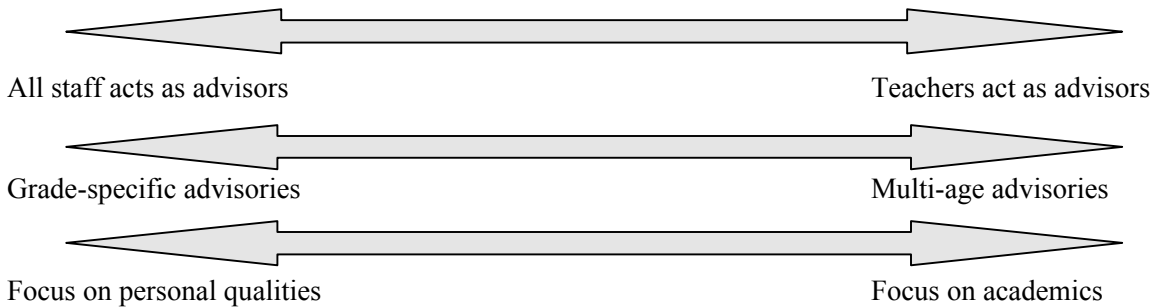


An Introduction

Designing an advisory program is a bit like planning a family vacation - there are so many considerations that it is easy to lose sight of the vision at the heart of the planning. The resources in this report aim to clarify the options available in creating advisories, while demonstrating the mirroring effect that advisories have with the whole school program and culture. A strong, well-planned advisory is congruent with, and central to all other elements of the school. This is especially vital in small schools, as advisories are synonymous with personalization and community-building in an education system founded on factory-like anonymity.

In line with the belief that advisories must be central to the school is the knowledge that advisories will look different in different learning communities. One of the schools profiled in this section is project-based, and has advisory time that carries over into the rest of the school day. Another school has a multi-ethnic student body and devotes time in advisories to having dialogues around diversity issues. All of the resources in this report must be contextualized to fit your school. You also must take into account what stage of the design process your school has reached and decide what material can be of immediate use and what would best be utilized at a later date.












Just as the family vacation echoes the desires of its members, the continuum of advisory design options should align with the mission of your school. Below is a sample of just a few advisory design considerations. Where your advisory design and your school mission fall on the continuum allows you to reflect on future goals or current strengths. Keep the image of the continuum at the forefront as you use the resources in this section.



Designing an advisory program requires difficult decisions, concessions, and compromises to be made for the benefit of the school community. The allocation of time and resources given to an advisory program is a direct reflection of the values of the school. The materials in this collection do not represent all of the possibilities for creating advisories; they are merely guiding points. Being innovative, asking for student input and/or representation, visiting schools with existing advisory programs, following the links provided in this report, and asking for community assistance in beginning advisories are all ways to enhance the process, and take it a step beyond the typical “homeroom” advisory program.

ADVISORIES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	The Five Attributes of Satisfying Advisories	1
	Advisory Design Sequence	4
	Design Considerations	6
	The Big Picture Company	8
	The Met High School	12
	Parker Charter Essential School	16
	Fenway High School	19
	How to Design an Advisory System	21
	Service Learning Student Guide and Journal	23
	Career Choices:  Interview with educator using Career Choices	25

ADVISORIES

The Five Attributes of Satisfying Advisories

Jim Burns (*NELMS Journal*, Fall 1996)

<http://www.vla.com/idesign/attributes2.html>

The following five universal attributes of satisfying advisories, compiled by Jim Burns from his work with educators across the country, are a great planning tool in developing advisories, or in assessing emerging/existing advisories.

1. Integral Placement. Satisfying advisories are integral components of the larger plan for learning. Excellent programs are connected to teaming, curriculum selection, classroom management, and community service. The opposite of such integral placement occurs when advisory is perceived as an "add-on" or "one more thing to do" in an already crowded schedule.

At some point we came to realize that to truly care for students, you first have to really know them. Whom do we know better than the students on our team?

2. Advisor Authenticity. Satisfied teacher-advisors feel comfort and authenticity within the role of advisor. Such *authenticity* is a result of good preparation and being granted substantial latitude in selecting activities to meet advisee interests and needs. The opposite of this sense of authenticity is described by advisors who are tied to prescribed activities in the absence of appropriate training.

Authentic advisors describe themselves as both well-prepared and encouraged to discover what works best with their particular group. Even in programs with clearly defined goals, satisfied advisors report substantial freedom in selecting and scheduling activities to meet their goals. When asked how she chooses activities, one sixth grade advisor responded,

"We do things that have worked before and we try "new" activities the students suggest. Before long we have a satisfying weekly routine for advisory." Perhaps the most typical complaint from frustrated advisors, "We receive no preparation. Instead we are enjoined to a sequence of worksheets xeroxed from some published advisory guide. We hate it."

3. Common Aims. A core of recognizable aims guides all advisory tasks. Professionals in schools with satisfying advisories can easily identify the purposes of advisory, as can their students. In contrast to this clarity of aims, program purposes in less-than-satisfying advisories are most often murky or unknown.

Satisfying advisories are built upon concrete aims focusing upon

ADVISORIES

relationships, including development of

- supportive and caring relationships with adults;
- a constructive group of friends; and
- relationships with the community through service projects.

Within such aims exist broad opportunities for student goal setting, advisee/advisor monitoring of achievement, democratic participation in establishing rules, resolving conflict, defining themes of inquiry, creating social activities, and selecting/managing service-learning projects. In team-based advisories, small community service projects may be executed by single or paired advisory groups, and larger service endeavors may be whole-team or whole-school projects.

4. Assertive Leadership. Satisfying advisories exist where leaders *champion the program*. Leaders include teacher-leaders as well as administrators. Such leaders promote advisory in the community, provide ample staff development/supplementary resources, set high expectations, and are actively engaged in the program. In less-satisfying programs leader behavior is most often described as distant rather than engaged or "hands on".

Satisfaction occurs in concert with leader behavior promoting and defining advisory. Leaders dedicate resources and time to advisory (often extending staff contracts for program development during summer months). They provide follow-up assessment and encourage program revisions throughout the year. Advisory leaders promote staff participation in regional and national conferences with the expectation that those who attend will share new knowledge by subsequently leading professional development activities on site.

In addition to encouraging advisor improvisation and experimentation, leaders also establish high expectations and commitment to advisory aims. They actively engage in the day-to-day operations of the program as this eighth grade teacher reports,

"Our principal keeps a regular schedule of advisory visits. She meets with each advisory group at least once each term. The assistant principal shares leadership of an advisory group with a colleague to ensure coverage on occasions when he is pulled away for administrative priorities."

5. Tangible Results. Frequent celebrations highlighting advisory accomplishments in academic achievement and community service, combined with prominent displays such as an advisory "wall of fame" of photographs and news clippings, provide tangible proof of successes. Student accomplishments in leadership, caring, and community service are honored. Data documenting improvement in achievement, attendance, and discipline are compiled and posted.

