

Advisory for DSAG

**Building Relationships, staying
connected and Creating Culture**

What is an Advisory?

An advisory is an organized group of one adult or two (depending on number of students) and a dozen or so kids that serves as the students' first line of affiliation in their school.

What is its purpose for Middle school aged?

- *ensure that each student is known well at school by at least one adult who is that youngster's advocate (advisor);*
- *guarantee that every student belongs to a peer group;*
- *help every student find ways of being successful within the academic and social options the school provides;*
- *promote communication and coordination between home and school.*

How does it work?

Although the "ideal" advisory might meet for 20 minutes each day, the length and frequency of advisories vary from school to school.

- *Most advisories meet on a daily basis. Some meet four times a week. Others might meet for longer periods of time once a week or once every two weeks.*
- *Some schools hold advisories first thing in the morning. Other schools might schedule a 20-minute advisory time between the second and third periods of the day.*
- *Advisory groups come in all sizes. The prescribed "ideal" size is usually 12 to 15 students. Many advisory programs, however, are successful with larger groups.*
- *In some schools, advisory groups include students who are all in the same grade. In other schools, each group includes students of mixed grades, and students stay with the same advisor during their years in the school.*
- *Some advisories are structured, using prescribed commercial programs or programs designed by counselors and teachers in the schools. Others are totally unstructured, allowing advisors to create their own meaningful activities.*

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Middle school reformers have widely promoted advisory programs as a way to strengthen connectedness at the middle level. Broadly defined, advisory programs are configurations in which an adult advisor meets regularly during the school day with a group of students to provide academic and social-emotional mentorship and support, to create personalization within the school, and to facilitate a small peer community of learners

Characteristics of effective advisors and advisory programs

Strong advisory programs address issues of community

Advisories with high levels of connectedness actively worked on creating a healthy community by addressing the way students related to one another. Advisors consciously helped students in their advisories work out issues among themselves, and they talked openly about the importance of treating each other with respect.

An advisor conversation example:

I like to stress that we are a family. So, we do not laugh at each other and nobody makes comments. They still do it, but we always come back to 'we are a family.' I am trying to break them of snickering and stuff like that.

Advisor/Advisory characteristics that foster connectedness

- Strong advisory programs address issues of community.
- Strong advisories promote open communication.
- Strong advisors know and care about their advisees.
- Strong advisors closely supervise their advisees' academic progress.
- Strong advisors are problem solvers and advice givers.
- Students and advisors perceive that advisory directly improves academic performance.
- Students and advisors perceive that advisory functions as a community of learners.