University of Northern Iowa

UNI ScholarWorks

2007

Advisory programs : organization and implementation

Angela Ruth Black
University of Northern Iowa

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Advisory programs : organization and implementation

Abstract

This literature review examined how to implement an advisory program into middle schools. This review looked at the pros and cons of advisory programs, and what needed to be considered before implementing an advisory program.

The topic of advisory programs was chosen after having discussions during my graduate program, as well as with work colleagues. During class discussions, advisory programs sounded like a wonderful concept. But when I went to work, my coworkers made advisory programs sound like a waste of time. I decided I needed to learn more about advisory programs, so I could make my own decision about their value.

I used the following questions to guide my search: (a) What are the parts that make up an advisory program? And (b) How does a school implement an effective advisory program in a school setting?

Following an extensive literature review, the conclusion was that advisory programs must be thought through before implementing one in a school. In the planning stages, roles need to be determined~ everybody in the school, mainly teachers and administration, needs to agree to take part in the program to make it work successfully. Also, questions dealing with the curriculum, program evaluation, and scheduling must be answered. An important idea to remember about advisory programs is that there are students who feel as though they do not fit in with their peers, except during advisory time, and everybody likes to feel as though they belong.

ADVISORY PROGRAMS: ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

A Graduate Literature Review

Submitted to the

Division of Middle Level Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

By
Angela Ruth Black
August 2007

This Literature Review by Angela Ruth Black

Titled: Advisory Programs: Organization and Implementation

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the

Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

Sept. 6, 2007
Date Approved

Jean S. Schneider
Graduate Faculty Reader

Sept 6, 2007
Date Approved

Donna Douglas
Graduate Faculty Reader

Sept. 6, 2007
Date Approved

Mary Herring
Head, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

ABSTRACT

This literature review examined how to implement an advisory program into middle schools. This review looked at the pros and cons of advisory programs and what needed to be considered before implementing an advisory program.

The topic of advisory programs was chosen after having discussions during my graduate program, as well as, with work colleagues. During class discussions, advisory programs sounded like a wonderful concept, but when I went to work my coworkers made advisory programs sound like a waste of time. I decided I needed to learn more about advisory programs, so I could make my own decision about their value

I used the following questions to guide my search: (a) What are the parts that make up an advisory program? And (b) How does a school implement an effective advisory program in a school setting?

Following an extensive literature review, the conclusion was that advisory programs must be thought through before implementing one in a school. In the planning stages, roles need to be determined; everybody in the school, mainly teachers and administration, needs to agree to take part in the program to make it work successfully. Also, questions dealing with the curriculum, program evaluation, and scheduling must be answered. An important idea to remember about advisory programs is that there are students who feel as though they do not fit in with their peers, except during advisory time, and everybody likes to feel as though they belong.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1

Introduction

"Advisory programs were specifically developed in response to the need to provide

guidance services to students in middle level schools."

(Galassi, Gulledge, & Cox, 1998, p.5)

In the past four years, my school district lost seven students due to two car

accidents, a go-cart accident, and a suicide. As a middle school teacher, I have seen the

effect these tragedies have had on young adolescents. Young adolescents go through so

many changes already, and then when major events occur to people their age, they

become emotional and ask themselves why things of this nature happen.

One particular student became very upset when a boy died as the result of a go-

cart accident. When asked if she knew the young man, she said, "No." Then when she

was asked whether she was upset because she was realizing that young adolescents do get

hurt or even killed, she said, "Yes." Unfortunately, for this young lady, a month later, a

close friend of hers committed suicide. I knew I was having trouble coping and

understanding the tragedies, so I could only imagine the emotions young adolescents

were going through at the time. As a teacher, when I am able to talk with students and

can be of assistance to them, I am helped in dealing with my own emotions of shock,

anger, and wondering why tragedies happen to young adolescents.

When I thought about how teachers and students could interact and discuss the

tragedies or anything else going on in the students' lives that they were having trouble

with, advisory programs sounded like a good idea. Advisory programs can be traced back to the 1880s. According to Wittmer, advisory programs were added to the English curriculum for "vocational and moral guidance" (as cited in Galassi, Gulledge, & Cox, 1998, p. 5). Advisory program are when small groups of teachers meet with students on a regular basis and discuss personal, academic, and skill development (Everett, Mouse, Parson, & Stephens, 2002).

