

Student and Teacher Attitudes Regarding Advisory

By

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Submitted to the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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Date Defended: 13 April 2017

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Abstract

Advisory classes in schools across the country have different meanings and purposes. This dissertation is focused on an Advisory class in an urban setting that was created purposefully to (1) build relationships between students and staff in a healthy manner, (2) increase academic performance of students, and (3) increase postsecondary entrance of students. This study uses a mixed method design to identify whether the original intent of the Advisory class was actualized through the perceptions of teachers and students. The purpose of this study is to explore whether, in the years of Advisory, discipline rates declined, graduation rates rose, and more students went on pursue postsecondary.

This dissertation focuses on an Advisory program that was developed in 2010 at Center High School, when a group of teachers and administrators began conversations on how to best serve students in a Student Service Model. The class was developed by a team under the model of continuous improvement to ensure change to the class as their needs fluctuated, and with determined focus on three main concepts: relationships, academics, and postsecondary entry.

The single-case study itself draws upon a program evaluation model to help guide the evaluative structure of the research. The qualitative design identifies the perceptions of the individuals immersed in Advisory, those who either taught it, or were students in the class. These individuals had little or no knowledge as to the initial team of creators or their goals, yet they lived and breathed Advisory in their daily practice. Eight teachers and eight students were interviewed to identify if through their conversations and knowledge of Advisory, the original intent of the program was recognized in the practice. Themes around relationships, academics and postsecondary entry were coded through the interviews, as were indicators of problems, frustrations, and ideas of better implementation. As a mixed method research design,

quantitative analysis of academic achievement data was reviewed to see if retention for students increased, decreased or leveled out during the first four years of Advisory.

Conclusions from this program's evaluation single-study model validated the original intent of Advisory. The Advisory program created adult student relationships, fostered academic success, and contributed to postsecondary pathways for students. Findings contribute to program implementation models, best practices for schools in high need, specifically in urban areas, and purpose-driven instructional models.

Acknowledgements

My husband and partner David Heide never gave up hope I would one day finish this project. He knew when to have patience, to push, or to encourage. He believed more than I that I could complete this task. He is my love and my strength, and I will forever be grateful. Without you I am not. I love you.

My children, Madison and Rhett are forever my purpose. They have taught me through their life, to dig into how and why people learn. Their quest for knowledge drove me to consider how to encourage that quest in all students. Madison's motivation and devotion to excellence inspires me. Rhett's quest for knowledge and the truth gives me hope in the good that exists in all people. I am a better teacher and administrator because I am a mother. Thank you.

In memory of my parents, William G. Marvin and Laurie R. Marvin for their unconditional love for me. They made me believe I could do anything. As a result, they provided in me a search for what love and encouragement can do for all young people. You are loved and missed.

Arnold "Ed" Heide and Trudi Heide, for always making me feel like your daughter. I cannot imagine my life without your love. For all the Heides'. I have always felt like a member of your family, and your help and encouragement through this project has been invaluable.

Center High School will permanently be a cornerstone to me. The students and staff encouraged me to continue to seek the best answers for all students. They taught me the best answer to poverty is love and high expectations, and that all students can and will achieve if given the opportunity. Friends who never stopped supporting me in my efforts are cherished; Sharon Ahuna, Joyce Suedmeyer, Krista McGee, Neil Corrison, and Joe Gunderson. This list

does not stop here with the number of amazing educators at Center who continue to work to help positively impact the lives of students each day.

Two great men, David A. Leone, who is a true father figure to me. Thank you for believing in me. Dr. Robert Bartman, who is my forever mentor and friend. Without your push, I would have never finished this project. I hope to be half the leader you are some day.

I thank the Educational Leadership Department at the University of Kansas for creating a rigorous and quality program for leaders. There are not words to express the gratitude I have for Dr. Twombly for her unfailing expectation that I complete this project, high expectations, and continual guidance to the end. I am eternally grateful.

Dedication

I dedicate this study to every child in urban poverty. Please know there are many who believe in you, and spend countless hours trying to find ways for you to be successful. Believe that tomorrow can be better than today, and education is the gatekeeper of that success.

To all educators, and especially those in urban education, who truly devote their life to understanding how children learn, and how to make an impact on all children. It is your belief in the power of education, that tomorrow can and will be better than today, that will change the world.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

Students in urban school settings face a multitude of difficulties to overcome in their quest for academic success. The environment, the educational institution, economic hardships, and unstable family structures are often dissuading factors in student achievement. The research regarding educational stagnation is well documented. Jonathan Kozol (1991) in *Savage Inequalities* discussed the effects of crime rates in the urban core, unmotivated teachers, and a perpetuation of low expectations of students. Poverty, limited English, family instability, poor health care, less academic competition among peers, student mobility, teen pregnancy, and single parent homes are also contributing factors in the ability to educate students in schools (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004). Heller, Pollack, Ander, and Ludwig (2013) maintained that improving the long-term life outcomes of disadvantaged youth remains a top policy priority in the United States, although identifying successful interventions for adolescents, particularly males, has proven challenging. Urban youth continue to underperform academically nationwide.

Underperformance. Underperformance leads to decreased percentages of high school graduates in urban schools. High school graduation rates are calculated using a measure called the Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI). In 2014, Garyan and Ludwig worked with CNN on a story citing a 50 percent dropout rate in urban schools, with a higher dropout rate for African-American youth (Garyan, 2014). As Garyan notes, “this has led many people to conclude that the harmful effects of poverty are already so entrenched by adolescence that improving academic learning for low-income teens is not feasible” (2014, p. 1).

Paired with data from the U.S. Department of Education Common Core of Data (CCD), the Urban Institute (2001) computed graduation rates for the high school class of 2001 in nearly every public school district in the United States. As Orfield et al. (2004) note, “according to the calculations used (*Losing Our Future: How Minority Youth Are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis*), in 2001, 68 percent of all students graduated from high school but only 50 percent of all black students, 51 percent of Native American students, and 53 percent of all Hispanic students graduated from high school” (p.2). That is, nearly one-third of all high school students failed to graduate, but beyond that, there was a tremendous racial gap for graduation rates that exists still today. Remarkably, students from historically disadvantaged racial/ethnic minority groups (American Indian, Hispanic/Latino, and Black) have little more than a fifty-fifty chance of finishing high school with a diploma.

Swanson (2004) noted, by comparison, that graduation rates for Whites and Asians are 75 and 77 percent respectively nationally. Even more shocking were the rates for males from minority groups, who graduated from high school at a rate of 8 percent lower than female students. Graduation rates for students who attended school in high poverty, racially segregated, and urban school districts lagged 15 to 18 percent behind their peers. A great deal of variation in graduation rates and gaps among student groups is found across regions of the country as well as the states (2004, p.2).

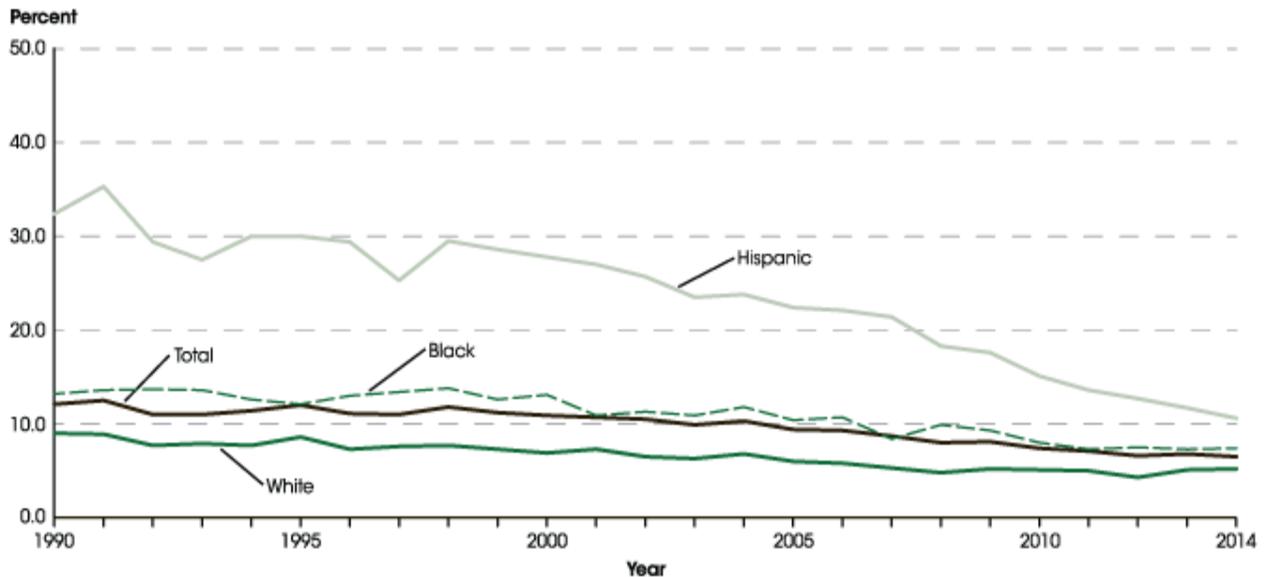
Long-term progress in addressing these problems has been limited, in part because finding ways to improve outcomes for disadvantaged youth (particularly males) has proven challenging. Despite technological changes that have increased the demand for educated workers over time, the high school graduation rate in America has not changed much since the 1970s (Goldin & Katz, 2008). While mortality rates from almost every major leading cause of death

