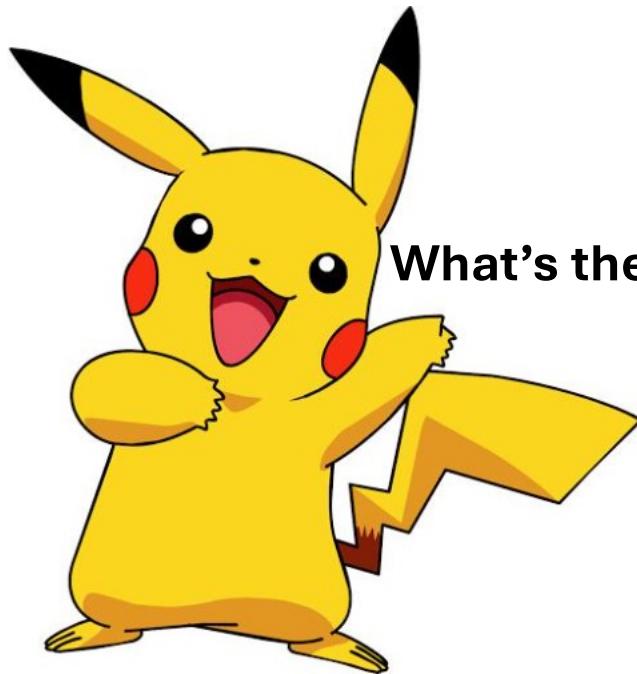
Seasonal Greetings

- Spring: What's something new you're excited to try this spring?
- Summer: What's your favorite summer activity or memory?
- Fall: If your mood today was a fall leaf, what color would it be?
- Winter: What's a cozy thing you like to do when it's cold outside?

Key Takeaway

You don't need to be funny or loud. You just need to be *intentional*. A good greeting says: 'You matter, and I'm here with you.' That's how trust grows.





Check-in—What should you ask to gauge student progress, emotions, and engagement while creating a supportive learning environment?

 **Progress Reflection (Start of Session)**

- What do you remember most from our last session?
- Since we last met, have you used or noticed anything we worked on?
- What felt easy or hard about your schoolwork this week?
- What's one thing you've improved at recently?
- What have you successfully learned?
- What challenges do you want to overcome?
- What's something you've practiced or noticed since we last met?

Mid-Session Progress Check

- How are you feeling about what we've covered so far?
- Is this pace working for you—too fast, too slow, or just right?
- What's something that just clicked for you?
- What part of this is still feeling tricky?
- What part of this feels clear? What part feels confusing?
- Do you want to try this together again, or give it a solo shot?

End-of-Session Wrap-Ups

- What's something you're proud of from today?
- What did you learn, discover, or understand better today?
- What's one thing to keep practicing before next time?
- If you had to teach one thing from today, what would it be?
- What's a question you still have or want to explore more?
- What's one thing you're taking away from today?
- What was your strongest moment during this session?
- What's still a little confusing that we can tackle next time?
- What would you rate your confidence on this topic, from 1 to 5?



**Time
to set
a
GOAL
!**

Goal-Setting Worksheet

⌚ Session Starter: Let's Set Our Goal!

Date: _____ *Mentor:* _____ *Student:* _____

What do you want to focus on or feel proud of by the end of today's session?

- Understand a tricky topic
- Practice for an upcoming test
- Finish a homework assignment
- Build confidence in a skill
- Ask more questions than usual
- Something else: _____



Today's Goal (in your own words):



How Will We Get There?

- What will we practice together?
- What will you try doing differently today?
- What kind of help do you want from your mentor?



Mentor Notes (optional):



Clarify Standards— What questions can you ask to make sure you and your student are on the same page ?

- Can you repeat the instructions in your own words?
- What does 'complete this assignment' mean to you?
- What do you think success looks like for this task?
- What questions do you have about what we need to do?
- How do you know when you're finished with this task?
- What should you do if you get stuck?
- What's the goal your teacher wants you to hit?
- What kind of feedback do you prefer—heat (straightforward) or heart (gentle and encouraging)?



Provide Support—What questions can you ask to better support your students ?

Guiding Problem-Solving:

- What do you already know that might help with this problem?
- Where do you think we should start?
- What's the first step you would take?
- Is there a smaller part we can start with?
- What is the question asking you to find or do?
- What do you think will happen if we do ___?

Encouraging Self-Reflection:

- What strategies have worked for you in the past?
- What's one thing you understand now that you didn't before?
- If you had to teach this to a friend, how would you explain it?
- What part felt the easiest? What part felt the trickiest?
- Did we meet the goal we set today? Why or why not?
- What helped you stay focused today?
- How did you feel about today's session—confident, confused, or in between?