Proactive leaders publicize data on improved grades and achievement-- results of advisor-advisee goal setting, downturns in frequency of discipline referrals, and reductions in absenteeism-- prior to discussions of the merits of using instructional time for advisory when speaking to the school board, parents, community, or representatives of the media.

The process begins with awareness and vision, championed by committed leaders.



ADVISORIES

Advisory Design Sequence

Jeff Petty, Small Schools Coaches Collaborative, 2002

<http://www.smallschoolsproject.org/>

This tool was developed by Jeff Petty, a school coach with the Small Schools Coaches Collaborative, and Kim Feicke of the Small Schools Workshop Northwest as part of a summer 2002 workshop in Portland. This worksheet is intended to assist school communities in the design of advisories that function within a coherent school program to support higher achievement for all students through increased personalization.

Key questions to consider in advisory design

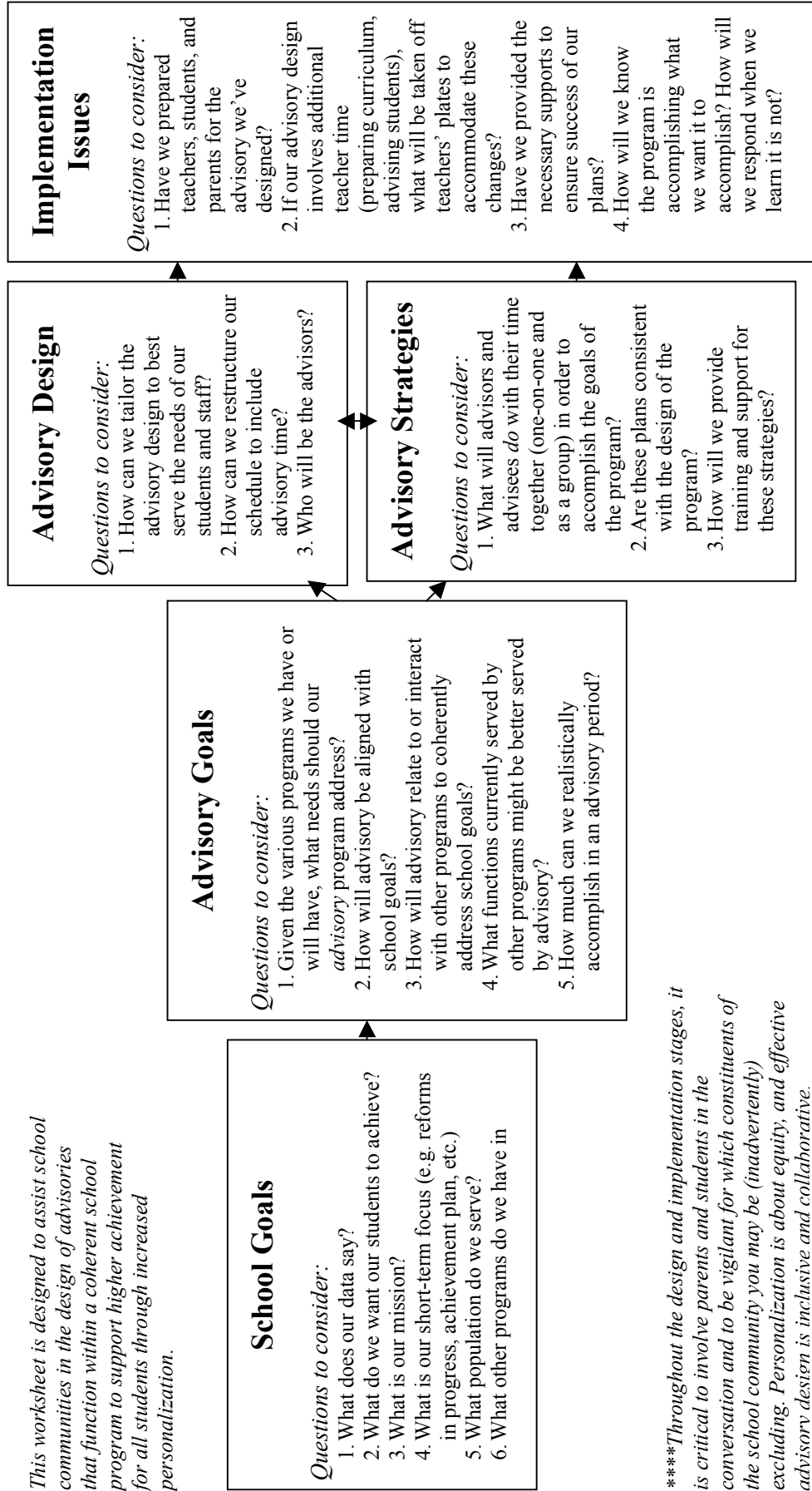
1. What will be the primary emphasis of the advisory program in our school (personalization, mentoring, career exploration, decision making, academic advising, leadership development, independent study, community service, self-esteem building, etc.)? How was consensus developed in reaching this decision?
2. Have we done our homework on the possibilities and problems associated with advisory programs? Examined the literature? Visited other schools? Brought in outside resources?
3. How often and for how long will the advisory groups meet? Is this consistent with our intentions for the program? How will our present schedule be modified to accommodate our choice of program? Will advisory meet only as a group, or will one-to-one meeting time be planned into the school schedule?
4. How will the advisory groups be structured? Same grade level? Mixed grade level? Same advisor? Rotating advisor? Self-selected? Assigned? Will every adult be an advisor, or just the teachers? Are these plans consistent with our goals for the program?
5. Have we prepared teachers, students, and parents for the advisory we envision? Teacher in-service? Student input? Community involvement? Press releases? Advisory group demonstrations?
6. Have we provided the necessary supports to ensure success of our plans? Sufficient time? Staff (and student?) collaboration time for design and improvement? Authority? Resources? Commitment and support from Superintendent and School Board?
7. How will we know the program is accomplishing what we want it to accomplish? How will we respond when we learn it is not?

Adapted from a list of questions by *School Strategies and Options*

<http://www.tiac.net/users/dfleming/index.html>

Advisory Design Sequence

This worksheet is designed to assist school communities in the design of advisories that function within a coherent school program to support higher achievement for all students through increased personalization.



School Goals

Questions to consider:

1. What does our data say?
2. What do we want our students to achieve?
3. What is our mission?
4. What is our short-term focus (e.g. reforms in progress, achievement plan, etc.)
5. What population do we serve?
6. What other programs do we have in

Advisory Goals

Questions to consider:

1. Given the various programs we have or will have, what needs should our advisory program address?
2. How will advisory be aligned with school goals?
3. How will advisory relate to or interact with other programs to coherently address school goals?
4. What functions currently served by other programs might be better served by advisory?
5. How much can we realistically accomplish in an advisory period?

