HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN:
STUDENT ADVISORY EVALUATION, 2007–2008

Austin Independent School District
Department of Program Evaluation

January 2009
07.72

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the 2007–2008 school year, all Austin Independent School District (AISD) high schools began implementing the Student Advisory/Family Advocacy Program. The program was designed in collaboration with each campus to ensure that all students had at least one adult in their school life who knew them well, to build community by creating stronger bonds across social groups, to teach important life skills, and to establish a forum for academic advisement and college and career coaching. In this effort, the schools were supported by different technical support providers. Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) provided technical support for the implementation of student advisory at Akins, Anderson, Austin, Bowie, Crockett, Johnston, Lanier, and McCallum high schools. First Things First (FTF) provided technical support for the implementation of the student advisory program, referred to as Family Advocacy, at LBJ, Reagan, and Travis high schools.

The Department of Program Evaluation (DPE) conducted an evaluation to describe the implementation of advisory/family advocacy programs across the high schools, to describe advisor/family advocate perceptions of the advisory program, and to describe the perceptions of students who participated in the first year of program implementation. Overall, the evaluation revealed positive results for all schools. Several key findings emerged from the evaluation of the district's student advisory/family advocacy program:

- The advisory steering committees were determined to be valuable in the implementation of the program. Ninety-seven percent of the committee members reported their groups had direction and purpose. All respondents reported they worked constructively and productively together.
- 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.
- Teachers became more focused on the implementation and management of the program during the school year, and they spent much of their focus group and interview time talking about the highlights and challenges associated with the implementation.
- Teachers supported by the ESR model had lower levels of concern about collaboration and refocusing than did teachers at FTF schools, indicating they

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 neutral or negative feelings. However, 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.
- Overall, the student survey results were similar for schools that implemented the ESR advisory/family advocacy model and schools that implemented the FTF model.

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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 all students had at least one adult in their school life who knew them well, to build community by creating stronger bonds across social groups, to teach important life skills, and to establish a forum for academic advisement and college and career coaching (see the program logic model in Appendix A).

In the 2007–2008 school year, all high schools began implementing the student advisory initiative. On a regular basis, the Advisory/Family Advocacy Program was facilitated by a teacher assigned to a small group of students (i.e., 15 to 25). During these meeting times, the teacher assumed the role of advisor and helped the students explore subject areas such as academic success, life skills development, college preparation, and career exploration. Advisors also met with individual students to review their academic progress, school attendance, and behavioral records and to assist them in planning for improvement. Acting as an advocate for their advisory students, some advisors worked with families, teachers, staff, and community agencies on issues related to student success.

Although a district expectation existed with respect to the general development and implementation of the student advisory initiative, the various schools had different technical support providers. Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) provided technical support for the implementation of student advisory at Akins, Anderson, Austin, Bowie, Crockett, Johnston, Lanier, and McCallum high schools. First Things First (FTF) provided technical support for the implementation of the student advisory program, referred to as Family Advocacy, at LBJ, Reagan, and Travis high schools. The ongoing technical assistance from both providers helped the schools to develop the student advisory curriculum and supported related professional development opportunities for teachers. From August 2007 to July 2008, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provided approximately $234,445.15 for the advisory's development and support across the district.

METHODS

PURPOSE

The Department of Program Evaluation (DPE) conducted the evaluation to provide information for district decision makers about program implementation and effectiveness, to facilitate decisions for program modification or improvement. In the first year, the focus of the evaluation was on program development and implementation. As the program develops in subsequent years, increasing emphasis will be placed on participant outcomes.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The following questions guided the evaluation of the district's Student Advisory/ Family Advocacy Program:

- Were teacher leadership committees effective in the development and implementation of advisory/advocacy programs at the school level?
- Were the advisory/advocacy programs implemented consistently across schools and classrooms?
- Did advisors/family advocates perceive a sense of efficacy relative to successfully achieving their goals for the advisory classroom?
- How did students experience the advisory program?

DATA COLLECTION

Both qualitative and quantitative data pertaining to clearly defined performance measures were collected to assess the program's progress toward its goals. A detailed description of data collection activities follows.

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM): This research-based model, developed by the University of Texas, was used to describe how the advisors developed as they learn about their advisory roles and the stages of that process. In year 1, two parts of the CBAM were administered. All advisors were asked to complete a CBAM questionnaire to help understand and track the stages of concern related to program implementation. Qualitative interviews and focus groups also were conducted with teachers on each campus regarding implementation of the advisory and family advocacy models. The third part of the CBAM, involving formal observations of the various components of the program being implemented in the classroom, was not implemented during the program evaluation in 2007–2008. These observations were planned for the 2008–2009 school year.

In March and April 2008, a stratified, random sample of advisors from all high schools was asked to complete a CBAM questionnaire to help understand and track the stages of concern about the program implementation. Of the 915 advisors who were sent a survey via e-mail, 762 (83.2%) completed the survey. An analysis of respondents indicated that the results can be considered reliable and representative of high school teachers across the district.

Committee Surveys: A survey was developed to describe the perceived effectiveness of advisory steering committees at the campus level in the development and implementation of the advisory program. All committee members were asked to complete this survey in May 2008, and 75 persons completed the survey. All high schools were determined to have appropriate representation, with the exception of Crockett High School, which had no responses.

Student 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. 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.

Advisor Surveys: Based on a variety of validated surveys designed to measure teacher efficacy, an advisor/advocate survey was developed to assess the advisors' sense of efficacy relative to successfully achieving the goals of the advisory program. There were 944 advisors selected across the district. Of those selected, only 142 advisors completed a survey, even though many of them had their students complete and return a survey. The return rate was low, creating a large margin of error, and the respondents were determined not to be representative of the high school populations. Thus, these surveys were not analyzed and results were not reported.

Teacher Interviews and Focus Groups: Teachers who responded to the CBAM survey were invited to participate in an interview or focus group at the end of May or in early June 2008. Teachers could choose to participate in a group or individual setting on the school campus, based on their schedule, convenience, and/or personal preference. Focus groups averaged 3 to 5 members and included teachers from varying content areas and grade levels. A total of 82 teachers across the district participated in the interviews or focus groups.

DATA ANALYSES

Evaluation staff used a concurrent, mixed-methods approach for the evaluation of the district's Student Advisory/Family Advocacy Program in 2007–2008. Simple descriptive statistics were used to summarize survey results. Content analysis techniques were used to identify important details, themes, and patterns within the qualitative data provided through open-ended survey questions, interviews, and focus groups. Results from the analyses were triangulated to verify the consistency of data and to clarify results, increasing the validity and reliability of results.

LIMITATIONS

This evaluation did not provide an in-depth examination of student outcomes. In the first year of implementation, it was determined that the focus of the evaluation be placed on program development and implementation. As the program develops in subsequent years, student attendance, discipline, school climate, and postsecondary enrollment preparation measures will be incorporated into the evaluation. Further analyses can compare student outcomes by grade level cohorts and by years of participation.

