wanted to learn more about the innovation from a proactive perspective and did not have other ideas that might interfere with the program implementation.

About half of the teachers participating in focus group interviews reported they were able to develop strong, close relationships with their students, while the other half reported they had difficulty developing relationships with their students in advisory. The teachers who reported having more difficulty developing relationships thought this process would be easier if they had more substantive activities or content to address or if their students were more engaged.

Teachers began to identify benefits of advisory groups for students. They reported students were learning about practices that would increase their success in school (e.g., attendance, course taking, and monitoring academic outcomes).

Higher percentages of students reported primarily positive feelings about their experiences in advisory/family advocacy groups, compared with those who reported

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INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

During the 2006–2007 school year, the Office of High School Redesign began supporting all Austin Independent School District (AISD) high schools in the planning and development of a Student Advisory/Family Advocacy Program. The program was designed in collaboration with each campus to ensure that al

DATA

RESULTS

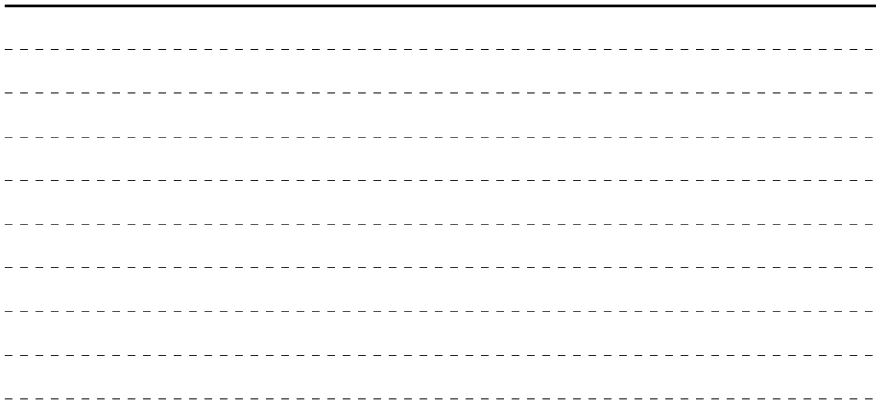
ADVISORY STEERING COMMITTEE SURVEYS

Understanding the need to develop advisory systems that address the needs of each campus's unique personality and to use campus leaders to facilitate the program

importance of the initiative and how it fit with other district initiatives. Overall, they were hopeful that teachers would develop their understanding about advisory and that the program ultimately would be successful. Illustrations of their comments are provided.

> "Teachers new to the building or to teaching often see this as another thing to 'put up with.' There are days when I also feel overwhelmed and would like not to 'do' advisory but as I look across the room, I see kids who actually believe life after high school offers some kind of future. We are NOT anywhere near perfect, but we now have a vehicle to demonstrate how much more human and caring we are now than even 5 years ago. Successful implementation? No, just on the road to getting better."
>
> "If advisory is to be a priority [in the school], then it must be made a priority by the district heads. While my campus is surviving the change, the resi

Figure 2. Stages of Concern Profiles, by Campus, March 2008



innovation and want to return to former practices. They may have professional development needs that must be addressed in order for them to move forward in successful implementation. When concerns related to information are low and refocusing concerns are high, it may indicate an emerging expertise among teachers and concern about continuous improvement.

