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The factors preventing the successful implementation of a middle level advisory program at one middle school

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The factors preventing the successful implementation of a middle level advisory program at one middle school

Abstract

This study investigated the feelings and conceptualizations about Advisory Programs of the teachers at one middle school in Southeast Iowa. Interviews were conducted to uncover the teachers' thoughts and perceptions on Advisory Programs at their middle school. The collected data was then evaluated and recommendations were made.

The Factors Preventing the Successful Implementation of a
Middle Level Advisory Program at One Middle School

A Graduate Research Paper

Submitted to the

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Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the feelings and conceptualizations about Advisory Programs of the teachers at one middle school in Southeast Iowa. Interviews were conducted to uncover the teachers' thoughts and perceptions on Advisory Programs at their middle school. The collected data was then evaluated and recommendations were made.

The conclusions found after the interviews were complete consisted of the following ideas. First, even though most teachers thought that Advisory had been poorly run when it was part of the school program, they still thought that there were positives and benefits to having an Advisory Program. Secondly, a majority of the teachers felt that there already was an adult advocate for each student without a set program. Thirdly, teachers definitely had apprehensions about an Advisory Program being re-implemented at Stevens Middle School. A fourth finding indicated the teachers who had the most experience with Advisory did not have the most negative comments. Lastly, even though some teachers definitely had strong feelings about Advisory not working at Stevens Middle School in the past, with changes, they seemed willing to try it again.

Five recommendations were made after reviewing the collected data. The first recommendation is to re-implement an Advisory Program. Secondly, all advisors need to receive proper training to teach advisory. The third recommendation is all certified staff need to be advisors. The fourth recommendation is that the school should form a planning committee of administrators, teachers, and students when re-implementing the program. Lastly, the Advisory periods need to have a permanent time slot in the school's schedule.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose.....	2
Definitions.....	2
Significance of Study.....	3
Research Questions.....	4
Limitations.....	5
CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY.....	6
Subjects.....	6
Instruments Employed.....	6
Research Designs and Procedures.....	7
CHAPTER 3. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
History of Advisory.....	10
Organization.....	11
Scheduling.....	13
Advisory Activities.....	13
Problems with Advisory.....	15
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS.....	17
Data Review.....	17
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	27
Positive Impact.....	27

Benefits	27
Adult Advocacy.....	28
Teacher Apprehension.....	29
Previous Experience with Advisory	29
Re-implementation.....	30
Recommendations	31
Re-implementation.....	31
Training	31
Advisors	31
Planning Committee	32
Permanent Scheduling.....	32
REFERENCES.....	33
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	36
APPENDIX B: HUMAN PARTICIPANTS REVIEW.....	39

Chapter 1

Introduction

Advisory programs are one of the defining aspects of the middle school concept (Manning & Bucher, 2001). In order to consider a school a middle school, they are supposed to have three important elements: a team approach to teaching, a strong guidance department, and an advisory program (Manning & Bucher, 2001). As time goes on, it looks as though many schools call themselves a "middle school," but may be missing one of the components listed above. For middle schools that are missing the component of Advisory, it is an unfortunate loss. It is often because the young adolescents entering middle school are leaving the safety of one classroom teacher and moving to many different classroom personalities (Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, 1998). Exemplary middle schools see to it that their students interact with many adults throughout the day, but have one particular adult with which they have a stronger connection (George & Alexander, 2003). The advisory program is known to create many positive aspects

for the school, teachers, and students (George & Alexander, 2003), so why would a school choose to eliminate this program?

Purpose

Stevens Middle School, in Southeast Iowa, had an Advisory Program beginning in 1992. The students and an advisor met five days a week for a timeframe that varied from fifteen to thirty minutes. The primary purpose of this study is to determine the answers to these questions: (1) How does the staff at Stevens Middle School conceptualize Advisory Programs? (2) What do they believe to be valuable or hindering them from implementing an Advisory Program (issues such as personal reactions, teacher load and training, adult advocacy, and sample topics).

Eight teachers who currently teach at Stevens Middle School, who also taught when Advisory had been implemented into the weekly schedule, were asked to participate in an interview. The questions that the interviewees were asked were grouped into the following categories: A) Conceptualization of Advisory Programs, B) Personal Reactions to Advisory Programs, C) Program Implementation,

D) The Teacher's Role, and E) The Perceived Value of Advisory Programs.

Definitions

In order for readers to have a common understanding of this topic, the following definitions from Manning & Bucher (2001) will be used:

Advisory- advisement efforts conducted by classroom teachers, sometimes spontaneous and other times reflecting a carefully prepared scope and sequence

Adult Advocate - a person in the school who knows him or her well, sincerely cares for him or her, and is supportive of their academic and personal development.

Middle School - organizational school approach, usually grades 6-8, sometimes also grade 5. It addresses the educational and developmental needs of young adolescents, ages 10-14.

Noncore Class- a class that is not necessarily considered essential for all students in the middle school.

Components of a Middle School - a strong guidance department, team teaching, and an advisory program.

School Climate - a positive school climate is one that is safe, caring, and inviting. It creates a sense of community within the school and promotes learning.

Significance of the Study

It is the intent of this ethnographic study to determine the attitudes of staff at Stevens Middle School on the topic of Advisory Programs. The answers given by the interviewed staff could contribute to how the administration might go about reinstating Advisory in the future. These interviews give insight on how the staff feels about advisory as well as possible recommendations that could be made. The interview questions also lead to insight on how reinstating Advisory would affect the school climate at SMS.

Research Questions

The following questions were the focus of the interviews: (1) How does the staff at Stevens Middle School conceptualize Advisory Programs? (2) What do they believe to be valuable or hindering them from implementing an Advisory Program (issues such as personal reactions, teacher load and training, adult advocacy, and sample topics).