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 implementation, teacher leaders on each campus were selected or volunteered to serve on an Advisory/Family Advocacy Steering Committee. Members of these campus-based groups were to serve as campus contact persons for those needing information regarding advisory/advocacy, to lead the development of the advisory curriculum, to facilitate professional learning opportunities, and to distribute program support materials on their respective campuses.

A survey was developed to describe the perceived effectiveness of Advisory Steering Committees at the campus level in the development and implementation of the advisory program. All committee members were asked to complete this survey in May 2008, and 75 persons completed the survey. All high schools were determined to have appropriate representation, with the exception of Crockett High School, which had no responses.

The results of the advisory steering committee survey were overwhelmingly positive (Appendix C). All of the respondents reported they enjoyed the experience, and 94.5% believed the work would improve students' experiences at their schools. When asked about their working experiences, 97.3% reported their groups had direction and purpose. All respondents reported they worked constructively and productively together. The items with the lowest agreement were about whether the groups had the amount of time (68%) and resources (74.3%) needed to develop the advisory program. Most believed their principals were supportive (73.9%) and helped navigate obstacles (82.1%) in development and implementation of advisory. Overall, they were optimistic that the program would be sustained (72.9%) and their contribution was important to the change process (94.3%).

Members of the advisory steering committees were asked to provide additional thoughts about the implementation of advisory within their respective schools, and 36% of the respondents provided comments. Most of the comments qualified the overwhelmingly positive responses on the survey. The respondents talked about their dedication to and hope for their schools. However, they described their challenges in developing collective teacher buy-in and encouraging student participation in advisory. They suggested that ongoing, well-articulated expectations communicated by district administrators would help teachers understand the

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 resistance remains partly because there is a lack of communication between 'the district' and our faculty. All of the other initiatives begun in roughly the same time period have sabotaged our efforts."

> "It has been challenging to promote Advisory in our school. There are a lot of teachers who do not like this addition to the curriculum. All we can do is continue to promote it and be as positive as possible about the change. It always takes time for change to take place."

THE CONCERNS-BASED ADOPTION MODEL

The CBAM is a research-based model developed by the University of Texas that was used to describe how student advisors developed as they learned about their advisory roles and began program implementation. The CBAM consists of data collected from several sources, including a questionnaire, interview, and observation. The first source is the Stages of Concern Questionnaire, a 35-item Likert scale that measures the feelings, thoughts, and reactions people have about a new program or innovation (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 2005).

The questionnaire addresses seven common stages of concern persons may experience when going through change. The stages are not mutually exclusive; that is, a person may experience more than one stage at the same point in time. Variations in the intensity with which one expresses concern vary with the implementation process. The seven stages of concern about a change can be thought of within three dimensions: self, task, and impact.

Table 1. Stages of Concern and Typical Expressions of Concern About the Innovation

	Stage of concern	Expression of concern
Impact	6 Refocusing	I have some ideas about something that would work even better.
	5 Collaboration	I am concerned about relating what I am doing with what other advisors are doing.
Task	4 Consequence	How is my work affecting kids?
	3 Management	How can I manage the materials?
Self	2 Personal	How will using it affect me?
	1 Informational	I would like to know more about it.
	0 Awareness	I am not concerned about it (the innovation).

Source. Hord et al., 2005

Stages of Concern Results, by District and Campus

In March 2008, the Stages of Concern Questionnaire was administered to advisors in all of the high schools to identify their stages of concern related to the program implementation Results were analyzed and interpreted according to the processes articulated by Hord et al. (2005).

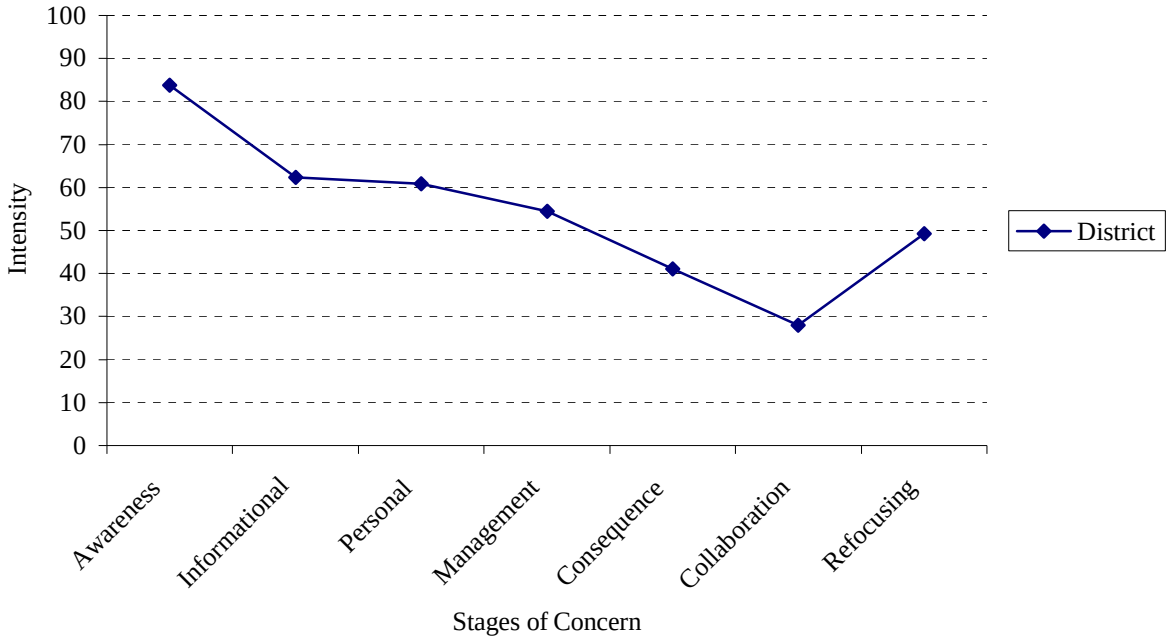
The district-level results indicated that most advisors identified concerns related to the earliest stages of the change process: awareness, information, and personal concerns (Figure 1). The advisors may not have been fully aware of the changes being proposed and/or they may have been looking for further information and showing an interest in the changes that would take place in the implementation of student advisory. This pattern is typical of an organization preparing to implement a new innovation or in the beginning stages of implementation, during which time the persons involved are focused on self-concerns.

The next highest area of concern identified by the advisors across the district was refocusing. This is a common result for schools in which many teachers are learning about and beginning to implement a new innovation. In this case, those with high refocusing concerns indicated that the “new” innovation was actually something they had tried or was related to something they had tried in the past. High refocusing concerns at the onset of a new innovation

typically decrease when sufficient attention is provided to address the concerns related to "self" (i.e., Stages 0 through 2).