have declined dramatically over the past half century, the homicide rate today is not much different from what it was in 1950 – or even in 1900 (Pinker, 2011; Heller et al., 2013). For example, the U.S. Department of Education’s What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) does not give a single dropout-prevention program its top rating of “strong effects” (defined as several randomized experiments or quasi experiments all pointing in the same direction, or one large randomized experiment). The Coalition for Evidence Based Policy did not list a single program for addressing high school graduation rates among its “Top Tier” of programs. (Heller et al., 2013). As Garyan (2014) notes,

Few approaches have addressed one of the central challenges facing so many urban schools: the wide variation in students' academic levels by the time they reach middle and high school. Consider trying to teach math to a classroom of 25 to 30 students when some students are at grade level and some are seven or even 10 years behind. Now imagine the same situation from the students' perspective. Asking kids to sit through material so far beyond their knowledge is a recipe for disengagement and dropout” (p. 2).

The dropout rate has changed very little from 1990 to 2014. Dropout rate was defined as the percentage of 16 to 24 year olds who were not enrolled in school and had not earned a high school credential (either a diploma or an equivalent credential such as a GED certificate) (Figure 1) (Kena, et. al., p.182).

Figure 1. Status dropout rates of 16- to 24-year-olds, by race/ethnicity: 1990 through 2014



Source. Kena et al., 2016.

Note. The “status dropout rate” is the percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds who are not enrolled in school and have not earned a high school credential (either a diploma or an equivalency credential such as a GED certificate). Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons in prisons, persons in the military, and other persons not living in households. Data for all races include other racial/ethnic categories not separately shown. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

The dropout situation has improved only slightly since 2001. Continual research has been done regarding graduation rates among minority students. Kamanetz, in an NPR report in October 2016, spoke of graduation in this way: “for most of American history, high school was a rare achievement — one, by the way, that qualified you for a white-collar job.” Today, high school graduation does not guarantee a white-collar job. Kamanetz (2016) goes on to state, “estimates vary depending on the method used, but generally speaking, the graduation rate didn't exceed 50 percent of the population until 1940. It peaked at the end of the 1960s, but continued to undulate, hitting the doldrums between 1995 and 1999.” Historically, racial and ethnic minorities trailed behind. On the economic front, “we knew that 63 percent of jobs in the next

decade would require some postsecondary education," says Sunny Deye, who works on education policy for the National Conference of State Legislatures (as in Kamanetz, 2016). As Deye noted, "there was an understanding that the way we were preparing kids for the 21st century economy needed to change. We had to shift the paradigm from allowing some kids to drop out to recognizing that a high school diploma was now the bar" (in Kananetz, 2016). In 2011 and 2012, graduation rates varied greatly by state and race. Nationwide, black students graduated at a rate of 69 percent; Hispanics graduated at 73 percent; Whites graduated at a rate of 86 percent (governing.com, 2017). Although the nation is currently graduating more students from high school than any time in our history, minority students are graduating predominately below the national standard.

Downward Spiral Effects. An uneducated populace in the urban core continues to perpetuate a downward spiral of economic deterioration. Students who do not complete high school are more likely to be unemployed, or have notably lower wages especially compared to suburban and rural students (Olson, 2006). The ratio of urban youth who ended up in prison, needed public assistance, and died at a younger age is notably higher. "The homicide rate for young males ages 15-24 is 21.9 per 100,000. The homicide rate for young black males in this age category is 85.6 per 100,000! The overall homicide rate for young males in the United States was between 4 and 73 times higher than the homicide rate for young males in any other industrialized nation" (Prothrow-Stith & Weissman, 1991).

Educational Deficiencies. In this environment, educational deficiencies in the urban core stem from a variety of factors. One main factor is poverty (Chipman, 1998). Closely associated with poverty is violence. Inner-city neighborhoods are overridden with gangs and drug dealers (Prothrow-Stith & Weissman, 1991). Low income urban children are more likely than suburban

or rural children to be exposed to environments that do not foster educational success. Examples that hinder development include poverty, unemployment disparities; gang violence; under-resourced neighborhoods; homelessness; frequent mobility; inadequate educational experiences, and limited resources (Bryan, 2005; Chau, Thampi, and Wight, 2010).

These aspects of the environment play a central role in the scholastic growth of the student. Maslow's hierarchy of needs would seemingly make reaching self-actualization a more difficult proposition for students from inner cities (Maslow, 1943, 1954). Maslow's hierarchy of needs for individuals speaks also to the educational needs of the child. According to Maslow, individuals have both deficiency and growth needs. Deficiency needs are basic needs for a person's physical and psychological welfare. Growth needs, on the other hand, include the "need for knowing, appreciating and understanding, these needs can never fully be satisfied" (Slavin, 2005). Growth needs cannot be pursued until all the basic needs of an individual have been met. According to Slavin (2005), schools and government agencies need to realize that if students' basic needs are not met, then their learning will suffer.

Some students felt they received no encouragement and only end up meeting resistance when they tried to advance their education. In turn, students end up in a state of learned helplessness where they feel that no matter how hard they try they are going to fail, and for this reason many students just give up. Prothrow-Stith and Weissman (1991) described this theory as "Black self-hatred." This is not genetically induced, but results from years of conditioning in the social environment. The authors contended that many children are growing up without fathers in the home or significant role models. The reality is that they have been forced to "raise" themselves as many of their mothers may be forced to work two minimum wage jobs just to support, feed and clothe them. Without appropriate role models, they sought the advice and

support of friends. This may have lead them to participate in risk-taking behaviors but often just placed them in the wrong place at the wrong time (Weissman, 1991).

The Need: Educational Success. Most teachers seek a moral purpose to guide them as they teach. This moral imperative focuses on deep learning for students regardless of background or circumstance (Fullan, 2010; 2011). At the secondary level, this moral commitment is complemented with a love of the curriculum they teach; thus, teachers go into teaching because of a sense that they are having an impact on the future, especially when they see success in what they are doing (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Many teachers are guided by a true sense of care, wanting their students to achieve. John Hattie's (2009, 2012) work of "collective teacher efficacy" identified the highest instructional effect size on student performance. Collective teacher efficacy refers to the "collective self-perception that teachers in a given school make an educational difference to their students over and above the educational impact of their homes and communities", Hattie identified this effect size 1.44 on student learning (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Meaning, if students believe teacher's make a difference personally to the student, learning increases. Through Hattie's research this impact on student achievement is as a result of 'high expectations for each student' (Hattie, 2009, 2012). This connectivity is a factor that draws teachers closer to students, and helps to identify their need as an educator with a centralized focus on student achievement (Hattie, 2015).

This empathic disposition often manifests itself in teachers' caring relationships with students. Researchers have noted that students, especially students of color, who have caring relationships with their teachers are more motivated and perform better academically than students who do not (Foster, 1995; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 1990). In addition, empathy can potentially foster openness, attentiveness, and positive relationships. In culturally diverse

classrooms, being open and flexible helps teachers adjust to varying contexts (Delpit, 1995). Empathy allows teachers to be better at modifying pedagogy and curricula to fit their students' needs, such as the teacher who changed a classroom ritual to be more comfortable for her Vietnamese students by simply offering her students multiple ways to say goodbye rather than obliging them to hug her before they left the classroom.