Limitations

For the purpose of this study, the research will be limited to staff members who currently teach at Stevens Middle School in Ottumwa, Iowa. The chosen interviewees will also have to be teachers who have previously taught Advisory at SMS. This research will also be limited due to the fact that eight teachers will be interviewed, not the entire staff.

Due to these limitations, the study will have little or no implications beyond Stevens Middle School.

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

Advisory programs have helped many young adolescents make a smoother transition from the security of a single classroom teacher to multiple teachers at the middle school. The relationships built in advisory helps students reduce their feeling of anonymity, shyness, and other mixed emotions (Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2001). Even though Advisory programs have shown to have positive benefits for the students, teachers often have mixed emotions about being an advisor.

Subjects

To participate in this study, the various participants had to meet a certain criteria in order to be considered. First, they all had to be teachers at Stevens Middle School. It was also required that they participated on a volunteer basis. Lastly, they had to have taught at Evans while Advisory was a part of the daily schedule four years ago.

Instruments Employed

An interview protocol based on the two research questions was used to interview eight teachers at Stevens Middle School (see Appendix A). The purpose of the interviews was to determine their feelings on Advisory

Programs and thoughts of future implementation at Stevens Middle School. The questions that the interviewees were asked were grouped into the following categories: A) Conceptualization of Advisory Programs, B) Personal Reactions to Advisory Programs, C) Program Implementation, D) The Teacher's Role, and E) The Perceived Value of Advisory Programs (See Appendix A).

Research Design and Procedures

A human participant review was completed and approved in the spring of 2003 (See Appendix B for complete form).

Letters were given to each teacher who could be a potential volunteer at Stevens Middle School via their school mailbox. The letters were enclosed in an envelope to ensure privacy. Participant privacy was upheld during this process and the names of those choosing to volunteer or decline was not revealed. Potential interviewees who were willing to participate notified the researcher by returning the letters with a signature indicating that they would indeed take part in the interview protocol. Conversations were held with those who were willing and then the final selections were made. Of the returned volunteers, eight were randomly selected.

A human participant review was completed and approved in the spring of 2003 (See Appendix B for complete form). The form was retrieved online, completed, and returned for approval. With this approval, the researcher was able to move forward with the interviews.

The participants who had been selected were then notified by the researcher and interview times were made. Of the eight selected, six were male and two were female. All of the participants were Caucasian. Their length of service at Stevens Middle School ranged from thirteen to thirty-three years. The participants were interviewed in a videotaped meeting for 30-40 minutes. After the interviews, the participants were able to review any information that they had provided and strike any information that they did not want used.

The interviews were kept private by the use of pseudonyms. Together, the researcher and participants made suitable accommodations for appropriate anonymity. Access to the videotaped interviews was limited to the review of the researcher and tapes were kept in a locked file cabinet at all other times.

Once complete, the interviews were reviewed and analyzed by the researcher for common themes. The taped interviews were reviewed and notes were taken by the

researcher. This allowed for quotes and summaries to be used in order to clarify meanings of the responses given. After collecting the data, the researcher was able to make recommendations for the re-implementation of Advisory at Stevens Middle School.

CHAPTER 3

Literature Review

What is the difference between a middle school and a junior high? There may be many differences, but an Advisory Program is one defining aspect that often distinguishes a middle school from a junior high school. Why is an Advisory Program so important? Advisor-advisee programs give young adolescents opportunities to become known and feel apart of a smaller group. In this group they are able to create important bonds with both teacher and students while also discussing and problem-solving (Manning & Bucher, p.125, 2001). "The interaction in school, in the noncore class setting, makes school more of a "way of life" (Carlson, Wolsek, & Gundick, p.37, 2002).

History of Advisory

Advisory programs in American schools can be accurately traced back as far as the 1890's when they were a characteristic of the junior high school (Briggs, 1920; Hieronimus, 1917 as cited in Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, p.5, 1998). The need for citizenship and character education in the classroom came from shifting demographic features during that time in America's development and the beginning of massive numbers of immigrants entering the country. These programs were developed so that the teachers could

guide their students to become good people and citizens(Galassi, et al., 1998). During the 1920s guidance services and educational services went hand in hand. The main objective in the classroom was to achieve a certain desired behavior as well as subject matter mastery. The subject matter at hand was a means of helping the students achieve their life goals(Galassi, et.al, 1998).

Organization

Currently every school organizes their advisory classes differently, but three things that every school should consider when planning for an Advisory Program are class size, advisors, and student assignment (Student Advisory, NV for PS).

Reduced numbers of students in a class and enough teachers for all classes is a goal strived for in many districts (J. White, Personal Communications, May 2004). In an Advisory Program, keeping each class size to 12 to 15 students is ideal(Student Advisory, NV for PS). If that is not possible, it is really recommended that the class have no more than 20 students(Galassi et.al, 1998). Smaller groups allow for more personalized attention and a closer relationship between both teacher and student, and student and student(Student Advisory, n.d.).

All certified staff can act as advisors (Ubben, et al.,2001). This includes Art, Physical Education, Industrial Technology, librarian, and Music teachers(Student Advisory, n.d.). When everyone is involved, it reduces the ratio and involves staff members with direct student contact (Ubben, et al.,2001). At the middle level, students have a relationship with the exploratory subject area teachers, so having those teachers as advisors would still be familiar. According to Bushnell and George(as cited in Galassi, et al., 1998) the following are five characteristics of effective advisors: 1)they care about their students in their advisory, 2)they are able to relate to each individual, 3)they are available to their advisees, 4) they have a positive attitude about advisory, and 5)their style is individualistic. All teachers have something different to offer and should be utilized to promote the success of the program.