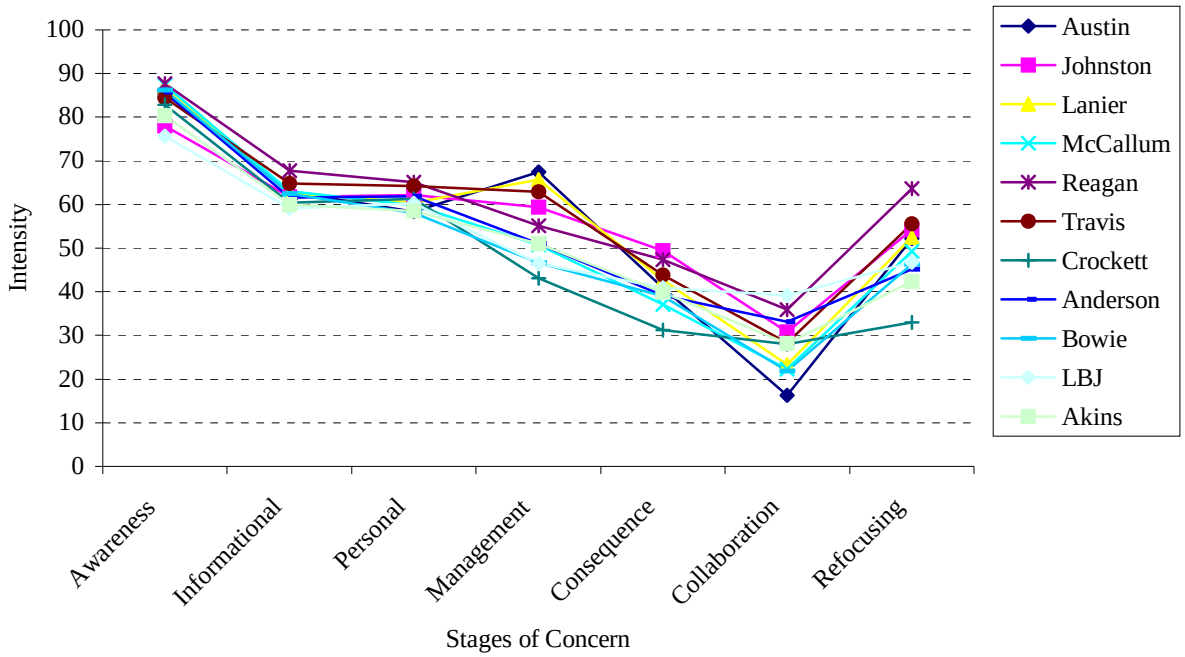
The profile in Figure 1 is a general description of persons who were becoming aware of and concerned about the program. They were generally interested in learning more about the new program from a positive perspective. They had a medium intensity about the management of advisory and gave lesser thought to the outcomes for students or to working with others on implementation. A high level of self-concerns, coupled with a high level of refocusing concerns, often indicates that the persons involved have some ideas about improving the program. These ideas for improvement typically are expressed as a desire to return to former practices.

Figure 1. Stages of Concern District Profile, March 2008



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

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



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

Additionally, the questionnaire results were examined by campus (Figure 2). A greater level of variation among campus concerns was found for the task-oriented stages (i.e., management and consequence) than for the stages related to self-concern. High levels of concern about management issues are typical in places where persons have begun implementing a new innovation and are struggling with how best to implement it. Time management often is a key issue in the early stages of implementation. When consequence concerns are high, people are concerned about the impact the innovation will have on them.

Greater variation also was evident for the stages related to the impact of the innovation than for the stages related to self-concerns. Concerns about collaboration can be observed from a few months to a few years into the program implementation. Teachers' interest in collaborating with others who are using the same innovation can vary by interest, perceptions of one's own level of competency at using the innovation, or simply the additional time/resource demands that collaboration may require.

Refocusing concerns surface at various stages of implementation. As discussed previously, the high information need, coupled with a lesser concern about the impact of the innovation on students, may indicate that teachers are feeling skeptical about the new

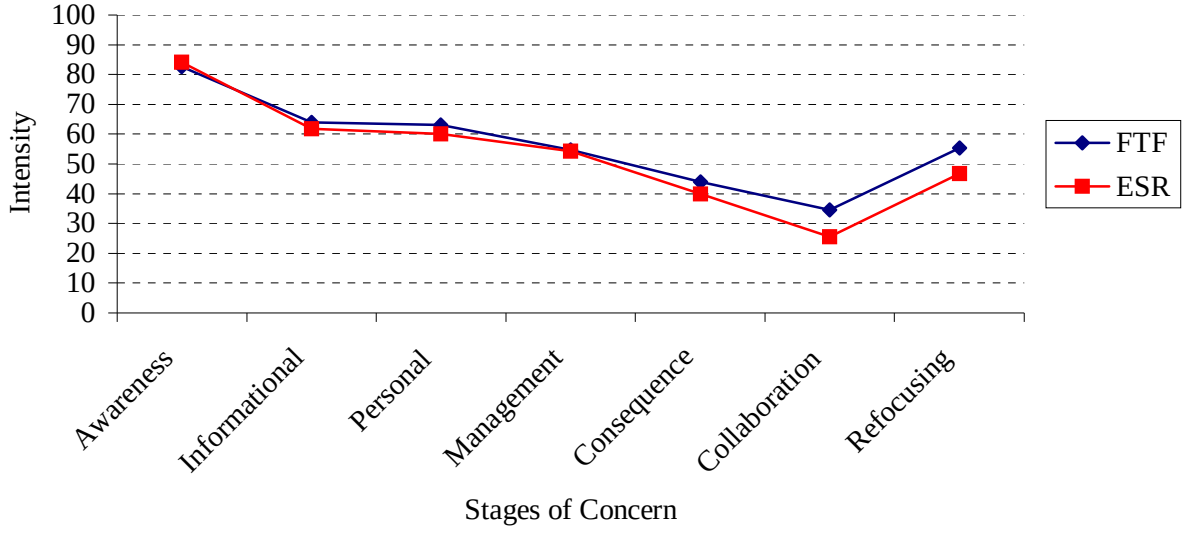
innovation and want to return to former practices. They may have professional development needs that must be addressed in order for them to move forward in successful implementation. When concerns related to information are low and refocusing concerns are high, it may indicate an emerging expertise among 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 supported by the ESR model had lower levels of concern in these two categories than did teachers supported by the FTF model.