Some teachers feel that having an advisory class is time that is taken away from the regular curriculum. Some teachers feel as though they cannot be of any help to their students during difficult times, such as when the student is dealing with suicidal behavior, because they are not trained to give advice or because such work is the job of the counselor. Through reading literature on advisory programs, I was better able to understand why some teachers feel as though advisory programs are a waste of time, and other teachers feel as though advisory programs are an asset to their school.

In this chapter, I will explain the rationale and purpose for selecting advisory programs as the topic for this graduate literature review paper. Also included in this chapter is the significance of this research and the terms that continued to surface as I read. Finally, to help focus this literature review, I identified two research questions.

Rationale

I chose to research the implementation of advisory programs into middle schools, after hearing many teachers say that advisory periods are a waste of time. By writing a literature review, I was able to read about and understand both sides of this topic. Before the advisory concept is put into place in a middle school, administrators, teachers, and counselors need to know and understand the benefits and the potential disadvantages of

the program or barriers that inhibit implementation. For example, by having advisory

sessions on a regular basis, teachers are better able to know their students on a one-on-

one basis and are more likely to be able to help their students with their problems. These

teachers may feel their students can benefit from an advisors' own knowledge of every

day life. Students may feel that they have an adult to talk to and have someone looking

out for their best interests when they meet with their advocate on a regular basis. On the

other hand, there are teachers who feel as though they are not educated in the area of

problem solving and feel that problems should be discussed with counselors. I conducted

this literature review to understand the educators' opinions on the topic of advisory

programs.

Purpose

This research was intended to benefit middle level education advocates when

making decisions regarding advisory programs, so their decisions would more likely be

research - based. Through reading the research, I learned the different aspects that help

make advisory programs successful. For example, the program needs to be planned out

and all certified staff should be involved with the program. I learned which program

choices help make advisory programs successful and how those choices may lead to

unsuccessful programs. Successful programs have activities which relate to the student's

life. To have an unsuccessful advisory program, the program is thrown together, and the

activities have nothing to do with the student's life. Additionally, I learned how to

correctly implement an advisory program into a school setting

Importance

By writing this literature review, I wanted to be able to help administrators make informed decisions while contemplating an advisory program for their school. I wanted to be able to give the administrators ideas and suggestions on what to think about when forming their advisory programs. Since my school has now implemented a type of advisory program, I am able to discuss how the program can be improved with my administrator. For instance, one improvement that could be made is that the advisory groups should meet on a regular basis, not just once a month.

Terminology

In order for readers to have a common understanding of terminology used in this study, the following definitions are provided:

1. *Adult advocate*: An *adult advocate* is an educator who supports students' academic and personal development (National Middle School Association, 2006).

2. *Advisory programs*: *Advisory programs* consist of small groups of teachers and students focused on personal, academic, and skill development. They meet on a regular basis (Everett et al., 2002).

3. *Components of a middle school*: *Middle school* incorporate the following components: (a) they use a wide range of instructional strategies in response to the variety of learning needs in the classroom; (b) they have implemented an exploratory program so that students may expand and develop individual interests; (c) they encourage continuous progress for each individual interests; (d) they encourage continuous progress, so each learner may progress at a preferred pace and in a preferred learning style; and (e)

they chart students' progress in ways that stress individual growth rather than comparing them to their peers (Manning & Bucher, 2001).

4. *Middle school*: A *middle school* is an organization containing grades 6 through 8 (and sometimes grade 5), that consists of two essential factors: first, they provide developmentally appropriate and responsive curricular, instructional, organizational, guidance, and overall educational experiences; and, second, they place a major emphasis on 10-14 year-olds' developmental and instructional needs (Manning & Bucher, 2001).

5. *Team teaching*: *Team teaching* is when two or more teachers work together to provide instruction to a group of students (Manning & Bucher, 2001).

6. *Young adolescents*: The term, *young adolescents*, describes girls and boys between the ages of 10 and 14, and sometimes includes the ages of 9 and 15 (Manning & Bucher, 2001).

Research Questions

To help me review advisory programs, I selected the following two questions: (a) What are the parts that make up an advisory program? (b) How does a school implement an effective advisory program in a school setting? I used these questions as a guide to help me find literature and understand why advisory programs work successfully for some schools and not so well for other schools.