Advisory Design

Questions to consider:

1. How can we tailor the advisory design to best serve the needs of our students and staff?
2. How can we restructure our schedule to include advisory time?
3. Who will be the advisors?

Advisory Strategies

Questions to consider:

1. What will advisors and advisees do with their time together (one-on-one and as a group) in order to accomplish the goals of the program?
2. Are these plans consistent with the design of the program?
3. How will we provide training and support for these strategies?

Implementation Issues

Questions to consider:

1. Have we prepared teachers, students, and parents for the advisory we've designed?
2. If our advisory design involves additional teacher time (preparing curriculum, advising students), what will be taken off teachers' plates to accommodate these changes?
3. Have we provided the necessary supports to ensure success of our plans?
4. How will we know the program is accomplishing what we want it to accomplish? How will we respond when we learn it is not?

****Throughout the design and implementation stages, it is critical to involve parents and students in the conversation and to be vigilant for which constituents of the school community you may be (inadvertently) excluding. Personalization is about equity, and effective advisory design is inclusive and collaborative.*

ADVISORIES

Design Considerations: A discussion tool

Adapted by the Small Schools Project from a prototype of
Discover the Power of Advisories: Personalizing Your Smaller Learning Community

The Education Alliance at Brown University
<http://www.lab.brown.edu/>

With all of the considerations that need to be taken under advisement when planning an advisory program, it is sometimes a struggle to know where to begin. The following tool has been developed by The Education Alliance at Brown University, and adapted by the Small Schools Project, to provide a visual representation and record of the planning process for your staff.

The 26 design options listed in the tool must be adapted to fit your specific needs. We encourage you to use only those options that are applicable and align with your school mission and philosophy. Make multiple copies of the tool and indicate which option is being discussed by checking the appropriate box. As you discuss, take notes on the ideas, opinions, and decisions raised by the topic. It may be helpful to keep an advisory planning binder with these discussion sheets inside for future reference.

It may also be useful to modify this tool for decision-making when your staff has reached that stage. The Education Alliance has two additional components in their tool that are not included here. They include *areas of support and opposition*, and *consensus*.



Design Considerations: A discussion tool

Design Options:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Duration of advisor-advisee relationship <input type="checkbox"/> Advisee role and responsibilities <input type="checkbox"/> Advisor role and responsibilities <input type="checkbox"/> Parent involvement <input type="checkbox"/> Community Involvement <input type="checkbox"/> Frequency of advisory meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Length of advisory meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Individual vs. group meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Same age vs. multi-age <input type="checkbox"/> Master schedule considerations <input type="checkbox"/> Where will advisories meet? <input type="checkbox"/> Personalization of advisory space <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing of advisory space <input type="checkbox"/> Scheduled professional time dedicated to advisory program <input type="checkbox"/> Configurations for training and support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consideration of cultural components. <input type="checkbox"/> Identification of training and support needs <input type="checkbox"/> Initial and on-going training (what, by whom, how) <input type="checkbox"/> Resources needed by advisors <input type="checkbox"/> New and struggling advisor support <input type="checkbox"/> Observation and assessment of advisors <input type="checkbox"/> Master contract considerations <input type="checkbox"/> Budget considerations <input type="checkbox"/> Additional student roles (e.g., steering committee) <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities for empowerment (e.g., school governance, community responsibility) <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring possibilities among older/younger students |
|---|---|

Description:

Advantages +

Disadvantages -

Discussion Notes:

ADVISORIES

The Big Picture Company

<http://www.bigpicture.org>

The Big Picture Company, a non-profit organization that works to generate and sustain innovative schools, designed and created The Met High School and The Highlander K-8 Charter School in Providence, Rhode Island. During the next five years, the Big Picture Company will open a dozen small schools, similar to the Met, in cities across the country. The Big Picture Company uses advisories as an integral part of their program, and although it is recommended that the material be used in conjunction with the entire Big Picture Company program, the ideas and philosophy of the advisory can be utilized by any learning community. The following is excerpted, with permission, from the Big Picture Company's Advisors Handbook.

Philosophy of Advisory:

An advisory is a small community within the school. Students remain with the same advisory for two to four years, so they will get to understand and know each other and the advisor very well. Advisories become great support systems, because the students are able to have close relationships with the advisor and each other. It's like an extended family. With an advisory system, every student has an adult in the school who cares about him or her deeply.

Getting Started:

Team Building

- In the first few months of advisory, spend a lot of time with activities and discussions that help the students get to know and trust each other.
- Have group discussions about how the advisory can support each other more and how it can become closer. Let the students lead the discussion.
- Plan group activities with your advisory, such as a trip, service project, or special lunch or dinner out together.

Day-to-day work in advisory

- Scheduling:
In advisory, ask students to plan their day and week in their calendars. Ask them to set goals and write weekly goals on their calendar.
- Checking in:
Look over student work and project updates.
- Schedule One-on-Ones:

- Schedule individual meetings to have with students during the week.
- Discussions:
Plan discussions to have with your advisory.
- Excursions:
You might go out for meals, field trips, etc.
- Plan Trips:
There are all kinds of trips your advisory could take. You might go camping, canoeing, to a movie, into a city, hiking, a lock-in, etc.
- Peer Help:
Advisory is a great place for students to help each other with academic work and interest exploration.
- Advisory Activities:
You may read a book or a play together, do community service, have an outdoor learning experience, make group decisions, do presentations for each other, share your project work, etc.

General Advisory Ideas

- How you run your advisory is your own decision. Your advisory may need extra help in team building, while another advisor's group immediately bonds. Or, your group may be really excited about outside activities, while another advisory prefers more at-school projects. As you get to know your students, you will have a better idea of how to plan the advisory time.
- Talk with other advisors about their advisory schedules and what activities are working well for them. You may want to combine advisories on occasion and do some getting-to-know-you activities.
- Involve the students in the decision making and planning. The more investment they have in advisory, the more active and enthusiastic they will be.
- Have the students make a mission statement for your advisory.
- Build a large monthly/weekly calendar together to schedule work and activities.
- Team students with a buddy whom they give a short presentation about, after getting to know all about them.
- Plan getting-to-know-you activities that go beyond just knowing someone's biographical basics. This could be done through discussing each other's values, goals, future dreams, likes/dislikes, etc.
- Be on the lookout for students who need encouragement, and try to get them involved with other students on an individual basis. Teaming them with buddies who are accepting and outgoing may help the excluded student be more involved and comfortable.

ADVISORIES

Journal Prompts About Advisory Culture

- Are you participating as much as you'd like to? If not, what is holding you back?
- Who have you gotten to know recently? Describe this person and anything that surprised you once you got to know him or her. Were they funnier than you expected? Nicer? Do you have something in common?
- What is your favorite discussion your advisory had this month/week? Why? What did you learn about each other? Did you agree with everyone? What was your opinion on the subject?
- What is your favorite activity that your advisory had this month? Why? How did you participate?
- What would you like to change about your advisory? What would you like to stay the same?
- Who is someone in the advisory you don't know well? What can you do to get to know him/her better?
- Is there someone in advisory you don't get along with? What can you do to help the situation?
- Is there something you'd like to present or teach your advisory? List some thing you could share with the group?