Figure 3. Stages of Concern Profile for FTF- and ESR-Supported Schools, March 2008

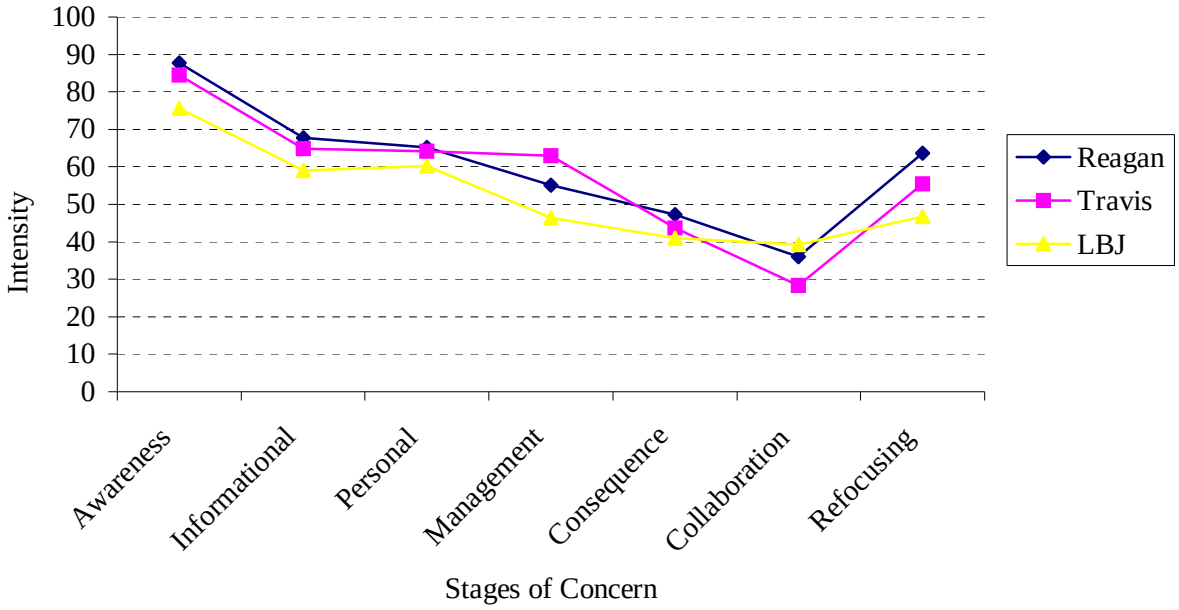


Source. AISD Stages of Concern Questionnaire for Advisory, March 2008

Upon further examination, the various schools using the FTF model of family advocacy had very different profiles (Figure 4). With lower levels of concern overall, teachers at LBJ

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

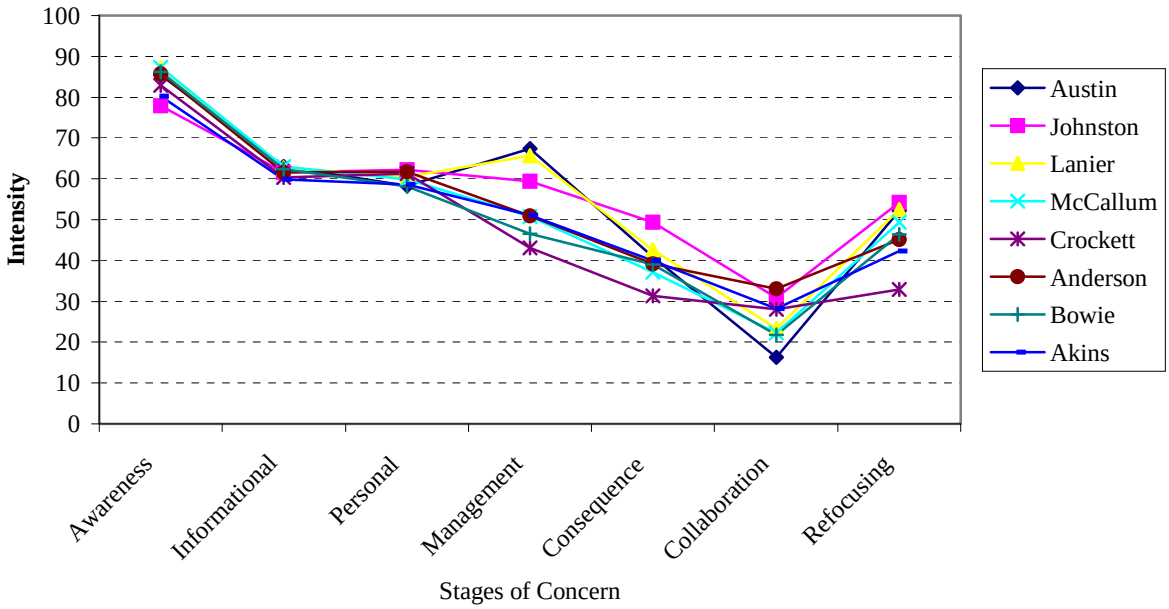


Source. AISD Stages of Concern Questionnaire for Advisory, March 2008

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



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

TEACHER INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

In the second phase of using the CBAM to describe the conceptualization of, implementation of, and concerns about the advisory and family advocacy models, focus groups and interviews were conducted at the end of May 2008 with teacher advisors who had completed the Stages of Concern questionnaire in March. These discussions were conducted using a semi-structured format in which teacher advisors were encouraged to talk about their

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 because you are interested in kids in the first place and you do not mind doing what it takes to meet their needs, then you will be a good advisor. If you are a teacher that is focused on teaching your content area to kids and not worried about developing relationships, then you will have trouble with being a good advocate."

Although they expressed some personal concerns, the teacher advisors were focused on the implementation or management of advisory, and many were able to tell stories about a time when they felt the implementation of advisory went well. They appreciated the support their respective advisory leadership committees provided, especially the calendars of events, lesson plans, and prepared materials. For example, teachers said,

> "ESR staff and our leadership committee have been very supportive and provided quality advisory training and professional development [activities]. The activities appear to be really good and seem to be focused on building cohesiveness across the school and student groups. It will help build relationships outside of the classroom."

> "I didn't like gatherings in the beginning. I have learned that these can be very cool experiences. You think that the kids won't like them, but they do. They want to do fun activities that provide some time for reflection."

> "The advisory committee has done a good job with providing lessons. We appreciate what they have done. We do not have to prepare the materials, but we do need to prepare mentally. We have to shift gears away from the teacher role and being an advisor. It is different."

The advisors also liked having a small class size because they found it easier to help students explore what the school had to offer and to connect to school activities. Some described their surprise when they found the students enjoyed activities designed to facilitate relationship development. The teachers thought the students might be learning about and joining student clubs and organizations they had not been involved with before. The advisors often spoke about the benefit of the academic advising component of the program. The STAR reports were a primary part of this process and were identified as being helpful for both advisors and students. These reports provided information about student progress on a variety of measures (e.g., attendance, discipline, course grades, and test scores). The advisors also positively described instances when they were able to address the social issues students can encounter.