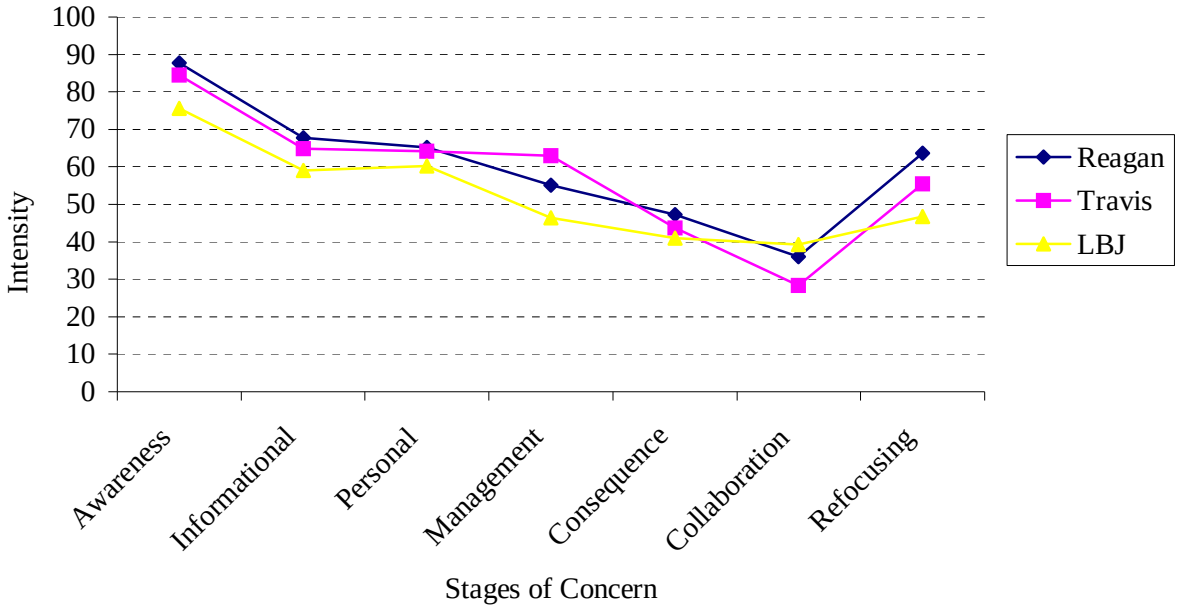
Stages of Concern Results, by Professional Development Provider

The district's advisory initiative was supported in the schools by two separate and distinct professional development providers. Three schools implemented the family advocacy program integrated into the FTF model: LBJ, Reagan, and Travis high schools. The remaining high schools across the district implemented their advisory program supported by the ESR model: Johnston, Lanier, International, Akins, Bowie, Anderson, Crockett, and McCallum.

The second level of analysis examined the Stages of Concern results for the schools grouped by the support providers. The results of the analysis for the FTF- and the ESR-supported schools were similar for the stages related to self- and task-concerns (Figure 3). Differences between the models were apparent at the final two categories of concern (i.e., collaboration and refocusing). Teachers suppor

appeared to be adapting well to the use of the family advocacy model. Travis had the highest level of concern among these schools school in the area of management, indicating that Travis teachers were working through issues of implementation in their classrooms. However, awareness concerns were highest at Travis, indicating the same teachers needed additional professional development opportunities to addresses fundamental concepts about family advisory. Finally, teachers at Reagan had a high level of concerns associated with awareness and refocusing, indicating that they may not have fully understood the innovation and believed they knew a better way to address their campus issues or wanted to return to former practices. When this pattern occurs, it is important for professional development experts to provide more training to address awareness, information, and personal concerns.

Figure 4. Stages of Concern Profiles for FTF-Supported Schools, March 2008

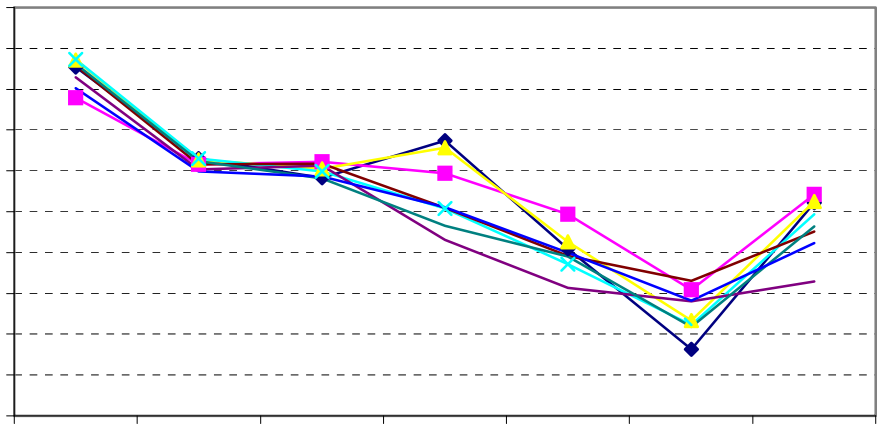


Source. AISD Stages of Concern Questionnaire for Advisory, March 2008

When comparing across ESR schools, the variation in concerns reported for each stage was examined. For awareness, information, and personal concerns, the teachers across the schools supported by ESR indicated similar levels of concerns. However, the levels of concern in the other stages varied more widely between the schools. This variation indicated that the schools were in varying stages of program development and implementation. For example,

compared with the rest of the ESR schools, Lanier, Austin, and Johnston had higher levels of concern regarding management, which suggested that they either were managing the innovation fairly well or were not implementing. Teachers at Johnston had higher levels of concern related to consequences for their students. This might be expected because this school had been implementing its advisory for the longest period of time, compared to the other schools, as a way to meet the needs of its at-risk student population. The Crockett profile had higher levels of awareness, information, and personal concerns, coupled with lower refocusing concerns, indicating that Crockett teachers wanted to learn more about the innovation from a proactive perspective and did not have any better ideas that might interfere with the program implementation.