Emotional Support:

- How are you feeling about this today?
- Is something on your mind you'd like to share?
- Want to take a quick break and reset together?
- What can I do to help make this feel a little easier?
- Would it help to talk about what's frustrating you?
- What's one thing that's going okay right now?
- It's totally ok to feel that way.
- You're not alone—I feel that way too.
- You're doing better than you think.
- I'm proud of how hard you are trying.
- Take your time—we're in this together.



Preferred Learning Style—What questions can help you figure out if your student is a *visual, audio, or kinesthetic learner*?

00 For Visual Learners

- Do diagrams, pictures, or videos help things make more sense to you?
- Would you rather read instructions or see an example?
- Do you like using color-coding, charts, or drawing to help you remember?
- Would seeing it step-by-step on paper or a whiteboard help?
- Do you like when things are color-coded or organized visually?

If the student says *No* to one of these visual-learner related questions, move to auditory questions

Auditory Learners

- Do you prefer when I read the question out loud?
- Do you like learning through songs, podcasts, or group discussions?
- Does it help if we talk through the problem together?
- Can you remember jokes or conversations easily?
- When studying for a test, do you like to read aloud or explain the material to someone?

If the student says *No* to one of these audio-learner related questions, move to kinesthetic questions 

Kinesthetic Learners

- Would you rather act it out or try it instead of just hearing or seeing it?
- Do you like building models, using objects, or drawing while learning?
- Do you tap your pencil, fidget, or move when you're thinking?
- Do you learn best when the lesson includes a game or activity?
- Do you remember things best when doing something with it, like a hands-on activity?

Visual Learner Activity Packet

1. Color Code Your Learning

Objective: Help students organize information visually using colors.

Instructions:

- Provide students with a short paragraph or math problems.
- Have them highlight key words, numbers, or ideas using different colors.

Example:

- Red = Main Idea
- Blue = Details
- Green = Transitions or Steps

2. Vocabulary Sketch

Objective: Reinforce vocabulary through visual imagery.

Instructions:

- Give students a vocabulary word.
- They draw a picture representing the meaning of the word.
- Below the drawing, they write a sentence using the word.

3. Story Sequencing with Pictures

Objective: Build comprehension and sequencing skills.

Instructions:

- Provide a simple story in mixed-up picture panels.

- Students cut and paste pictures in the correct order.
- They can then write captions or retell the story aloud.

4. Visual Timelines

Objective: Understand chronological order and history.

Instructions:

- Pick a topic (e.g., a student's day, life cycle of a butterfly).
- Students draw or place images in order on a timeline.

5. Matching Games

Objective: Reinforce vocabulary or math facts.

Instructions:

- Create cards with images and matching words or equations.
- Students match pairs and explain how they relate.



Audio Learner Activity Packet

1. Repeat After Me

Objective: Build memory and attention through repetition.

Instructions:

- Say a list of words or numbers aloud.
- Students repeat them back in the same order.
- Increase difficulty by adding more words.

Variation: Use rhyming or themed word sets (e.g., animals, colors).

2. Rhyming Songs & Chants

Objective: Reinforce vocabulary and math facts through rhythm.

Instructions:

- Sing a short song or chant using key vocabulary or multiplication facts.
- Have students create their own songs.

Example: Three times three is nine / That's a fact and it's just fine!

3. Story Listening

Objective: Improve comprehension and attention.

Instructions:

- Play an audiobook or read a story aloud.

- Ask questions afterward: What happened first? Why did the character feel sad?

4. Teach-Back Time

Objective: Reinforce learning by speaking.

Instructions:

- Students explain a concept or lesson aloud to a partner or group.
- Encourage them to use their own words.

5. Record & Reflect

Objective: Help students process thoughts by speaking.

Instructions:

- Students record themselves summarizing what they learned.
- Then listen to their recording and reflect on how they explained the topic.

Kinesthetic Learner Activity Packet

1. Role Play and Act It Out

Objective: Reinforce understanding through physical expression.

Instructions:

- Choose a story or historical event.
- Assign roles and have students act it out.
- Include props or gestures to enhance the experience.

2. Learning Stations

Objective: Create movement-based learning through rotating stations.

Instructions:

- Set up 3-5 stations around the room.
- Each station includes a hands-on task (puzzle, building, sorting).
- Students rotate every 5-10 minutes.

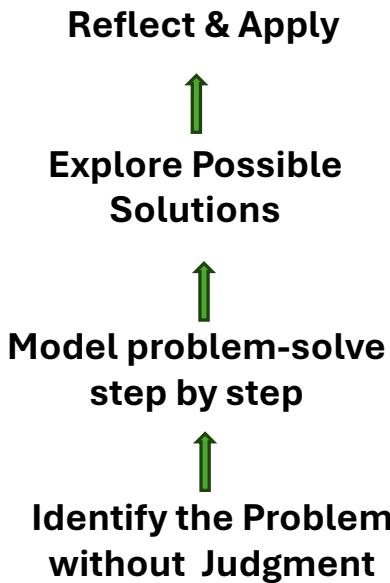
3. Hopscotch Math

Objective: Practice math facts through body movement.