Statement of the Problem

How are schools working to combat the environmental, social, and psychological effects of the urban core on its youth? In an ethnographic study investigating school failure in urban schools, "absenteeism, perceptions of racism, and personal relationships with teachers" was cited as being the main reasons for student dropouts (Lee, 1999). According to Lee (1999), despite the outside influences on urban youth, the students hold school factors responsible as their primary influences on meager academic achievement. In Lee's (1999) findings, students reported that teacher-centered classrooms, perceived racism and discrimination against students; as well as teacher apathy, lack of caring, and low expectations are all major factors contributing to the low achievement of students in urban schools. By the 2003-04 school year, twelve percent of all high school students dropped out, while twenty-five percent of students in 2004 moved in and out of districts nationwide. By 2011, nationwide, black students graduated at a rate of 69 percent; Hispanics graduated at 73 percent; whites graduated at a rate of 86 percent (Governing.com, 2017).

Between 1994 and 2003, the number of elementary school students who were suspended nationwide more than doubled, with African-American students accounting for a disproportionate share of them (Payne, 2005). Students in urban settings, lower socioeconomic groups, and minorities traditionally have had less success through conventional education

(Orfield et al., 2004). These lower success rates can be measured through academics, grades, attendance rates, graduation rates, and entrance into postsecondary study (Olson, 2006).

Relatively little is known about the environmental characteristics that stimulate academic achievement in students with limited economic and social resources (Richman, Bowen, & Woolley, 2004; Ungar, 2005). Even less is known about how environmental protective factors operate in the daily lives of African-American youth (Barbarin, 1993; Byfield, 2008; Evans-Winters, 2005).

Schools have created a multitude of programs to try to counteract the failing environments and combat violence and underachievement for urban youth. Examples include smaller class sizes, additional counselors and social workers, remedial classes, reading programs, truancy officers, and increased security. These are all hopeful solutions that schools have implemented to solve apathy, low skills, psychological issues, and violent tendencies of students (Byrk & Schneider, 2002).

There has been an effort over the last few decades to respond to the growing needs of diverse students, especially on a personal level. McClure explained it as “making an effort to personalize secondary schools, creating places that respond to students on a human scale” (McClure, Yonezawa, & Jones, 2010, p. 2). The context in which students learn is of critical importance to motivate and educate them (Steinberg & Allen, 2002). As a result, schools have responded by creating programs that are geared to meet the needs of all students by helping them become more connected to the school. One such program is Advisory.

Advisory programs provide regular meetings between an advisor and a student or group of students to provide academic and social support (Johnson, 2009; McClure, Yonezawa, & Jones, 2010). Broadly, an Advisory is a small group of students (less than fifteen) with at least

one teacher, created with the objective of increasing students' engagement and attachment to school (McClure et al., 2010). Advisory is "a fundamental structure for middle and high school students to develop key life skills, metacognitive skills, and habits of learning in support of academic achievement, postsecondary planning, personal growth, and interpersonal skill development" (ISN National Conference on Education Innovation, 2017). More specifically, Advisory is a class created for high school students to connect to the school. Thus, the goal of Advisory is to decrease the drop-out rate, failure rate, and low grades while also increasing grades, connectivity to school, and postsecondary entrance.

Similar to the "homeroom" model of the 1980s, Advisory is different in that most advisories carry a curriculum. Districts vary on implementation methods. Advisories in general are characterized by discussions of students' social and academic experiences in school, and some have embedded some postsecondary material. Advisories are based on the notion that providing a mentor adult to a student will lead to a better connection to the school, and that in turn will lead to academic success. According to McClure et al. (2010), "a key component of improving schooling environments has been improving personalization, that is, tightening connections between students and their learning environments (e.g. teachers, other adults, student peers, curriculum, overall school culture)" (p.3). A student's sense of connectivity to a school is a major predictor of academic achievement (Klem & Connell, 2004). With more positive, personalized school cultures the result will be more caring relationships among teachers and students with the hope of fewer students "getting lost". This is the philosophy behind advisories and the needs they address within schools.

Purpose of the Study

Center High School is a small urban school in Kansas City. Advisory has been in effect at Center High since the fall of 2011. The purpose of this study is to find out if Advisory as enacted in Center High School is meeting the original intentions of the program. The original goals of Advisory were: (1) build student relationships with an adult, (2) encourage academic success, and (3) bridge the gap into postsecondary entry for more students. Quantitative and qualitative methods are used to explore goal attainment. Interviews were conducted to assess Advisory success in regard to academic achievement, connectivity in school, and postsecondary access. A comparison of graduation rates, discipline rates, and college application rates before and after Advisory was conducted. While it is too early to draw definitive conclusions as to whether the program is achieving its desired outcomes, this study yielded critical information for teachers, school administrators, and guidance counselors about early outcomes and directions for program implementation and reorganization. This study also helps others who are trying to find a way to reach students in the urban core.

Research Questions

In considering Advisory as their template, this study sought to answer the following questions.

1. Has Advisory had an effect on student outcomes? Specifically, what are graduation rates, discipline rates, and college application rates at Center High since implementation of Advisory compared to rates on the same indicators for the three-year period prior to implementation?
2. What are teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness of Advisory?
 - a. Have they implemented it? What parts, pieces?

- b. What do they like/dislike about it?
 - c. How does it help (or not help) students?
 - d. Why do they think some students are still failing? What would they do about it?
 - e. Do they have a relationship with their students? How do they know?
2. From the perspective of students, what are the outcomes of Advisory?
- a. How do students describe Advisory?
 - b. Has Advisory made an impact in students' lives? Do students like it? What role do they think it plays in their success (or failure)?
 - c. How has Advisory enhanced students' connectedness to the school?
 - d. What makes it work (or not)? In particular, does Advisory facilitate a positive relationship with teachers?

Conceptual Framework

The ecological perspective is used to frame this study because it considers a broad range of variables within the students' social environment to help identify the individual characteristics and contextual conditions that contribute to student outcomes, including broader social, cultural, and historical forces (Fraser, 2004). The ecological perspective, also called the social ecological model, is a conceptual framework used in the social sciences to examine the interactive relationship between individuals and their social environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As such, the ecological model forces researchers to look beyond the commonly cited causes of resilience (i.e., individual characteristics) and to consider external factors (i.e., family, school, and community) that might have a significant impact on the educational resilience of urban black students (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1997). According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological

systems theory, human development is influenced by the dynamic interaction between an individual and multiple levels of his or her surrounding social environment. The social environment is viewed as a series of nested systems: (a) the microsystem consists of the immediate environment where the individual is physically present (i.e., home, peer group, school, neighborhood); (b) the meso-system consists of interactions and connections between micro-system settings; (c) the exo-system consists of settings in the wider society; and (d) the macrosystem consists of the values, laws, customs within the community and nation. Within each of these subsystems, there are risk factors also known as adversities that may negatively influence development, and there are protective factors also known as support systems that may foster resiliency (Fraser, 2004).

Using this framework as an influence on the Advisory study, interactions and connections between students and teachers and their perception of the effects of those interactions systematically set the stage for the success or failure of Advisory.

Center School District

Center School District was established in 1904. The district grew to approximately 6,000 during its peak enrollment during the mid-1970s. In 1963, Center was urged to merge with the Kansas City Missouri School District. The Center community was strong and included a high percentage of the population of the Kansas City Jewish community, as well as the Kansas City Jewish Community Center. This ardent commitment to community was a dissuading factor in the Center School District joining the Kansas City Missouri School District. As a result, the Center School District voted against the merger and remained its own entity.

Currently surrounded by large urban districts, the Center School District is small. Approximately 2,200 students were in the entire district in 2016, a decrease from the 6,000 in the

1970s. The Center School District maintains a daycare center, an early childhood center, four elementary schools, one middle school, an alternative middle and high school, and one high school. It is the smallest public school district within the municipal boundaries of the City of Kansas City, Missouri, and it is the smallest urban district in the state of Missouri.