Figure 5. Stages of Concern Profiles for ESR-Supported Schools, March 2008



overall feelings about advisory and the associated highlights and/or challenges in the process of implementing the program.

At the end of the year, the information yielded through the interviews and focus groups indicated that teacher advisors were progressing through the change process. The teacher advisors indicated that they were fully aware of the program and had reasonable amounts of information about the intent of advisory. Most of them understood the general purpose of the program and the underlying rationale. They described the initiative and its purpose consistently across all of the schools. Some teacher advisors also identified the need to educate parents about advisory and how it can support their children. Examples of their comments follow.

> "We need to thoroughly communicate the purpose of advisory to parents. Parents need to know it is more than the old concept of homeroom. The district administration needs to take a bigger role in communicating about advisory to parents across the district."

> "Advisory creates a support network for students that extends into the home. When parents are contacted, they can help at home. Kids need to know that the school and home are communicating."

During the interview and focus groups, many of the teachers continued to express personal concerns about advisory. Often, they struggled with their philosophical beliefs about the roles and responsibilities of being a teacher versus the roles and responsibilities of being an advisor. In addition, they expressed concern about not having the personal characteristics or counseling skills needed to successfully serve as an advisor. Many of the teachers expressed concerns about assuming the role of an advisor because their interest and training were focused on teaching within their content area. These teachers were more comfortable developing relationships with students when a particular content area provided common ground between themselves and their students than when such content was absent. For example, teachers said,

> "I have a lovey-dovey personality in my classes, but I cannot artificially develop this [relationship] with kids I have nothing in common with."

> "I am not a parent, and I am not a counselor. Advisory is asking me to assume a role that is not my responsibility."

> "I am not equipped or trained to be an advisor. If had wanted that, I would have become a counselor, minister, or priest."

"Advocacy works depending on the type of teacher you are. If you are a teacher

For example, advisors at most of the schools reported that debriefing about drunk driving and healthy dating practices was important to the students.

During the discussion about advisory implementation, few teacher advisors talked much about helping students prepare for their future in college or in a chosen career. Many of the teachers referenced other persons in their schools who were responsible for preparing students for college (e.g., Project ADVANCE staff and school counselors). To address college and career preparation, the teachers suggested that they be provided with resources they could use with students to further explore college and career opportunities.

Teachers also discussed concerns related to the implementation of the advisory, and their concerns seemed to be typical of persons who were implementing a new initiative. Many of the concerns articulated were related to the curriculum. Teachers often wanted a more comprehensive curriculum that could address the basic tenets of advisory and still offer some flexibility in lesson selection. Along the same lines, teachers often were unclear about how much they could deviate from the articulated curriculum. Some confessed they chose their own activities to implement (e.g., Mensa tests, trivia games, movies) or allowed students to use the time as a study hall.

Even though they wanted flexibility in advisory implementation, the teachers identified concerns related to the consistency of the advisory implementation within their respective schools. Many of those interviewed reported they were implementing advisory to the best of their ability. However, teachers reported that they deviated from suggested activities, knew others who did so, and knew of some who did not implement at all. They were unsure about what was expected by the district, and sometimes by their campus administration. They were concerned about establishing the same expectation for all teachers. Additionally, many of the teachers reported that they had difficulty implementing advisory and that this difficulty was compounded when they were expected to implement other new programs in their school at the same time. Examples of their personal and management concerns follow.

> "Implementing advisory requires a culture change. It will take time for many teachers and students to buy-in. But there is a 'glimmer of hope,' and teachers need to have continuing support to implement it well in every classroom."

> "If the teacher is not implementing the curriculum as designed, and students aren't using their time well, the students do not like advisory. Students like the activities.

Teachers can develop a culture of respect and student engagement with advisory, but all of the teachers need to commit to implementing the program well."

