



# Instructor Lab Card

Welcome to PathFinder – the most advanced and widely used system in America for Youth Opportunities, Electronic Portfolios and Learning Plans.

This card offers important tips and suggestions for a successful and error-free lab session.

## CHECK THE LAB EQUIPMENT

1. From a computer in the lab, go to: "inspection.communityos.org."  
(Do not enter any "www," just this direct address.)  
Click on Web Inspector, and check the results. If you get a green light, then this computer, the Web Browser you are using, and the network on which it resides are probably in compliance. Check the other computers unless they are configured identically.
2. Schedule lab time on your district or partnership's PathFinder calendar, in order to avoid conflicts with too many students in your area accessing the same system at the same time.
3. Print Student Lab Cards so students can be self-guided in their PathFinder experience.

Color	Indicates
Green	OK. No problems or warnings.
Yellow	Warning. You may not be able to use all site features, but you should be able to use our site.
Red	Error. You will have trouble using PathFinder, NextStep, Tapestry, or CommunityOS.

## HAVE A PROJECTOR AT THE READY

With a student at every computer you will find it useful and sometimes necessary to be able to project the PathFinder system onto a large screen to give suggestions and instructions to your students.

## ASSESS YOUR STUDENTS READINESS

In some cases students may not be familiar with Web Browser software; be prepared to show them how to scroll horizontally and vertically.

Also, show them how to find the navigational aids in PathFinder. Rather than using the Back and Forward buttons of the Browser program, use links and buttons provided on the PathFinder screens. (*Click here to search again, Click here to Save and Return, etc.*) These are almost always located at the bottom of PathFinder pages.

From a content perspective, you may want to print appropriate PathFinder screens and hand them out in class so that students can work on their entries before using PathFinder on the Web. You are free to make whatever copies you need of PathFinder's screens for classroom use without additional copyright permission.

## DESIGN THE LAB FOR SELF-GUIDED WORK

Important: In rare circumstances, you may encounter errors if you have the students proceed as a group together. "Everyone now click on Enter PathFinder. Now enter your username and password, and now together, click on Login," are examples of synchronized group work for which PathFinder is not designed. This type of group work may cause errors.

It may help to understand why: PathFinder is part of a very large national network that supports education, employment and training and social service partnerships from Connecticut to California. It handles thousands and thousands of users every day with extremely sophisticated security. However, it is not designed to handle many simultaneous requests for exactly the same thing at exactly the same time. If your students proceed at their own pace in the lab and the computers are in compliance, you will have no problems. If the students are all entering requests for exactly the same thing at the same time, or if they are using equipment or settings that are not in compliance, you may encounter errors.

## TIPS & SUGGESTIONS

1. PathFinder provides an excellent opportunity to engage parents. Send students home with instructions to have their parents visit the site and work with them on their profiles and resumes. If you are working on Portfolios, Learning Plans, or Youth Opportunity Requests such as internships or job shadowing days, these are even more powerful modules through which to engage parents.
2. Students will want to explore other sites on the Web, and PathFinder encourages them to do so. In fact, some fairly amazing sites are listed on the backside of the Student Lab Card. When working with larger groups of students, say 20 or more, it is very helpful to tell half the group that this is "Web Exploration Time," while focusing on profile or portfolio work with the other half. This satisfies the need to explore in a controlled environment, and makes instructional time more efficient.
3. Tremendous motivation can be quickly achieved if you can have an employer partner come by the lab and review with the students their resume printouts. It adds to legitimacy, motivates the students toward well-written entries, and helps them to further link their classroom work to the world beyond.
4. If you are building Portfolios, take them to some of the more exciting web sites that offer information about salaries, aerial maps of their neighborhoods (see Student Lab Card), or career trend information, to help them become more concrete about their futures and the education and training such will require.
5. If you do not have a copy of the *Portfolio Companion*, Produced by the Learning Exchange, please contact your PathFinder System Administrator to acquire a copy from VisionLink. It offers comprehensive curriculum examples and suggestions.

## TECHNICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. If a student gets a DATA MISSING message, it is because our security system won't let them use the Back Button on their Web Browser at this point. Just click on the browser's Reload to continue. If the navigational aids are used (located at the bottom of every screen), the DATA MISSING message will not occur.
2. If any student receives a light bulb error, or an indicator that system traffic is excessive, it means the system is being overloaded with requests from your area. Have everyone stop for a minute and the system will catch up. This means too many students are doing exactly the same thing at the same time.
3. If a student sees someone else's information, it is may be because another student in this lab forgot to logoff from PathFinder and close the Browser program. Close that computer's Web Browser program completely and then re-open it and have the student go into PathFinder again. If this continues you will want to consult with the Technician of the lab and the PathFinder Systems Administrator for non-compliant network or proxy server settings.
4. PathFinder is designed to be fault-tolerant. Even if you receive error messages, the system has, in virtually all cases, saved the student's information. Any edits that were not processed by clicking on "save," of course, will not be.
5. Your technical support contact for PathFinder in your area has a list of supported Web Browsers and preference settings that are necessary for accurate transfer of information between your lab and the PathFinder server. Be sure the computers are in compliance. Fairly often new browsers are released and they may or may not be compliant with PathFinder's intensive data management and security systems. Also, recent browsers may have bugs in their software code that has yet to be fixed in a maintenance release from the developers of that browser.
6. If you are having technical problems during a lab session, call your local PathFinder support contact (system administrator) who can call VisionLink immediately. VisionLink can observe your lab session in progress and very often provide solutions and insights right away. Most importantly, the problem can be solved before future lab sessions are scheduled.
7. Computer, Lab Network, Firewall and Proxy Servers need to be configured to work together. VisionLink uses standard protocols so that in only rare instances would any of these settings need to be changed to support VisionLink systems. If your local building's technical person has specific questions, VisionLink posts a wide variety of information on its "inspection.communityOS.org" testing site concerning these standards and settings.