Chapter 2

Methodology

A literature review was chosen in order to examine the characteristics that make an effective advisory program and to examine how to implement an advisory program into a school setting. When discussing advisory programs with colleagues, opinions on the topic of advisory programs for middle school students varied from teachers liking the idea to teachers who believed advisory programs are a waste of time. I felt that research - based evidence would prove that advisory programs were either a benefit, a waste of time, or somewhere in between.

This chapter describes how the topic of advisory programs was chosen. I also describe the method of locating resources and how I decided on the reliability of the resources.

Initial Topic Selection

When I was considering the topic I would choose to do my research project, I kept coming back to advisory programs. After the death of seven students within a two year time span in my school district, it was obvious to me that students needed a place to discuss their feelings without feeling judged, and they needed help to understand why they might be feeling a certain way. I had a student come to me upset about the death of a classmate whom she did not know well. Along with this student, I had another student who came to my room upset on the anniversary of the death of a student killed the previous year. The act of these students coming to me shows that young adolescents need a place to share their feelings and know they will not be judged. They need a safe place to

let their emotions out. I thought by having a well running advisory program, students would be able to see that other people their age were having similar feelings and questions. To make sure I knew what qualities advisory programs required to be beneficial to students, I read the literature to understand the different aspects of advisory programs.

Method to Locate Sources

When I started doing research, I talked to Dr. Jean Schneider about my topic choice. Dr. Schneider suggested that I purchase the book, *Advisory: Definitions, Descriptions, Decisions, and Directions* by John P. Galassi, Suzanne A. Gulledge, and Nancy D. Cox (1998). Along with this book, I located journal articles by using online databases such as Yahoo, ERIC, and the Wilson Web. I also received articles from a colleague, Gina Leonard, an eighth grade language arts teacher.

Methods to Select Sources

Sources were selected by assessing the amount of information given on the topic. Readings were also selected based on the type of information that was provided. I looked for publications which contained a variety of opinions on advisory programs and suggestions on how to implement advisories into middle schools. I looked for this information because I teach in a middle school, and after hearing the negative comments about advisory programs from colleagues, I wanted to see how our school could implement an advisory program successfully.

Procedures to Analyze the Sources and Criteria to Include the Sources

When determining which sources to be used, I looked at the date, author, and source. To have a reliable source it could not be more than 10 years old because it would

be outdated. If the author was mentioned in more than one article, I would consider him or her a good source; an example of a reliable author would be Galassi, because his name showed up in different articles. By using these criteria, it helped me find information that was current and reliable.

Another aspect of determining the usefulness of the resources was whether the articles addressed the answers to my two research questions: (a) "Do these articles tell me why advisory programs should or should not be implemented?" and (b) "How does a school implement an advisory program into a middle school?" I did need to change one research question, though, as I read the literature. When I started this review I focused on middle schools, however, as I read the literature it focused mostly on high schools. Since I had trouble finding literature on middle schools only, this literature review concentrates on both middle and high school. My new or revised research question is this: "How do you implement an advisory program in a school?" For an advisory program to be implemented smoothly, it must meet the needs of the students (Miller, 1999).

Chapter 3

Review of Literature

What makes an effective advisory program? How does one implement an

advisory program into a school? This chapter will explore the history of advisory

programs. It will provide details by giving the definition, the different types, how to

group students, activities that could be done during advisory time, as well as, the

advocate's role to help the advisory program succeed. Obstacles with advisory programs

are discussed in this chapter, also.

History of Advisory Programs

The role of advisory programs has changed through the years. According to

Myrick, Highland, and Highland (as cited in Galassi et al., 1998) advisory programs can

be traced back to schools from the 1880s. A Detroit high school principal added,

"vocational and moral guidance" (Wittmer as cited in Galassi et al., 1998, p.5) to the

English curriculum in 1889. One reason advisory programs were needed was due to

demographic features, because families were moving from agrarian to industrial settings.

Advisory programs were designed to help with character education; teachers would help

students be good people and citizens.

Definition of Advisory Programs

Throughout the literature, the definitions of advisory programs were similar.