There are various ways in which students can be assigned to advisories (Advisories, n.d.; Galassi, et al., 1998). First, they can either be randomly placed, or hand-picked. Secondly, advisories can have students who are the same grade level or they can be multi-leveled (Student Advisory, n.d.). Advisories that are across grades have shown that students enjoy the variance in age. Students

liked that they were able to form relationships with others, discussions brought about topics that may not have been discussed normally, and for strengthening relationships between the teachers and their advisories. Multi-level advisories also help create a sense of total community within the school (Galassi, et al., 1998).

Scheduling

Just as the organization of Advisories varies, so does the scheduling. Typically, every advisory would meet everyday for 15-30 minutes or 30-45 minutes once or twice a week (Student Advisory, n.d.). Anything less than 15 minutes just is not enough time to have a positive effect (Student Advisory, n.d.). As for time of day, some schools hold Advisory first thing in the morning. Others might choose to have it mid-morning between second and third periods, while some have it over their lunch hour (*Advice about Middle School Advisories*, 1999). Most would say that having Advisory first thing in the morning is a way to create a positive start to the day. Those schools that have Advisory over the lunch hour may be giving the perception that advisory is not "on par with the other classes" (Galassi, et al., 1998, p.41).

Advisory Activities

Advisory activities are going to be influenced by the goals set for the program by the school (Galassi, et al., 1998). Some schools will want their Advisory Program to be one of academic enhancement, others possibly for invigoration or to emphasize community; therefore, their activities in Advisory will look different (Galassi, et al., 1998). One thing to keep in mind is that students still want activities that are enjoyable, less structured, relevant to their lives, and those which they can have some degree of choice (Galassi, et al., 1998). As aforementioned, activities within schools take on a structure that will meet their goals. In an article by Everett, et al. (2002), Putnam City Schools in Oklahoma have an Advisory program that balances both community and school. Some examples of issues students encounter are:

1. Ninth Grade: Graduation Requirements, Alcohol and Drugs, Relationships, School Pride, Car and driver.
2. Tenth Grade: Self Esteem, Study Skills, Time Management, Peer Meditation.
3. Eleventh Grade: College Preparation, Relationships, Money Management, Responsibility.
4. Twelfth Grade: College and Financing, Independent Living, Careers, and Health Abuse.

Other examples include community service projects, having forums to discuss students' day-to-day lives, and conflict resolution (Student Advisory, n.d.).

No-matter what the activity or who is the advisor, one idea should be remembered; advisories are not just for getting students organized or relaying information. To make the most of Advisory, it needs to be student-centered so that the students can set their own goals and directions (Miller, 1999).

Problems with Advisory Programs

Even though Advisory programs are provided to the students as a part of an effective middle school, concerns still arise (Manning & Bucher, 2001). Problems can occur when advisory groups get too big. As stated previously, groups over 20 are just too big. Also, if too little time is dedicated to advisory, students just cannot receive the same effects. Little time means less activities and less bonding. Lastly, advisory does not run smoothly if teacher training is not sufficient (Advisories, n.d.). All of these issues are ones to discuss when planning and organizing the program.

Across the literature, one thing was made clear and simple, the basic purpose of Advisory was to create an environment where each student could get to know at least

one caring adult in the building. With this adult the student could go to them without reservations and feel safe (Black, 2002; Galassi, et al., 1998; George & Alexander, 2003; Hopkins, 1999; Manning & Bucher, 2001; Miller, 1999; Rappaport, 2000; Ubben, et al., 2001; Wilson, 1998).

CHAPTER 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to uncover the staff's perceptions at Stevens Middle School on the topic of Advisory, and whether they thought that it was a beneficial component of a middle school. The method used to determine their perceptions about Advisory came about through interview sessions. All participants had taught at Stevens Middle School when an Advisory was implemented in the school schedule and continue to teach at Stevens Middle School voluntarily participated in a videotaped interview with the researcher. All of their identities were protected by the use of pseudonyms agreed upon by both the participant and the researcher. After the interview, the participants were all allowed to review their answers and revise or correct any answers they felt may have been incorrectly recorded. The interviewer in no way tried to elicit responses or withhold information from the participants.

Data Review Procedures

Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher reviewed the videotaped footage. By transcribing their responses, as well as notes taken during interviews, the

researcher was able to gather a database of statements for this study. This database was then used by the researcher to determine the general thoughts and feelings those eight teachers had on the topic of Advisory.

The first two questions dealt with the teacher's conceptualization of Advisory. The interviewees deemed that these words came to mind when hearing the term "Advisory Program": frustration, social skills, learning skills, group interaction, making connections with kids, non-traditional teaching, advice, values, pain, and misery. When asked to define "Advisory Program" in their own words, all but one teacher indicated that it is an organized group of students working cooperatively together to make connections with each other and the advisor. The other teacher mainly thought that it should be a time cover topics that are current and important to the time. For example, he thought that this time should be used for announcements, reminders, or other pertinent information that should be given to the students.

The next set of questions dealt with personal reactions to Advisory. When asked how it would make them feel to have Advisory implemented in the school, the responses were mainly negative. One teacher responded that it would simply make him "nauseous." One teacher stated

that he would be apprehensive. He said that "It failed before. I know that it is important to the middle school concept, but our building isn't really supportive." Two of the interviewees felt that it would be challenging due to the need of finding content and strategies that the students would buy into. On the other hand, one teacher felt that it would be great. He thought that every school should have one, it would be good for the mixing of cultures. The teachers' gut reactions to the idea of re-implementing Advisory in Stevens Middle School brought mixed feelings. They ranged from being reluctant and nauseous to being excited and thinking that the school should have it. One teacher stated, "I get turned off by people who are too lazy to do it because they might have to do more work." One of the opponents stated, "We could possibly take previous knowledge and make a better program, or we just need to find a better program."