The High School. In 2014, Center High School had approximately 600 students. Each year, from about 2007 through 2014, roughly 25-30 percent of the student body had transferred in and out of the high school. From 2011 to 2014, the graduation rate hovered at about 85 percent; the rate in 2013 was 93 percent. The percentage of students requiring financial assistance steadily grew, and by September 2016, 75 percent of the students were on free and reduced lunch. At that time, African-American students comprised 75 percent of the total student population. Before the 2011–2012 school year, 40 percent of students failed at least one or more class for the year; 60 percent entered into college; and the average ACT score was 18.4 for the graduating class of 2011.

Yet, between 2011 and 2014, test scores steadily increased in most areas, and the district in 2013 had 14 out of 14 proficiency points by the State of Missouri making it “Fully Accredited.” That was the first time the school ever received all accreditation points since the enactment of the Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP). In the 2011–2012 school year, the high school was given the Gold Star award in the State of Missouri. This is the highest award possible from the state. The award was given as a result of the gains made in overall student achievement. Also in the 2011-2012 school year, the high school was nominated for a Blue-Ribbon award. This is the highest award for public schools given by the federal government. In 2014, the high school was named by *US World and News Report* as part of the “Best High Schools in America” report.

In comparing other urban districts throughout the state, the Center School District maintained the highest test scores collectively between 2010–2013 among peer districts, and was considered by the community as the ‘Number One Urban District within the state of Missouri’ (DESE, 2013). These increases coincided with the implementation of Advisory. The gains in student achievement took a decisive upturn the year after Advisory was implemented. After three full years of Advisory, the behavior rates (conduct cases) compared to 2010 alone decreased by almost 54 percent (70 events per 100 students to 38 events per 100 students) (DESE, 2016). The graduation rate increased steadily to the highest it had been since the 1990s. Postsecondary collegiate acceptance also steadily grew (DESE, 2016).

Advisory at Center High School. In 2010, teachers could see that something more needed to be done to connect the students to the school to increase college and career readiness for all students. Advisory was born as teachers wanted more resources to reach their diverse students. In working collectively with administration for a method to reach students, the Advisory program was created, and in 2011-2012 the program was implemented.

In this quest to increase student proficiency and connectivity, huge gains were made in creating the curriculum to add an Advisory class. The goal was to establish a program within the school setting to meet the needs of students socially, to help prepare them academically, and to bridge the gap between high school and postsecondary entrance.

This “class” which met once a week was specifically designed for, but not limited to, those students who were struggling socially and academically. Special intent was given for the students who had not made connections with the school. This teacher-led program initiative was established with a detailed curriculum for freshmen Advisory, sophomore Advisory, junior Advisory, and senior Advisory. The curriculum was researched and developed by teachers. The

curriculum was different for the various grade levels. Meaning, lessons and activities to meet the goals outlined were different depending on the grade level of the Advisory class. It was designed to particularly address academic achievement, relationship building, and postsecondary entry. These classes met once a week for thirty minutes. Small groups of less than fifteen students were assigned an Advisory mentor. Mentors included teachers, secretaries, counselors, social workers, and the in-school suspension teacher. Each Advisory mentor followed their group of students through graduation with the curriculum established. An administrator oversaw the program and had continual meetings with an Advisory leadership council to address the needs and concerns of the program in general. All Advisory teachers met at least once a month to discuss the curriculum, to ensure the pacing was accurate, and to address issues and needs within the various sections (freshmen, sophomore, junior, and seniors) as they arose.

Conclusion

This dissertation will examine Advisory using a program evaluation model. It seeks to answer the following questions: Does Advisory meet the original goals of its creation in a small urban high school in Kansas City? Those goals being (1) student academic achievement, (2) a strong relationship with an adult in the building, and (3) postsecondary entrance. In Chapter 2, I review the literature informing the study. The study method is described in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 discusses the findings from the study, while Chapter 5 discusses the conclusion and implications of the findings.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature and research related to the role of Advisory. Special consideration is given to urban school populations and the difficulty they have in educating their students. Advisory is discussed as to the role it plays in regard to impact on student achievement, especially in urban settings.

Urban School Challenges

Education is facing a “crisis of completion and performance” with urban schools leading in the percentages of dropouts, underperformance, and appalling postsecondary entry (Hyslop & Imperatore, 2013, p. 16). Graduating from high school is “a barometer of the health of American society and the skill level of its future workforce” (Heckam & LaFontaine, 2010, p. 244). Yet, urban high schools are struggling to meet these challenges. Urban schools make up 30 percent of the nation’s disadvantaged students (Hyslop & Imperatore, 2013). Overcoming the challenges is not an easy task, especially with typically limited resources at the onset. The obstacles to overcome for an urban school at times are insurmountable due to the varying state in which students come to school. Not only are there issues of resources for the schools, but also in the community at large.

Urban environment challenges include educating non-English speakers, meeting the needs of low-socioeconomic families, a general lack of resources, violence and poverty within the communities that the schools are serving, unemployment rates, and so forth. For instance, urban students from low-income families are more likely than their suburban or rural peers to be exposed to environments that do not foster educational and economic success such as poverty, unemployment disparities, gang violence, under-resourced neighborhoods, homelessness,

frequent mobility, single parent households, inadequate educational experiences, and limited resources and services (Bryan, 2005; Chau et al., 2010).

With these barriers facing communities, schools, and students, it is often difficult for the student to connect to education. The lack of resources, higher rate of non-certified teachers, lack of technology, less parental involvement, lower pupil expectations, and a general sense of apathy make the future seem very bleak for many urban students (Barton, 2003; Bennett, Merritt, & Wolin, 2004; Brady-Smith, Fauth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Carey, 2002; Evans, 2004; Moore, Redd, Burkhauser, Mbwana, & Collins, 2009). Students find it difficult to see a future in a high-wage, high-demand, or in satisfying work; and as a result, struggle to understand and connect the purpose of school as it relates to their future.

Heider (1958) and later expanded by Weiner (1985) explained an attribution theoretical framework. Heider noted that how people perceive each other and how people hold others accountable for their behavior is exhibited in internal motivation. Weiner (1985) added in his attribution theory of achievement motivations, that it is in the educational settings how students form beliefs about their academic performance. They form beliefs based on external factors (characteristics at school) and internal factors (prior knowledge and experiences). Weiner believed that how students' attribute achievement affects their behavior and motivation. When students attribute their academic success to internal factors such as effort and ability, they are more likely to repeat the behavior and as a result have increased achievement results. A lack of success, on the other hand, is attributed by students to external factors such as task difficulty or poor teacher instruction. Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory states a need for individuals to be connected, but the connections come from external factors he defines as people and the environment. Thus, the environment has an enormous impact on individual self-

determination. This, in turn, in urban settings fosters disengagement with students and creates dropouts at higher rates than non-urban peers, as the level of connectedness is less (Hyslop & Imperatore, 2013). According to Jordan (2012), “black males are 7 percentage points less likely to graduate than White males, and youths raised in households with one biological parent are 12 points less likely to graduate” (p. 18). African-American students attribute external factors for their success or failure more than White peers (Graham, 1997).

Urban schools are continually fighting this trend of apathy and disengagement. Across the United States, there are millions of public (K-12) school students from low-income urban communities who overcome personal adversity and dire circumstances, such as low socioeconomic status, inadequate resources, and fragmented services to succeed academically (Wyner, Bridgeland, & Diiulio, 2007). These high-achieving, lower-income (K-12) students are often referred to by researchers and educators as educationally resilient (i.e., students who succeed in school despite the presence of adverse conditions) and constitute an important, but scarcely understood, segment of the public-school population (Wang et al., 1995; Wyner et al., 2007). In the last two decades, only a few studies on resiliency have focused on resilient African-American youth (Braddock, Royster, Winfield, & Hawkins, 1991; Clark, 1983; Cook, 2000; Ford, 1993, 1994; Geary, 1988). Schools are continuously trying to create programs in an attempt to successfully reach more students. Advisory is one such program.

Advisory Programs

The rise and fall of schools implementing Advisory programs has been studied minimally. Since 1987, there have been no comprehensive and rigorous studies conducted on the effectiveness of Advisory programs (Makkonen, 2004). Until recently, published work has

focused instead on how to implement Advisory programs, train staff, and provide appropriate administrative support (Gewertz, 2007).