However, the best comprehensive definition I found stated that advisory programs would

provide an academic supportive community and set high expectations that students would

strive to meet (Everett et al., 2002). To put it into simpler terms, "Advisory programs

were specifically developed in response to the need to provide guidance services to

students" (Galassi et al., 1998, p.5). An advisory class is a small group of students,

averaging 12-15, but normally, no more than 20 (Hopkins, 1999; Galassi et at., 1998).

Students meet with an advocate on a regular basis. The advocate could be any certified

staff person who works within the school: principals, counselors, teachers, or librarians.

The student groups stay together throughout the years, unless students go to new schools,

such as the move from the middle school to high school. The advisory period is one class

that does not assign grades. According to Galassi et al. (1998), the advocate is hoping to

have class discussions so students can share their thoughts, opinions, and feelings and not

worry about being judged by saying the wrong thing, or by saying something with which

people disagree.

Advisor's Role

It was not until the 1920s and 1930s educators realized that guidance and

education went together (Galassi et al., 1998). The goal was to have changes in behavior

as the primary objective of teaching. Teachers were viewed as the first source of

guidance, because the student-counselor ratios were high. However, teachers needed to

know how to help their students with their personal problems. In other words, teachers

were to supplement the role of counselors by giving advice on educational and personal

problems, and to do activities that related to the topic being discussed (Galassi et al.,

1998).

Much of the literature indicated that the main purpose of advisory was to have at

least one adult in the school to know students very well (Black, 2002; Hopkins, 1999;

Miller, 1999; Rappaport, 2000; Wilson, 1998). The advisor is known as the advocate for

his or her students (Galassi et al, 1998). The advisor has many jobs. Not only does the advisor meet with the whole group on a regular basis, but the advisor also makes time to meet with each student individually. The advisor's role, according to New Visions for Public Schools (n.d.) includes the following: (a) to know how students are doing in all aspects of their life, including, academic standing, attendance, and behavior; (b) to intervene in certain situations; and (c) to become the person parents contact if there are any questions or concerns. The advocate would be the one to call home with questions and concerns, also. However, although the advisor is there to help students with problems, he or she should not be expected to meet all the needs of students (Black, 2002).

Miller (1999) puts advisory programs and the role of advisor into perspective: The key belief underpinning middle school advisory programs is that early adolescents need an adult at their school to serve as mentor, guide, and advocate-someone who knows them well and works with them closely, in a nonjudgmental way, as they fumble and stumble through the middle school years. (p. 1)

Types of Advisory Programs

There is not one type of advisory program the literature discussed that was better over the others. Miller (1999) states, "…successful advisory programs need to be tailored to meet the needs of a specific group of students. It cannot be a prepackaged, one-size-fits-all set of activities" (p. 1). Advisories should focus on students being successful, with activities that meet the needs and interests of the students (Miller, 1999). A couple of types of advisory programs that could be implemented are *service based advisory* and *interest centered advisory* (Johnston, 1994). In the service based advisory, advisory

groups become a service organization for the school or community. The interest centered advisory groups are formed by using students' interests or hobbies (Johnston, 1994).

Galassi et al., (1998) also discussed different types of advisory programs. They defined six types of advisory: (a) *advocacy* – meeting with students individually to "attend to students' individual needs" (p. 20); (b) *community* – helping students cope with stressful times for their age group; (c) *skills* – helping students with decision making, stress management, race relations, and values clarification; (d) *invigoration* – providing a relaxing setting with informal, fun activities; (e) *academic* – focusing on students' educational needs; and (f) *administrative* – offering a business orientation for announcements, distributing school materials, and collecting money for lunch tickets, or anything else students need to purchase.

One advisory program that stood out in the literature was the Freshmen Advisory (Lampert, 2005) at Maine East High School because of its unique format. The freshmen class has an advisory period, instead of study hall, where they meet with student mentors. The student mentors are upper level classmates who are trained to be in charge of the advisory group. There is an advisory teacher, but he or she is there for discipline problems and to help guide the mentors. This advisory program was implemented to help students succeed during their first year of high school. It appeared the program was successful: there was a decrease in the failure percentage after this program was implemented (Lampert, 2005).