Creating an Advisory Identity:

Advisory Name

Your students may want to create an advisory name. This can be a great way to build your team and shared identity. T-shirts, posters in advisory and shared experiences are ways to celebrate your advisory team.

Respect and Diversity

This is an important part of the school. The more conscious effort you make to emphasize respect and diversity in advisory, the more students will internalize it as a fundamental premise of the school. Over time, students should take more responsibility for the culture of respect at the school. Many students arrive from other schools without a clear concept of what it means to be respected in their school community or what it means to truly respect others and embrace differences. Make sure they know that this is one of the highest priorities.

Ideas for Respect and Diversity Activities

Advisory Discussions: It's important to build an atmosphere of trust, tolerance, and acceptance within the school and your advisory. Plan to have many advisory discussions about diversity, conflict resolution, and respect for others. Use an image, video, or reading as a starting point. Here are some of the topics you can cover:

- Race, gender, culture, economic status, intelligence/abilities, religion, sexual orientation, age, looks/appearance, social class, and physical disabilities.
- Within these topics you can cover issues such as stereotypes, myths, biases, oppression, violence, gossip, bullying, and other aspects of conflict.
- Plan activities that celebrate diversity.
- Bring in community speakers/panelists to talk about diversity issues.
- Ask a local diversity trainer to run a session with your advisory.
- Organize activities/events that deliberately raise student awareness of diversity issues and that improve tolerance and appreciation of others.
- Have each student give a short presentation about their own background (ethnicity, religion, culture, etc.).

Personal commitment that students and advisors can make

- Think about the biases and stereotypes you have, explore where they have come from, and work to get rid of them.
- Challenge biases and stereotypes that your friends and family have.
- Challenge the oppression of others, such as challenging ethnic jokes, or negative comments about sexual orientations, certain religions, etc.
- Challenge sexist comments.
- Challenge cruel comments about other students.
- Share information about your own groups (ethnic, religious, etc.) so people can avoid stereotypes and myths.
- Be a role model. Show that you respect and value all other people.

Journal Prompts about Diversity

- What are some stereotypes you have? Where did they come from? How can you work on getting rid of them?
- Do people have stereotypes/misconceptions about you? What are they? How can you help others learn about who you really are?
- Describe racism and sexism. What kinds of problems are caused by these two things?
- Have you ever been oppressed because of your race, religion, sexual orientation, culture, or social class? How has this oppression affected you? How can you challenge oppression in a non-violent way?
- What is your culture/background and how does it impact how you respond to other people?
- How do you respond to inappropriate remarks (made to you, or someone else)? Do you ignore them? Challenge them? Try to talk about it?

ADVISORIES

The Met High School

<http://www.metcenter.org/>

The Met was designed by the Big Picture Company, a non-profit organization that works to generate and sustain innovative schools. The following is an excerpt from the on-line portfolio *Student Learning in Small Schools*, by What Kids Can Do, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The piece gives a glimpse into what a daily advisory meeting looks like at the Met.

This small public school in Providence, Rhode Island, opened in 1996 and serves 100+ students at each of its two campuses. At the Met, there are no required courses, credits, grades, or tests. Instead, the school integrates academic and applied learning with the goal of educating "one student at a time". Students, teacher-advisors and parents work together to create personalized learning plans for each student, based on the student's needs and interests and including an internship with a mentor two days a week. At the end of their internship, each student demonstrates to parents and teachers what they have learned.

In order to graduate, students must meet five academically-applied learning goals, including empirical reasoning, symbolic/quantitative reasoning, communication, social reasoning, and personal qualities. In June 2000, the Met graduated its first senior class - 100 percent of the students graduated and were accepted into college.

ADVISORS

Teachers at The Met are known as advisors, and they facilitate the learning of the 14 students (all in the same grade) in their advisory group. They help students create learning plans, identify interests, find internships, develop projects, and manage their time. They also work closely with their advisees' mentors (internship job-site coordinators), meeting monthly at the job site and providing back at school whatever instruction or support students need to complete their internships. Since advisors stay with the same students until they graduate, teaching applicants must make a four-year commitment to the school. The resulting advisor-student bond runs deep.



An advisory in brief

At The Met, each advisory group has its own “dedicated” classroom space where students can meet as a group and store their belongings. Advisories meet for a half hour after each morning’s school-wide Pick Me Up and again for a half hour at the end of the day. The students in Damian Gonzalez’s advisory are all tenth graders. Three visitors from New Haven, with plans to start a school modeled after The Met, sit in on this morning’s session.

Damian’s advisory: 1.22.03**9:30 — 10:00 Group time**

Damian invites students to introduce themselves to today’s visitors. The informality and intimacy of the group quickly surface. “I’m Ashley,” “Gladys,” “Natalie” give way to “Precious” and “Damn Sexy” as the introductions move around the table.

Damian shares his reflections on last week’s second quarter exhibitions by students. “Personally, I thought you all did a good job, better than first quarter,” he says. “I’m happy that you all stepped it up. Those of you who had gaps, I know you’ll fill them in. But all in all, I’m proud of you.”

He then asks students to share their own quick assessment of how they’d done. Some responses:

... I think my exhibition went well, because I’d researched it. Of the various things I covered in my exhibition, what I’m most proud of was my tuberculosis project. I’d researched it a lot and my parents learned from it. That was my goal.

... I felt I was articulate, that I had a game. In terms of all the hard stuff I’m going through, I’m proud that I actually did my exhibition. And the fact that my dad finally came to one of my exhibitions—that’s the best part of all.

... It wasn’t as good as my first quarter exhibition. And my mom didn’t like it; she was mad at me for some reason. Still, I was proud of everything I’d done and how much I’ve learned about myself.

... My exhibition was banging. And my mom liked it. She had no faith in me the night before. But when she came in, I shocked her. I proved that I was on target with my work.

... This is the first exhibition where I’ve been happy with what I’ve been doing, with my LTI. I’m also proud that I overcame my usual procrastination—that is, I procrastinated but didn’t let it discourage me.

Damian switches gears. “You know that the idea of the advisory is family support, responsibility, leadership,” he begins. “I want us to take a few minutes now and do a check on how we’re doing as a group.” Damian passes out a handout [see list below]. “What I want you to do is to put your name



ADVISORIES

next to those areas where you are weak and give it back to me when you're done. The point is for you to visualize the areas where you can improve.