Advisory programs have been created to combat the statistical downturn, hoping to change the negative forecast of student success and achievement. The research on Advisory programs is thin. Advisory models have sprung up all over the county. Each school and district from rural, suburban, and urban are trying to find a model which meets the needs of their students in their community. Advisory varies in program model and implementation. Research is lacking when trying to identify the success of Advisory programs on student achievement and school connectivity.

Another issue for researchers is trying to understand Advisory programs. It is difficult due to the variance of programs nationwide. Therefore, looking at research as a guide for the effectiveness of Advisory is shallow, as this research has not been done systematically. What then becomes the purpose of Advisory programs within schools? This varies from school to school and district to district. However, research does agree that urban schools need something individualized and intensive (Garyan, 2014).

Advisory as a whole is a class where teachers are hoping to connect with students. There is a multitude of research on connectedness with students and schools, relationships between students and an adult, and although less research, research none the less on disadvantaged students and their success.

Connectivity and Relationships between Students and Teacher

Despite the lack of literature specifically associated with Advisory programs, there is tremendous research aligned with the goals addressed through Advisory. The goals of Advisory build upon strong student relationships with an adult mentor in the school, a sense of student

connectedness, engagement and belonging. Programs should address the literature within these areas to inquire if these types of processes illicit positive outcomes for students. Likewise, are there links in the methods and areas within advisories in urban districts where gains have been made in reaching students academically? In other words, there is research on the concepts or theories on which advisories are based. In *Visible Learning for Teachers*, Hattie (2012) explained that “teacher’s beliefs and commitments are the greatest influence on student achievement”.

High schools have historically been organized into departments that create classes which will provide credits for high school graduation for students. Often, this system gives teachers primary allegiance to subject matter departments, and little attention to the emotional and developmental needs of the students. Students often are hurried from one class to the next, classmates change with each class period, and having the same teacher from one year to the next provides little or no autonomy for students. Advisory addresses this change directly. Advisory provides a central class where students meet regularly. Some Advisory programs create models where the teacher is with the same group of students throughout the years.

Research shows a positive correlation when students attend high schools that are communally organized (acting like a community), where there is shared responsibility and decision making among staff, a commitment to a common set of goals, and an emphasis on personal relationships between teacher and students. In these schools, greater gains in student achievement are noted (Neild, 2009). Continually fostering personalization within the school setting is one of the greatest ways to increase school connectivity.

Tightening connections with students and their environment show a positive correlation in achievement. These environmental connections with teachers, other adults within the

building, the student's peers, curriculum, and the overall school culture and climate matter when trying to increase student connectedness. Young people who are engaged emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally in their education are less likely to show signs of alienation and more likely to feel a connection with their school (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Hallinan, 2008). When teachers understand the essentials of what to teach and at what level of difficulty, and they understand progress, and the effects of their teaching, an impact on student achievement is made (Hattie, 2012). It is "powerful, passionate, and accomplished teachers" teaching with a certain attitude or belief system that truly makes the difference...passionate and inspired teachers (Hattie, 2012, p.23). Students must have interactions with people and the environment (external factor) for connection or relatedness to occur. When that happens, students internalize the success and become self-determined (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Schools have an obligation to create systems of connectivity for all students. Phillippo (2010) pointed out that the most effective structures for student success include Advisory periods. Informal gathering places are especially important for building a community within the school. Creating systems where innovative instruction can take place offers students invaluable lessons that utilize valued knowledge and skills, but they also provide the social conduits that link teacher and student cultures together, which is essential to student success. Increased school connectedness is also related to educational motivation, classroom engagement, and better attendance; all of which are linked to higher academic achievement (Blum & Libbey, 2004; Blum, McNeely, & Rinehart, 2002).

This connectivity and success for all students is also linked to the relationships between an adult mentor and a student within the high school setting. As Hattie (2012) noted:

Such an expectation requires teachers to believe that intelligence is changeable rather than fixed. It requires teachers to have high respect for their students and to show a passion that all can indeed attain success. The manner used by the teacher to treat and interact with students, to respect them as learners and people, and to demonstrate care and commitment for them also needs to be transparent to students (p. 30).

According to Neild (2009), emphasis on personal relationships between teacher and students can offer greater learning gains than their peers at “bureaucratically” organized schools. Fewer course failures were shown at schools where teachers offered more help with personal problems, gave students more personal attention in class, and held higher expectations for students to work hard, stay in school, and have high aspirations for the future. Neild (2009) suggested that one indicator for change in student outcomes is a more personalized school environment for teachers and students. Advisory creates this type of environment between staff and students. More positively, personalized school cultures result in more caring relationships among teachers and students, and results in fewer students feeling unworthy, isolated, and getting lost.

Advisories, adult-student mentoring programs, and enhanced adult-led extra-curricular programs are a few ways that small and large schools can enhance adult-student relationships. The importance of personalization is reinforced by growing evidence that indicates greater personalization—improved, trusting relationships particularly among teachers and students—is able to raise students’ expectations for themselves and teachers’ expectations for students (McClure et al., 2010). As Hattie (2012) and Kottler, Zehm, and Kottler (1993) note:

The picture of expert teachers, then, is one of an involvement and respect for the students, or a willingness to be receptive to what the students need, of teachers who demonstrate a

sense of responsibility in the learning process, and of teachers who are passionate about ensuring that their students are learning (Hattie, 2012, p.32)...Passionately committed teachers are those who absolutely love what they do. They are constantly searching for more effective ways to reach their children, to master the content and methods of their craft. They feel a personal mission...to learning as much as they can about the world, about others, about themselves – and helping others to do the same (Hattie, 2012, p. 30; Zehm & Kottler 1993, p. 118).

Disadvantaged Students and Success

Effective teachers with diverse students in urban settings recognize empathy as a component of success for teachers (Gordon, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994). McAllister and Irvine (2002) pointed out that teachers also play a large role in student success, especially those students in urban settings. Their study of 34 practicing teachers' beliefs regarding the role of empathy in working with culturally diverse students showed the importance of using and nurturing empathetic dispositions and behaviors. Teachers discussed their most valuable learning experiences in a professional development course geared towards fostering culturally responsive practices. Through a content analysis of various documents, three themes emerged impacting student achievement: more positive interactions with culturally diverse students, more supportive classroom climates, and more student-centered practices. Thus, teachers who possess empathy and increased sensitivity to students are viewed as desirable. Noddings (1992) referred to this as “feeling with” a non-judgmental empathy (as cited in Goodman, 2000). It is important to ensure educators provide feedback that is impactful for motivation, especially since students think about what causes success (Weiner, 1985).

Achievement is still disproportionately different between races of students. Since the 1990's the achievement gaps have steadily widened. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the 1970's and 1980's reported a large decline in the reading and mathematics achievement gap of White and Black students (NAEP, 2009). The College Board National Task Force on Minority High Achievement (1999) reported minority achievement has lagged behind White peers as early as elementary school. In 2013, NAEP reported the same scores for White students in 2009, but reported a drop in African-American scores.

The lack of caring and supporting adults and teachers has the greatest impact on minority populations. Polite (1992) asserted that the lack of supportive and caring adult relationships within the high school, as well as the absence of guidance and structure, negatively impacted the academic engagement and progress of African-American students. It is the teacher who has the most impact and influence in creating academic success and experiences for students (Nieto, 1992).

To influence diverse students, there are many factors to be considered which have an impact. Schwille, Dembele, and Schubert (2007) have suggested that teaching is the strongest determining factor of student achievement at the school level. Creating environments that are student-centered, tap into motivation, and create high expectations have a high impact on diverse learners (Ungureanu, 2013). Student interactions with their teachers ensures the students' educational performance and identity (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). A teacher's influence of the achievement of students, regardless of subject or school level (Woessmann, 2012), and the role they play in sharing the academic success of students is critical (Reyna, 2000).