Advisory Curriculum

There is no set curriculum for the different types of advisory programs, although, some schools have a structured curriculum. Typically, as Wilson (1998) stated,

"…activities can vary from discussions on student interactions and problems in class to fun activities or more serious ones that involve service to the community" (p. 1). In other schools, the individual teacher makes up his or her own lessons for advisory time. According to the National Middle School Association (2006), the Mac Iver study found a reduction in the dropout rate when the advisory program dealt with, "social and academic support activities" (p. 1). Everett et al. (2002) gave some examples of topics that different grade levels may concentrate toward:

1. *Ninth Grade*: During the students' freshmen year, graduation requirements, school pride, and school issues are discussed.

2. *Tenth Grade*: Group discussion for *tenth grade* advisory might include self-esteem, time management, and money management.

3. *Eleventh Grade*: Advisory discussion for the *eleventh grade* might consist of college preparation, tolerance, and relationships.

4. *Twelfth Grade*: During the students' final year of advisory, they would probably discuss college, careers, and community service with their advisory classmates.

Hopkins (1999) discussed how one advisory class completed a community service project during the holiday season; they put together hampers for needy families. Another advisory group had a baby shower for a student whose mom was having a baby with the student's stepfather. The same group also made get well cards, visited hospitals, and went to wakes for people students in the advisory group knew but did not feel comfortable to go alone. A group of students developed their own curriculum after hearing teachers complain that advisory was a waste of time (Hopkins, 1999). The students' curriculum activities include opportunities that help them "build study, organizational and time

management skills; some that help them get involved in their community; and some that focus on test-preparation and test-taking skills" (Hopkins, 1999, p.4).

Some fun activities a middle school in St. Louis did to celebrate Math Awareness week are as follows: (a) *wear a number shirt day* – during advisory, students added up the numbers on their shirts then calculated the average; (b) *graphing day* – students made graphs by counting number of students wearing glasses and watches; and (c) *design your dream house day* – by using different shapes in their design students were able to draw their house (Hopkins, 1999). Activities that are done during advisory need to be "worthwhile" (Hopkins, 1999, p. 5); they need to help the students bond with the advocate and provide academic guidance (Hopkins, 1999).

Grouping for Advisory Programs

There are different ways to organize advisory groups. One way is to group different age groups together. By doing this type of organization, older students can be "leaders and act as big brothers and sisters to younger ones" (Miller, 1999, p. 7). Galassi et al., (1998) stated that information from two different studies students who were grouped in a multi-age advisory program enjoyed meeting more people and had a sense of belonging at school. Groups can be assigned randomly or deliberately, with mixed grades, or by grade level. Random selection of advisory grouping is when students are put together not based on any certain criteria; students are just assigned to an advocate. There are some schools that when planning an advisory program look at students' interests to decide how to group students; this is deliberate grouping. Since young adolescents have different needs at different times in their life, some schools decide to have same grade level advisory groups.

To make sure the groups are small, not only does the classroom teacher have groups, but administrators, music teachers, physical education teachers, and librarians also have advisory groups (Rappaport, 2000). Some advisory teachers have the same group of students for the four years of high school. By belonging to the same advisory all during their high school career, students also get to know their advisor very well, as well as their peers (Wilson, 1998). Those who believe it is good to change groups realize that some teachers do a better job with advisory than others and want to make sure students are able to experience the differences among the different instructional styles (Rappaport, 2000).

The Rappaport (2000) study examined a debate among the staff members of Cambridge Ridge and Latin High School in Massachusetts. They debated on whether to have all the students participate in advisory programs or have only the students who are at risk participate. Those who believed in limiting the advisory programs to those at risk felt that it would be "overkill to provide advising for stable, directed students who would be better served by focusing on academics" (Rappaport, 2000, p.46). However, the final outcome was that all students would be involved in advisory, because all students have something to offer (Rappaport, 2000). Though every student was assigned to an advisory period, students were allowed to drop advisory only after meeting with an administrator. Only two students chose to drop the advisory class. Rappaport did not explain why these students decided not to participate in the program. By Rappaport (2000) reporting that all students, but two, participated in the advisory program, it leads to the conclusion young adolescents like being included in a group with a variety of peers.

Scheduling for Advisory Programs

There are many different types of scheduling for advisory. According to New Visions for Public Schools (n.d.), a typical advisory schedule can be from 15 – 30 minutes daily to 30-45 minutes once or twice a week. A period of less than 15 minutes is too short for good interaction. However, the length of the advisory periods is usually determined by the type of advisory program being used (Galassi et al., 1998).