"Now as you work on these weaknesses I want you to support each other. Say Marcos isn't well organized. Then I want him to go to Gladys and Natalie, who excel in organization, and enlist their help." Students chat as they begin to work on the handout:

PERSONAL QUALITIES

Organization
Leadership
Responsibility
Focusing

Time Management
Maturity
Language

Punctuality
Consistency
Respect

... Are we still sticking to the name "Day-Day's Kids" [Damian's Kids] for our advisory group?

... No, we're growing out of that name.

... But we're always going to be his kids.

... No, we're growing up, we aren't just his kids anymore.

... I think we definitely need to find a new name.

Damian ends group time by throwing out a "scenario"—a staple of Met advisory group meetings, aimed at sparking reflection and discussion:

"We're on a boat. It's sinking. We're all going to die except for one person who gets to live. Who would you pick and why? And it can't be yourself!"
Some answers:

... Crystal lives. Remember when we went to her grandfather's funeral and she saved herself? She deserves the chance to follow through on what she committed herself to that night.

... Gladys, because she is doing things. She does more work than the rest of us; she's determined to get everything she can from her education.

... Marcos lives. I can't let him die a virgin.

... Natalie lives because she's going through a lot right now, I know she is, and she does so much work.

... Let Matt live. He has such a strong character, a lot of potential to do good things. Plus he needs to experience more things.

And some last words from those going down with the ship:

... What I would want my family and friends to remember me by is my artistic ability. And for everyone in my advisory to know that I grew to love them and that I love my family.



... That I love my family, that they did bring up somebody to be somebody. To my advisory, it's been an honor to know you.

... I'd thank my father for everything he's done, for being the best father in the world, for standing by me always. I'd want to give honor to my brother for all he's been through. And I'd thank my classmates for being there and my advisor.

... I'd ask my mom for her forgiveness.

Edorah Frazer, NSRF, on what struggles she encountered when implementing an advisory program:

The biggest obstacle I've seen in starting advisories is that faculty is afraid of being put in a counseling role that they are not trained for. The start-up needs to be coupled with a strong referral system so advisors know whom to turn to to support their advisees!



Parker Charter Essential School

Teri Schrader, Principal

<http://www.parker.org/>

Parker's Principal Teri Schrader spoke with us about Parker Charter's flourishing advisory program. In describing the importance of advisory, Schrader said, "Advisory is central to our mission. It puts the kids at the center of their education and helps them see their academics as an integrated experience. It pushes them to make sense of the world." (Horace, Fall 2002) The following is a description of the Parker advisory program and Schrader's advice to schools that are beginning an advisory program.

A six-year public secondary school of choice, the Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School is one of Massachusetts' first charter schools. Parker was started in 1995 by area parents and teachers committed to the principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools, of which it is a fully approved member.

The school was named after Francis W. Parker, the 19th-century New England educator who is known as the father of American progressive education. Theodore R. Sizer and Nancy Sizer are trustees of the school and participate actively in its ongoing development and work; they served as co-principals in 1998–99.

Q: Can you tell me a little about your school?

TS (Teri Schrader): Sure. We have 350 students here in grades 7-12 and the school is in its 8th year. Three hundred and fifty was always the size that the founders had in mind and so we started with a smaller number and increased incrementally to 350 over the years; it was very deliberate. The school is kind of in no-person's land. It is 35 miles west of Boston so it is too far away to be considered metro west. We are an independent public charter and our charter is with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We are actually located on a decommissioned army base on the intersection of four towns. Devins is technically where we are, but Devins is no longer a town. As you can imagine, we have an intricate system of parents working to carpool kids to school, to meetings, and to one another's houses. Our parents are great about this.

Q: Why don't you tell me about the advisory program?

TS: We have thirty-three advisories and 10-12 students in each advisory. Parker's advisory program has four central purposes:

- First, to connect kids in a meaningful way with service, which looks different according to what division they are in [there are three divisions of 7-8, 9-10, 11-12 grades] because the divisions are doing

activities that are developmentally appropriate. One division might decide they want to visit an animal shelter, while another may take that a step further and have a pet food drive. Another might raise awareness in the school community about animal cruelty and neglect. All advisories have a plan for community service that is filed with our advisory coordinator, Debbie Osofsky, and then followed up on as the year progresses.

- The second purpose of advisory is academic counseling. We do not outsource to specialists. We keep an eye on student issues, questions, and concerns; we facilitate conversations; we act as mediators; we are the parents go-to person; we have stewardship over the program; we are the keepers and developers of the student's personal learning plan. Parker advisors report to families six times a year about the personal learning plan goals of students.
- The third purpose of advisory is to develop and promote school citizenship - to create a democratic school community. We want students at Parker to have a civic sense and be informed about their world, and their community.
- The fourth function is fun - to play together, and to find ways that make sense for students to solve conflicts. We want to help the school be a safe place for kids to learn, whatever that means for them. Safe to interact, safe to make mistakes, safe to take risks.

Q: How did Parker introduce advisories to teachers?

TS: The program has been a part of the school since day one, but the quality and meaning of it has really been internalized in the last four years. There is a summer program where new teachers are really taught by other teachers about what advisories do and the pedagogy driving them.

Q: Can you give me an example of what an exemplary advisory meeting might look like at Parker?

TS: To give you a picture, our advisories happen during the first and last fifteen minutes of each day and then for half of the day on Wednesdays. The first fifteen is a check in - connections, business. The end of day fifteen is to reflect on the day, clean up their area, argue about whose turn it is to sweep, and to get information about the day to come. An example of a Wednesday advisory is this: a few weeks ago we had a fabulous storyteller speak to the kids, and then we went to advisories to debrief and talk about it. The wellness teachers developed a guide based on the storyteller's focus of alcoholism and the guide was given to advisors. Another example is students might gather on a Wednesday and go out for community service and do their pre-arranged service. The ongoing nature of advisory always includes debriefing. Sometimes advisory might look like planning for a dance. Sometimes it looks like individual conferences. It really depends on what the advisory has decided. There are so many great things that they are doing.



ADVISORIES

Q: How does school size influence the advisory program?

TS: Advisories are about more than the ratio of students to teachers. Supporting the advisors is just as important and I'm not sure we could effectively talk to each other about issues if we had a larger group. Each advisory knows all of the other advisories. With one recent problem we were having as a whole school, the advisors met and did a role-play on the issue, then discussed intervention by making a continuum for what the intervention would look like and where we were as a staff on the issue, and then we did a writing exercise to debrief and reflect. We couldn't do that with forty teachers. Advisories virtually provide not only a metaphor, but a structure for the school. Because of the small size, there is not any anonymity here so any trouble that a student runs into, we can usually break down the barriers and work it out. There are very few cracks to fall through here.

Q: Do you have any advice for schools doing the work of creating advisory programs?

TS: Do not make any assumptions. Saying it does not make it so. Everyone is carrying around a model advisory in their head – now tease out a plan from that model. Adults need to come to a meeting of minds and realize that they are not doing it alone. Decide beforehand, how does each activity we are considering help us? Build it together. Get a sense of what it is.