Instructions:

- Use chalk or masking tape to create a hopscotch board.
- Write math problems in each square.
- Students hop through while solving problems aloud.

Collaborative Troubleshooting



Ask open-ended questions to identify the problem 🔥

- What do you understand so far?
- Where do you think it got confusing?
- Can you show me what you've tried?
- What part feels the most challenging right now?
- What do you notice about this question/problem?
- Is there a step that doesn't make sense yet?

Patiently guide with step-by-step questions

For Math:

- What's the first number we see?
- What is the question asking us to find?
- Can we underline any important words or numbers?
- What operation do we usually use for this kind of problem?
- What do we get when we do just this part first?

For Reading:

- What's happening in this paragraph?
- Can you point to a word that you don't understand?
- Who is the main character in this section?
- What do you think the author is trying to say here?
- Can you summarize this sentence in your own words?

For Writing:

- What's one thing you want to say in this sentence?
- Can we start with just the first word?
- What does your topic sentence sound like so far?
- Want to say it out loud first before we write?
- Can you give one example to support your point?

What questions can you ask to explore possible solutions together with the student?

For Math:

- What are some ways we could approach this?
- If we tried a different method, what might that look like?
- What would happen if we started from the end and worked backward?
- Can you think of a similar problem we've solved before?
- What's one thing we could try next?
- What tools or strategies might help us here?
- Is there another way to check if our answer makes sense?
- Would it help if we broke it down into smaller parts?

For Reading:

- Do you want to sketch it out, talk it through, or try it another way?
- How would you explain your thinking if we were solving this as a team?
- Can you think of another way to understand this part?
- Does this remind you of something else we've read?
- What clues from the text could help us figure this out?
- If this character had made a different choice, what might have happened?
- How could we summarize this in our own words?
- What's a question we could ask to dig deeper into this paragraph?



For Writing:

- What's the main idea you're trying to get across?
- What part do you feel strongest about? Why?
- Is there another way to start this sentence or paragraph?
- How could we make this more specific or detailed?
- Can we think of a clearer word or phrase here?
- What's another way to organize these ideas?
- Does the conclusion connect back to the beginning? How can we strengthen that?
- Is there a place where we could add an example or story?
- If you read this out loud, does anything feel confusing or off?
- What question do you want the reader to be thinking about when they finish?

What questions can you ask to help the student to reflect and apply what they have learned in the future?

- What did we learn from this?
- How can you use this strategy next time?
- If a friend had a same problem, how would you help them?
- How might this help you in a different subject or setting?
- Where else could you use this skill?

Student Encouragement & Motivation



Strategy ONE: Identify students' emotion and acknowledge it

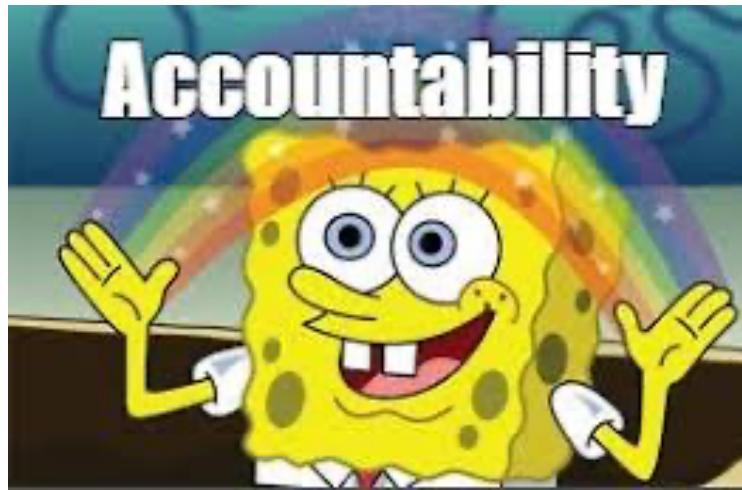
- *Are you feeling frustrated, confused, or stuck?*
- *What part of this feels hard?*
- *Would it help to take a deep breath and try again?*
- *Does this feel overwhelming or just annoying?*
- *Are you feeling tired, stuck, or maybe just not in the mood?*
- *I've felt like that too – does it help to know you're not alone?*
- *Want me to show you where I used to get stuck too?*
- *What would be most helpful from me right now—listening, guiding, or just sitting with it?*

TWO: Use encouragement that feels authentic

- *This is tough, but look how much you've figured out already!*
- *Let's tackle this one step at a time.*
- *What strategy did you use to solve that problem? I really appreciate how you broke it down.*
- I can see how hard you're working on this — that determination will pay off.
- You didn't give up, even when it got frustrating. That's real progress.
- You stuck with it — that takes grit.
- You're building stamina for challenges like this every time you keep going.