Advisory periods can be held at anytime of the day. Some people promote having the advisory period at the beginning of the day (Galassi et al, 1998). They believe it is a positive way to start the day. Others believe having advisory at the end of the day is a good way for students to discuss problems or concerns they might have had during that particular day and diffuse issues before students are released to ride busses, walk home, or participate in after school activities. At some schools, the advisory period is scheduled before or after lunch. However, others think that, "scheduling it before lunch or at the end of the day may give the perception that advisory is not on par with regular classes" (Galassi et al., 1998, p. 41). Galassi et al. (1998) feel that the advisory period should be at the end of the day to "re-invigorate both students and advisors" (p. 41). By re-invigorating students before they leave for the day the students will not dread coming back to school the following day.

Benefits of Advisory Programs

Although some teachers who believe advisory programs are a waste of time, others believe they are a benefit to some students (Hopkins, 1999). Dr. Jeannette Stern, a teacher at Wantagh Middle School, in New York, stated, "I feel advisory is a very

valuable time of day, for some students the most valuable time there is" (as cited in Hopkins, 1999, p. 1). These teachers appreciate knowing their students in a more relaxed atmosphere. Some parents believe advisory is a good thing, too. Parents feel better about sending their child to school knowing there is somebody at the school who is watching out for their child (Hopkins, 1999)."Our parents are pleased with advisory since they feel there is one person in the building – who is not in an evaluative position – who sees the child every day and can discuss general concerns and ideas," stated a principal (as cited in Hopkins, 1999, p. 4).

When students know adults care about how they do in school, they strive to do their best in school (Rappaport, 2000). An example of students working harder when they know an adult cares about how they do in school was provided by Wilson (1998). Wilson wrote about a student whose mother did not believe he would do well in the current year because he did not do well the previous year. By the end of the year, this student passed most of his classes and his mother boasted about how well he was now doing in school. One difference between the two years was the addition of his advisory group. It appeared that the advisory group influenced how well the student did that year with his school work: he knew his advisor cared.

Obstacles to Advisory Programs

One general comment that was consistent throughout many of the readings was that advisory programs just do not work and are a waste of time (Burns, 2002). For one thing, many teachers feel as though an advisory period is added work. Also, if students have problems, teachers feel that they need to see counselors, who are trained specifically for dealing with problems (Wilson, 1998). Some teachers feel the same as one teacher,

cited in Peterson (2001), "it is easier for me to model appropriate behaviors for students and connect character education with my daily activities in the classroom than to teach the 'lesson on respect'..." (p. 6).

As cited in Black (2002), Ross Burkhardt provided some questions that schools should answer when considering having an advisory program:

1.) What are teacher advisors' responsibilities?

2.) How will the program be evaluated?

3.) How will advisory groups be formed and scheduled?

4.) Who will supervise and manage the advisory program?

Burkhardt chose these questions due to the fact that they will be some of the first to be asked by the people who are going to be involved in the organization and implementation of the advisory program.

Effective Advisory Programs

For an advisory program to be effective, teachers need to look at the benefits, such as having a stronger relationship with students, and overcome the obstacles, such as thinking an advisory program is a waste of time. To make sure advisory programs work, they need to be planned out, not just thrown together (Wilson, 1998). Black (2002) made some good points to help teachers feel at ease with teaching advisory: (a) "teachers should be trained to view the program as an opportunity to help students overcome social and emotional barriers to learning to help them connect with school" (p. 2); (b) principals need to give teachers clear expectations and boundaries; they are not expected to be counselors; and (c) the principal that Black cited cautions teachers to help students but not be their "psychiatrists or medical practitioner"(p. 3). The main thing that needs to be

done for an effective advisory program is to provide staff development, to make sure all staff know and understand what needs to be done and not done.

Rappaport (2002) stated teachers will support effective advisory programs. "When advisory is working, students are taking risks to challenge themselves academically, to know themselves as learners, to recognize what gets them stuck in school life, and to explore healthy alternatives when they face adversity" (p. 3).