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 colleagues are not doing it?"
>
> "Campus staff are not necessarily compelled to implement all of the programs planned for their school during the school year with fidelity. We have been subject to implementing multiple district programs and participating in district professional development that is not considered helpful or of quality. Due to these experiences and the various qualifications of the teaching staff, we feel justified in planning and implementing programs/activities our own way."

Of primary concern in the implementation of advisory was the issue of student engagement. Teachers were highly concerned about engaging students in a motivating and helpful way and wanted more support to learn how to improve student engagement. They discussed the dilemma of creating relevance and communicating the importance of advisory without at the same time holding students accountable for attending and participating. Teachers at all schools reported high absenteeism during the advisory period and lack of student participation in the activities. They requested additional assistance in addressing these concerns.

The teachers often discussed the process of building relationships with their students in advisory class, and these discussions illustrated both implementation and consequence concerns and the relationship between the two. At the end of the school year, teachers were divided when it came to reporting successful relationship development with the students. About half of the teachers reported they were able to develop strong, close relationships with their students, while the other half reported they were having 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 said,

> "I love my advisory kids. I have a hodge-podge. It was difficult in the beginning. My relationships have actually developed outside of the advisory class and the help I provide outside of the advisory class. I take the initiative to check up on them outside of the advisory period. It is positive, and I have enjoyed it."

> "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 did not have a strong sense of efficacy in influencing student school attendance, behaviors, or academic outcomes that were unrelated to the course they taught. They often assumed it would take time to see the influence of the program on students.

However, some teachers were beginning to identify benefits for students. They reported students were learning more about practices that would increase their success in school (e.g., attendance, course taking, and monitoring academic outcomes). Some teachers also reported their students had positive feelings about advisory and were appreciative of the personal support.

> "I look forward to the time to connect. It gives us a chance to talk about schedules for next year. Students say they've never known this much about schedules, what classes students should take, college schedules, etc. Parents are responding well, they like having one person to talk to."

> "Students liked to share their successes and positive things in their lives. Students begin to see common connections and feel good when others ask questions about their personal lives."

> "My students really liked advisory. Students were making friends with others they might not have met otherwise. They liked the support socially and academically. Students reported that they felt empowered and supported. Seminar helped kids deal with tough issues [student death] and a tragic situation became inspirational."

> "Student conferences were valuable. Students want to know how they are doing. With support and encouragement, they monitor their own progress and assume responsibility."

> "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 experience positive outcomes.

> "It is hard to get buy-in from teachers. Advisory came in when we had tremendous upheaval in the school with multiple principals. We have never gotten our feet on the ground with the new principal, much less the things required by the High School Redesign Office. No one really knows what is going on and where priorities are."

> "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.

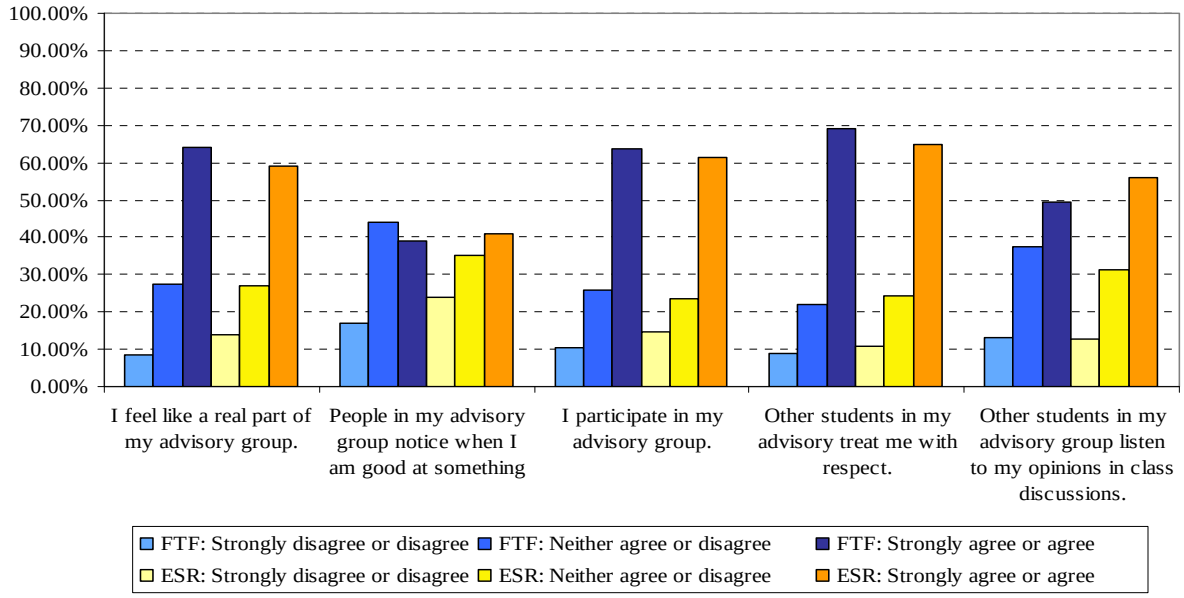
Because the district's advisory initiative was supported in the schools by two separate and distinct support providers, student advisory results also were compared between the FTF- and ESR-supported schools. In this comparison, response options were collapsed into three categories (i.e., *strongly disagree 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

ESR schools (Figure 6). Lesser percentages of students at FTF- and ESR-supported schools reported that others noticed when they were good at something. Slightly more students attending ESR-supported schools, compared with students attending FTF-supported schools perceived that others noticed they were good at something.

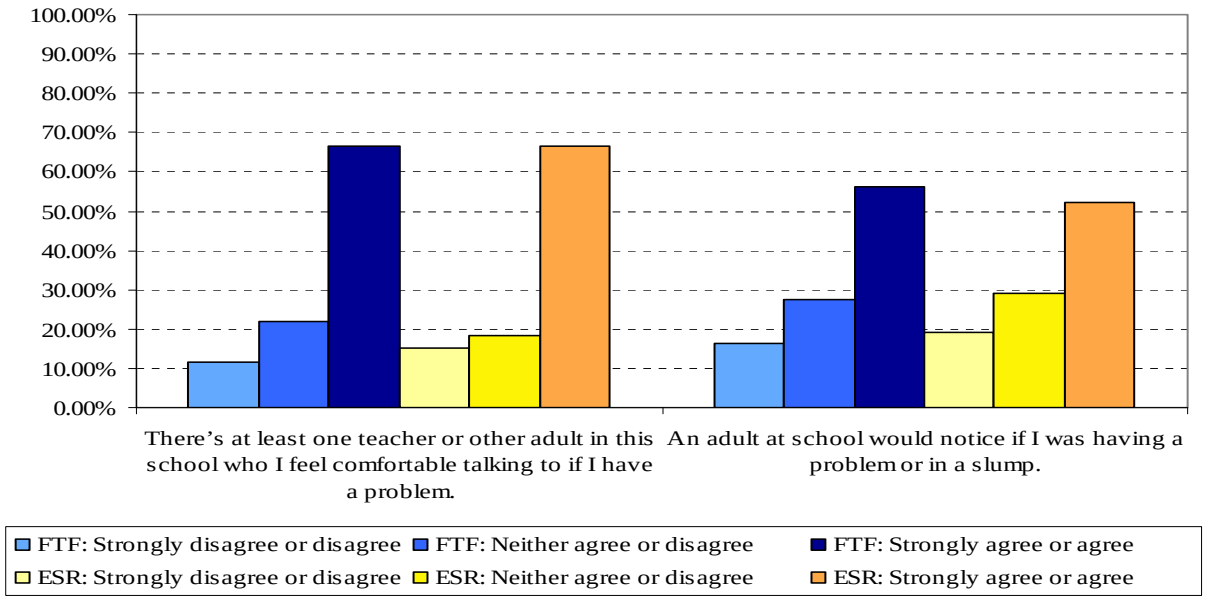
Figure 6. Student Feelings of Inclusion in Advisory/Family Advocacy Group, 2007–2008