The teacher's relationship with students is critical to student success. Zenkov, Harmon, and Lier (2008) found the students believed that the relationship with their teachers, which

consisted of being valued as individuals and trusted to excel, would have helped them remain engaged in school and academically achieve. A study on causes of student drop outs found students stated a teacher who cared about their learning and took an interest in them would have prevented them from dropping out (Altenbaugh, Engel, & Martin, 1995). Smith (2008) noted that teachers who cared about their students emotionally and socially, implemented culturally relevant and applicable instruction, and maintained high expectations for behavior and achievement, reduced the risk of school failure. The teachers in another study, identified the tools of success and promotion for African-American male achievement, were to make instruction relevant to their lives, provide adult mentoring opportunities, and be conscious of cultural influences (Lindberg, Hyde, Peterson, & Linn, 2010). It is for these reasons that Advisory was created: the hope to provide a caring, mentoring adult.

Academic Impact of Advisory

Research varies as to the relationship of an advisory program to academic success. Is it the advisory program, or the relationships established through advisory that increase academic success? McClure et al. (2010) found that the more that students felt personalization at their schools, the better students did academically. Throughout their study, a strong sense of a student's sense of personalization over time created a corresponding steady increase in academic achievement.

McIntyre, Pedder, and Ruddock (2005) summarized an extensive series of research on student voice found that students want a constructive focus on learning. Students want to talk about their learning and how to improve (Hattie, 2012). Students who perceive that their teachers care about them, respect them, praise them, and hold high expectations for them are more apt to like school and be motivated to learn. Students who enjoy the school environment

have higher academic achievement and a lower incidence of disciplinary problems, absenteeism, truancy, and drop out less often than those who do not like school (Hallinan, 2008). Liking school indicates a positive effect on grades (Rogers & Rose, 2002). The social psychological theory “Mattering” suggests that stable, positive interactions with one or more persons are essential for healthy socio-emotional development (Noddings, 1992, 2003). Thus, the perceptions of students that the school staff and teachers care about them and their academic achievements are imperative to their overall success.

Impact of Expectations

As early as 1968, Rosenthal and Jacobson studied what they called “the Pygmalion Effect.” This was the impact of teacher expectations on student achievement. Teachers in an elementary school in San Francisco, California were given false information regarding their students. As a result, they believed their students were high performing based on the false information given. The study results showed the inflated perceptions of teachers led to higher academic achievement of students, which to Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), was indicative of the self-fulfilling prophecy. There have been many studies since then which show similar results (Brophy & Good, 1970; Mistry, White, Benner, & Huynh, 2009). Teachers who believe and support success of students, receive higher returns toward those expectations. In other words, if teachers believe students will be successful, and teach to that, students are successful.

Research on teacher bias is wide spread. Researchers in the Netherlands explored the biased attitudes of teachers and how that related to their beliefs and expectations about minority groups (Van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten, & Holland, 2010). They sought to determine if there were biased attitudes and differential expectations of teachers. The study included 41 Dutch teachers and a total of 434 students of Dutch, Turkish, and Moroccan origin in

17 elementary schools. The study used the Modern Racism Scale (MRS). The MRS was also included in a larger questionnaire that measured teachers' job satisfaction and attitudes regarding learning disabilities and personality characteristics. An additional questionnaire was given to measure teacher expectations, the Implicit Association Test, which measures perceptions of ethnic groups. The findings revealed the teachers held different expectations for different ethnicities. When the teachers held higher expectations for students, the achievement scores of those students were higher. As a result, the conclusion of the researchers was that the prejudicial attitudes of teachers regarding ethnic groups significantly influences the academic achievement of students (Bergh, et al., 2010).

Teacher expectation of students makes a difference. When teachers held positive expectations, students performed better and the reverse occurred for negative expectations held by teachers (Boer, Bosker, & Van der Werf., 2010). Rubie-Davies (2007) determined that teachers with low-expectations had student performance decline over the year, yet teachers with high expectations had high performing classes. Another study was conducted by Rubie-Davies, Patterson, Irving, Widdowson, and Dixon (2010) on student achievement verses teacher expectations. Teachers who had high expectations revealed a strong correlation to students' performance (Rubie-Davies et al., 2010). Teachers' expectations are also attributed to graduation rates (Samuel, Sonderfield, Fischer, & Patterson, 2011). The findings revealed the On-Time Graduation (OTG) students believed that their teachers had high expectations for them to graduate and go to college. Students' perceptions of how their teachers feel about them contribute to their success.

Environments where teachers were emotionally supportive led to greater student engagement, motivation, and achievement (Buhs & Rudasill, 2016). School climate has an

impact. Student academic performance was significantly better in schools where students felt an attachment to their school (Stewart, 2008). Stewart (2008) also discovered that a student's feeling of belonging at school was a predictor of student outcomes. Classroom engagement for African-American students at all grade levels increased when teachers displayed caring and respectful attitudes (Tucker & Herman, 2002). Students develop academic behaviors based on the verbal and nonverbal actions of their teachers (Weinstein & McKown, 1998). These studies indicate that when teachers create an emotionally supportive environment, students are inclined to be better engaged and more academically successful (Sakiz, Pape, & Hoye, 2012; Stewart, 2008).

Summary

As indicated from the literature review, the need for student-teacher relationships is necessary for improving education in the United States by meeting the needs of the students in preparation for 21st century learning. Teacher mentors have the potential to guide students through academic learning, various experiences, and social persuasion. Teacher effectiveness has the greatest impact on student success and achievement. Advisory can be a catalyst for that success.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In this chapter I describe the research design, study site and participants, how the data were collected, and the methods for analyzing the data. This section also discusses other considerations to study, data validity, and limitations of the study.

Introduction

Advisory is a class created to help secondary students connect to their school. The goals of Advisory are to decrease the drop-out rate, failure rate, and low grades while also increasing grades, connectivity to school, and postsecondary entrance. In the urban core, advisory is like other programs created to respond to the conditions of under achievement for urban youth. Schools have continuously created a multitude of programs to try to counteract the failing environments and combat violence and underachievement. Some examples include smaller class sizes, additional counselors and social workers, remedial classes, reading programs, truancy officers, and increased security. These are all hopeful solutions that schools have implemented to solve apathy, low skills, psychological, and violent tendencies of students (Byrk & Schneider, 2002). All programs created come with a cost for schools. The cost can be in personnel, allocation of time, and resources available. While advisory is a program like the others, it specifically addresses the relationship students have with a teacher.

A student's sense of connectivity to a school is a major predictor of academic achievement (Klem & Connell, 2004). With more positive, personalized school cultures the result will be more caring relationships among teachers and students with the hope of fewer students getting lost. This is the philosophy behind advisories, and what needs they address within schools. Advisory is a proactive rather than reactive response to student achievement.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to conduct a program evaluation to find out if Advisory as enacted in Center High School is meeting the original intentions of the program. The original goals of Advisory were: (1) build student relationships with an adult, (2) encourage academic success, and (3) bridge the gap into postsecondary entry for more students. Do students and staff feel that Advisory is meeting the original goals? Is the cost worth the benefit of the program?

Guiding Research Questions

In utilizing a program evaluation model, the following research questions guided the study. These were both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Has Advisory had an effect on student outcomes? Specifically, what are graduation rates, discipline rates, grades and college application rates at Center High School since the implementation of Advisory compared to rates on the same indicators for the three-year period prior to implementation?

The remaining research questions guiding the study are addressed through the use of face-to-face interviews with students and teachers, using qualitative data, and quantitative research from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

1. Has Advisory had an effect of student outcomes? Specifically, what are graduation rates, discipline rates, and college application rates at Center High since implementation of Advisory compared to rates on the same indicators for the three-year period prior to implementation?
2. What are teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness of Advisory?
 - a. Have they implemented it? What parts, pieces?
 - b. What do they like/dislike about it?
 - c. How does it help (or not help) students?

- d. Why do they think some students are still failing? What would they do about it?
 - e. Do they have a relationship with their students? How do they know?
3. From the perspective of students, what are the outcomes of Advisory?
- a. How do students describe Advisory?
 - b. Has Advisory made an impact in students' lives? Do students like it? What role do they think it plays in their success (or failure)?
 - c. How has Advisory enhanced students' connectedness to the school?
 - d. What makes it work (or not)?
 - e. In particular, does Advisory facilitate a positive relationship with teachers?

This study's research questions explore the early outcomes of Advisory at Center High School, while looking to gain a general understanding of teachers' practices with the use of Advisory within the school, and finally students' feelings toward Advisory. It is recognized that similarities might be common in other institutions. The goals of this study correspond to the research questions guiding the study. Some of the guiding research questions were answered through use of school data (graduation rates, behavior rates, grades, and retention), while the rest were attained through qualitative face to face interviews.