Chapter 4

Conclusions and Recommendations

In the final chapter, I will discuss my findings and my opinion of advisory programs from doing this literature review. Also, I will make recommendations for advisory programs. I did have some problems while researching the literature; those will be addressed, as well.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the pros and cons of advisory programs in the middle schools. I learned that advisory programs need to be thought out and not thrown together, so they work successfully. Everybody who is going to be involved with the advisory program needs to be aware of what is expected of them. Expectations of the advisor could include making sure he or she talks with members of their advisory group besides when the group is meeting and making contact with parents about successes or problems the students might be experiencing. The problem with this is that it will take a lot of time, and some teachers and administrators do not want to give up valuable free time for an idea that might not work. However, by working with a small group of students, teachers are able to know their students better and build a relationship with each student. The benefit of students knowing their advocate well is that they are more likely to be willing to come to an adult to discuss a problem. Having an advisory program implemented in my school a few years ago would have been a good way for my school to have helped students deal with the tragic deaths that our school and community experienced. Also, it might have helped the student who committed suicide. If this

student had felt as though there had been an adult he could talk to about his problems, he would have had another option for himself instead of taking his life.

Limitations

The first limitation of this literature review was that most of what I read about advisory programs was repetitive. When I found an article that looked interesting, I would read it and it would be similar to an article I might have read already in my research.

Another limitation I encountered had to deal with the information I was finding in the articles. I started this literature review determined to find out the pros and cons of advisory programs in middle schools, however, what I came across was how to implement advisory programs into schools, particularly in high schools. Due to not finding the information, I decided to change my research questions to coincide with the information I was finding.

Evaluation and Interpretation

When I started my research, I believed that advisory programs were beneficial not only to students, but also to the advisor. This belief about advisory programs was verified as I researched the literature. Also, I found that advisory programs are capable of working, as long as it is a team commitment. By a team commitment, I mean that everybody in the school needs to be willing to do his or her part to make the advisory program successful. Each person has a part to complete: (a) administrators need to make sure they are thinking the program out thoroughly and scheduling advisory time at regular intervals, (b) all teachers need to participate in the advisory program; (c) each teacher needs to become an advocate for students, needs to be willing to be a person

students can come to with a problem, and needs to give the students reason to believe that the advocate has their best interests at heart; and (d) both teachers and administrators need to design a curriculum that meets the needs of every student. The curriculum may look different from school to school, and from community to community. For example, schools in bigger cities, like Los Angeles, may have curriculum relating to gangs, where my school has advisory curriculum dealing with test taking strategies.

Recommendations

My recommendation for schools is that they should plan for and implement advisory programs. However, the advisory program must be thought through and not just thrown together. Advisory programs are about relationships between students and advisors. Sometimes while walking in the hallway at school, I did not see a lot of interaction between adults and students; however, when I did see interaction between adults and students, it was because there was a connection between the two individuals. I believe it is important for teachers to build relationships with students, but on an average day, teachers in secondary schools come into contact with many students, and it is hard to get to know each child individually.

I highly recommend that a school develop a committee to plan an advisory program. The committee members should consist of administrators, counselors, and different grade level teachers. There should be different grade level teachers because students have different needs at different ages; seventh graders should not be doing the same thing as eighth graders. This planning committee should work on their plan for one year prior to implementing an advisory program into their school. Taking a year to plan gives time to train the staff, who will be advisors, schedule when groups will meet, how

the grouping of students will be decided, and determine how the advisory program will be evaluated.

Teacher Practices

In my opinion, teachers need to have an open mind about advisory programs and realize that nothing is perfect in the beginning stages. Once teachers come to this realization, I believe, they will be more open and willing to connect with the students in their advisory group. During this past school year my school had an advisory time. However, we met only once a month. For the advisory program to matter to the students and for connections to be made between students and advisor, we should have met on a regular basis, not just randomly.

My colleagues and I should have been trained on how to do an advisory class; instead we were told we were going to have an advisory group to talk with the students' one on one about their Iowa Test of Basic Skills Test and how they can improve their scores. With the remaining meeting time, we were allowed to do whatever we wanted to do with the students. Some of the time, I felt as though I was wasting valuable class time by having advisory, because we played games or had a study hall during our meeting time.