"Why should I have to implement this program when I know my

> "I believe that we should develop relationships with kids and get to know them. This helps them to engage in school. It is worthwhile for all of them. Advisory will help us meet their needs, no matter what their future aspirations are."

Because they were focused on implementation concerns, teachers did not spend much time talking about their thoughts related to program consequences or student outcomes. Some were not sure what outcomes were expected for their students. Some communicated that they

> "Advisory provided team building and engaged students. Students liked learning to calculate their GPAs [grade point averages] to monitor their progress. Activities that require team problem-solving worked well with students."

Finally, the teachers often relayed concerns related to refocusing. Often, teachers spent time talking about how the current implementation of advisory was very similar to what they had done in the past or were doing within their own classrooms. They did not expect the advisory program to be successful and often expressed other ideas about addressing student needs in lieu of implementing advisory. Most of these ideas hinged on protecting their own instructional time to improve student learning. Examples of their comments follow.

> "I do not like advisory. I have done this before. It did not work and we abandoned the practice."

> "I already meet the function of advisory in my classroom. It is hard to establish relationships in advisory because there is no common goal. The class content provides a focus for my students while we develop a relationship."

> "The time advisory takes away from the classroom takes away from the time for instruction and relationship development in the classroom. Having another group of kids to get to know creates another burden on me."

As a part of their program implementation and refocusing concerns, teachers often discussed the expectations and communication from campus- and district-level administrators. Teachers reported they heard conflicting messages coming from campus- and district-level administrators. They often did not perceive they had real administrative support on their respective campuses. Teachers often proposed that improved administrative communication and support would increase the level of teacher buy-in on their campuses. With higher levels of teacher buy-in, the advisory program could be better implemented and students would

> "We did not perceive that our kids really needed advisory, so it is difficult to get buy in from teachers. Further, the principal has not really endorsed the program. He says that as long as about 30% of the teachers are doing it, that we are doing fine."
>
> "Communication with all of the teaching staff was not uniform [between campus and district administrative offices]. I think there was misinformation, and there is no accountability for teachers or kids. Without accountability, there can be no success."
>
> "It [advisory] seems disjointed. Decisions are made and then it becomes apparent that it wasn't the best thing to happen. It's not that we aren't open to new ideas, we just need to be thoughtful about how it affects others and have the support to do the work."
>
> "People get worried when they do not have the information and rely on second-hand information. We need more direct communication from our principals. This will help us deal with conflicts. Lack of information and the lack of decision or 'wait and see' is not always the best approach."

Considering the results of the Stages of Concern questionnaire, the overall findings from the focus groups and interviews were congruent. Teachers had a basic understanding about the program's purpose and implementation; yet, they had concerns about how they were personally affected by the implementation of the program. Moving beyond their personal concerns, the teachers became more focused on the implementation or management of the program. They spent much of their focus group and interview time talking about the highlights and challenges associated with the implementation. This discussion was promising because it indicated that many of the teachers were sincere in their attempts to implement advisory well. These findings are considered developmentally appropriate for persons experiencing the beginning stages of the change process, especially when this change requires a shift in personal beliefs and long-held practices.

STUDENT ADVISORY SURVEYS

Based on a variety of validated surveys designed to measure student engagement and classroom/school climate, a student survey was developed to assess student perceptions of and engagement in the advisory classroom (Appendix E). A stratified, random sample of advisory classrooms from each high school was selected for student participation. Of 4,326 students,

2,192 (51%) completed the survey. An analysis of respondents indicated that the results can be considered reliable and representative of high students across the district.