Source. AISD Student Advisory/ Family Advocacy Survey, May 2008

Students at FTF and ESR schools had similarly positive ratings of their relationships with adults in their schools (Figure 7). Greater percentages of students felt comfortable talking to an adult in the school about a problem, compared with the percentages of students thinking an adult would notice if they had a problem.

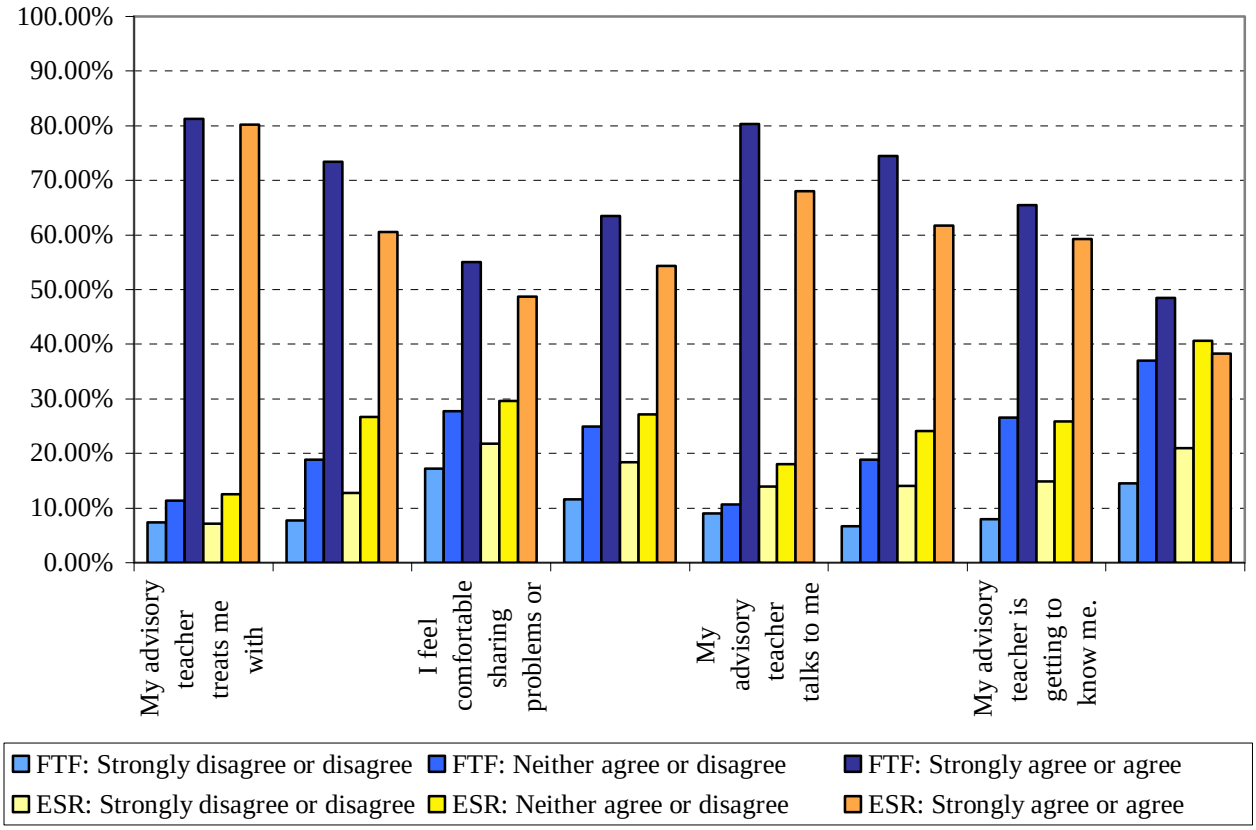
Figure 7. Student Perceptions of Their Relationships With Adults in Their Schools, 2007-2008



Source. AISD Student Advisory/ Family Advocacy Survey, May 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 at school, they were comfortable sharing problems with their advocate, they discussed course grades, they reflected on school progress, and their advocates were interested in their families' perspectives. Compared with the other questions about student-advisor relationships, lesser percentages of students at both FTF and ESR schools reported they felt comfortable sharing problems with their advisor/advocate, and reported they perceived their advisors/advocates were interested in their families' point of view.

Figure 8. Student Perceptions of Their Relationships With Their Advisors/Family Advocates in Their Schools 2007–2008



Source. AISD Student Advisory/ Family Advocacy Survey, May 2008

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 family advocacy program on their campuses. Specifically, teachers needed more information about how the program worked and about the intended outcomes. They had personal concerns about the program and wondered how the implementation of advisory would affect their work responsibilities. Notably, program managers and support providers continued to address these concerns throughout the school year. After informational and personal concerns have been addressed, the teachers will be better able to implement the program more effectively.

When a school's profile from the Stages of Concern questionnaire shows elevated personal and informational needs and also reflects high concerns about refocusing, teachers in that school may be hoping to abandon the program (Hord et al., 2005). They may have different ideas about improving the innovation. However, most often, teachers think the best solution would be to return to the old way of doing things in order to avoid having to change their practices and mindsets. This presents a challenge for program managers and support providers because they must continue educating teacher advisors about the advantages of the new approach and must encourage them to implement well so the desired outcomes can be realized.

A few campuses had comparatively higher levels of concern about management and consequence. Concerns in these stages usually pertain to time management and preparation needs, as well as to gauging the impact programs are having on students. Teachers at these campuses were implementing the advisory program and were working toward perfecting its use.