THREE: Reframing difficulty as progress & challenges as opportunities to grow

- What's one thing you understand now that you didn't before?
- Can you think of a time when something that was hard at first became easier?
- What's something you struggled with in the past but eventually mastered?
- What's one small win you had today?
- If this feels tough, what does that tell us about your brain? (Answer: It's growing!)
- What's a mistake you made today that helped you learn something new?
- If you were to give advice to someone else facing this challenge, what would you say?



Shift the Mindset: From “Homework Checker” to “Accountability Partner”

Goal-Setting Questions

Helps the student think ahead and take ownership

- What's one thing you want to accomplish before we end today?
- Which assignment feels most important to tackle first?
- If you finish early, what's your plan for the extra time?
- What's your top priority for the week in this subject?

Accountability Check-In Questions

Makes them responsible for follow-through

- Last time you said you'd finish [X]—how did it go?
- What will you do between now and our next meeting to stay on track?
- If you get stuck after I leave, what's your plan?
- How will you know you've done your best work?

Acknowledgment

It truly takes a team to accomplish this student-mentor program. Thank you, Pathwise team—you have given me a sense of belonging, the belief that I could bring this initiative to life, and the inspiration to become who I aspire to be.

Nichole, thank you for welcoming me into the Pathwise community. Your passionate energy for serving others is contagious.

Liz, I deeply appreciate your patience, trust, and support. Working with you has been both meaningful and enjoyable.

Miranda, thank you for guiding me through class observations. Your insights on student-tutor dynamics were invaluable in shaping this program.

A huge round of applause to our incredible co-creators. Your kindness, passion, and creativity inspired me to give my best. Special thanks to **Alex, Anya, Kathryn, Evanllylyn, and Aritra**. This project would not have reached the finish line without your consistent effort. I am grateful for the accountability we shared and truly enjoyed working alongside each of you.



(From left to right): Alex Efremova; Anya Rasmussen; Kathryn Chen; Evanllylyn Sanchez Vargas; Aritra Nag; Sonika Gadgil; Dhruv Kamath; Yana Smith

Finally, this is not the end of the program. My hope is that it will continue to evolve over time and create even greater impact.

jing ge-stadnyk
08/18/2025



My name is Alex, I use he/him pronouns, and I am a senior at Gunn High School. As a Pathwise mentor, I am proud of building lasting connections with my students that promote kindness and motivation to learn. Outside of the classroom, my favorite things to do are volunteer and help my community, and act or direct plays in my high school theater.



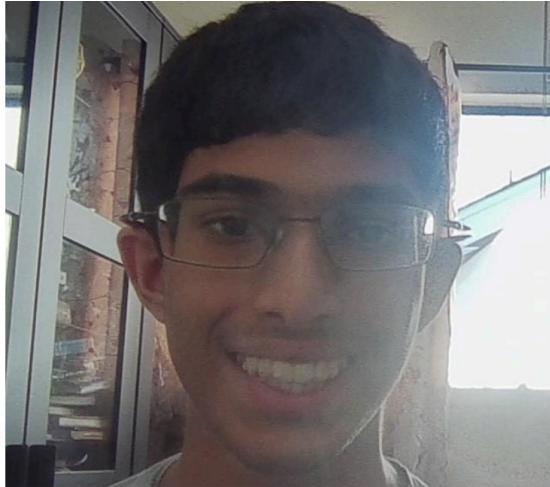
Anya Rasmussen, a junior at Paly, has volunteered with Pathwise since her freshman year and works as a digital artist for her school newspaper. She is passionate about education and community service, earning recognition such as the President's Volunteer Service Award.



My name is Kathryn, and I'm a senior at Palo Alto High School! As a Pathwise mentor, I'm proud to help encourage the love of learning in students, as well as the importance of persistence, even when things get challenging. In my free time, I love to read, draw, and crochet.



I'm Evanlelyn Sanchez Vargas, Palo Alto Senior High School, 12th Grade. As a former student and current mentor, I'm proud of coming back to the program that helped me, and now helping students like me. Seeing their smiles after understanding a difficult concept is all I need. I enjoy sewing and thrifting!



My name is Aritra Nag, and I am a senior at Gunn High School. One thing I am proud of as a Pathwise mentor is the academic progress my students have made over the years. Often, students who I've tutored become independent learners who do so well that they don't even need tutoring anymore. On a different note, some of my hobbies include playing the violin and reading nonfiction books.



Dhruv has been volunteering for Pathwise for over 2 years - he has a passion for tutoring and helping others learn. In his free time, he enjoys watching sports, and hanging out with friends and family.