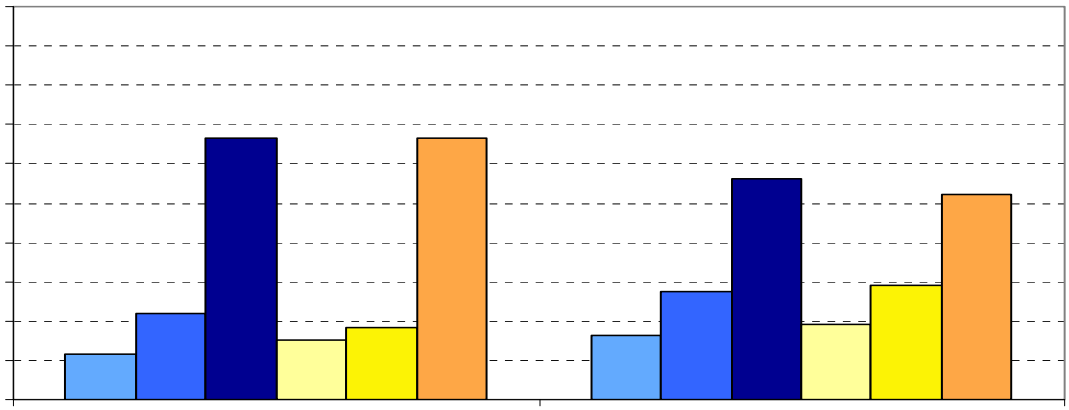
The advisory/family advocacy surveys contained 15 questions pertaining to the students' feelings of inclusion within their advisory group, the students' relationships and communication with their assigned advocate/advisor, and their relationships with other adults in their schools. The surveys used a 5-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Overall, survey item responses had mean scores ranging from 3 (did not agree or disagree) to 4 (*agreed*), indicating students primarily held neutral or positive feelings about their experiences in advisory/family advocacy groups. The item with the highest mean score (4.1) was "My advisory/advocacy teacher treats me with respect." Two items had the lowest mean score (3.2): "People in my advocacy group notice when I am good at something" and "My advocate is interested in hearing my family's point of view." The overall results for the advisory student survey at the district level are provided in Appendix E.

Because the district's advisory initiative was supported in the schools by two separate and distinct support providers, student advisory results also were compared between the FTF- and ESR-supported schools. In this comparison, response options were collapsed into three categories (i.e., *strongly disagree or disagree*, *neither agree or disagree*, and *strongly agree or agree*) and the distribution of responses were illustrated to provide more detailed information about the percentages of students who felt negatively, indifferently, or positively about their advisory group.

The percentages of students answering each question were similar in most cases, regardless of whether their school had implemented the ESR or FTF advisory/family advocacy models (Figures 6, 7, and 8). Higher percentages of students responded positively to the survey questions overall. In many of these cases, the percentages of students responding positively ranged between 50% and 60%. These survey results indicate a considerable percentage of students did not perceive that their advisory/family advocacy groups facilitated the development of relationships or created an environment conducive to personal and academic growth.

The student responses concerning their inclusion in their advisory group were positive, and little difference was found between the ESR- and FTF-supported schools. The question response patterns regarding whether others noticed when a student was good at something were slightly different from the responses to other question and different between the FTF and

Figure 7. Student Perceptions of Their Relationships With Adults in Their Schools, 2007-2008



Finally, students reported positive perceptions about their advisors/family advocates. In this area, greater percentages of students at FTF-supported schools than at ESR-supported schools reported they strongly agreed or agreed that their advocates helped them with problems

DISCUSSION

At most campuses, the development and implementation of advisory hinged on the development of campus-level advisory steering committees comprised of teacher leaders. This approach capitalized on the strengths and buy-in of the teacher leaders and was instrumental in the development of an advisory curriculum tailored to meet the unique needs of each campus. Additionally, this teacher leadership team was critical in providing information about advisory to the campus at-large and to the facilitation of ongoing professional development activities. Teacher leaders are expected to play a role in developing the capacity to effectively implement the program after funding for external support providers ends.

Results of the CBAM Stages of Concern questionnaire, conducted early in the spring semester, indicated teachers across the district had a need to better understand the advisory or

The school profiles generated from the Stages of Concern questionnaire for the FTF- and the ESR-supported schools reflected similar patterns. Regardless of the model, teachers had similar levels of personal and task-related concerns. Differences between the models were apparent in the areas of collaboration and refocusing. Teachers supported by the ESR model had lower levels of concern in these two categories than did teachers supported by the FTF model. In the teacher focus groups, these differences were partly explained by the fact that teachers in ESR-supported schools reported more professional development opportunities that addressed the needs of students and that focused on building cohesiveness in advisory across their respective campuses than did teachers in FTF-supported schools.

The overall findings of the focus groups and interviews seemed congruent with the concerns identified on the Stages of Concern questionnaire. Teachers described advisory's purpose and implementation, yet they had concerns about how they were personally affected by the implementation of the program. At the end of the school year, teachers discussed the highlights and challenges associated with the implementation. These discussions suggested that many of the teachers were sincere in their attempts to implement advisory well. The questionnaire and interview findings related to the teacher's perceptions are considered developmentally appropriate for persons experiencing the beginning stages of the change process, especially when this change requires a shift in personal beliefs and long-held practices (Hord et al., 2005).