The next five questions dealt with program implementation. Most teachers' experiences with advisory was during the years in which advisory was a part of Evans Middle School. The years of experience with being an advisor ranged from one year to eight years. One teacher had one year of experience with teaching Advisory. The remainder of the interviewees had five to eight years of

being advisors. When asked to discuss what their likes and dislikes were with advisory, the interviewees had an abundance of thoughts. Six of eight liked the idea of connecting with the students and getting them to open up. They thought it important that they be able to create a strong relationship with the advisor and the others in the advisory. This way, it would give the students somewhere they could turn to work out their problems and people in whom to confide. One teacher simply replied, "I didn't like anything." On the other side, the dislikes were fairly unanimous across the board. The teachers didn't like the students not buying into the program, the instructions in a box (pre-packaged lesson plans), the anxiety of teaching it, scheduling, the time taken away from academics, and the friction that it tended to cause amongst the staff.

The interviewees also had many suggestions on how to make an Advisory Program work well. Most often mentioned was that the students would have to see a need for that type of a program to ensure student buy in. Another suggestion was to have it first thing in the morning. Allowing teachers to be creative and be able to use program guidelines instead of a pre-set curriculum was stipulated. One person opposed to Advisory mentioned "It would work

well from 8:25-8:26. That would work. If we would have to have it, though, students and teachers need to be involved in a planning committee. It has to be evaluated on a yearly basis, that way if it doesn't work, we can scrap it."

Benefits of Advisory

The next question had interviewees addressing whether or not an Advisory Program could be beneficial to the students at Stevens Middle School. All but one person stated that Advisory could be beneficial to students. They expressed the benefits included: connections that the students make, the role modeling that they encounter, and seeing the students who usually try to stay hidden in large classes speaking up in a smaller group. One teacher, Mr. Green, that was in favor Advisory stated, "Even a bad advisory is beneficial to the students; any opportunity that they have to make connections is useful." Mr. Black, the one person voicing opposition, stated that he was torn on the idea of an Advisory Program being beneficial. He stated, "The way we run our school environment, no. The kids aren't all familiar with each other and it takes too long. You can't run an Advisory like a textbook." The same teachers who thought that Advisory would be beneficial also thought that it would support every student having an adult

advocate. Likewise, the one person voicing opposition, Mr. Black, strayed from the consensus. The reason that he thought it did not necessarily support every student having an adult advocate arose from the fact that for that to happen they would need to have the chance to pick their own advisor. When asked if the presence of an adult advocate for each student is true of Stevens Middle School even without advisory, the answer was positive across the panel. Every teacher interviewed felt that the students all have an adult in the building in which they could turn if they needed. All of the responses revolved around the aspect of teaming and due to this, being an active part of SMS students have an easier time finding an adult advocate.

The next question asked the interviewees to decide whether or not an Advisory Program could be positive for our school climate. All but one of the teachers thought that it could be. His reasoning for saying that it would not be positive was based solely off of past experience. Another teacher stated, "Yes, very definitely. School spirit can be a spin off. You could also incorporate new kids. We are having an influx of Hispanic students, we can deal with that." Other thoughts of how it could be positive for school climate includes issues of service

learning, current events, school issues, and even little competitions amongst advisories.

Teacher's Role

The next set of questions that were asked dealt with the interviewees feelings on the teacher's role in Advisory. The first thing that the interviewer wanted to know was what teaching Advisory meant to them personally. Mr. Red's response was, "Moderator that would bring forth topics and discuss. I would bring forth ways different students have solved different problems." Another teacher, Mr. Blue, felt as though it meant he would be "Interacting with kids, talking with them, getting them to feel comfortable with the building and to know that they could come to an adult. I see myself as another advocate." Other thoughts that came about were that of being flexible, having a diverse group of personalities for advisors and creating another opportunity for connectedness for kids. The most striking response as to what teaching advisory meant to these teachers was this, "Pulling out worksheets and teaching things both students and teachers don't want. Something to make us look good."

When asked whether or not Advisory should be taught by the whole staff it was split half and half. One half felt as though every certified teacher in the building should

teach it. The other half thought that it would be great to allow those who truly felt comfortable with it to teach it. The one downfall of allowing them to choose, though, was brought up by one teacher. Mr. Black pointed out that if we allow teachers to choose, there would be the possibility of too many teachers opting out.

All but one teacher felt that lessons should be provided for the Advisory Program. Mr. Blue commented that, "It would ease a lot of anxiety teachers might have." Mr. Orange added, "Yes they should be provided because some people won't do it if they have to come up with it on their own. Mr. Green, the one interviewee opposed to providing lessons to the teachers, commented that while teachers should not be given preplanned lessons, "There should be guidance from administration."

Topics the interviewees cited should be discussed in Advisory included: peer pressure, racism, social interaction, friendships, making connections, small amount of drug resistance, fun activities, current events, school events, death, emergencies, values, some emotional discussions, problem solving, and attribution training. Mr. Red felt "Topics that we end up having to deal with are home topics, not school, and we're not very good at that." On the other hand, the interviewees also had thoughts on

topics that should not be discussed. These included: birth control, sexual promiscuity, drug and alcohol resistance, sex and the human body, reproduction, forums to harangue on staff, sexual harassment, and huggy feely stuff.

The last question that dealt with the teacher's role asked whether or not the interviewees felt that the lessons for Advisory needed to be uniformly scheduled so that all teachers are teaching the same lesson throughout the school. Only one teacher, Mr. Red, felt strongly about having a uniform schedule for the lessons. The rest of the interviewees felt as though that would take away from the flexibility and the possibilities of the program.

