Principals' Training Center
PTCnet Survey

Topic   Middle School Advisory Program

Query   **These questions are about Middle School Advisory Programs**

- How frequently do you have an advisory period?

- Where does advisory fit into your schedule?

- How long is your advisory period?

- Would you describe your advisory as having a school wide planned curriculum, a team planned curriculum or an individual teacher planned curriculum or would you describe it differently?

- What would you say are the 3 most frequent uses of your advisory program (e.g. student organization, bonding activities, social issues?)

- What gains do you feel you get from your advisory program?

- What ways do you feel your advisory program could be improved?

Date   January 2011

Query Submitted and collated by   Mr. Jeff Farrington, HS Principal/ MSHS Campus Director, American School Foundation of Monterrey

Total number of responses

Individual responses

<u>MS Advisory</u>

These questions are about Middle School Advisory Programs

How frequently do you have an advisory period?
1x week, but we have homeroom (with the same students) every day for 5 mins.
1 hour and 45 minutes per week

Daily
AHIS has a set time period every day
We schedule them as needed when we have a specific need.
4 times a week
Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays
Daily
Once a week
Once a week
4 days out of 8

Where does advisory fit into your schedule?
On Thursdays, mid-morning, between periods. We create a special advisory schedule to get 32 minutes.
15 minutes each morning and a total of 45 minutes on Wednesday mornings.
As part of the lunch block: for the first 20 minutes, grades 6-8 go to advisory while 9-12 go to lunch; for the second 20 minutes everyone is at lunch; for the final 20 minutes, grades 6-8 finish lunch while 9-12 have advisory
Every morning before 1st period
We usually do a lunch meeting or a special meeting on our short Wednesday collaborative planning times.
Between the first and second block of the day (gives us the great access to shared MS/HS facilities)
It comes between first and second period in the day (we have four blocks per day)
first thing
after lunch before the final block of the day - we run 4 80 minute blocks a day
At the end of day 4
A special period per grade level. All student in a class are mixed up and different advisors meet with their own group, same day same time.
Before lunch for HS and after lunch for MS

How long is your advisory period?
32 mins.
15 min x 4, 1 x 45
20 minutes
Only 15 minutes
Usually 50 minutes or so.
25 minutes
Relatively long. Its 30 minutes in length.
25 minutes
30 minutes
30 mn but advisors see the students every morning for 5 mn to take attendance and make announcements.

40 min
40 minutes.

Would you describe your advisory as having a school wide planned curriculum, a team planned curriculum or an individual teacher planned curriculum or would you describe it differently?
A grade-level team planned curriculum filtered through a grade-level purpose statement, yet connected to four division-wide themes.
Our advisory program has aspects of all three. We have a whole school approach, then each spring our Grade level leaders and MS administrators meet together to plan out advisory for the next year, then the individual teams tweak and approve. Within that there is also room for flexibility for individual teachers.
Team planned with individual teacher control over some parts
There are SW activities that must be completed during the year and the time in the morning is to help with this. We do not have a set curriculum, homeroom teachers are expected to complete per their on schedule and be ready when activities come around.
We have an individual teacher-planned curriculum development process, but we align both horizontally and vertically via middle school advisory meetings.
School-wide monthly focus, planned at the individual grade level, coordinated by our Activities Director.
Our advisory curriculum was designed by the secondary teaching staff. It links broadly with our school's character development program and it increasingly has an emphasis on college preparation as students progress through the grades
team planned aiming for more school wide
it's a team planned curriculum - aiming to ensure a consistent/similar experience across advisory classes
I would say school wide and team planned curriculum. For example 12th and 11th graders will be involved in many EE "sessions" while 10th grade will have personal project assignments during that time.
It is a Middle School curr, divided by grade level (789) and then each teacher adds or adapts according to what is going on at school or in their group.
Our counselors head up/oversee the advisory team. They have their usual planning time as well as working with interested teachers during our once monthly SIT (School Improvement Team) scheduled blocks. The counselors plan the "Small Learning Community" day, the Service Learning coordinator plans the Global Citizenship" day and I plan the "Reflective Learner" day (attached), on the fourth day, we have a student led assembly.