Also, the curriculum was thrown together, so teachers did not take this time seriously, and that came across to students, so they did not take the time seriously. There were times we did not receive our plans for advisory until the morning of the day we were meeting with our groups. This gave us eight, shortened class periods to prepare for our time with our advisory groups. Because the counselors gave us little notice about what was to be done during the advisory period, teachers felt that it was not an important

time, and activities were just being thrown together. Also, when the activities did not take

the whole meeting time, and they usually did not, teachers needed to figure out how to fill

the time. In my opinion, teachers, or any advocate, should have plenty of time to organize

the plans and activities for their advisory period to benefit the students.

Future Research

There are a couple of topics researchers can look into to help create more

successful advisory programs. In the literature, it discussed the different times of the day

advisory groups met, but it never said which meeting time was the most beneficial to the

student. Therefore, the first topic is to find the best time of the day to have advisory. The

second item to look at is whether a certain type of advisory exists that meets the needs of

every student or whether it depends on where one lives. I conclude from my reading that

as long as the activities relate to students' lives, then advisory programs will make a

positive impact on the students.

Educational Policies

By completing this research, I believe I will be able to help my administrators

understand what needs to be done to make advisory work at our school. When I hear

colleagues saying how advisory programs do not work, I am able to tell them that the

programs are not a waste of time if they are planned out and implemented them correctly.

After having those rough couple of years dealing with several deaths of young

adolescents, I realize that young adolescents need to have someone to talk with and know

they are not going to be judged. Advisory programs provide a time for the advocate and

advisory group to connect on another level – a level that connects adults and young

adolescents in relationships in which coping with problems, emotions, and even tragedies occurs; instead of just a teacher and pupil "work" relationship.

References

Black, S. (2002). Getting advisories right [Electronic version]. *American School Board Journal, 189* (10). Retrieved September 27, 2004, from http://www.asbj.com/2002/10/1002research.html

Burns, J. (2002). Advice for advisors. *Middle Matters*, p.6. Retrieved October 4, 2005, from http://www.naesp.org/ContentLoad.do?contentId=531 action=print

Everett, L., Mouse, M., Parson, G., & Stephens, M. (2002). Motivating students to prepare for the future. *Principal Leadership, 2*(6), p. 31-35.

Galassi, J.P., Gulledge, S.A., & Cox, N.D. (1998). *Advisory: Definitions, descrip tions, decisions, direction.* Westerville, OH: National Middle School Associa tion.

Hopkins, G. (1999). Advice about middle school advisories. *Education World.* Retrieved September 27, 2004, from http://www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr127.shtml

Johnston, H. (1994). Restoring purpose to the guidance function of the middle level school. *Advisory Programs to Restructured Adult – Student Relationships.* Retrieved October 4, 2005, from http://www.middleweb.com/johnston.html

Lampert, J. (2005, April). Easing the transition to high school. *Educational Leader ship, 62*(7), p. 61-63.

Manning, M.L., & Bucher, K.T. (2001). *Teaching in the middle school.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice – Hall, Inc.

Miller, H.M. (1999). Making the most of advisory programs: Teaching, mentoring, or

   just killing time? *Middle Matters,* p. 1, 7. Retrieved September 27, 2004, from

   http://www.naesp.org/ContentLoad.oad.do?contentId=469&action=print

National Middle School Association (2006, July). *Advisory programs.* Retrieved

   January 20, 2007, from http://www.nmsa.org/Research/ResearchSummaries/

   AdvisoryPrograms/tabid/812/Default.aspx

New Visions for Public Schools. (n.d.). *Student Advisory.* Retrieved September 27,

   2004, http://www.newvisions.org/schoolsuccess/practices/student/index.shtml

Peterson, D.W. (2001, January 25). *On the road: In search of excellence in middle*

   level education. Paper presented at the Annual Winter Workshop of the Minn-

   sota Association of Secondary School Principals. Abstract retrieved September

   27, 2004.

Rappaport, N. (2000). Small advising groups: Relationships for success. *Schools in*

   the middle, 9, p. 45-47. Retrieved October 19, 2004, from

   http://0vnweb.hwwwilsonweb.com.unistar.uni.edu/hww/results/results_single.jht

   ml?nn=5

Wilson, C. (1998). The real meaning of middle school advisory programs.

   Contemporary Education, 69(2), 100-102.