Perceived Value

The perceived value of Advisory Program questions were the final set of questions. Not all teachers felt that they would like to see Advisory re-implemented at Stevens Middle School. Mr. Red stated, "It would have to have a lot of different changes, a backing and desiring by the students." Mr. Blue thought, "Maybe in the seventh grade; the eighth grade already has every teacher teaching an additional reading class." A strong voicing teacher opposition said, "NO! Due to the way it affects school

atmosphere. A lot of it is self interest and not liking the program."

Those who were in favor of Advisory coming back still wanted the stipulation that it would be done right. Mr. Orange commented, "Yes I would like to see it back, whoever doesn't is just lazy. We could prod students along and get the school more unified."

The final question asked if the interviewees saw an Advisory Program as a positive or negative attribute to middle schools. Two of the teachers interviewed could not state it as a positive. Mr. Black commented, "[I have] Not seen it run yet as a positive, [so I'm] not saying that it can't be done." The other, Mr. Red, stated, "Middle schools have a lot of positives, but Advisory does not play into that. Teachers and students don't get much out of it, [and it] creates problems." The remaining six of the interviewees felt that if it is done right and scheduling works out it can be a real positive.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Being Advisory Programs are a vital component, they have to have had success somewhere in order for the researchers to feel this strongly. At schools though, where it has not been successful, we need to find out why. One way to accomplish this is by gathering suggestions and ideas from the teachers who were in the classroom daily working with Advisory.

Positive Impact

When examining the data collected from the case study at Stevens Middle School, various conclusions can be made in regards to the thoughts and feelings on Advisory Programs. Although there was not a consensus, many of the teachers indicated to the researcher that there are definite positives and benefits to having an Advisory Program. The supporters mentioned many social and emotional aspects that would tend to deem the program as having a positive impact on young adolescents.

Benefits

A brief review of the most common benefits mentioned would be getting students to feel comfortable with an adult in the building, giving students an opportunity to connect with others, allowing kids who normally sit in class and do

not participate a time to join in, and reviewing social skills. One teacher commented, "Even a BAD Advisory is beneficial to the students, it is allowing them opportunity to have connections." This thought is reinforced in the article, "The Real Meaning of Middle School Advisory Programs." Stated in that article, Advisory is based on one simple concept: every child being known by at least one caring adult in the building (Wilson, 1998). The data collected on Advisory Programs through these interviews indicated that even those supportive of Advisory recognize that for the program to be more successful than the last time it was implemented at Stevens Middle School, changes would need to be made.

Adult Advocacy

A second conclusion brought about by the collected data was that of the fact that adult advocacy already exists without an Advisory Program. All of the teachers stated that they felt there currently was the presence of an adult advocate for each student. Not one person denied the fact that an Advisory Program reinforces every student having an adult advocate, but they all felt that aspect was already in place. When asked if adult advocates were present in the building one teacher stated, "Yes, and team time allows for identification of problems." These teachers

truly thought that utilizing the approach of the teaming method created the advocacy that the young adolescents at Evans Middle School needed.

Even though teaching with a team of teachers helps, advisors have many responsibilities and they should not be expected to take care of all the student's needs. A good advocate, though, will be able to help wherever they can and in turn, find the student the needed support when they cannot (Student Advisory, n.d.).

Teacher Apprehension

A third conclusion that was brought to the researcher's attention is that because of the way that Advisory was run previously at Stevens Middle School, it definitely had created some negative feelings. Due to these feelings, teachers were reluctant to implement an Advisory Program again. Factors that contributed to their negative feelings are: lack of student buy in, unfit topics, scheduling, an additional class to prep for, and unsupportive staff.

Previous Experience with Advisory

A fourth conclusion that it was not necessarily the teachers who had the most experience teaching Advisory who had negative remarks about the program. Even the teachers who had the most experience with advisory still thought

that it was a good concept. They thought that students should be able to develop a caring relationship with an adult in the building in which they could turn to when needed. They obviously had enough positive interaction in advisory to see the benefits in the end. In fact, it was the one teacher who had taught advisory the least amount of years that stated he "didn't like anything."

Re-implementation

A final conclusion of the collected data is that even though some teachers definitely had strong feelings about Advisory not working at Stevens Middle School in the past, with changes, they seemed willing to try it again. They seemed to have apprehension due to a failing program before; but changes such as allowing students and teachers to plan curriculum, finding the right time of day to have it, ensuring student buy in, and allowing teachers and students to be creative might bring the staff on board. Even one teacher who tended to be negative when talking about advisory commented, "Students need to be involved in curriculum. Create a planning committee. Teacher influence is needed also. It has to be evaluated on a yearly basis. [Then] if it doesn't work, scrap it."

Recommendations

Re-implementation

The first recommendation for Stevens Middle School is to re-implement an Advisory Program. Young adolescents at this stage in their lives need all the opportunities that it has to offer. They need to have a caring adult in which they can turn for help when they need it. Students also need the social interaction with a diverse group of students in which otherwise they might not interact. These are just a couple of the ways in which students can benefit from advisory, but there are still many more.

Training

The second recommendation for Stevens Middle School is that all advisors have the proper training that is needed. This may be given through in-services or training sessions by certified trainers. This will alleviate or mitigate apprehension that may be present.

Advisors

The third recommendation for Stevens Middle School is that all certified staff should teach advisory. Teachers, including art, physical education, industrial technology, and music all need to serve as advisors. This is important

because they, too, serve the students in the same capacity as the core subject teachers.