A Student's Perspective on Advisors

Barbara

My first advisor and I just didn't hit it off. He was always on my case about deadlines and credits, he kept saying I was behind. But I had confidence in myself. The more he pressured me, the more I didn't want to do the work. I guess you'd call it a typical teen reaction.

This is what I'd tell all advisors: "You need to know the student as a person before you can help them as a student."

A good advisor helps you take an idea and shape it into something do-able.

(Minnesota New Country School, 2002)

Fenway High School
Luz Padua, Acting Director
<http://fenway.boston.k12.ma.us/>

Fenway High School, located in the Fenway neighborhood of downtown Boston, is a pilot school of the Boston public school system. The school has been given relative autonomy from the district in its staffing, scheduling, curriculum, budget, and board, in exchange for high accountability of student achievement. Fenway currently enrolls 270 students from all over the city and from every background and ethnicity, and has 100 more on its waiting list. We spoke with Fenway's acting director, Ms. Luz Padua, about her school's advisory program, which is touted in many education circles, and for good reason.

Q: Why don't you tell me a little about the role of advisories at Fenway?

A: Advisories meet 3 times a week for 1 hour. (We have block scheduling.) Ninth grade advisories focus on the transition into Fenway life – emotional, social, academic, and behavioral. They work on health and wellness issues a lot in 9th grade as well. Also, time management and presentation skills. Tenth grade advisories focus on community service. Eleventh grade advisories focus on their junior review. Junior review is a reflective and evaluative portfolio about their experience at Fenway over the last 2 years. They present their work publicly in content areas and in an exemplary area that they have done high quality work in. They present to a committee made up of teachers, peers, council members, and community members. They also do career research and practice college application essays at this stage, too.

Unlike most traditional schools, twelfth grade is the most intense year at Fenway. Students must graduate with a portfolio and present it publicly. Graduate portfolios focus on life after Fenway, along with their academic achievements over the last four years.

We have divided up the school into three Houses so it is like three schools within a school. Each house has the same curriculum but a different staff. Students who stay in the same house will carry the same advisors from 2 to 4 years, depending on their choices.

Q: What elements of advisories do you think are most beneficial to students and why?

A: The opportunities to make connections, to make them feel that this is really a place of belonging with their advisor and their peers.

Q: How does your school introduce advisories?



ADVISORIES

A: Fenway has been around for 20 years and the philosophies have stayed the same but the program has changed. Advisory is challenging for teachers, and we are still developing our model. Some teachers feel strong and comfortable with their advisories and some don't. The comfort level with the role of advisor is a key component in their success.

The advisors must see that the students are their biggest resource. They will let advisors know what is working and they can give great feedback. The staff needs to have planning time built in for advisories and also a time for staff to meet and share practices surrounding advisories.

Q: Can you give me an example of what an exemplary advisory meeting might look like?

A: A great advisory runs itself. The students take ownership; the parents feel connected; there is trust and a familial feeling; a bond is established.

Q: How does school size impact the educational program at the school?

A: Tremendously! It is difficult to build relationships with 30-35 students in an advisory. It is still tough with a group of 20, but manageable.

Q: What practices do you use in your advisories to be culturally responsive?

A: We have professional development on diversity issues, but what is most natural is to have consistent dialogues and discussions with staff and students. We used to bring in outside experts to help us with the ongoing process but now we are doing more internal work. We have great resources within the community. We have a diversity committee, which keeps the issues at the forefront. We have also developed a common language surrounding our diversity dialogue. The language may seem like common sense, but it has helped us a lot. We have 5 safety guidelines which are: 1) try it on (put yourself in a place to try), 2) agree to disagree, 3) take personal responsibility for your actions, 4) use confidentiality, 5) no shaming, blaming, or attacking.

Q: What recommendations do you have for educators who want to introduce advisories into their existing program?

A: Don't feel pressured to be a know-it-all; work on relationship-building; direct and guide students; don't be afraid to ask. Don't forget that advisory is still a class to prepare for; winging it will only work so many times, and will not be productive. Talk to your colleagues. Having focused goals helps to set parameters and answer the question – what is the end result? Make sure to have a time for staff to meet, plan, and discuss; this is a necessity. And have patience – advisories are not going to take off overnight, but they will take off.

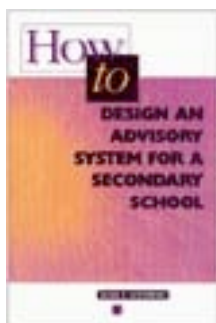
How to Design an Advisory System for a Secondary School

Mark Goldberg

<http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/1998goldberg/1998goldbergtoc.html>

The following book was recommended by school practitioners and is reviewed in the words from the publisher, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), and the author, except in this boxed abstract.

Books focusing on advisories are few and far between, and good books are even more rare. Mark Goldberg's book, although prescriptive, offers a rare glimpse into the design and inner workings of a high school advisory. Goldberg's chapters on communicating with parents, and special issues are excellent, and his candor and humility about the trial and error of starting any new program is refreshing. This book would be a wise place to begin the planning of your school's advisory program.



When Mark Goldberg first visited a school with an advisory system, he was impressed by the way such a system personalizes school for secondary students, provides a shared professional experience for the adults in a school, and improves home-school relations. When he subsequently became founding administrator of a high school, he started an advisory system.

This book is based on his experiences. Goldberg explains why an advisory system is important, what it requires, and how to tailor the concept to a particular school. An advisory system stresses the advisor–advisee relationship and ensures that every student is known well by at least one adult in a school. That adult—a teacher, administrator, librarian, or other staff member—becomes the student's advocate and the first person the student seeks out to discuss school problems or to get advice about where to turn for assistance with more serious issues.

The Introduction to *How to Design an Advisory System for a Secondary School*, by Mark Goldberg (1998)

I became aware of an advisory system in the late 1960s and early 1970s. At that time, the National Association of Secondary School Principals Model Schools Project was promoting personalization in schools. The Project Director, J. Lloyd Trump, spoke and wrote about an advisory system that would guarantee each student a staff advisor-advocate in school. When I visited a school in Northern Virginia that was part of the Trump effort, I was impressed by its modified advisory system and determined that I would bring such a system to a secondary school if I ever had the opportunity.

ADVISORIES

In 1973, I became the founding administrator of the high school in Shoreham-Wading River (SWR) on Long Island in New York. Richard Doremus had just been appointed superintendent of schools, and he was interested in establishing "guidance units" in the new high school, a concept close to an advisory system. Dennis Littky, the founding administrator of the new middle school in SWR, had installed a rather complete advisory system there a year before I arrived in SWR. I knew Dick Doremus and had worked with Dennis Littky for two years at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. They made it easy for me to bring an advisory system (called House Group) to the new high school.

