

11B 4.3 Letters of Recommendation

PHASE OVERVIEW

This phase acts as a jump start for students on the post-secondary application process. Pairs will (1) finalize their preliminary post-secondary list (2) learn the importance and steps to acquire letters of recommendation and (3) learn the importance and basics of applying for financial aid. They will plan summer tasks to complete in order to stay on track with the post-secondary application process and draft a pair summer communication plan.



LESSON OBJECTIVE

Letters of recommendation are important to my professional life and post-secondary application process. I need to identify adults who can describe my qualities as a student and community member.

PURPOSE

Most post-secondary pathways require or allow letters of recommendation as part of the application process. It is important for students to know why and how to ask their teachers and other adults in their community (e.g., coaches, volunteer supervisors) for recommendations.

AGENDA

5 min	<i>Do Now: Mentor Response</i>
30 min	<i>Learn and Engage: Asking for Letters of Recommendation</i>
5 min	<i>Mentor Connection</i>



KEY TAKEAWAY

Letters of recommendation are important to my professional life and post-secondary application process. I need to identify adults who can describe my qualities as a student and community member.

Facilitator Notes:

You should either send an email to the 11th grade teachers before this lesson or after to let them know that you will/have completed this activity. The teachers will then understand why they are receiving these requests en masse and this will allow them to prepare to respond to the students.

If the school requires students to complete “brag sheets” of their high school accomplishments, you should remind students to include those in writing their requests to their teachers.

The week after you launch this lesson, you should have students read their mentor’s edits, modify their email requests and then send them out as a “Do-Now.”

You can play the video lesson instead of teaching “live” if you think students will require a substantial amount of time to work on the assignment. You should consider emailing the mentor guide directly to mentors and prompting them to write a recommendation for their mentee.

MATERIALS:

[4.3 Presentation](#), [Brag Sheet](#), [Mentor Guide to Letters of Recommendation](#), [Video Lesson](#)

Do Now: Mentor Response		Notes:
Students will log into the Platform.		
Slide 2: 5 min	TALKING POINTS Please log into your Platform account. Read your mentor's message and respond. Then, share 1 high and 1 low of this week.	

Learn and Engage: Asking for Letters of Recommendation		Notes:
Students will learn how to properly request letters of recommendation.		
Slide 3: 1 min	<i>Have a student read the key takeaway.</i>	
Slide 4: 5 min	<p>Student discussion question: What is a letter of recommendation? What is it used for?</p> <p><i>Anticipated responses: a letter that highlights a student's best traits and advocates for acceptance into a certain program or opportunity.</i></p> <p>TALKING POINTS Post-secondary programs want to know who you are in the classroom and in the school community. Recommendations can provide that perspective.</p> <p>This is also a great way to practice self-advocacy! You are going to have to ask people for references/recommendations all throughout your professional life.</p>	
Slide 5: 1 min	<p>TALKING POINTS You will need at least two letters of recommendation (and possibly more).</p> <p>Ask 2 teachers who know you well and have seen you grow as a student. Make sure that at least one of these teachers is a core teacher (English, Math, History, or Science).</p> <p>You should have a few backup options in mind. Teachers receive a lot of letter of recommendation requests. They might say that they are not capable of writing you one because they have already committed to writing many others.</p>	

<p>Slide 6: 2 min</p>	<p>TALKING POINTS</p> <p>Your mentor can provide a different perspective than your teachers! You should consider asking your mentor for a letter of recommendation as well!</p> <p>You can also ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coaches ● Employers (bosses) ● Community members ● Religious figures ● Volunteering supervisors ● Club advisors 	
<p>Slide 7: 6 min</p>	<p><i>Note: Go through the email, part by part. It can be helpful to first have a student read out the email and then dissect it with the class.</i></p> <p>Dear Ms. Jones,</p> <p>I hope you are doing well. I am writing this email to request a letter of recommendation for my post-secondary applications. I am planning on attending college to study history. I am asking you because you have helped me throughout this year with your after school tutoring in Math. As you know, Math isn't my best subject. I am proud that my hard work with you brought my grade up from a D to a B. I attended tutoring three times a week with you and made up all of my missing assignments to reach this goal. I hope this proves to you that I am committed to my studies and my future success.</p> <p>Please let me know if you can write me the letter. Feel free to ask me any questions. I appreciate you.</p> <p>Thank you, Bob Smith</p> <p>Potential discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you notice/what stands out in this email? 2. What did the writer do well? 3. Is there anything you would have done differently? <p>Important parts to highlight:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The student included a subject line in their email clearly showing the topic of the message. ● They started their email off with a greeting. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● They clearly asked the teacher for a letter of recommendation. ● They clearly explained WHY they chose this teacher in particular and reminded them of the efforts they made in the class. ● They signed off their request with a “thank you.” 	
Slide 8: 15 min	<p>You will now have time to write both of your drafts! Think about the two teachers that you would like to reach out to and then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draft your 2 requests for letters of recommendation in your email account ● Copy/paste the drafts on the platform so your mentor can read and edit them ● You can exit your email, the draft you wrote will be saved in the “draft” folder 	
Slide 9: Mentor Connection	<p>TALKING POINTS</p> <p>Now let’s write to our mentors.</p>	
Slide 10: Extend	<p><i>If you have additional time remaining, consider asking students what new information they have learned from their mentor’s message.</i></p>	



Mentor Connection

MENTEE PROMPT

1. Share with your mentor the email drafts that you have written for each teacher.
(copy/paste)
2. Ask your mentor for feedback on these emails.

Here are the drafts I have written. Is there anything that I should change or add?



Mentee Connection

Overview:

In this lesson, students learned why post-secondary institutions ask for letters of recommendation from teachers and other staff members. They discussed how to select the best teachers for recommendations and how to compose a request for their letters from those teachers.

Students often feel that recommendation letters are a part of the application process that is out of their control. They believe that what teachers and counselors will communicate has already been set, and they have no way to influence what admissions officers will hear about them. However, students do often have the power to ensure a stand-out recommendation letter. If they understand the purpose and make smart choices about who to ask and what to ask for, then they can ensure they will receive recommendation letters that show their best qualities.

If you feel comfortable doing so, you should offer to write your mentee a letter of recommendation. This guide ([click here](#)) has been created to help support you in this task.

Your Response

1. Read over your mentee's drafts and provide feedback!

Things to keep in mind:

- Does the email have a greeting?
- Is the purpose of the email clear?
- Has your mentee explained their rationale for selecting the particular recommender?
- Does the email have a closing statement?
- Does the email have a signature?

2. If you feel comfortable doing so, offer to write your mentee a letter of recommendation.