Planning Committee

The fourth recommendation for Stevens Middle School is that when re-implementing advisory, a planning committee be formed. This committee should consist of administrators, teachers, and students. It is here that all goals, issues, and ideas will be put into scope and sequence for the advisors. It is also recommended that the students and/or student body be questioned about the program using the same questions that the interviewees were asked. If all entities are involved in the planning then the outcome may be more successful.

Permanent Scheduling

The final recommendation for Stevens Middle School is that Advisory be given a permanent time slot within the daily or weekly schedule. It should be a time that is taken seriously, not the first thing to go when something else of importance needs to happen.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The factors preventing the successful implementation of a middle level advisory program at one middle school questionnaire.

The following questions were the focus of the study:

A. Conceptualization of Advisory Programs

1. When you hear the term "Advisory Program," what words come to mind?
2. Can you define "Advisory Program" in your own words?

B. Personal Reactions to Advisory Programs

1. When you think about an Advisory Program being implemented at our school, how does it make you feel?
2. What is your emotional or gut reaction to that idea?

C. Program Implementation

1. What is your previous experience working with Advisory Programs?
 - a. What did you like? What did you dislike?
2. If we ever decide to set aside a time in the schedule for an Advisory Program, I'd like to know what your ideas are for making the Advisory Program work well?
3. Do you think that an Advisory Program could be beneficial to our students? In what ways, or why not? Do you think that advisory could support every student having an adult advocate? Why or why not?
4. Do you think the presence of an adult advocate for each student is true of our school now, even though we do not currently have an Advisory Program?
5. Could an Advisory Program be positive for our school climate? If yes, how? If no, why not?

D. The Teacher's Role

1. What does teaching Advisory mean to you? Do you think that Advisory should be taught by the whole staff?

2. Do you think that lessons should be provided to teachers?
 - a. Are there any topics that should be discussed?
 - b. Are there any topics that should not be discussed?
3. Do you think that Advisory lessons should be uniformly scheduled so that all teachers are teaching the same lesson throughout the school?

E. The Perceived Value of Advisory Programs

1. Do you see Advisory as a positive or negative attribute to middle schools?
 - a. Why? Why not?
2. Would you like to see advisory implemented again at our school? Why? Why not?

APPENDIX B

Office Use Only: Protocol # _____

University of Northern Iowa
Human Participants Review Committee Application

Note: Before Completing Application, Investigators Must Read Information for Investigators
 (<http://www.grad.uni.edu/research/policy.asp>)

All items must be completed and the form must be typed or printed electronically. Submit 3 hard copies to the Human Participants Review Committee, Graduate College, 122 Lang Hall, 0135

Title of proposal: The factors preventing the successful implementation of a middle level advisory program at one middle school

Project Faculty/Staff Research Class Project Thesis/Dissertation Indep Study
 Grant/Contract Other, Specify _____

Name of Principal Investigator(s) Gina Leonard
 (PI):

Status: Faculty Undergraduate Student Graduate Student Staff

PI Department: Curriculum and Instruction Faculty Advisor Dept (if different)

PI Phone: (641)-683-7781 PI Email: leonardg@aea15.k12.ia.us

PI Campus Mailing Address/Mail 909 W. Williams
 Code Ottumwa, IA 52501

Source of Funding: Personal

Agency's Number (if assigned): _____

Data collection dates: Beginning After Dec. 2002 Through Dec. 2007

Project Status: New Renewal Grant-Compet. Renewal Grant-Non-

Has the PI and faculty sponsor (if applicable) completed IRB training/certification in Human Participants Issues? YES

DATE _____ NO YES DATE _____
 FACULTY SPONSOR YES DATE _____

X NO

SIGNATURES: The undersigned acknowledge that: 1. this application represents an accurate and complete description of the proposed research; 2. the research will be conducted in compliance with the recommendations of and only after approval has been received from the UNI IRB. The PI is responsible for reporting any serious adverse events or problems to the IRB, for requesting prior IRB approval for modifications, and for requesting continuing review and approval.

Principal Investigator(s):

Gina Leonard

TYPED NAME PLUS SIGNATURE

DATE

Faculty sponsor (required for
all student projects):

Dr. Donna Schumacher-Douglas

TYPED NAME PLUS SIGNATURE

DATE

Committee Use Only

EXEMPT FROM CONTINUING REVIEW <input type="checkbox"/>	EXPEDITED APPROVAL <input type="checkbox"/>	FULL BOARD APPROVAL <input type="checkbox"/>
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HUMAN PARTICIPANTS REVIEW COMMITTEE SIGNATURE

DATE

Period of approval is one year, from _____ through _____

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY. In lay language, answer in spaces provided (add numbered and referenced sheets when necessary). Do not refer to an accompanying grant or contract proposal.

A. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH. Explain 1) why this research is important and what the primary purposes are, and 2) what question(s) or hypotheses this activity is designed to answer, and 3) if this is a class project, explain whether and how the data will be used or presented outside the classroom.

- 2) Importance of Study: Advisory programs are one of the defining aspects of the middle school concept. In order to consider a school a middle school, they are supposed to have three important elements: a team approach to teaching, a strong guidance department, and an advisory program. As time goes on, I am finding that many schools call themselves a "middle school," but may be missing one of the components listed above. The advisory program is known to create many positive aspects for the school, teachers, and students, so why would a school choose to eliminate this aspect?

The primary purpose of this study is to determine (1) how the staff at Evans Middle School conceptualizes advisory programs and (2) what they believe to be valuable or hindering them from implementing an advisory program (issues such as personal reactions, teacher load and training, adult advocacy, and sample topics).

This case study will present staff perspectives about Evans Middle School's advisory program. Faculty and administrators will be provided the results as aggregated data so the identities of participants are protected.

3) The following questions will be the focus of the interviews:

A. Conceptualization of Advisory Programs

1. When you hear the term "Advisory Program," what words come to mind?
2. Can you define "Advisory Program" in your own words?

B. Personal Reactions to Advisory Programs

1. When you think about an Advisory Program being implemented at our school, how does it make you feel?
2. What is your emotional or gut reaction to that idea?

C. Program Implementation

1. What is your previous experience working with Advisory Programs?
 - a. What did you like? What did you dislike?
2. If we ever decide to set aside a time in the schedule for an Advisory Program, I'd like to know what your ideas are for making the Advisory Program work well?
3. Do you think that an Advisory Program could be beneficial to our students? In what ways, or why not? Do you think that advisory could support every student having an adult advocate? Why or why not?
4. Do you think the presence of an adult advocate for each student is true of our school now, even though we do not currently have an Advisory Program?
5. Could an Advisory Program be positive for our school climate? If yes, how? If no, why not?

D. The Teacher's Role

1. What does teaching Advisory mean to you? Do you think that Advisory should be taught by the whole staff?
2. Do you think that lessons should be provided to teachers?
 - a. Are there any topics that should be discussed?
 - b. Are there any topics that should not be discussed?
3. Do you think that Advisory lessons should be uniformly scheduled so that all teachers are teaching the same lesson throughout the school?

E. The Perceived Value of Advisory Programs

1. Do you see Advisory as a positive or negative attribute to middle schools?
 - a. Why? Why not?
2. Would you like to see advisory implemented again at our school?

a. Why? Why not?

3) Outside of class, this research may be presented to the administration of Evans Middle School.

B. RESEARCH PROCEDURES INVOLVED. 1. Provide a complete description of:
a. the study design, and b. all study procedures that will be performed (e.g., presentation of stimuli, description of activity required, topic of questionnaire or interview, name of psychological test). Provide this information for each phase of the study (pilot, screening, intervention and follow-up). Attach study flow sheet, if desired.

Attach questionnaires, interview questions/topic areas, scales, and/or examples of stimuli to be presented to participants.

An interview protocol based on the four research questions will be used to interview eight to ten teachers at Evans Middle School. The purpose of the interviews will be to determine their feelings on Advisory Programs and thoughts of future implementation at Evans Middle School.

To participate in this study, participants must be employed at Evans Middle School as a teacher. They must have taught at Evans when an Advisory Program was implemented in the school day four years ago. Eight to ten participants will be selected and interviewed about their experiences with Advisory. Those persons who volunteer, but are not selected, will be notified in writing.

Methodology

If selected, participants will be notified in writing. The letter will thank them for agreeing to participate and ask them when might be a good time to conduct the interview. The interviews will be a videotaped session that will last approximately 30-45 minutes. The questions asked during the interview will be those questions that are from the aforementioned research questions.

Participant identity will be protected. Participants will work with the researcher to make sure that their responses are anonymous. Upon completion of the interview, interview summaries will be made available to participants for correction and clarification of responses if needed.

Responses will be analyzed by the researcher for common themes. Story summaries and quotes will be used to explain the meaning of the generated themes when needed.

C. DECEPTION: If any deception or withholding of complete information is required for this activity, explain why this is necessary and attach a protocol explaining if, how, when, and by whom participants will be debriefed.

No deception or withholding is planned.

D. PARTICIPANTS

1. Approximately how many participants will you need to **complete** this study?

Number 8-10 Age Range(s) 30-60

2. What characteristics (inclusion criteria) must participants have to be in this study? (Answer for each participant group, if different.)

To have been involved in the teaching of the Advisory Program when it was part of Evans Middle School four years ago.

3. Describe how you will recruit your participants and who will be directly involved in the recruitment. (Attach advertisements, flyers, contact letters, telephone contact protocols, scripts, web site template, etc.)

Eight teachers who meet the criteria will be sent a letter asking them to take part in my research. They will have the option to either agree or disagree and I will go from there. If they disagree, I will merely send another letter to another staff member asking for participation.

4. How will you protect participants' privacy during recruitment? (Attach letters of cooperation &

agreement from any and all agencies, institutions or others involved in participant recruitment.)

The letters will be given in an envelope and another envelope will be provided in which to return it to me.

5. Explain what steps you will take during the recruitment process to minimize potential coercion or the appearance of coercion.

Subject will reply back to the researcher either agreeing to participate or declining to participate. No coercion or the appearance of coercion is expected to take place.

6. Will you give participants gifts, payments, services without charge, or course credit?

No Yes If yes, explain:

7. Where will the study procedures be carried out? If any procedures occur off-campus, who is involved in conducting that research? (Attach copies of IRB approvals or letters of cooperation from non-UNI research sites if procedures will be carried out elsewhere.)

On campus Off campus Both on- and off-campus

Do offsite research collaborators have human participants protection training?

No Yes Don't know Not applicable – no offsite collaborators

E. RISKS AND BENEFITS

1. All research carries some social, economic, psychological, or physical risk. Describe the nature and degree of risk of possible injury, stress, discomfort, invasion of privacy, and other side effects from all study procedures, activities, and devices (standard and experimental), interviews and questionnaires. Include psychosocial risks as well as physical risks.

The risks for participants to participate in the interview may include some psychological risk since they will be asked to share personal perspectives and reasonings on the subject of Advisory Programs. Their responses will be kept confidential. All participants will be given a pseudonym to keep them anonymous.

2. Explain what steps you will take to minimize risks of harm and to protect participants' confidentiality, rights and welfare. (If you will include protected groups of participants which include minors, fetuses in utero, prisoners, pregnant women, or cognitively impaired or economically or educationally disadvantaged participants, please identify the group(s) and answer this question for each group.)

I will give each participant a pseudonym, keep the data to myself, and destroy the documents after my final graduate paper has been approved in its final draft by the Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction.

3. Study procedures often have the potential to lead to the unintended discovery of participant's personal medical, psychological, and/or psycho-social conditions that could be considered to be a risk for that participant. Examples might include disease, genetic predispositions, suicidal behavior, substance use difficulties, interpersonal problems, legal problems or other private information. How will you handle such discoveries in a sensitive way if they occur?

Due to the use of interviewing, the reporting of private information will be at the discretion of the interviewee. As stated previously, the participants will be able to review the summaries and make corrections where needed.

4. Describe the anticipated benefits of this research for individual participants in each participant group. If none, state "None."

The individual participants will be contributing to the Evans Middle School administration analyzing why an Advisory Program may or may not work if implemented again.

5. Describe the anticipated benefits of this research for society, and explain how the benefits outweigh the risks.

This research may give the administration at Evans Middle School some information that they need to do to possibly implement an advisory program again. This would be a benefit for our students and in-turn for society.

F. CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESEARCH DATA

1. Will you record any direct participant identifiers (names, Social Security numbers, addresses, telephone numbers, locator information, etc.)

XNO Yes

If yes, explain why recording identifiers is necessary and describe the coding system(s) you will use to protect against disclosure.

2. After data collection is complete, will you retain a link between study code numbers and direct identifiers after the data collection is complete?

No Yes If yes, explain why this is necessary and for how long you will keep this link.

All of the interviewees will be given pseudonyms. All other details and information given in the interview will be altered in a way to keep the participants' confidentiality.

3. Describe how you will protect data against disclosure to the public or to other researchers or non-researchers. Other than members of the research team, explain who will have access to data (e.g., sponsors, advisers, government agencies) and how long you intend to keep the data. If data will be collected via web or internet, please include information on security measures, use of passwords, encryption, access to servers, firewalls, etc.

To protect the interviewees, they will be given a pseudonym in order to protect their identity. No other parties will be able to access the data collected. All findings will be locked in a file cabinet while researching. The data will be destroyed at the conclusion of my research.

4. Do you anticipate using any data (information, interview data, etc.) from this study for other studies in the future?

XNo Yes If "Yes," explain and include this information in the consent form.

G. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. Will you need access to participants' medical, academic, or other personal records for screening purposes or during this study?

XNo Yes. If yes, specify types of records, what information you will take from the records and how you will use them.

2. Will you make sound or video recordings or photographs of study participants?

- No Yes. If yes, explain what type of recordings you will make, how long you will keep them, and if anyone other than the members of the research team will be able to see them.

I will be video recording the interviews. I am the only one that will be able to view them aside from my committee members, if needed, and the interviewees.

H. CONSENT FORMS/PROCESS Check all that apply.

Written (Attach a copy of all consent and assent forms for each participant group.)

Oral (Attach a written script of oral consent and assent for each participant group and justification for waiver of documentation of consent)

Elements of Consent Provided via Letter or Electronic Display (Attach written justification of waiver of documentation of consent along with text of consent for letter or display)

Waiver of Consent (Attach written justification of waiver of consent process. Note that waiver of consent would only be granted if the consent process itself posed a greater risk to participants than did participation in the research)

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA
HUMAN PARTICIPANTS REVIEW
INFORMED CONSENT

The factors preventing the successful implementation of a middle level advisory program
at one middle school

Principal Investigator: Gina Leonard
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Donna Schumacher-Douglas

Dear Colleagues,

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted through the University of Northern Iowa. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project. The following information is provided to help you made an informed decision whether or not to participate.

Background of the study

Advisory programs are one of the defining aspects of the middle school concept. In order to consider a school a middle school, they are supposed to have three important elements: a team approach to teaching, a strong guidance department, and an advisory program. As time goes on, I am finding that many schools call themselves a “middle school,” but may be missing one of the components listed above. The advisory program is known to create many positive aspects for the school, teachers, and students, so why would a school choose to eliminate this aspect?

The primary purpose of this study is to determine (1) how the staff at Evans Middle School conceptualizes advisory programs and (2) what they believe to be valuable or hindering them from implementing an advisory program (issues such as personal reactions, teacher load and training, adult advocacy, and sample topics).

Methodology

If selected, you will be notified by the investigator and an interview time will be scheduled. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30-45 minutes in order to obtain their thoughts and feelings on advisory programs. These interviews will be videotaped and kept locked in a filing cabinet. The researcher and possibly the graduate advisors will be the only people allowed to view the tapes. Upon approval of the graduate project, the tapes will be erased/destroyed to prevent others from viewing. The interviews will take place in an agreed upon location within the school.

Information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. In order to assure this, each participant will be given a pseudonym.

Responses will be analyzed by the researcher for common themes. Quotes and summaries from the interviews will be used to explain and clarify the meaning of the themes generated.

Your participation is completely voluntary. There are no direct benefits to participation. You are free to withdraw from participation at any time, or to choose not to participate at all, and by doing so, you will not be penalized. No physical, psychological, social, legal, and/or economic risk(s) or cost(s) on your part is expected to result from this research other than minimal risks such as inconvenience.

If you have questions about the study, you may contact or desire information in the future regarding your participation or the study generally, you can contact Gina Leonard at 641-683-7781 or Dr. Donna Schumacher-Douglas at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Northern Iowa 319-273-5880. You can also contact the office of the Human Participants Coordinator, University of Northern Iowa, at 319-273-2748, for answers to questions about rights of research participants and the participant review process.

Agreement to Participate

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to participate in this project. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement. I am 18 years of age or older.

(Signature of participant)

(Date)

(Printed name of participant)

(Signature of investigator)

(Date)

(Signature of instructor/advisor)

(Date)