I was able to build on and copy Dennis's excellent work, and Dick understood and supported the system and was interested in how the advisory/House Group system could become even better. Dennis left SWR after six years, but the advisory system remains as part of his strong legacy. I stayed in the high school for 21 years, until June 1994, and the House Group system remains. Shoreham-Wading River has gone through many changes recently, including considerable financial adversity, yet both the advisory system and the House Group system appear to be part of the permanent landscape of the school district.

An advisory system will appeal to any middle, junior high, or high school that wishes to emphasize personalization. Most graduates of U.S. public schools recall homeroom, a place where 20 to 30 youngsters reported in the morning for attendance and notices. An advisory system is different: It stresses a relationship between an advisor and student that does not exist in homeroom.

Advisory meetings are smaller than homeroom meetings, and an advisor may play a role in any aspect of a student's life, from scheduling to discipline, from common school problems to more complicated issues that require a helpful adult and meetings with the student's parents or guardians. The individual relationship between an advisor and student is the heart of an advisory meeting and sets it apart from a homeroom setting.

This book provides a comprehensive look at how to investigate and establish an advisory system. All schools have different needs, and some schools will be able to devote more time to this process than others. Therefore, I have tried to provide options and to focus on realistic school possibilities educators can select from to tailor such a system for particular schools. So as you read this information, think about how an advisory system can work in your school and which elements described here fit best with your specific circumstances.

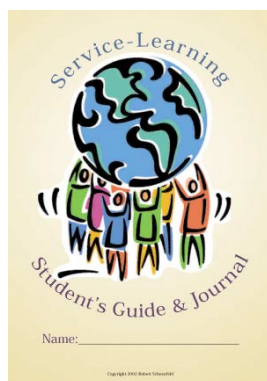


Service Learning: Student's Guide and Journal

Robert Schoenfeld

<http://www.ServiceLearn.com/>

The Service-Learning Student's Guide & Journal is one way to build community and trust in your advisory in a meaningful way that will have a lasting impact. If your advisory is beginning a service-learning project, the guide is a way to bring focus to the work and give students a permanent record of their project.



The Service-Learning Student's Guide & Journal is a new booklet that will help every high school and middle school student in the United States organize their Service-Learning project and improve their thinking and writing skills. The Student's Guide & Journal will aid students in their pursuit of scholastic achievement while guiding and inspiring them to take their service to their community and the nation to a higher level of achievement.

The Service-Learning Student's Guide & Journal is a useful resource for any Service-Learning program such as: The Cesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning, The Martin Luther King Day of Service, The National Youth Service Day, environmental programs, tutoring and mentoring projects, helping the homeless and the hungry.

The mission of the Service-Learning–Student's Guide & Journal is to:

- * Make it easy for the teacher to teach Service-Learning.
- * Help establish nationwide Service-Learning standards for motivation, guidance and evaluation.
- * Be a tool that will keep the participants working smoothly as a team, facilitating communication between student, parent, teacher, and the agency's volunteer coordinator.
- * Give all of the participants a clear vision of the goals of Service-Learning.
- * Facilitate the student's growth in personal character.
- * Be a guide that will help set up each student for maximum success.
- * Give the student an opportunity to compose personal reflections and journaling.
- * Encourage the student to make a commitment and be accountable to the project.
- * Help the student combine classroom academic learning with service to the community.

ADVISORIES

The Service-Learning–Student's Guide & Journal is a "State of the Art" booklet that uses extensive journals for creative composition, charts to verify the student's service, graphs to measure the student's progress, and directed questions to elicit positive personal reflection from the student.

The Student's Guide & Journal includes chapters on:

- What is Service-Learning?
- How Do I Benefit From Doing A Service-Learning Project?
- How Do I Get Started?
- Qualities Of A Leader,
- How Do I Measure Success?
- Developing Personal Character,
- My Vision For My Future,
- Find A Mentor / Be A Mentor,
- Contact Information,
- and Inspirational Stories of Three Teens Who Have Changed The World. (Schoenfeld, 2002)



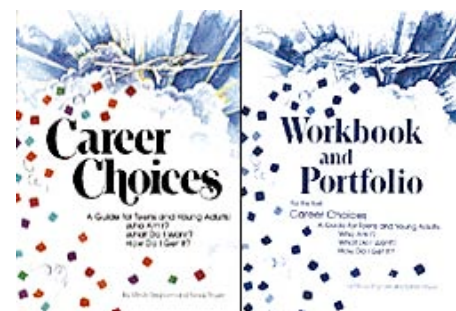
Career Choices

Academic Innovations

<http://www.academicinnovations.com/>

The Career Choices guide is an excellent way to tap into the prior knowledge, strengths, and interests of students in your advisory group. The guide and accompanying workbook can be used as an ongoing advisory process. Although Career Choices is called a curriculum, it is not prescriptive and leaves room for teacher and student input. You can select the lessons that suit the goals and identity of your advisory, or move through the book at a pace that is conducive to your advisory meeting times. The activities prompt thoughtful discussion, relationship building, and personal growth, and can be a vehicle for moving into service learning projects, advisory trips, and internships.

Career Choices is designed to help young people deal with the two major tasks of adolescence: establishing and consolidating their identity and deciding what they want to do with their lives. It goes without saying that these are huge undertakings for individuals of any age.



The Workbook and Portfolio is an important component in the series. It gives students a personal and permanent record of their career and life planning goals. This low-cost, consumable workbook replicates each exercise in the *Career Choices* main text. Key pages provide you with important information about the students' educational and career aspirations. As your students complete the workbook, you will see them gain a greater sense of focus and direction for their lives. Just a few of the skills students will gain by using *Career Choices* are,

- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Goal setting | Decision making | Critical thinking |
| Problem solving | Knowledge of self | Personal choice |
| A vision of the future | Positive work ethic | Financial reality |
| Career awareness | Employability skills | A personalized plan |

Possibilities

Possibilities is the language arts component in the *Career Choices* series, linking 50 selections of poetry, short stories and essays to specific lessons in the *Career Choices* text. The curriculum is flexible enough to be used in a variety of situations, and with students of varying abilities. *Possibilities* fits in perfectly with sustained silent reading, as students can read a selection and then apply it during their next advisory using the *Career Choices* text. (www.academicinnovations.com)



In-Depth Interviews with Innovative Educators
Using *Career Choices*

Career Choices has been used by teachers across disciplines for over a decade, and there are many testimonies to its success. The article below highlights how one teacher used the curriculum with his summer youth program, and infused field trips, community service, internships, and guest speakers with Career Choices, all of which could be done within advisories. The teacher, Pat Marabella, had great enthusiasm for his students and for the program, and he catered Career Choices to the needs of his particular student population.

Small Successes Lead to Love of Learning

By Pat Marabella - Havre, Montana

"You know Pat, you were right. I can do it. I am somebody."

