

# memorandum

**Date:** 10.15.08 | **To:** Woodrow Wilson Foundation | **From:** REL West at WestEd  
**Re:** Advisory Programs

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## Request >>

- What is an advisory program and who does it serve?
- What are the goals of an advisory program?
- Is the advisory part of the school day?
- What are some examples or models of an advisory program?
- Are any curricula available?

## Response

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### What is an advisory program and who does it serve?

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Generally focused at the **middle school and more recently at the high school level**, an advisory program is a system that partners a teacher (or educator) with a small group of students for ongoing academic support, mentoring, and guidance. The intent of an advisory is to create a one-to-one relationship between a student and a school staff member. This connectedness is seen as a critical link—both academically and socially—to supporting students through school.

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### What are the goals of an advisory program?

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- [Advisory Programs in High School Restructuring](#)<sup>1</sup> reports that, based on their research, there are five primary goals for advisory programs:
    1. Developing interpersonal relationships among staff and students
    2. Providing academic support to students
    3. Enriching the curriculum
    4. Providing college preparation
    5. Building a school culture
  - The [Coalition of Essential Schools](#)<sup>2</sup> (CES) offers several distinct approaches to the advisory group models. Affective and academic supports are two primary goals of advisory. CES offers relevant materials on their website for anyone who registers (registration is free).
  - [The Principals' Partnership](#)<sup>3</sup> offers other examples of [advisory goals](#)<sup>4</sup>.
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### Is an advisory part of the school day?

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Yes, but there is no consistent time or timing for advisory. Schools and districts may schedule advisory for different lengths of time—generally 20 to 40 minutes—at different times of day, meeting anywhere from once to five times a week. In addition, some advisories group students by grade and/or age, while others do not.

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The Principals' Partnership offers [examples of advisory schedules](#)<sup>5</sup> taken from participating schools. Some schools schedule advisory at the beginning of the day, others at the end of the day, while still others offer it around the lunch schedule.

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### What are some examples or models of an advisory program?

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There is little consistency in how advisory programs are structured or how they are implemented. For example, some advisory programs are more structured in format and content (meeting at a regular time or class period, perhaps following a curriculum with an academic focus) while other programs are more informal (meeting at different times with no set agenda).

Following are examples of advisory models.

- [Advisory Programs in High School Restructuring](#)<sup>6</sup> offers some guidelines and key questions for creating and supporting a “successful” advisory:
  1. **Scheduling:** Determine the timing and frequency of advisory periods, whether attendance will be mandatory, and if it will be a credit-bearing course.
  2. **Advisory Scope and Content:** Will the advisory focus on affective or academic issues or a combination? How will content be developed?
  3. **Advisor Roles:** How will staff adjust to their new roles as advisors?
  4. **Advisory Participants and Groupings:** Who will serve as advisors? Will they work with the same students through their high school years? How will students be grouped?
  5. **Support for Advisory:** All stakeholders must support the efforts and must meet periodically to assess progress.
- The [Distributed Counseling](#)<sup>7</sup> approach, developed by the Institute for Student Achievement (ISA), requires that **every faculty and staff person** in a school be trained to advise and support students on academic and social issues. The approach includes advisory as a key component of school reform and redesign.
  - [Supporting Student Success through Distributed Counseling](#)<sup>8</sup> is an ISA resource for developing and supporting this approach.
  - [An Advisory Advantage](#)<sup>9</sup> highlights the Bronx Lab School's use of distributed counseling.
- *The Advisory Guide: Designing and Implementing Effective Advisory Programs in Secondary Schools* (ADVISO) is a comprehensive resource that a district can use to develop an approach best meeting its needs. The guide offers a menu of 15 different formats for advisories as well as sample activities. The book can be purchased online at [ESR](#)<sup>10</sup>.

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### Are any curricula available?

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The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has implemented a Student Advisory Program that offers [week-by-week advisory lessons](#)<sup>11</sup> for meeting social and academic needs at each grade level.

### Sources and methods used for this memo:

To respond to this request, we searched multiple databases including Google, Google Scholar, and ERIC. We selected resources that offer general information about advisory programs and provided examples of programs currently being implemented.

## Endnotes

- 1 [http://www.tc.edu/ncrest/Aera/aera2005\\_Advisory.pdf](http://www.tc.edu/ncrest/Aera/aera2005_Advisory.pdf)
- 2 <http://www.essentialschools.org/>
- 3 <http://www.principalspartnership.com/>
- 4 <http://www.principalspartnership.com/HSadvisory.pdf>
- 5 <http://www.principalspartnership.com/advisorysched.pdf>
- 6 [http://www.tc.edu/ncrest/Aera/aera2005\\_Advisory.pdf](http://www.tc.edu/ncrest/Aera/aera2005_Advisory.pdf)
- 7 [http://www.studentachievement.org/home/isamodel\\_principles.html#p2](http://www.studentachievement.org/home/isamodel_principles.html#p2)
- 8 [http://www.tc.edu/ncrest/onlinepub/ISA\\_DC.SP.FINAL.pdf](http://www.tc.edu/ncrest/onlinepub/ISA_DC.SP.FINAL.pdf)
- 9 <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=1229025091&SrchMode=1&sid=1&Fmt=6&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1213207790&clientId=47400>
- 10 [http://www.esrnational.org/store/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info&products\\_id=2](http://www.esrnational.org/store/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=2)
- 11 <http://intranet.cps.k12.il.us/Lessons/Advisory/>

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