In this chapter the design of the mixed method program evaluation study will be discussed, along with how a sample will be selected, how data will be collected and analyzed, and finally how trustworthiness will be ensured. Consideration of other studies and limitations of this study will be discussed.

Design of the Study

Administrators must continue to evaluate programs to ensure their effectiveness, and this study is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Center High School Advisory program. The program model is a hybrid, developed specifically to meet the needs of the students within Center High School. While aligning to national trends in advisory, Advisory at Center High School is led and developed by teachers, thus, creating a structure unique to the needs of the community for which it serves.

There are approximately 620 students at the high school. Every student is assigned an Advisory teacher. Advisory has changed slightly since its enactment in 2010-2011, but the premise remains constant. Students stay with the same teacher for the four years they are in the high school. Class sizes for Advisory average about 12-15 students a class. The Advisory classes are structured around the grade levels. Freshmen are in a freshmen Advisory class, sophomores are in a sophomore Advisory class, and so on.

The class meets once a week for 20 minutes. After Advisory class is finished the students have a tutoring session where they can travel to another teacher to make up a test, get help on a problem, or simply stay and work in their Advisory class as a study hall. In 2011, there were two tutoring sessions for students lasting 20 minutes each, and in 2015 the teachers voted to change the tutoring to one session for 40 minutes. This change was done without much input from students. Since 2015, a \$500 stipend is given to teacher leaders of the grade levels. These Advisory teachers keep the curriculum up to date, meet regularly with administration and counselors to ensure topics are timely and accurate, and they disseminate information to their colleagues regarding Advisory class.

Having a class such as Advisory takes resources, so it becomes critical to measure the effectiveness of the class and determine whether it is working according to the original intent. I chose a program evaluation model, using a qualitative mixed method case study. In conducting the program evaluation, I believe it was crucial to hear the voices of the students and teachers who are actively participating or have actively participated in Advisory as a class. That is why I chose to use qualitative data as a source of determining the effectiveness of the program. My approach to this study aligns with the standards of qualitative research, which are to “focus is on process, meaning, and understanding...[and] the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). It was important to see if those who are most closely connected to Advisory, the teachers and the students, feel that it is successful. This is best done through interviews.

This case study research design was based on the constructivist paradigm in which truth and reality are relative to one’s perspective (Searle, 1995). The views of participants, teachers and students, and their stories influence their perceptions of whether the original goals of Advisory are being met. Case studies must have a unit of analysis that determines the case by definition and context (Stake, 1995). For this case study, I examined the perceptions of students and staff on their Advisory class: Center High School’s Advisory was the case.

The Advisory program at Center High School was analyzed specifically through the three original purposes of the program’s implementation. The (1) first purpose of the program was to increase postsecondary enrollment. The (2) second goal of the program was to increase academic success. The (3) final purpose of the program implementation was to build relationships between students and teachers. As a mixed method study, data in the form of discipline, dropout rates, and post-graduation entrance rates will all help determine whether there is specific

quantitative data to support success trends for Advisory. Quantitative data was brought into the study to take a deeper look at trends before and after Advisory was created. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) for the state of Missouri was utilized to provide data associated to student success and performance. This information will be specific to discipline data, dropout data, and student enrollment in postsecondary schools.

Both the quantitative data and the qualitative data will be essential in determining whether Advisory is meeting the goals for which it was enacted to address.

Samples Selected. Participant selection for the implementation of this research study was voluntary. Potential participants were approached face-to-face for a general explanation of the study, and were extended an invitation to participate. Eight teachers from the school district were invited to participate. Eight students from the high school were selected to participate. Teachers and students who agreed to participate were given an Informed Consent form to complete and sign before participation in this study. (See Appendix C) Students received and returned the Parent/Guardian Consent (Appendix A) and a Student Assent form (Appendix B) in order to be used in this study.

Purposeful sampling occurred in that the criteria for the students was they must be students of Center High School, and must be enrolled (or have been enrolled) in an Advisory class. I wanted an array of students in various grade levels to be interviewed. Originally I wanted an even number of boys and girls, and a mix of ethnic diversity to be interviewed. The teachers interviewed needed to have taught at least one year of Advisory. In determining who would be interviewed, students and teachers were randomly selected to participate.

Initially getting students to be interviewed consisted of randomly selecting their student number, asking them to participate, getting their parents to agree, and then interviewing. This

became virtually impossible as students did not know who I was, and I was not getting anyone to agree to be interviewed. Therefore, I switched to a “snowball” sampling selection. I asked a coach to ask a student for me. That student and parent agreed to be interviewed, they knew another student I could talk to, and so forth and so on. Eventually freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors were interviewed. There was even one student who had just graduated who was interviewed. I interviewed until the data collected started repeating itself. In all, eight students were interviewed. Of the eight, two were female and six were male. One was white, and seven were African-American.

There are approximately 55 teachers in Center High School. Eight randomly selected Advisory teachers were chosen to participate. They were asked and agreed to be interviewed. Advisory has been in practice since 2011. Seven of the eight teachers have been teaching since 2011. As a result, the teachers have taught almost all levels of Advisory. The curriculum for each level (i.e. freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior) of Advisory is different, and the teachers brought in years of experience with teaching different Advisory curriculums. Of the eight teachers, four were female and four were male. One was African-American.

Data Collected and Analyzed: Qualitative

Interviews were used to gain more knowledge regarding both student and teacher perspectives of Advisory and its success around its designed goals of (1) relationships, (2) postsecondary, and (3) academic success. Merriam (2009) explained in all forms of qualitative research, some and occasionally all of the data are collected through interviews. Qualitative data consist of “direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge” obtained through interviews; “detailed descriptions of people’s activities, behaviors, actions” recorded in observations; and “excerpts, quotations, or entire passages” extracted from

various types of documents (Patton, 2002, p.130). Interviewing involves asking questions and getting answers from participants in a study. Interviewing has a variety of forms including: individual, face-to-face interviews, and face-to-face group interviewing. The asking and answering of questions can be mediated by the telephone or other electronic devices (e.g. computers). Interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Guided by the view of phenomenology (people know what they experience), and the problem and purpose for the study (program evaluation), and the sample of students and teachers involved; conducting interviews for the purpose of uncovering individual viewpoints on Advisory was necessary. In this study, one-to-one, face to face interviews were conducted. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured model. Semi-structured interviews allow for a mix of more and less structured interview questions. All the questions use flexibility and usually data is required of all respondents. The largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored. There is no predetermined wording or order from the respondents (Merriam, 2009).

All interviews of students were conducted at Center High School. The interviews of the teachers varied from their classroom at Center High School, the library, a coffee shop, and in an office. All interviews were conducted one-to-one, face-to-face. Both student and teacher interviews were tape recorded, and transcripts were made.

Interviews were analyzed to identify themes. The thematic analysis, following Schwandt's (2007) process, required reducing the data and drawing conclusions based on the interpretation of the data. This method was appropriate for this case study because it allowed for (a) analysis consisted of sorting of data collected from interviews and organizing it into

categories; (b) coding the segments of the transcription were done to find patterns; (c) comparing and interpreting the data gathered offered an in-depth understanding of the common experiences shared by participants; (d) and the qualitative research design involved in interviews with subjects that captured their experiences and permitted their voice to be heard (Miller, 2015)

Through the interviews it was important to receive teacher and student feedback regarding their perspectives of Advisory. The interview questions were aligned to the original goals of Advisory to discover whether teachers and students believed Advisory was addressing the goals for which it was intended.

Advisory utilizes a curriculum created by a group of teachers, and unique to the level of student in the class. That is, freshmen receive a different curriculum than sophomores, juniors, or seniors. The interview also sought to gain their perspectives about what components worked and did not work with the program, and what could be changed to help students succeed.

Interview questions for teachers included:

1. Do you feel Advisory is effective? Why or why not?
2. Do you feel like you have a positive relationship with your Advisory students? Why or why not?
3. Do you think your Advisory students would have been as successful academically without Advisory? Why or why not?
4. What post-high school discussions have been most beneficial to the students as a result of Advisory?
5. What areas could Advisory help to further address to aid in student success through high school?
6. What has been the most helpful component of Advisory for students?