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 more prominent. Further, it is important to acknowledge that these concerns do not occur in isolation. Teachers' concerns may be influenced by personal feelings, the campus context, the number of other programs being implemented by the teacher, and the administrative support received when program implementation occurs.

It should be noted that this evaluation in the first year of implementation used teacher self-report about their feelings and perceptions of the district's advisory program. Little information was gathered pertaining to actual advisory practices used in groups within and across schools. To better understand how the program is unfolding at the campus level, observations of advisory groups in schools across the district should be conducted. Observation

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 groups, to teach important life skills, and to establish a forum for academic advisement and college and career coaching. Toward this end, student advisory/family advocacy classes were established and supported through a combination of efforts provided by the district's Office of School Redesign, teacher leaders, and contracted support providers in all high schools during the 2007–2008 school year. An evaluation was conducted to describe the implementation of advisory/family advocacy programs across the high schools, to describe advisor/family advocate perceptions of the advisory programs, and to describe the perceptions of students who participated in the first year of program implementation.

Overall, the evaluation results were promising. The advisory steering committees were determined to be valuable in the implementation of the program. Although they expressed information and personal concerns, most teachers understood the program and were beginning to implement it. Students appeared to have positive feelings about their advisory experience. Program effectiveness might be improved through relatively minor changes in implementation or the continuance of existing practices. The following recommendations are provided for consideration:

1. *Articulate expectations for advisory program implementation at the campus- and district-levels.* Teachers were unclear about the district's and their school's commitment to the initiative and reported reluctance to personally invest in a program that might be abandoned in the near future. Anfara and Brown (2001) found that administrative expectations and support were critical in the ongoing development and support of well-functioning advisories. Burns (1996) asserted that leaders should assertively champion the program to promote staff buy-in, to supply necessary resources, and to ensure quality implementation.
2. *Continue to develop the advisory curriculum so it includes more college preparation activities appropriate for each grade level*. Because they wanted to provide a forum in which relationships could be built that allowed students to acquire knowledge and skills, teachers requested a larger library of advisory activities to choose from to meet the various interests and needs of their students. Burns (1996) found that authentic, satisfied teacher advisors had considerable opportunity to select activities that met their

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

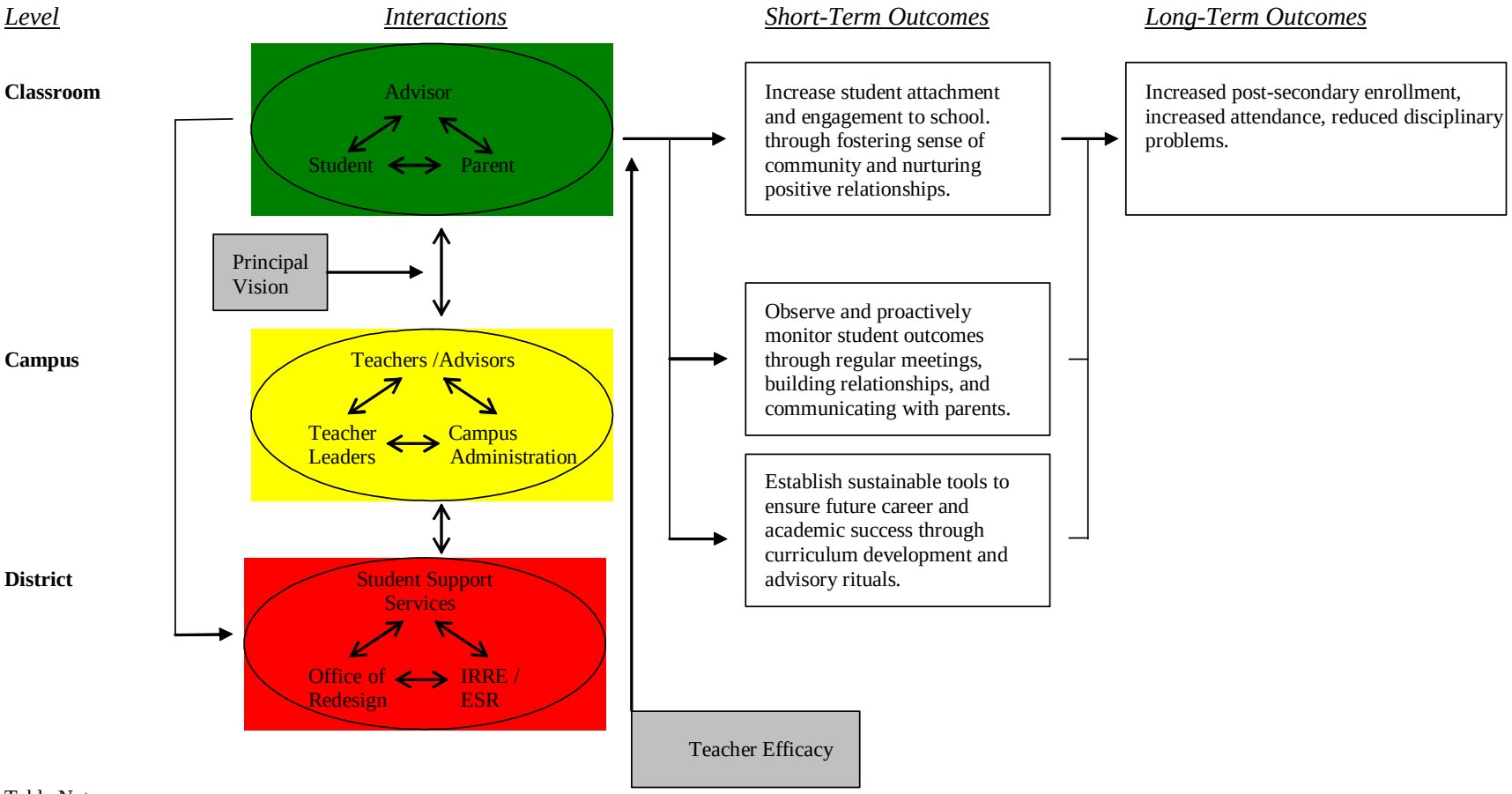


Table Notes:

1. Specific Processes by Level:
   - Advise Students
   - Talk with parents
   - Serve as liaison between parent and school
   - Train and support advisors
   - Develop curriculum
   - Provide vision and leadership
   - Develop advisory program
   - Evaluate program effectiveness
   - Develop sustainment plan
2. Principal Vision and Teacher Efficacy serve as moderators. They have the capacity to positively or negatively influence processes or 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 this questionnaire may appear to be of little relevance or irrelevant to you at this time.* For the completely irrelevant items, please circle "0" on the scale. Other items will represent those concerns you *do* have, in varying degrees of intensity, and should be marked higher on the scale.