What would you say are the 3 most frequent uses of your advisory program (e.g. student organization, bonding activities, social issues?)
Group bonding, community service, planning for/sharing information about school events/trips.
A place for important adolescent issues that do not fit neatly in other curriculum areas (e.g. bullying, puberty, organization, study skills.....)

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Teacher-Student Mentorship
Student-Student and Student-Teacher bonding activities
Teachers have been told orally to work on all three, but really unsure how much is actually getting completed.
Student organization, teaching ATLs, social issues
The uses of our meetings are first and foremost student concern times. We also meet to vertically and horizontally align throughout the curriculum development process. We also meet for special programming and event planning. Occasionally, we meet to discuss the viability of a new option or program for the kids.
Depends on the grade level. We do a lot of House system activities in advisory time, pastoral care with teachers, student organization.
Main focus would be (1) character development (2) bonding (3) leadership
Social Emotional, Academic support, Community celebration and sharing
it's a blend - we have a day for DEAR (Drop Everything And Read), a day for a developmentally appropriate Life Skills lesson, ie organization. goal setting etc, a day for academics/mentoring/personal organization and a day for energized team building activities that are linked to our House system
bonding and support of the curriculum. CAS, EE, PP follow up.
Bonding, Organization, Conflict Resolution, grade follow up

What gains do you feel you get from your advisory program?
 Connectedness of students to each other in a small group and to their advisor; a focus on the affective development of students; addressing the whole child (social, emotional, etc.).
Helps to guarantee that there is an adult advocate for every middle school student. Helpful for parents and students as they know who to contact.
Helps every student have a personal connection with a teacher; provides a teacher-advocate for students when issues come up like too many tests on one day; eases administrivia issues
The greatest gain is undoubtedly collaborative discussions around individual student concerns. We get a broader look at a student from many angles this way.
It is the glue that holds the school together. It is the family that students develop and it is the place that we can reach kids in an intimate concerned way.
A lot of gains. I believe it is instrumental to addressing any of the larger issues that schools deal with. We spend a lot of time talking about issues such as bullying, academic integrity, social responsibility... the list goes on and on. Our advising teachers are quite "close" to their assigned groups and spend quite a bit of time in bringing students together for social activities. It is also an instructional platform for teaching how to work through problems with others.
community building, adult advocate for each student, another layer of support, communication method
kids immediately feel as part of a small group, they develop a closer relationship with their advisory teacher, parents have one teacher they can touch base with concerns, it's an avenue for supporting developmentally appropriate student needs and it's flexible
A time when students can get support from an adult who knows the "whole" picture.

Students have a closer guidance and follow up; admin team gets a sense of what students feel or are living in everyday basis.

Advocacy for students, proactive character education, reactive responses to student concerns and needs. Each student has an adult in the school who looks out for them, it also provides a structured approach to service, reflection and developmentally appropriate social/emotional issues that are key to our school's philosophy and learning outcomes.

What ways do you feel your advisory program could be improved?

Regular oversight and evaluation of program as it pertains to themes.

We have steadily worked on our advisory program and have been fairly happy with it.

Concerns remain that we never have enough time to do all that we want to do.

The program has to adjust to unexpected issues (like a government mandate that every student fill in a certain form), which means that some things we wanted/planned to do have to give way. The program could be better if we could know in advance what we would be able to do in a given year.

This questionnaire has really made me think. Perhaps if we did have a set curriculum with timeline for teachers to follow we would get more out of the little time we give homeroom teachers in the morning.

More time to meet would improve the program. I think everyone who sits on the committee would say this too.

We pack too much in at times. At times we need more pastoral care, and more organizational exercises that are engaging.

Our teachers need better training with our character development program (The Virtues Project) so that they are more effective at implementing it with the groups they work with. I think that's where we need to grow the most.

Better progression grade to grade, a better link to academic support and portfolio, stronger counselor support

we are going to take some time this year to review the curriculum and make plans for the following school year - this should free up team meeting time to focus on other important topics like students of concern and cross curricular links

By being more structured and by having more consistency across groups.

Trained teachers.

Better documentation to provide clarity of expectations and goals for faculty – the SIT team are working on that this year.