It is important to recognize the developmental nature of the change process. It is difficult for persons who have high levels of personal concerns to move toward effective implementation without having those concerns addressed. After personal concerns have been addressed, it is anticipated management and impact concerns will become mgs of t.h-0.0001 fintio.J0.0007 Tc

data would provide descriptive information about the advisory practices being used. Combined with additional teacher and student data, the classroom observation information could be analyzed to identify best practices for program improvement purposes.

As program development and teacher support systems are considered, findings from other research studies should be examined along with the evaluation findings presented within this report. In a literature review compiled by Anfara and Brown (2001), research studies about the implementation of student advisory programs found that teacher capacity, technical/ administrative support, articulation of teacher and administrator expectations, well-developed advisory curricula, and inclusion of a feedback loop for program improvement influenced the overall success of student advisory programs. Anfara and Brown also found that many teachers were concerned about how their teaching roles would change when they entered the affective domain, and that school administrators did not adequately support the advisory program after the first couple of years of implementation. Thus, the findings from this evaluation in the first year of implementation can be considered similar to experiences elsewhere and should be reflected upon as the district moves forward with advisory implementation.

Another notable finding from this evaluation was related to the primarily positive perceptions students had of their advisory/family advocacy groups. This is an encouraging finding considering that teachers were beginning their implementation of advisory/family advocacy; implementation was variable across and within schools; and relationships between the students, their advisors, and their peers were in the beginning stages of development. Although more inquiry needs to be completed in upcoming years, these positive student responses may indicate the program is on its way to creating relationships between students and adults, better relationships between student peer groups, and a forum for academic advisement and college/career coaching.

The fact that some students reported neutral or negative feelings about their advisory groups suggests the need to take into account the complex task of building relationships and creating a closely bonded group. This process requires highly committed teachers who possess the necessary knowledge and skills (Boorstein, 1997). Additionally, Boorstein found a teacher's personality or stance to be a major factor in creating a successful advisory. The teachers in the focus group interviews often discussed the importance of personal personality traits in the in the implementation of advisory and identified those they thought were of value (e.g., compassionate, energetic, "touchy-feely," dynamic). Thus, it is hoped more students will

respond positively as relationships develop and as teachers become increasingly aware of their personal attitudes or attributes, proficiency in implementation, and/or confidence in the work.

Finally, outcomes apart from the student's perceptions were not explored in this evaluation; however, other research studies have found positive outcomes for students. These research findings were summarized by Makkonen (2004) and include improved student and teacher relationships, an increased sense of trust and belonging, reduced instances of substance abuse, lower dropout rates, and improved school attendance. In subsequent years of the district's program evaluation, these student outcomes will be explored.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

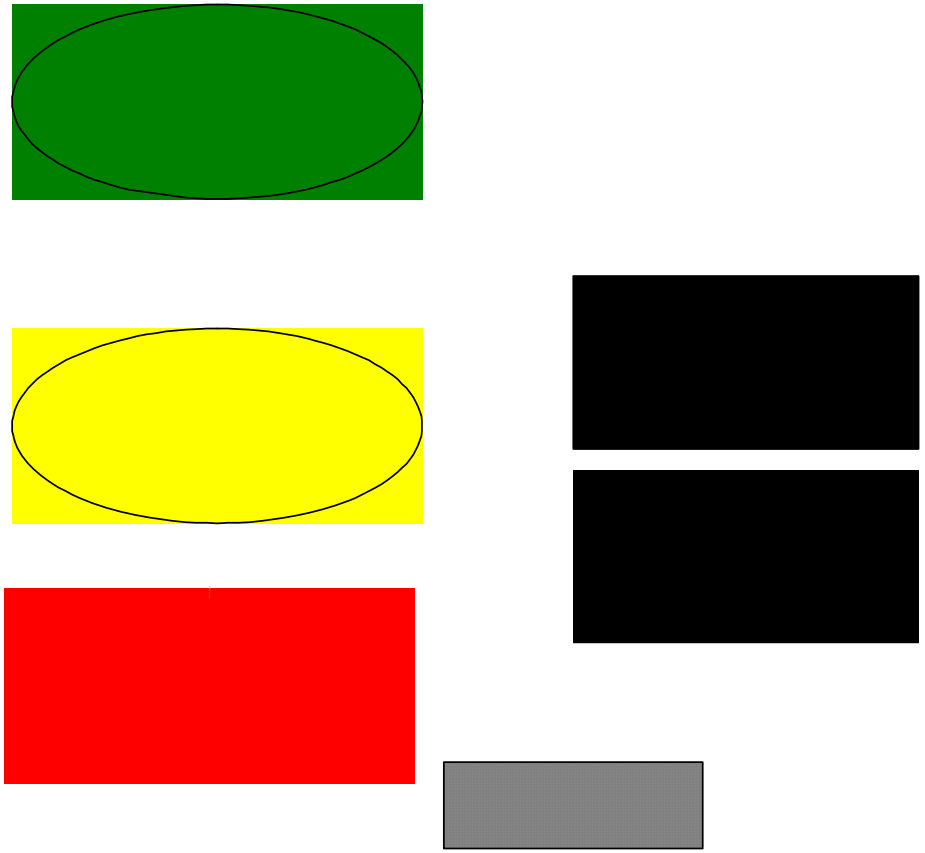
The district's mission was to ensure that all student have at least one adult in their school life who knew them well, to build community by creating stronger bonds across social

students' needs. In the development of curriculum, greater emphasis should be placed on college preparation and career exploration to assist teachers in meeting these student needs.

3. *Create a program innovation configuration, or rubric, to specify the most desirable implementation level and describe the qualitatively different levels of implementation leading to an optimal level*. In discussions, teachers expressed some confusion about how much flexibility they had in program implementation. Many were unsure about how a model advisory should look. As a result, their advisory practices varied widely. A rubric can be used by a variety of stakeholders to identify levels of implementation, determine appropriate goals and the steps necessary to achieve them, and track improvement as implementation progresses.
4. *Communicate how advisory can be implemented incrementally on the campus and within classrooms to show that full implementation is attainable and expected student outcomes can be realized*. This communication can include sharing program logic models, timelines, and rubrics with teachers and administrators. This process would legitimize personal concerns and provide encouragement for effective implementation.
5. *Provide ongoing professional development support for effective program implementation*. Continue to provide information that addresses the how-to issues and challenges that frequently cause implementation concerns. Peer observations or demonstration classrooms also can be used provide learning opportunities for teachers. Professional development activities should include frequent communications about advisory accomplishments (e.g., related to student academic achievement, attendance rates, discipline referrals, and school climate) to build up the advisory community and engage teachers in ongoing discussion about the importance of comprehensive student support systems.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Conceptual Model: Levels, Processes, Duties, and Outcomes



Appendix B: Stages of Concern Questionnaire for Advisory

The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine what people who are using or thinking about using various programs are concerned about at various times during the adoption process. The items were developed from typical responses of school and college teachers who ranged from no knowledge at all about various programs to many years experience using them. Therefore, *a good part of the items on*

14. I am concerned about my inability to manage all that advisory requires.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I would like to know how my leading of advisory is supposed to change from how I teach in my content area.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I would like to familiarize other departments or people with the progress of advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I am concerned about evaluating my impact on students during advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I would like to revise advisory's content and formats.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I am completely occupied with other things than advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I would like to modify my use of advisory based on my students' experiences.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	

Appendix C: Advisory Steering Committee Survey, Spring 2008

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. If fully implemented, advisory groups will improve students' experiences at my school.				
2. I enjoy being on the advisory committee.				
3. Our committee meetings have direction and purpose.				
4. I've been able to contribute my ideas or skills to our advisory committee.				
5. Our advisory committee is constructive and productive.				
6. When committee members disagree, we are able to work it out.				
7. I am able to promote advisory and answer questions about it with colleagues.				
8. I know what our next steps are as a committee.				
9. Our committee has the time we need to implement our next steps.				
10. Our committee has the resources we need to develop advisory.				
11. Our principal effectively communicates the vision behind advisory.				
12. Our principal helps us navigate obstacles in the change process.				
13. I believe the reform of implementing advisory groups will last.				
14. It's important to me to be part of a change process at school.				
15. My skills and confidence are growing as a leader of this change effort.				
Additional thoughts about our process toward successful implementation:				

Appendix D: Student Survey of Advisory/Advocacy Period, 2007-2008

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I feel like a real part of my advocacy group.	1	2	3	4	5

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