- Student reflection at end of the program

"My biggest goal was for the kids to develop a love of learning," says Pat Marabella, referring to the vision he had for the young people who went through the "remediation" component of the Summer Youth Program in rural Havre, Montana.

"Our youth are disenchanted about school, often having little success. I wanted to provide them with a program that would give them some small success," he told us. Pat's program, which served a multi-cultural population that was 30% Native American, turned out to be a huge success in terms of academic achievement and increased motivation for learning.

Most of the students in his class had tested "academically deficient," and all were at least two grade levels behind their peers. Some were behind as much as six grade levels. One thing was clear at the outset: everyone was in need of improvement.

Pat hoped to increase his students' skill levels in reading, writing, and math, and chose the *Career Choices* curriculum to help focus them in this task. But what really made a difference for Pat's students was the caring and dedication he brought to the job. His positive attitude and genuine interest in his students' progress was the catalyst that changed their motivation to learn.

"The results were phenomenal," Pat reports. "We pre- and post-tested them and found that the majority went up two grade levels. About 10% went up six grade levels. I had one youth who scored a 3.5 grade level for language and a 4.2 for math at the beginning, and tested at the end with 10.5 in both areas."

When asked about this remarkable success, Pat described four winning strategies he used:



1. Give students a sense of responsibility for their own learning
2. Make the content culturally relevant
3. Involve the community and the worksite supervisors
4. Build trust in the classroom

Responsibility for Learning

"We had a very innovative program, Pat explains. Students were paid for class time as if it were a job. "We wanted to place the responsibility for learning on the students, give them a sense of ownership for their own learning process."

One way Pat accomplished this goal was to teach academic subjects in the context of students' experiences from their summer jobs. One youth worked at the local fairgrounds and used math to calculate how much paint was needed to cover an area. Another had a job that entailed mixing chemicals and required math to determine the correct balance. Yet another worked at a newspaper in the advertising department and needed to practice written communication skills. By teaching reading, writing and math as it related to immediate, real-life experiences, new sources of motivation emerged for students.

Pat also experimented with different classroom activities as part of his strategy to transfer ownership for learning. "I had several youth actually take a lesson and teach it themselves. When that happened, the classroom just blossomed. They used a lesson from *Career Choices*, the one on budgeting. I had two students plan the lesson, working very closely with me, and they had a lot of coaching. When they got up in front of the class, which was arranged in a circle, everyone was very comfortable. I was just amazed. I was waiting for jeers, goofing off, but they responded really well. It even made me jealous at first, because the class liked them so much!"

Cultural Relevancy

For the Native American youth, the program became more relevant when Pat invited Elders from the Tribal Council to come into the classroom and teach certain lessons from the *Career Choices* curriculum. One prominent and well-respected Native American guest speaker told the class how important it was for the growth of their people that this learning take place. He talked about making wise decisions and about self-actualization, both of which are basic to tribal spiritual beliefs.

"Even the non-Native American students loved it and thought it was fantastic. A lot of them made connections with their own beliefs," Pat reported. The result was to inject cultural relevance and meaning into the school and academic environment. Students were encouraged to develop their own cultural stories based on talking with their families at home. Many were written up as part of the daily journal exercise and published in a program booklet.



Involving the Community

Pat invited more guest speakers, including the "elders" - experts and authorities - from the white community as well: insurance people, travel agents, bank managers.

How did he do this? "Basically, I used the Speaker Bank concept and strategy in *Career Choices* to set this up. I looked for people who really cared about young people, and I met with them personally, one-on-one." He found that when he showed community members how much he cared about his students, they were more than willing to participate.

Pat believes that the Speaker Bank part of his program is very transferable, and could be done in the inner city, as well as rural towns like Havre. "What you need is people who the kids can identify with. In Philadelphia, ex-gang members who have become successful through employment training, now go into the classroom to teach and counsel, and it works," he said.

To further integrate community with classroom, Pat took students on field trips to the "old town" of Havre, a restored section that had been buried under the streets. This provided students with an understanding of the rich cultural heritage unique to their area and a sense of common roots.

Getting the cooperation of worksite supervisors was another step Pat took to insure community support for his program. "I spoke to each of them personally, and visited the worksite to give each one a copy of the book. When they were asked to monitor what the kids were doing, they were more than happy to do so. Teachers would be surprised how many employers really care. They see the students as being their future employees, and want to invest in their success."

Pat firmly believes that we're not going to see the drop-out rate go to zero, or young people develop a work ethic, or teen pregnancy disappear, unless we see a strong and supportive community involvement. "These are community problems, and the responsibility belongs to all of us," he said.

Building Trust

Running the gamut from cooperative learning to individual instruction and peer tutoring, Pat kept his class moving with a non-traditional, student-centered format. Building trust in the classroom was one of the keys to his program's success. "The classroom was very open and students were encouraged to speak their minds," he reports. "Every day, we sat in a circle and talked about our personal lives for at least a half hour. I kept things very informal, and let them set their own rules and goals. Complaints were listened to, and reasonable changes were made, such as holding classes outdoors on sunny days.

Being willing to talk about himself and his personal life was another trust-building strategy Pat employed. "The first thing I tell them is that many famous people have learning disabilities and have to learn differently than



the norm. When I included myself in that category, the students really opened up."

Asked for an easy formula that works to build trust, Pat offered this: "If you just follow the curriculum itself, you can't help but build trust. I followed the steps and procedures straight down the line, and the kids started opening up, they started listening."

Trust permeated the classroom and spilled over into student relationships: "Students started caring about themselves and about each other, which is really exceptional these days. Instead of picking on each other, I saw them actually defend one another. The curriculum was designed so this could happen. It stresses cooperative learning, not competition."

Bridging the Gap

"I think *Career Choices* completely bridged the gap [between learning and real life] for these kids," Pat told us. "It's one of the best curriculums out there, and I've seen a lot in the four years I've worked for Summer Youth. *Career Choices* makes it real for the kids, and they can see it working in their lives."

Students particularly liked a selection from *Possibilities*, "The Bridge Builder," a poem about an old man who crosses a dangerous river and returns to build a bridge for those who would follow. They talked about how it brought them hope and made them feel a personal sense of responsibility. "It really hit home, as far as seeing how their actions affect other people. They said that they wanted to do something for the freshmen, like build a bridge by visiting the junior high and talking to the students about high school."

And then there were those unforgettable moments when Pat Marabella was reminded exactly why he took the job. One of these involved a Native American student who had pre-tested at a 3rd grade level in math and language.

"This was someone who hated school, couldn't get along with his teachers, trouble with the law, and everything else. He told me he couldn't do it, he was just too dumb. I asked him to give me a chance and make the effort, that he'd even get paid. He came in every day. When post-tested at the end of nine weeks, his scores had gone up to the 10th grade level. When he saw them, he came to me, tears in his eyes, and said: 'You know Pat, you were right. I can do it. I am somebody.' It was a very powerful experience for both of us."



ADVISORIES

NOTES: