DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 426 987 SP 038 285

AUTHOR	Anfara, Vincent A., Jr.; Brown, Kathleen M.
TITLE	Advisor-Advisee Programs in Middle Schools: Community Building in a State of Affective Disorder.
PUB DATE	1998-11-01
NOTE	41p.; Paper presented at the Convention of the University Council for Educational Administration (St. Louis, MO, October 30-November 1, 1998).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescents; Educational Environment; Intermediate Grades; Junior High School Students; Junior High Schools; *Middle Schools; Secondary School Teachers; *Student Attitudes; *Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	*Adviser Effectiveness; Adviser Role; *Advisers; Caring

ABSTRACT

Researchers used a qualitative case-study methodology to examine the current status, strengths, and shortcomings of advisor-advisee programs in middle schools. Data came from six middle schools in two large metropolitan areas. At each school, researchers interviewed at least three teachers and three students. The teacher interviews focused on involvement in the advisor-advisee program, program organization, positive and negative program aspects, needed changes, feelings about being an advisor, activity selection for the program, responsibility for the advisory program, relationships with advisees, and changes in teacher and student attitudes. The student interviews asked about experiences in the program, relationships with adults in the program, ability to talk to the advisor, the advisor as a role model, pride in the school as a result of the program, relationships with other students as a result of the program, and talking with parents about the program. Data analysis indicated that participants believed in the importance of an adult who cares for an adolescent. There was great diversity in how programs were structured. Two themes emerged about the effect of advisory programs on the schools: teachers moving from attention provider to detention giver and the fact that everyone seemed to be able to point to something good no matter what the situation. (Contains 73 references.) (SM)

ADVISOR-ADVISEE PROGRAMS IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS: COMMUNITY BUILDING IN A STATE OF AFFECTIVE DISORDER

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.
Kathleen M. Brown

Temple University
College of Education
Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
266 Ritter Hall (003-00)
Philadelphia, PA 19122

215.204.6174
vanfara@astro.ocis.temple.edu

Paper presented at the University Council for Educational Administration Convention,
St. Louis, Missouri, October 30-Nov 1, 1998

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ADVISOR-ADVISEE PROGRAMS:
Community Building in a State of Affective Disorder?

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr
Kathleen M. Brown

...the school is in the best position of all U.S. institutions to initiate and strengthen links that support children and adolescents...
(Urie Brofenbrenner, 1988, p.54)

The quality of the relationship between teachers and students is the single most important aspect of middle level education.
(Van Hoose, 1991, p.7)

INTRODUCTION

Reports calling for reform of middle level schooling first appeared in the mid-1970s. While it is commonsense to assume that schools would respond to the needs of their students and create developmentally appropriate learning environments, it is evident from the history of middle level reform that schools are slow to change. In their 1989 report, Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century, the Carnegie Task Force claimed that "a volatile mismatch exists between the organization and curriculum of middle grade schools and the intellectual and emotional needs of young adolescents. Caught in a vortex of changing demands, the engagement of many youth in learning diminishes, and their rates of alienation, substance abuse, absenteeism, and dropping out of school begin to rise" (pp.8-9). Jackson (1990), Project Director for Turning Points also notes that "recent studies show that few of the recommended actions, though frequently proposed, are actually practiced in schools" (p.1) (also

see Alexander & McEwin, 1989; Cawelti, 1988; and Mc Iver, 1990 for a similar analysis).

These middle-level reform efforts include teaming, flexible-scheduling, and advisory programs. This chapter focuses on one component of middle level reform, the advisor-advisee program. Beane and Lipka (1987) present the following description of advisory programs:

> Advisory programs are designed to deal directly with the affective needs of transescents. Activities may range from non-formal interactions to use of systematically developed units whose organizing center are drawn from the common problems, needs, interests, or concerns of transescents, such as "getting along with peers," "living in the school," or "developing self-concept." In the best of these programs, transescents have an opportunity to get to know one adult really well, to find a point of security in the institution, and to learn about what it means to be a healthy human being. (p.40)

While recent research points to positive results of advisory programs (Connors, 1991; Mac Iver, 1990; Putbrese, 1989; Vars, 1989), it remains one of the most difficult of the middle level concepts to implement (Fenwick, 1992; Lounsbury & Clark, 1990). Many advisory programs are not functioning as they were initially intended and have simply taken the place of homeroom. Because of the tremendous potential of the middle school concept to contribute to the improvement of schools, we feel it most important to investigate the current status, strengths as well as shortcomings, of advisory programs. To this end, this chapter is focused.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

While there is still a need for considerably more research about the effectiveness of advisory programs (Clark & Clark, 1994), some of the most frequently mentioned purposes of advisories include:

(1) Promoting opportunities for social development,

(2) Assisting students with academic problems,

(3) Facilitating positive involvement between teachers and administrators and students,

(4) Providing an adult advocate for each student in the school,

(5) Promoting positive school climate. (Clark & Clark, 1994, pp.135-136)

Regarding the effectiveness of such programs, Mac Iver (1990) found that when teacher advisories focused on social and academic support activities that a strong relationship existed to the reduction of dropouts. Connors (1986) found evidence that advisory programs helped students grow emotionally and socially, contributed to a positive school climate, helped students learn about school and get along with their classmates, and enhanced teacher-student relationships. George and Oldaker (1985) suggest that when advisory programs are combined with other components of the middle school concept that student self-concept improves, dropout rates decrease, and school climate becomes more positive.

While these studies all point to the possible positive effects of advisory programs, we are warned that schools have a very difficult time both implementing and sustaining this component of middle school reform (Fenwick, 1992; Lounsbury & Clark, 1990). A number of studies (Batsell, 1995; Bunte, 1995; Dale, 1993; Lee, 1995; Mosidi, 1994) addressed the issue of implementation of advisory programs. Findings from these research projects note that successful implementation must address issues related to staff capacity, technical/ administrative support, limiting the number of students (15-20) in each advisory, differing expectations on the part of teachers and administrators, the allotment of time to advisory periods as well as to teacher planning, a well defined advisory curriculum, a feedback/maintenance loop for program review

and revision, the transformation of the school's cultural norms, and the management of organizational politics.

Some researchers provide their readers with sample program development time lines (Ayres, 1994) or a listing of the "Ten Steps to a Successful Advisory Program" (Hertzog, 1992). Others suggest what the critical program features are (see Table 1) and how best to prepare teachers for their role in the program (Gill & Read, 1990; James, 1986).

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Despite an expanding amount of literature on advisory programs, few researchers have systematically probed the subjective experiences of participants in advisory programs as disclosed by both students and teachers. This chapter is dedicated to making the voices of both students and teachers heard in regard to their advisory experiences. Sardo-Brown and Shetlar (1994) acknowledge that "more investigations of both teacher and student perceptions of the advisor-advisee period need to be done in a variety of different types of schools" (p.23). The research methodology employed in this study was developed especially to insure that an emic perspective would result. However, before we turn to the design, let us now look briefly at the conceptual framework that drives the analysis of the data--the ethic of caring and the importance of community.

THEORETICAL/ CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

According to Van Hoose (1991) relationships are the essence of advisory programs.

These relationships connect teachers and students, as well as students and students, in a "warm, caring, friendly environment" (Carnegie Task Force, 1989). We are reminded by the scholarship of both Mayeroff (1971) and Gaylin (1976) that we as human beings are ontologically relational and that caring interactions are a natural expression of that fact. Communities are created around these relationships. Buber (1958) acknowledges that we can experience what it means "to be" only through our participation in caring relationships. Let us look, then, at the conceptual framework that guides this research--the concepts of community and caring.

Community:

According to Sergiovanni (1996), communities "create social structure that bond people together in a oneness, and that bind them to a set of shared values and ideas" (p.47). Sergiovanni continues by arguing that this bonding and binding is tight enough to transform them from a collection of "I's" into a collective "we." Communities are characterized by qualities such as purpose, trust, respect, commitment, unconditional acceptance and belonging, safe-haven, and shared responsibility.

Exploring the conditions and qualities of communities, Tonnies (1887/ 1957) made the distinction between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*. While these are two "ideal forms" that do not exist in the real world, the distinction between them is important for our discussion. *Gemeinschaft* refers to community while *gesellschaft* translates to society. As we moved away from a traditional community concept to a societal ideal, community qualities were replaced with contractual ones. Relationships became very formal with job descriptions and role expectations. The qualities of a community (mentioned above) were lost. Sergiovanni (1994), following the work of Tonnies, notes that "gemeinschaft enterprises...strive to go beyond calculated to

committed involvement" (p.50).

In his discussion of community, Mitchell (1990) suggests that modern culture has disabled virtually everyone due to "rapid and repeated episodes of loss" (p.22). Loss includes disrupted families, poverty, as well as other experiences that destroy one's sense of security and well-being. To regain this sense of security, we seek membership in groups or communities that support "consistent and continuous nurturance of belonging" (p.39). Mitchell challenges educational leaders to create such communities in our schools.

Caring:

Beck (1994) recognizes that "young people in our schools speak poignantly of their longing to be cared for and the perceived lack of care that characterizes not only our schools but society at large" (p.ix) (see also Anfara & Miron, 1996). Braddock and McPartland (1992) acknowledge that "students must also be attached to their schools in human terms and on a personal level, with the perception that their teachers care about them..." (p.160).

Caring has been explored from the perspective of many fields--social policy (Watson, 1980), social work (Imre, 1982), and family studies (Hobbs, Dokecki, Hoover-Dempsey, Moroney, Shayne, & Weeks, 1984) to name only a few. Hobbs et al. call on scholars and practitioners to move toward "the creation and support of a competent and caring society" (p.4). In the field of education Gilligan (1982), Barth (1990), Noddings (1992), Sergiovanni (1992, 1994) and Beck (1994) have all called upon us to practice a caring ethic. Beck (1994) is so strong in her conviction that she writes:

Furthermore, I believe that a conceptual framework that emphasizes personal

> development, the cultivation of community, and an ethic of caring, offers the **only** valid starting point from which academicians and practitioners can hammer out organizational and instructional theories and methodologies that can adequately meet the challenges facing education in the 1990s and beyond" (p.2). (emphasis added)

Noddings (1984) acknowledges that the term "caring" does not easily lend itself to an operational definition. Echoing the ideas of Buber, Noddings writes that "the relational mode seems to be essential to living fully as a person" (p.35). But she also emphasizes that "vulnerability is potentially increased when I care, for I can be hurt through the other as well as through myself" (p.33).

In On Caring (1971) Mayeroff acknowledges that "to care for another person, in the most significant sense, is to help him grow and actualize himself" (p.1). For Gaylin (1976), true caring happens when people relate to each other in ways that promote the healthy unfolding of all types of development. In short, people are relational and caring acts are an appropriate expression of this human quality. Communities, then, become the context in which care can be exhibited. Hobbs et al. (1984) propose that community is essential to the creation of caring relationships.

In her discussion of caring, Beck (1994) notes that caring involves three activities:(1) receiving another person's perspective, (2) responding appropriately to the other's perception, and (3) remaining committed to the relationship. She writes:

> Caring is...distinguished by the fact that there is commitment between people who care. This commitment shifts caring from being a conditional act dependent on merit or whim, and moves it toward being an unconditional act marked by acceptance, nurturance, and grace. (p.20)

In conclusion, as Beck purports, " A caring educational ethic would support the idea that schools

should promote maximum individual and community growth and development..." (p.65).

Why this discussion of community and caring? Basically because the link between caring and learning is very strong. Students, according to Noddings (1992) will "do things for people they like and trust....They listen to people who matter to them, and to whom they matter. As we are reminded by Palmer (1983), "But what scholars now say--and what good teachers have always known--is that real learning does not happen until students are brought into relationship with the teacher, with each other, and with the subject. We cannot learn deeply and well until a community of learning is created in the classroom" (xvi).

DESIGN

All empirical studies have an implicit, if not explicit, research design. Yin (1994) discusses design as "an action plan for getting from here to there" (p.19). This study was designed to understand and describe the nature of advisory programs as they contribute to a sense of community and caring in the context of middle school reform. This study is theoretically driven and descriptive, stressing the importance of context, setting, and the subject's frame of reference (an emic perspective).

The major questions to be answered by this research project are: (1) How do advisory programs help or hinder the creation a sense of community and caring for students and teachers? (2) How do the structural / procedural components of an advisory program enhance or hinder the creation of this sense of community?, and (3) What do teachers and students say is the most important effect of advisory programs on school?

This study employs a qualitative case study methodology (Merriam, 1988) to gain a richer understanding of the unit of analysis. Specifically, a multiple-case (holistic) design is employed (Yin, 1994).We are reminded by Herriott and Firestone (1983) that the evidence from multiple cases is often more compelling and the overall study can be regarded as more robust, without sacrificing within-site understanding. Additionally, a multiple case holistic design increases the potential for generalizing findings beyond a particular case (see Merriam, 1988).

Sites:

Data for this study were collected from six middle schools (see Appendix A for portraits of these six schools) located in two large metropolitan areas--the Greater Philadelphia Region and the Greater New Orleans Area. The three schools in the Greater New Orleans Area adopted the middle school concept and started their advisory programs approximately three years ago as part of a Goals 2000 subgrant awarded by the State of Louisiana. All three of these schools are part of a school district that services approximately 54,576 students in 83 schools. Approximately 65% of the students in this school district receive free or reduced-priced lunch.

Schools implementing advisory programs were harder to locate in the Greater Philadelphia Region. A wide variety of programs exist that are labeled advisory programs--from exemplary programs that are a central part of the school day to those that are informally conducted with a limited number of teachers and students. Because of this problem, we looked to neighboring counties. Four suburban counties surround Philadelphia, the fifth largest school system in the nation. The Philadelphia School District services approximately 213,000 students in 257 schools. Finally, one middle school was selected from the Philadelphia School District

and two were selected from a northwestern county bordering Philadelphia.

Procedures:

At each of these six schools, a minimum of three teachers and three students were interviewed (see Appendix B for interview questions). The names of the schools as well as the names of teachers and students have been changed and pseudonyms have been used. Using a type of nonprobability sampling or purposive sampling, principals, assistant principals, or counselors were asked to select teachers and students for these interviews. No criteria were required for selection of informants other than the teachers or students had to be officially involved in an advisory program for at least one school year. The 36 semi-structured interviews were recorded and later transcribed for purposes of analysis. To enhance design validity participant language or verbatim accounts are presented in the analysis of this paper. Observations were conducted at the 6 sites and documents (ie., examples of advisory activities, agendas from planning sessions, newsletters to parents) were collected to help in the triangulation of the data. Additionally, a questionnaire (see Appendix B) concerning procedural matters was designed and administered to the teachers in Louisiana. It was thought that interview time would be limited because of the necessity to travel to the site from Philadelphia and that time could best be spent talking about more substantive (relational) than procedural issues.

The two researchers involved in this project equally divided responsibilities regarding interviews and observations. Using multiple researchers also helped in establishing design validity. Analysis was begun by reading and re-reading the transcripts and the development of initial codes and themes. At this point in the analysis, the two researchers met to debate the

interpretation that has been presented in this research. Wasser and Bresler (1996) refer to this as the "interpretive zone" -- "the place where multiple viewpoints are held in dynamic tension" (p. 6). The results of these procedures lead to the presentation of a cross-case analysis (Yin, 1994).

To help establish the trustworthiness of this research, the "debated" interpretation was presented to some of the initial informants for participant review. To help in minimizing researcher bias, a field log was maintained in which decisions were recorded relative to the emerging design and data validity. Additionally, all dates, times, places, persons, and activities to obtain access to informants, as well as researcher impressions, were recorded.

ANALYSIS

Confronted with a mountain of impressions, documents, transcribed interviews, and field notes, the qualitative researcher faces the difficult task of making sense of what has been learned. Van Maanen (1988) discusses this process as telling the "tales of the field." It is our hope that this analysis will take the reader into the center of the advisory experiences being described from an emic perspective. The use of two researchers proved invaluable in this process of making sense of the data. Before we proceed, though, we must revisit the central questions that this research hopes to answer. The three questions include: (1) Are advisory programs creating a sense of community and caring for students and teachers?, (2) Do the structural/ procedural components of an advisory program hinder the creation of this sense of community?, and (3) What do teachers and students say is the most significant effect of advisory programs on school? To begin our "tales" let us now turn to the first question.

Question # 1: A Sense of Community and Care

While the rationale for middle school advisory programs is multifaceted, a common theme that is found in most programs is the importance of an adult who cares for an adolescent who is experiencing an important developmental period in life. Galassi, Gulledge and Cox (1997) write that "the extent to which AA is perceived to contribute to and affect the degree of caring in the school seems to be an important subjective outcome that cuts across virtually all AA programs" (p.326). As the interviews progressed in this research, two major themes revolving around care and community emerged. First, we were surprised when we began to hear that "caring is woman's work." We were less surprised by the second major theme--fear of the affective domain.

Caring is Woman's Work

That the analysis relative to caring and community would involve gender issues was truly not expected by either researcher. Let us listen to some of the salient statements from teachers about this issue:

> **Female Teacher**: The advisory program is pretty much woman run. People that are not advisors are men. I think there's only two men in the building that have an advisory and the women have complained about that a lot. He [the principal--a male] says that women are better nurturers and make better advisors. And I've got to agree with him on that. I think they [women] do make better advisors. They have a completely different attitude towards the advisory program, towards being in a close-knit group, towards the family thing, towards letting the kids get to know you. In the very beginning, the very first year, there were a lot of men and then all of the people that were removed have all been men.
>
> **Female Teacher**: His [the principal's] first priority is what is good for the kids. I think the women do a better job in the advisory program with the children, and that's his first priority.
>
> **Female Teacher**: In the sixth grade there is only one man--and this is his first year. So we'll see what happens next year. He is a nurturing kind of guy, though.

Male Teacher: And not everybody (uhm) participates. There are quite a few men on the faculty who do not want anything to do with this program. They are not sold on the idea of getting to know the students on a more personal basis.

Male Teacher: It was mainly the men who voiced some opposition. They just did not want to be involved in this kind of thing. I guess they thought the women should do it. They didn't complain too much, but the counselor got the picture quickly that she had better not use them if she expected some degree of success with the project. She tried to find other things for them to do--like coordinate some intramural games among the advisories and things like that.

In her 1989 publication Charol Shakeshaft notes that "...women and men manage in markedly different ways" (p.166). She continues by acknowledging that there are differences in "...the way they spend their time, in their day-to-day interactions, in the priorities that guide their actions, ...and in the satisfaction they derive from their work" (p.170). The end result is that the work environment is different for men and women. In discussing this difference, Shakeshaft (1989) claims that women use language that encourages community building, respect their audience through listening and responding in a nonantagonistic manner while men do not. All of this points once again to the role of gender in not only organizational (school) effectiveness, but program (advisor-advisee) effectiveness.

Fear of the Affective Domain: For Some Yes and for Some No

Most teachers (especially those who are certified for secondary education) will recall their college days and acknowledge that they were well prepare to teach their subject matter. Many can probably remember studying Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Cognitive Domain. But fewer are probably familiar with Krathwohl's (1964) Taxonomy of

Educational Objectives: Affective Domain.

Many of the teachers interviewed for this study were vocal about the role of guidance in the educational process. We are reminded by Brewer (1937) and Jones and Hand (1938) that guidance and education were so interwoven in the 1920s and 1930s that the classroom teacher was viewed as the perfect person to deliver guidance. In fact, desired changes in behavior, not subject mastery, were promoted as the goal of the teaching process. Mastery of subject matter was secondary to the acquisition of necessary life skills. Van Til, Vars and Lounsbury (1961), as well as Jenkins (1977), also remind us guidance is everyone's responsibility, not just that of the school's counselor. But some of the teachers who were interviewed have a different opinion on this matter. First, let's turn to their comments to hear the perspective of those who feared the affective domain:

> **Teacher**: The faculty's primary argument for not wanting an advisory program is that we need academics more!
>
> **Teacher**: Advisors are uncomfortable with the topics and do not do it daily.
>
> **Teacher**: I think there is always a mixed reaction whenever you start any new program. Because the reaction is, oh well, I'm not comfortable with all that touchy-feely type of stuff.
>
> **Teacher**: I could remember the man that I taught with saying, you know, I don't want to be their friend. You know, I want to be their teacher, I don't want to be their friend. I don't want to know their business and I don't like them knowing anything about me. And you just can't have, you know--the kids like to know what you did on the weekend, and if you have kids, how many kids do you have and where do you go on vacation and stuff. And if you're not willing to share that kind of thing--you know, because you don't want to take academic time to do that kind of stuff. But, I remember that comment distinctly, that has stuck in my mind. And I remember another--and these were both males--the other male says, you know, I'm no psychologist and I guess they have the wrong idea.
>
> **Teacher**: Teachers' complaints about not wanting to do the advisory program included

just not being comfortable with the affective domain--feeling uncomfortable with sitting and talking with students. And you have to be very careful what you get into in the advisory--but just not wanting that role entirely.

Teacher: The teachers are uncomfortable with the topics that need to be covered. They feel that the school counselors should deal with these issues.

Teacher: Teachers are not prepared to deal with students on this level. They are prepared to teach some subject matter.

Ornstein and Hunkins (1988) remind their readers that "some educators, and many parents, view the taxonomy (affective domain) with concern. They feel that the school is responsible for the cognitive dimensions of learning, but has little responsibility in the affective or values domain" (p.156). But Combs (1962), an effective spokesman for affective education, comments, "Education must be concerned with the values, beliefs, convictions, and doubts of students. These realities...are just as important, if not more so, as the so-called...facts" (p.200). Let's now turn to those who felt comfortable dealing in this domain:

Teacher: Staff members act like more of a coach. It is an opportunity for us to get to know the children so that if there are problems somewhere along the line, we can help them. Our role is to make school easier for the children.

Teacher: During our advisory time we work on interpersonal relationships, peer skills--dealing with peers. I'll also approach this and find out about any social or academic problems they are having.

Student: We sort of play games to get to know each other better. It's sort of like a working together game. We also sometimes, last year we got in a circle once every three advisories and we would just talk about any problems that we had.

Teacher: I'd like to think that it makes a difference . I'd like to hope that it does--that we are helping them to be kinder and gentler to each other.

Teacher: I don't see it so much as value training. I see it more as just a family-like type of atmosphere where there's somebody that you can go to if you're having a problem and you're struggling. And just a more relaxed setting...for the students to get to know each other a little better other than just academics.

A Sense of Community and Care: A Summary

As noted, advisory programs provide mutual benefits for students as well as teachers. One of these benefits is the sense of community and care that changes the school climate. As one of the principals noted, "Yes, you can actually feel the climate. Some schools where there is not a formed relationship between the teachers and the kids, there is not that supportive feeling" (administrator interview, September 29, 1997). But, the work of making these changes seems to fall on both the female teachers and those who are comfortable with the affective domain. We are reminded of a quote from Trubowitz (1994):

> In the best of all educational worlds, advisories might not even be necessary. With small classes and with teacher recognition that the affective and cognitive are inextricably interrelated, what occurs in advisory programs can be made commonplace in regular classrooms. In the interim advisor-advisory programs can do much to enrich the school lives of young adolescents. (p.5)

We are left, though, asking the bewildering questions: When will these changes become commonplace? When will middle schools respond to the needs of their students and create developmentally appropriate learning environments?

Question # 2: The Structural/Procedural Components and the Sense of Community

One of the things that struck both researchers was the tremendous diversity in how advisory programs were structured. At some of the schools advisory periods were scheduled every day as an integral part of the school day. At one of the schools students and teachers met when and if they could find the time--at lunch or after school. In most of the schools students and teachers met two or three times a week for advisory. With such a vast array of programs called

advisory, we were interested in the degree to which the structure and procedural components actually affected the sense of community and care at the school. In looking at this question, two themes emerged from the data: (1) Battle Lines: Administrative support versus teacher resistance and (2) Student mingling or teacher meddling? Once again, let us turn to the voices of both students and teachers to support these themes.

Battle Lines: Administrative Support Vs. Teacher Resistance

Discussing advisory programs Mc Ewin (1981) states that "The understanding and support of the principal is the key determiner of success or failure" (p. 345). Indeed, not only teachers (Lounsbury, 1991) and counselors, but middle school principals have a responsibility in keeping their advisory programs working successfully. Galassi et al. (1997) write that "there is a theory that the top-down effect of a principal's lack of enthusiasm for advisory time will influence teachers and undermine the program" (p.317). Let's turn now to what teachers think about this issue of administrative support. These teachers are from three of the schools that are experiencing some problems with their advisory programs:

> **Teacher**: At first, the faculty was receptive to the advisory program. It failed after two years...no administrative backing, no accountability.
>
> **Teacher**: At first the faculty seemed to be enthusiastic and willing to try the program, but as the program progressed and the administration didn't live up to its promises, enthusiasm turned to resentment.
>
> **Teacher**: The administration gave no support to advisors.... "Complaints to the administration were not welcomed and the people presenting them were criticized and considered uncooperative.

In contrast, the following quotes are from teachers who have very supportive principals.

These advisory programs are getting stronger and better as each school year passes.

> **Teacher:** I think that it's very well organized. I think (the principal) has really put into place an advisory program that is very workable. We put the time into our schedules.
>
> **Teacher**: I think the most positive aspect is that it's well organized around a common theme and that you can stay focused on your goal or your purposes for that particular year.

With little administrative support it is easy to see how teachers' attitudes towards advisory programs may be affected. While the reasons for program success or failure may be complex, we feel that an essential component that must be in place is the support of the principal. This support must not only be there in the implementation stages, but must continue for program maintenance and development.

Existing opposite administrative support is the reality of teacher resistance to program implementation. Cole (1994) acknowledges that "if teachers in a school do not embrace the program, it will fail" (p.3). In support of this theme of teacher resistance we offer the reader the following teacher and administrator quotes:

> **Teacher**: When the advisory activity was scheduled, those days grew to be dreaded. Joyful comments floated around the building on days when the activity had to be canceled for a specific reason.
>
> **Teacher**: It is no longer in existence, primarily because of faculty dissatisfaction.
>
> **Teacher**: The group's argument was that it increased their workload. They had to prepare for another class.
>
> **Teacher**: The advisors' attitudes concerning the program were the most negative aspects of the program. Negative attitudes concerning the (advisory) meetings were discouraging.
>
> **Administrator**: There was a little bit of grumbling. Major detriment against it, teachers will tell you how much can you have us do? We're teaching our subjects, doing 100 other

> little things, now on top of it you want me to establish relationships with my 33 students. That's pretty hard to do. Major way to object--prep time is my time.

In contrast, at one of the schools where the advisory program was very successful a teacher commented, " If I would have seen resistance, then it probably would not have worked. You have to have people who are receptive, if you don't then it's not going to work."

Student Mingling or Teacher Meddling?

The second theme to emerge from looking at the structural components of an advisory program dealt with the issue of student mingling versus teacher meddling. The data will demonstrate that while some students loved the ability to "mingle" with other students and teachers, there were students who felt that their right to privacy was or could possibly be violated. If they wanted to talk with someone, they would--but don't force the issue. Note these positions in the following accounts. First, we will hear from those who think the advisory process leads to mingling:

> **Student**: I think it's a really good program just because it's not like a stressful subject. You gotta just sort let go and just be yourself during the day and just talk to your teachers and get to know them better and have them get to know you.
>
> **Student**: I get to know them (fellow advisees), I get to know how they feel, I really get to know what they're like and how they interact--so I can work with them better.
>
> **Teacher**: She was very open telling me what was going on. Very, uhm, easy to talk to and I think she was relieved that she had somebody she could safely let it out.
>
> **Teacher**: Some students look at it as a chance to get to know other people better, even another faculty member better.

On the other hand, let us now turn to those who think this whole process leads to

meddling and an invasion of a student's right to privacy.

> **Teacher**: The children only wanted to play games...they did not seem to derive much satisfaction from contact with the adults.
>
> **Teacher**: The most negative aspect of the program was that students were reluctant to share.
>
> **Teacher**: Some faculty complained about students being committed to not sharing their thoughts and feelings on different issues discussed.
>
> **Student**: Like some things I like about it and some things I dislike--like having to tell them what I'm thinking or feeling about things--that's my business, not their's. It's (the advisory program) just OK.

One of the key recommendations in Turning Points (Carnegie Task Force, 1989) is the need to establish "small communities for learning, where stable, close, mutually respectful relationships with adults and peers are considered fundamental..." (p.9). An important word that seems to have gotten misplaced in some advisory programs is "respectful." From the data collected for this study it has become clearer to us that teachers need to be sensitive to students' needs (Manning, 1993) and must respect their students' right to privacy (Cole, 1992). These elements are essential if trust is to be developed between teacher and student--an essential component to the educational process (Anfara & Miron, 1996).

Structural Components and Community: A Summary

In our second research question we asked if the structural components of an advisory program affected the creation of a sense of community. In one word, then, the answer to our question would be "yes." School administrators need to be cognizant of the fact that there are many structural elements (ie., scheduling, staff development, staff support services, faculty and

student input while creating the program, awareness of the needs of the students) that can make or break a successful advisory program. Instead of a sense of community (your intended consequence), you can be left with dissatisfied teachers and students (unintended consequences). Your faculty can become polarized over the project and students and teachers can grow to resent advisory sessions. As one teacher responded, "This advisor-advisee project has destroyed any sense of collegiality in this faculty. We are now in two opposing camps. The school has really suffered trying to deal with this."

Question # 3: The Effect of Advisory on Teachers and Students

The last question looks at what teachers and students consider to be the most important effects of advisory programs on their schools. Two themes emerged from the data regarding this issue. The first is called "From Attention Provider to Detention Giver," and the second theme deals with the fact that everyone seems to be able to point to "something good." Let's look at what teachers and students had to say about these themes.

From Attention Provider to Detention Giver

The Carnegie Task Force (1989) cites as one of the key elements of learning communities the fact that "small group advisories...ensure that every student is known well by at least one adult" (p.9). It is hoped that this individual attention will result in improved student attitudes toward school, increased academic achievement, increased self-esteem, and a reduction in behavioral problems (Andrews & Stern, 1992). Our findings are mixed on this issue. We found reference to discipline problems as well as mention of the attention that students get as a result of

advisory sessions. Let's turn to the data to hear what teacher and students have to say about this theme--"attention provider to detention giver."

Student accounts that supported the idea of an adult providing attention and some degree of improvement in academics or behavior include:

> **Student**: Like if I am in trouble, he'll (teacher) talk with me about it so that I can control what I do. Yeah! I've gotten in a lot less trouble. I used to get suspended a lot.
>
> **Student**: I like it cause she would talk to me about doing better. I got better in, like my behavior and uhm...yeah, I am much better now.
>
> **Student**: Uhm, hum. Like, Uhm, cause last year I had a bad year and like Mr. M was my adopted buddy (advisor) and if I got problems, I go to him.

One teacher commented, "She was disruptive in class and in my homeroom. I was able to talk to her mentor (advisor) about some issues and I've seen some changes with a couple of kids I had problems with."

But in contrast to these statements we must listen to the following teachers who experienced student disciplinary problems which added to a sense of uneasiness relative to participation in advisory activities.

> **Teacher**: The administration gave no support to advisors on the handling of disruptive students. Advisors had to make-do as best they could, which frequently meant that the time spent in the activity was unproductive because of one or more disruptive students. Advisors would have to give additional time to hold detentions, give written work, call parents, or whatever needed to be done.
>
> **Teacher**: It's a much looser situation than the regular classroom and some students use that time to act out and show off to their friends, have a hard time getting on task because it is a looser situation. I deal with it like any other class procedure where you can give warnings and do whatever you want with that but if it's not getting any better you can use a time out, demerit, detention, phone the parents.

Sardo-Brown and Shetlar (1994) discuss the removal of disruptive students from the advisory

period. This was not an issue that was anticipated by either researcher. So much of the literature dealing with the effects of advisory is focused on the improvement of student satisfaction with school, the establishment of relationships, and the reduction of behavioral problems. The data from this study point to the necessity of dealing with the issue of disruptive students in a straight-forward manner.

No Matter What Happens, Something Good Seems to Result!

The second theme to emerge from our last research question points to the positive effects of this component of the middle school concept. No matter how terrible things seemed, no matter how disorganized the program was, no matter how disruptive students were, teachers and students had positive comments.

> **Teacher**: The most positive aspect is teachers and students getting together in a non-teaching atmosphere.
>
> **Teacher**: A chance for students to get individual help.
>
> **Teacher**: The students benefitted from having another adult with whom they could communicate with on a regular basis.
>
> **Student**: Yeah! I mean it (the advisory program) makes me feel better about coming to school. Just like to know I always have someone to talk to if I need to.
>
> **Teacher**: It give them a chance to interact with an adult in a positive way, a non-threatening way, a non-authoritative way.
>
> **Student**: I don't like going to school, but it made it easier for me. I knew there would be someone there to help me if I was struggling, like now.

Discussing the positive effects of advisory, one of the school principals noted, " That you will, as one of my colleagues here put it, save lives. At times, especially with today's kids, things reach

crisis level and we literally save a life. It is certainly a long term thing--but maybe a kid will have a brighter future because of the relationship they formed with somebody."

Effects on Teacher and Students: A Summary

As we previously mentioned, the rationale for middle school advisory programs is multifaceted. While there are disciplinary problems that need to be addressed, the mutual benefits to both teachers and students, not to mention school climate, are great. This notion of mutual benefit is supported by the scholarship of Stevenson (1992). In summary, though, Alexander and George (1981) offer some important thoughts to ponder:

> Teachers need this type of involvement no less than students do. Since most teachers really do seem to have a deep felt need to make a significantly positive difference in the lives of their students, and the daily demands of the classroom often seem to make this difficult or impossible, the advisor-advisee program provides the teacher with an opportunity to get to know some manageable number of students in a meaningful way. (p.90)

Some Practical Suggestions

Now that the "tales of the field" have been told, we turn to some practical suggestions for educators who are thinking about implementing advisory programs in their schools. These lessons, learned from the field, will hopefully help in the avoidance of some of the most common pitfalls. We, then, offer the following considerations:

A successful advisory program should:

(1) develop both short and long range goals,

(2) be cognizant of students', teachers', and parents' needs,

(3) provide for initial and on-going staff training and development,

(4) provide an orientation for students, teachers, and parents,

(5) honor small student-teacher ratios,

(6) be structured in the daily schedule of the school,

(7) be very aware of school climate/culture,

(8) involve students, parents, and faculty in the planning phase, and

(9) respect teachers' and students' rights to privacy

While many of these suggestions have been offered by others (Cole, 1992; George & Lawrence, 1982; Phillips, 1986; Schurr, 1992;), what we find striking about these recommendations is that they came from teachers, students, and administrators who are hard at work in our middle schools. There is, indeed, much to still be learned about the development, implementation, and survival of advisory programs in America's middle schools.

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Appendix A

Portraits of the Six Schools

Greater Philadelphia Region

Adams Middle School: Adams is located in Jefferson Township, Grant County which is on the Northwest border of Philadelphia. It is a diverse multi-cultural community which values a high quality education. Recognized in 1996 by Money magazine as one of the nation's top 100 school districts, Jefferson Township School District consists of seven schools serving approximately 4700 students. Adams is the district's only middle school (grades 7 and 8). Of the 850 students, 30% are African-American, 60% are White, 8% are Asian, and 2% Hispanic. Only 4% of the students at this middle school qualify as part of low-income families. A staff of 75 teachers seek to "nurture young adolescents at a time when they are trying to make sense of themselves and the world around them" (interview with vice principal, October 15, 1997). The advisory program is known by the acronym SWAP--Students with Academic Potential. Participation is voluntary and approximately 15 teachers out of 60 participate. Teachers typically have one or two advisees. There is no formally scheduled time for students and teachers to meet within the daily schedule. Many participants report that they meet after school or at lunch.

Buchanan Middle School: Buchanan Middle serves Hoover Township, Grant County, which has a total student population of 2,050.The school district is comprised of four schools--two elementary, one middle school, and one high school which are all located within walking distance of each other. The surrounding neighborhood is typical suburbia with large, single-family homes, sidewalks, and plenty of trees. Ethnically, the student population is 96% White, 2% African-American, 1% Asian and 1% Hispanic. Approximately 7% of the students qualify as low-income. The middle school houses grades 5-7 and has received acclaim for its exemplary advisory program, team teaching, and emphasis on technology in the classroom. While the exterior is large, three-story brick building sprawled over a massive campus of playing fields, athletic courts, and open ground, the interior is very warm and cozy. Numerous displays of student artwork and academic achievement decorate the halls and corridors. The students move about comfortably and seem to be very much "at home" in their environment. The advisory program was instituted by the principal who is very much an advocate of the middle school concept. For the 1997-98 school year the school is divided into 38 authors (last year it was tribes) around which activities are planned. In a typical 6 day rotation schedule of 9 periods a day, students and faculty meet in advisories for 2 periods. Each of these periods last for 41 minutes. The Advisor-Advisee ratio is approximately 1 to 14.

Calhoun Middle School: Calhoun Middle School is a racially balanced magnet school nestled in the Port Richmond section of Philadelphia. It houses 900 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders pooled from the surrounding Jackson area. Located at the corner of Lincoln and Johnson, Calhoun structurally is a large four-story brick building defaced with graffiti. The school encompasses a city-wide block with a fenced yard in the rear. The surrounding homes are inner city row houses where a predominately lower socioeconomic working class lives. The neighborhood is ethnically mixed. The streets are somewhat safe during daylight hours but are plagued with drugs and violence after dark. Security guards man the only unlocked entrance to the school. Most of the students who attend Calhoun walk to school, attend regularly, behave properly, and work hard on their studies. They are academically gifted but economically deprived. The administration and staff are warm, welcoming, and caring. Small learning communities have been formed and team teaching occurs. There is a nice "feel" to Calhoun--the students move about freely and seem very much at ease. They view education as important and see it as their vehicle to advance in life. All of the students and teachers at Calhoun participate in the Advisory Program; the Advisor-Advisee ratio is 1 to 33. The program is scheduled for the first 22 minutes of every day. In connection with this, one additional "Guidance" period, another 22 minutes, is conducted during the course of the week.

Greater New Orleans Area

Dwight Middle School: Dwight Middle School is located on the West Bank of Madison Parish, Louisiana in a suburban setting. A large, two-story brown-brick building built in the early 1980s, the school is clean and decorated with art work done by one of the teachers. The suburban setting is deceptive. The Parish is divided by the Mississippi River and the river separates a predominantly minority population (West Bank) from a predominantly White population (East Bank). Dwight Middle serves a students population from grades 6-8 that is 67.1% African American, 23.8% White, 4.2% Hispanic, 4.6% Asian American, and .3% American Indian. Approximately 80% of the students come from low-income families. Many of the problems faced by students and faculty are similar to those found in urban schools. Most of the parents work in semi-skilled or unskilled jobs and receive some form of government assistance. For most parents a high school education is the extent of their schooling. The school has a population of 1140 students who are taught by approximately 60 teachers who are predominantly White and travel from the East Bank to teach. The advisory program was started three years ago through funding that came from a Goals 2000 subgrant. A change in administration has proven detrimental to the implementation of the middle school concept at this school.

Eisenhower Junior High School: Also located on the West Bank of Madison Parish, this school services 728 students in grades 7-9. Approximately 50.3% of the students are African American, 37.9% White, 2.5% Hispanic, 9% Asian American, and .3% American Indian. Forty-three percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch. The school, three single-story blond-brick buildings (built in the 1970s), is located in a suburban setting with a high fence surrounding the property. The subdivisions that surround the school are racially segregated. The school is in the midst of an African American neighborhood, but there are White and Asian American subdivisions that are in close proximity. Many of the classrooms have murals that were painted by one of the teachers. The school is clean and orderly. Students move around the halls according to established "traffic" pattern, but tend to be quite loud. Hall monitors check for tardy and disruptive students. Most of the 50 faculty members travel from the East Bank to teach at this school. The advisory program was started three years ago as part of a Goals 2000 subgrant.

Franklin Middle School: Located on the East Bank of the Mississippi River, Franklin Middle School is located in buildings that once housed the vocational school for this school system. The wooden buildings have recently been painted blue and red, the school's colors. The facility is well kept, but clearly not of the quality of other school facilities in the school system. Of the 533 students in grades 6-8 approximately 89.1% are African American, 8.1% White, 2% Hispanic, .1% Asian American, and .3% American Indian. Seventy-six percent of the students come from low-income families. This school is the only school on the East Bank with such a high percentage of minority students. Most of the teachers live on the East Bank and are White. The advisory program was started three years ago as part of a Goals 2000 subgrant.

Adams Middle School
(Jefferson Township - Grant County)

Enrollment - 5,000 students in the district, 850 students in the school
Racial Composition - 30% Black, 60% White, 2% Hispanic, 8% Asian
Special Education - 6% Gifted and Talented - 14%
Average Class Size - 23 students
Low-Income Students - 8%
High Reading Scores - 36% High Math Scores - 41%
Median Teacher Salary - $76,000
5+ Years Teaching Experience - 85%
Spending Per Pupil - $9,800

Calhoun Middle School
(Washington Cluster - Philadelphia City District)

Enrollment - 214,000 students in the district, 11,700 students in the cluster, 900 students in the school
Racial Composition - 35% Black, 33% White, 30% Hispanic, 2% Asian
Special Education - 11% Gifted and Talented - 3%
Average Class Size - 27 students
Low-Income Students - 80%
High Reading Scores - 26% High Math Scores - 23%
Median Teacher Salary - $50,000
5+ Years Teaching Experience - 78%
Spending Per Pupil - $7,000

Buchanan Middle School
(Hoover Township - Grant County)

Enrollment - 2,050 students in the district, 500 students in the school
Racial Composition - 2% Black, 96% White, 1% Hispanic, 1% Asian
Special Education - 13% Gifted and Talented - 12%
Average Class Size - 22 students
Low-Income Students - 7%
High Reading Scores - 42% High Math Scores - 37%
Median teacher Salary - $64,000
5+ Years Teaching Experience - 90%
Spending Per Pupil - $10,500

[Taken from The Philadelphia Inquirer, Report card on Schools, 1997]

Dwight Middle School
(Madison Parish School System)

Enrollment- 54,568 students in the district, 1140 students in the school
Racial Composition- 67.1% Black, 23.8% White, 4.2% Hispanic, 4.6% Asian American, .3% American Indian
Special Education- 16% Gifted and Talented- .5%
Average Class Size- 30 students
Low-Income Students - 80%
Median Teacher Salary- $28,651
Spending Per Pupil- $4,870
% Passing Exit Test in Language Arts- 84% Math 70%

Franklin Middle School
(Madison Parish School System)

Enrollment-54,568 students in district, 533 students in school
Racial Composition- 89.1% Black, 8.1% White, 2.0% Hispanic, .1% Asian American, .3% American Indian
Special Education- 20% Gifted and Talented- .3%
Average Class Size-26 students
Low-Income Students- 76%
Median Teacher Salary-$28,651
Spending Per Pupil- $4,870
% passing Exit Test in Language Arts- 86% Math 68%

Eisenhower Middle School
(Madison Parish School System)

Enrollment- 54,568 students in district, 728 students in school
Racial Composition- 50.3% Black, 37.9% White, 2.5% Hispanic, 9% Asian American, .3% American Indian
Special Education- 10% Gifted and Talented- .3%
Average Class Size- 28 students
Low-Income Students- 43%
Median Teacher Salary- $28,651
Spending Per Pupil- $4,870
% Passing Exit test in Language Arts 74% Math 64%

[Taken from Madison Parish District Composite Report, 1997]

Appendix B
Interview Questions

TEACHER INTERVIEW/QUESTIONNAIRE

The teacher questions are divided into two parts. Part One is composed of structural/ procedural questions that were sent in the form of a questionnaire to the teachers in the Louisiana schools. These questions became part of the semi-structured interview for teachers in the Philadelphia Region. Part Two are relational questions that deal with the teacher/student and student/student relationships typically found in advisory programs.

PART ONE

1) How long have you been involved in the adviser-advisee program at your school?
2) Please explain how the program is organized?
   a) Were the students allowed to choose their adviser? Explain.
   b) How many advisees per adviser?
   c) When do you meet? How often? Where do you meet?
   d) What types of activities do you do in the time allotted? If you can, please attach a sample activity or describe one.
      Do you monitor student academic progress as part of your adviser duties? Discipline problems? Family/ Social problems?
   e) Where did the idea initiate to start an adviser-advisee program in your school?
      Were you given any training in how to run an advisory group? If yes, please describe.
   f) Was the faculty receptive to the program?
   g) Was there a group of faculty who were vocal about not wanting to engage in this activity?
      If you answer **yes** to this, then please try to describe these faculty to me. How long have they been teaching? Do they tend to be male or female?
      What was this group's primary argument for **not** wanting an advisory program in your school?
3) What do you see as the most positive aspect of the advisory program?
4) What is the most negative aspect of the program?
5) If you could change the program in any way, what would you do differently?
6) Do you feel differently about going to school on days that you meet with your advisees?
7) Has your school developed a resource guide to help in the selection of activities for your advisory group? How are the activities selected?
8) Who is responsible for the advisory program at your school? If there are problems, where do you go for help?

PART TWO

9) Have you gotten to know the students in your advisory group really well?
10) Can your advisory students talk to you whenever they need to?
Are you willing to listen to them and assist them in finding solutions to their problems?
11) Do your advisory students look up to you? Are you a role model for them?
12) Has the advisory program helped change your attitude toward or about school?
Has the advisory program helped change the students' attitudes toward teachers?
13) As a result of the advisory program, do you get along better with your students?
Do students seem to get along better with other students as a result of advisory?
14) Do you feel that the advisory program has helped teachers work more collaboratively?

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) Tell me about your experiences in the advisory program.
2) Have you gotten to know at least one adult really well as a result of advisory periods?
3) Has an adult gotten to know you really well?
4) Can you talk to your advisor whenever you need to?
Are they willing to listen to you and assist with finding solutions to your problems?
Can you talk to them about your problems without having to worry about issues of confidence?
5) Do you look up to your advisor? Is he/she a role model for you?
Do you have the option of changing your advisor if you want?
6) Do you participate in cooperative and group projects that help make you familiar with the school, with other students and adults, and with appropriate school behavior?
Have you participated in any volunteer youth service activities as part of the advisory program?
7) Do you have more pride in your school as a result of the advisory program?
Do you think that the advisory program has changed your attitude toward school?
Has it helped change your attitude toward others? Who?
Has the advisory program changed your attitude toward yourself?
8) As a result of the advisory program, do you get along better with your classmates?
Do you get along better with your teachers and other adults at school?
Do you get along better with your parents?
9) Do you talk to your parents about the advisory program?
10) What has the advisory program taught you?

Table 1

Components of Successful Advisor-Advisee Programs: Rationale, Design & Emphasis

Rationale for Advisor-Advisee Programs

- Promote small, caring communities of learners
- Promote mutually respectful and meaningful relationships
- Provide individual attention to students
- Provide each student with an opportunity to "belong"
- Allow teachers to be actively involved in the affective development of students
- Emphasize the social and emotional development of every young adolescent
- Assist students with interpersonal communication skills development

Design of Advisor-Advisee programs

- Need careful organizing, planning, preparing, implementing and monitoring
- Need guidance department, administration, and district level support
- Need teacher, parent, student input and active involvement
- Need teachers/advisors trained and committed to teaching young adolescents
- Need relevant, ongoing professional development opportunities
- Number of Meetings per Week -- scheduled daily, regularly
- Length of Advisory Meetings -- 20 to 40 minutes, uninterrupted
- Time of Day Advisories Scheduled - morning, flexible
- Number of Students Assigned to Advisory Groups - 10 to 20 students
- Assigning Students - see advisor during the course of the day

Emphasis of Advisor-Advisee Programs

- Based on teacher and student input
- Based on the affective domain
- Address needs of specific school and community
- Social/Communication/Positive Interpersonal Relationships
- Respect for Self and Others/Good Citizen
- Accepting Responsibility for Education and Actions
- Develop Group, team, and School Spirit
- Academic Monitoring/Assistance/Motivation
- Study, Test-taking, and Note-taking Skills Instruction
- Self-Esteem Activities/Self-Awareness Growth
- Appreciating Talents, Health, and Potential
- Understanding and Making Commitments
- Decision Making/Coping Skills/Problem Solving
- Career Education/Guidance/Future Planning
- Setting and Obtaining Goals/Organizing Time
- Intramural Activities/Community Service Projects
- School Issues and Concerns/Adjustments
- Substance Abuse/Current Adolescent Issues

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