Please respond to the items in terms of your present concerns, or how you feel about your involvement or potential involvement with ADVISORY PERIOD. We do not hold to any one definition of this program, so please think of it in terms of your own perceptions of what it involves. Remember to respond to each item in terms of your present concerns about your involvement or potential involvement with ADVISORY PERIOD.

Thank you for taking your time to complete this task.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
irrelevant not true of me now somewhat true of me now very true

1. I am concerned about students' attitudes toward advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I now know of some other approaches that might work better than advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I don't even know what the advisory period curriculum is.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I am concerned about not having enough time to organize for advisory each day.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I would like to help other faculty in their implementation of advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I have a very limited knowledge about the advisory content we are to cover.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I am concerned about conflict between my interests and my responsibilities within advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I am concerned about revising my use of advisory content.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I would like to share practices within our faculty and with outside faculty about advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I am concerned about how advisory affects students.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I am not concerned about advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I would like to know who makes the decisions about the content and implementation of advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I would like to know what resources are available when I teach advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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	7
21. Although I don't know much about advisory, I am concerned about issues advisory claims to address (such as attendance, relationship building and student performance).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I would like to excite my students about their part in advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I am concerned about working with nonacademic problems during advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I would like to know what the implementation of advisory will require in the immediate future.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. I would like to coordinate my effort with others to maximize advisory's effects.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. I would like to have more information on time and energy commitments required by advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I would like to know what other faculty are doing in advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. At this time, I am not interested in implementing advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. I would like to determine how to supplement or enhance advisory.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. I would like my school to use feedback from students to change the program.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. I am able to shift smoothly from my usual role (as teacher, counselor or administrator) to my role as advisor.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. Coordination of advisory tasks and people are taking too much of my time.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. I would like to know how advisory is better than what we had before.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Source. Hall & Rutherford (1998)

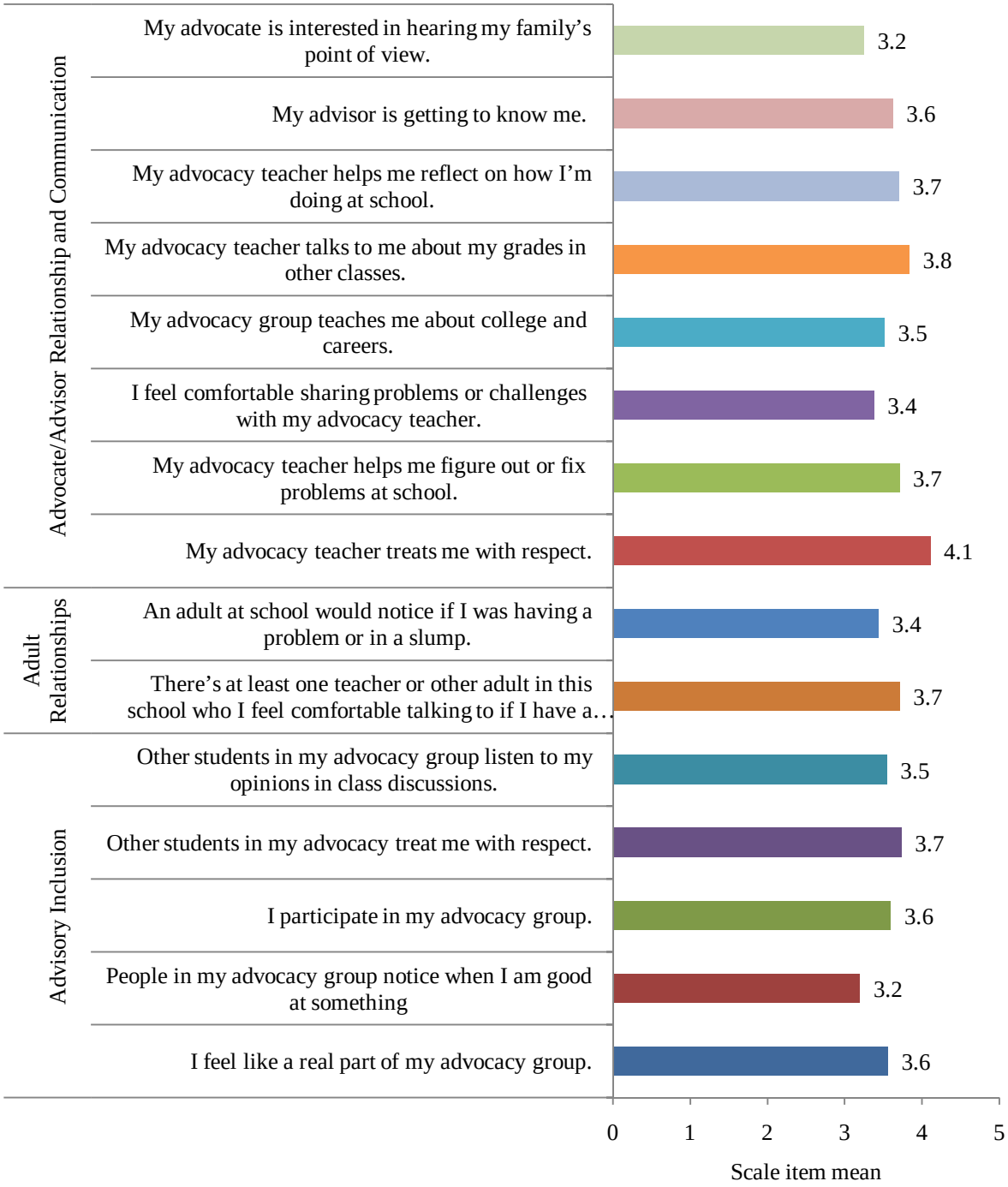
Appendix C: Advisory Steering Committee Survey, Spring 2008

	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
2. People in my advocacy group notice when I am good at something.	1	2	3	4	5
3. There's at least one teacher or other adult in this school who I feel comfortable talking to if I have a problem.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I participate in advocacy group.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Other students in my advocacy group treat me with respect.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Other students in my advocacy group listen to my opinions in class discussions.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My advocacy teacher treats me with respect.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My advocacy teacher helps me figure out or fix problems at school.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel comfortable sharing problems or challenges with my advocacy teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My advocacy group teaches me about college and careers	1	2	3	4	5
11. My advocacy teacher talks to me about my grades in other classes.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My advocacy teacher helps me reflect on how I'm doing at school.	1	2	3	4	5
13. My advocate is getting to know me.	1	2	3	4	5
14. An adult at school would notice if I was having a problem or in a slump.	1	2	3	4	5
15. My advocate is interested in hearing my family's point of view.	1	2	3	4	5
Please tell us anything else that you would like us to know about advocacy in the comments box on the back of your scan form.					

Appendix E: Advisory Survey District-Level Results Spring 2008



Source. AISD Student Advisory/ Family Advocacy Survey, May 2008

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Publication Number 07.72

January 2009