Additional documents:

Adapted from Preface, by Larry Dieringer, of *The Advisory Guide*, by Rachel A. Poliner & Carol M. Lieber, Educators for Social Responsibility Cambridge, MA, 2003. © ESR

Why Create Advisory Programs?

Advisory programs have existed in independent schools and a few public schools for decades. The Coalition of Essential Schools played a significant role in the expansion of advisories. One of the Coalition's ten Common Principles states "teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum

feasible extent." Starting in 1984, many Coalition schools chose advisories as one vehicle for achieving personalization. In 1989, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development published *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century. Turning Points,* a call for transforming the education of early adolescents, accelerated the middle school movement. The first of its eight essential principles promotes dividing large middle grade schools into smaller communities. Assigning an adult advisor to each student was seen as a key strategy for achieving smaller communities. *Turning Points* said, "Every student should be well known by at least one adult. Students should be able to rely on that adult to help learn from their experiences, comprehend physical changes and changing relations with family and peers, act on their behalf to marshal every school and community resource needed for the student to succeed, and help to fashion a promising vision for the future." (p. 40) *Turning Points 2000* goes further, stating "Among youth at risk from health or behavioral problems, family dysfunction, poverty, or other stresses, the most important school factor fostering resilience — defined as 'successful adaptation despite risk and adversity'…— may be the availability of at least one caring responsible adult who functions as a mentor or role model…" High schools have generally lagged behind middle schools in seeing the importance of personalization and utilizing advisory programs. In 1995, the National Association of Secondary School Principals published *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution. Breaking Ranks* challenges high schools of the 21st century to be "much more student-centered and above all much more personalized in programs, support services, and intellectual rigor" (p. vi). In its section, "School Environment: Creating a Climate Conducive to Teaching and Learning," it recommends, "Every high school student will have a personal Adult Advocate to help him or her personalize the educational experience." The report says "The relationship between the student and advocate should ensure that no youngster experiences the sense of isolation that frequently engulfs teenagers during this critical period of their lives" (p.31). More recently, the Gates and Carnegie Foundations and the federal government have supported the development of small learning communities in high schools. Advisory programs are seen as one of the key building blocks for creating a small learning community, whether it's in a brand new small school or a traditional high school that is being restructured into smaller units. Another development supports the creation of advisory programs. There's a growing body of research from the study of resiliency and the field of prevention showing an integral link between school success and healthy development. This is especially true for students who find it more challenging to navigate the dominant culture of secondary school successfully. In a nutshell, the research says that if we create safe, supportive, respectful learning environments, personalize young people's learning experience, help them develop social and emotional competencies, and provide opportunities to practice these skills, they will grow more attached to school, avoid risky behavior, and achieve more academic success. Effective advisory programs meet all of these goals. The research reveals an interesting and complex set of cause and effect relationships. To begin with, initiatives that make the learning environment safer, more caring, better managed, and more participatory have been shown to increase student attachment to school. In turn, students who are more connected and attached to school are more successful as measured by indicators like better attendance and higher graduation rates, as well as higher grades and better standardized test scores. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, a survey of 75,000 students from 127 schools, found that school connectedness is maximized when the school environment meets core adolescent developmental needs. These needs include opportunities for autonomy, opportunities to demonstrate competence, caring and support from adults, developmentally appropriate supervision, and acceptance by peers. In other words, meeting basic developmental needs is the foundation for academic and school success. This makes good common sense. Students need to first feel safe (both physically and psychologically), feel like they belong, feel respected, and feel cared about in order to be successful in school. Positive personal relationships with teachers and bonding with peers are keys to students' success. Academic

personalization emphasizes differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, multiple intelligences, and the social construction of knowledge. In addition, student work that has personal meaning and value, and strengthens metacognition and problem solving skills, makes learning both relevant and rigorous. One study showed that when students perceive their teachers as caring and respectful, they participate more in class, complete more of their homework, and cheat less often.

Research also indicates that interventions that improve the climate for learning, enhance student attachment to school, and increase student achievement decrease the rates of high risk behaviors. The Adolescent Health survey found that adolescents' sense of connectedness to school is the single most important factor associated with significantly lower rates of emotional distress, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, violence, substance abuse and sexual activity. In other words, when students connect positively with peers and adults, they are more likely to avoid high risk behaviors. A meta-analysis of 165 prevention programs found that initiatives that created a more positive environment decreased the prevalence of delinquency, alcohol and drug use, drop-out and non-attendance rates, and behavior problems. Despite these many findings, school reform efforts and prevention programs evolve separately in most schools. The assumption that students' thinking, feelings, and behavior function independently of each other continues to drive the organizational culture of most secondary schools, especially high schools, where the myth of the divided self goes unchallenged. Relentless departmentalization sanctions specialized roles of adults in secondary schools — the content expert in the classroom, the child expert in the guidance center, and the discipline expert in the dean's office. One group is entrusted to take care of young people's physical, social, and emotional needs, while the other group serves as students' intellectual guardians. If we fail to appreciate how students' academic success is linked intricately to their healthy development, we are unlikely to change the outcomes of the students we want to help the most. Improving the quality of relationships among and between adults and young people can stand at the center of an integrated approach to successful prevention and instructional reform.

Advisory programs promote healthy student development, support academic success, and provide multiple opportunities to bridge the divide between healthy development and academic success. They help ensure that all young people have an adult who knows them well. Advisory helps create stronger bonds among young people, usually cutting across the typical exclusionary social groups that form in schools. It is the "safe container" for discussing adolescent concerns and provides an ideal setting to teach and practice important life skills. Advisories encourage student voice on school wide issues. Finally, they establish a forum for academic, college and career coaching, and advisement that cuts across subject areas. In short, advisory programs encourage both student achievement and healthy development directly through instruction, coaching, and monitoring; and indirectly through increasing attachment to school.

Advisory: Advocacy for Every Student
Middle School Journal, Volume 30, Number 3, January 1999

Ross M. Burkhardt

"Mr. B., I got a 93 on my test!" Marisa rushed into my room between second and third periods to tell me the good news. For several weeks we had been discussing her lack of success in math. An honor student in seventh grade, Marisa was suddenly earning Cs and Ds on her eighth grade algebra tests. She was considering a tutor or possibly dropping to a lower ability level; recently she had begun attending math extra-help sessions. In my dual roles as Marisa's advisor and teacher, I saw her four times daily—morning advisory, social studies, lunch, and English. Once a month I had a 40-minute advisory conference with Marisa to discuss school and life in general. An accomplished actress who enjoyed

playing lacrosse, Marisa regularly shared with me the joys and woes of being thirteen; math was one of her burdens. I listened sympathetically as she voiced her frustrations (she knew that I was interested in her eventual success), and I suggested extra-help sessions.

That is about all I did. Marisa did the rest.

This We Believe, National Middle School Association's basic position paper, asserts that developmentally responsive middle level schools are characterized by, among other things, "an adult advocate for every student" (National Middle School Association, 1995, p. 16). Why adult advocacy?

What is it? And why is it important that the adults who teach middle level students also act as their advocates? Why should "each student [have] one adult who knows and cares for that individual and who supports that student's academic and personal development?" (National Middle School Association, 1995, p. 16).

Advocating for young adolescents is necessarily problematic as they navigate the transition from elementary to middle school, as their bodies grow and change, as they develop new interests and new peer groups, as they probe boundaries and test limits, as they explore a rapidly changing world via the Internet, as they consume a daily bombardment of advertising on television and in magazines, as they consider the varied messages embedded in the lyrics and music of current popular artists, as they confront shocking headlines, and as they edge tentatively, yet inexorably, towards maturity. Some emerging adolescents weather the turbulence with few upsets; others inhabit self-centered lives redolent with roller-coaster drama; still others experience pain and suffering resulting from abusive settings or unhealthy choices, or both. Clearly, educating today's youth is as great a challenge as it ever was.

Many middle level schools respond to the question of advocacy by instituting advisory programs, also know as advisor/advisee, Prime Time, or Home Base. Whatever they are called, most advisory programs share several common attributes: a designated staff member responsible for a small group of students; regularly scheduled meetings of the advisory group; ongoing individual conferences between the advisor and the advisees during the school year; administrative support for advisory activities; parent contact with the school through the child's advisor; and, most importantly, an adult advocate for each young adolescent.

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