7. If you could work to change an aspect of Advisory what would it be?
8. What have you liked most/least about the Advisory program?

As with the teachers, it was imperative to see whether students' perceptions of success and connectivity to Advisory aligned with their success in school. The aim of the student interviews was to gain their perspectives about Advisory. It was important to acquire an understanding of how Advisory contributed to their success or failure, helped connect them to the school, staff, and faculty members. The questions were also designed to elicit feedback regarding their teacher mentor relationship, and whether that relationship helped them to become a better student.

Interview questions for students included:

1. How do you describe Advisory?
2. Do you feel like your Advisory teacher cares about you? Why or why not?
3. Do you feel connected to your Advisory teacher?
4. Do you like your Advisory teacher?
5. What qualities either help you feel connected or keep you from feeling connected to your teacher?
6. Has Advisory helped you become a better student? How or why?
7. Do you feel more comfortable with the idea of receiving an education after high school because of Advisory? Please explain.
8. Do you feel like the Advisory program has helped you be more successful in high school? Why or why not?
9. Is your academic success better because of Advisory? Why or why not?
10. What post-high school discussions have been beneficial to you as a result of Advisory?

11. What has been the most helpful component of Advisory?
12. What have you liked most about the Advisory program?
13. Do you believe that what you learned in Advisory has helped you better prepare for life after high school? Why or why not?

Other than the observations done as an Administrator in the building and going in to Advisory classes, no actionable observations of a class were conducted as a part of this study.

Process. Qualitative data gathered included audio recordings and transcriptions from interviews of teacher and student participants, and any related references and materials. First, data collected were sorted and reviewed. Transcriptions were coded and categorized according to research questions. All transcriptions of interviews from teachers and students were coded into themes. The researcher personally interviewed each of the teachers and students. Interviews lasted from 12 minutes to 50 minutes. All interviews were tape recorded.

Analysis. All qualitative data analysis is inductive and comparative in the service or developing common themes or patterns or categories that cut across the data (Merriam, 2009). The data analysis process involved listening to audio recordings and reviewing transcribed data from interviews. Data analysis was conducted along with data collection. The data organized was sorted into categories to align with the goals and research questions. Using a “constant comparative method”, while re-reading transcripts, themes began to emerge. Repetition of words and themes were compared amongst the participants, which afforded the researcher with the ability to recognize common threads of beliefs and attitudes. The analysis process essentially included reading, re-reading texts and documents, and listening to recordings multiple times to identify themes, to code, and analyze notes throughout the project. This process is the “constant comparative method.” Utilizing content analysis from the content of the interviews, themes and

reoccurring patterns of meaning developed. The findings from this project are presented in the next chapter.

Limitations of the Data. Students selected for the study knew each other, and very likely were members of a team or involved in similar activities to connect them to each other and the coach who originally asked a student to be interviewed. As a result, the students could have feelings of connectivity as a result of the activities they were involved in. This could have been a dependent variable in the sampling.

Data Collected and Analyzed: Quantitative

Quantitative data were also collected as a part of this study. To help determine if there were identifiable changes in student achievement and behavior after Advisory took effect, DESE data from the state of Missouri were gathered.

Data. The quantitative data collected was discipline, dropout, achievement, ACT, and postsecondary enrollment before and after Advisory was used. The timeframe of the samples was slightly different depending on what records DESE for the State of Missouri recorded.

Also, the state has changed the collection process with the onset of MSIP V (Missouri School Improvement Plan), so comparing achievement rates in 2009 does not give comparison data with student achievement rates now. Meaning, the test changed and the measurement changed making it difficult to glean whether student achievement prior to Advisory was better or worse than following Advisory.

Analysis. Utilizing the information from the State (DESE), a simple comparison of the data was conducted. Could one conclude that the data indicated a clear statistical significance in the years of Advisory prior to the years of Advisory? Did disciplinary cases decrease, and if so by what percentage? Was there a decrease in dropout rates? Did achievement increase? Did

student's ACT scores increase? Finally, were more students enrolling in postsecondary options after the enactment of Advisory?

Limitations of the Data. Data was collected from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education from the State of Missouri. There are inconsistencies with the data as compared to what the school collected. The State of Missouri required all Juniors to take the ACT after 2015. The data from the DESE shows that there was a gap in graduates to those tested. Also the numbers of graduates shown by DESE do not align to the number of of female and male graduates as indicated with other data.

Trustworthiness

As an effort to ensure trustworthiness, multiple factors were put in place. I, the researcher, spent 22 years in the district, and 20 of those years at the high school. I know the school and the district well. I helped develop the Advisory program at Center High School, and was the principal of Center High School from 2010-2014. Thus, I have a very deep knowledge of the program design and curriculum. Striving for trustworthiness throughout this study, a commitment to monitor myself regarding potential personal biases was a major goal.

The interviews collected, a major data source, are used in qualitative research designs. This natural setting of research allowed for a free-flowing honesty that often is not received from contrived or laboratory settings. Finally, the analysis incorporates researcher reflection, introspection, and self-monitoring that Erickson (1973) calls disciplined subjectivity, and these expose all phases of the research to continual questions and reevaluation (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993).

Researcher Bias and Assumptions

Having worked in the district for 22 years, and watching the culture and climate shift positively from 2010 to 2014 especially, I had assumed that Advisory was truly the key to that shift. I had a very close connection to the Advisory program as I was with the original group who thought to enact it.

Chapter 4

Findings

Chapter 3 was an overview of the methodology of this study. This chapter presents the outcome of the gathered data, both quantitative and qualitative. The single-case study drew upon a program evaluation model to help guide the evaluative structure of the research. The purpose of this dissertation was to find out if Advisory as enacted in Center High School was meeting the original intentions of the program. The original goals of Advisory were to: (1) build student relationships with an adult, (2) encourage academic success, and (3) bridge the gap into postsecondary entry for more students.

Quantitative Findings

Using the DESE resources and data, I researched Center School District. I was looking for indicators of the three goals of Advisory: (1) relationships, (2) academic success, and (3) increased postsecondary options. Specifically, has Advisory had an effect on student outcomes? What are dropout rates, graduation rates, discipline rates, ACT and achievement, and postsecondary attendance rates at Center High School since implementation of Advisory compared to rates on the same indicators prior to Advisory implementation?

Identifying indicators of those three goals, data was collected. To be clear, the quantitative data of Center High School carries with it the data from the Center Alternative School. The average high school enrollment of the Alternative School is about seventy high school students. The data from the Alternative School is not separated from the Center High School data. Therefore, there is a percentage of the data (approximately 9.5 percent which varies year to year depending on the enrollment of Center High School and the enrollment of the Center Alternative High School) that is not solely reflective of the Center High School data. Center

Alternative School during 2011-2016 did not have a structured Advisory program that was similar to the Center High School Advisory program. Nor was the purpose of the Advisory program at the Center Alternative School the same as Center High School. Yet, the student data from the Alternative School is shared with Center High School data.

Dropout Data. Advisory was created in the school year 2010-2011. The hope was to see a decrease in the number of dropouts after Advisory was created, thus aligning with all three of the original goals of Advisory. Data from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education from the state of Missouri (DESE) indicates the dropout rates by race/ethnicity for 2007-2015 (see Table 1).

In 2011, the year Advisory was instituted, there is an increase in the dropouts' district wide. Yet between the years of 2012 – 2015 the dropout rate was between 2.6% and 3.4%. Those years are the lowest the dropout rate had been since prior to 2007. In fact, between 2007 and 2011 there was a steady increase in dropouts' district wide. Between 2011 and 2012 the dropouts decreased from 5.4% to 2.6%. There was an almost 3% decrease in the rate of dropouts, when a steady increase of dropouts had been occurring since 2007.

Table 1. Center High School dropout percentages by ethnicity 2007 – 2015

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Asian Dropout Rate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black Dropout Rate	4.1	3.5	4.2	4.1	4.7	1.2	2.6	2.3	3
Hispanic/Latino Dropout Rate	8.2	2.7	3.2	11.1	9.2	3.2	0	6	3.3
Multiracial Dropout Rate		0	0	0		0	3.1	2.7	0
Pacific Islander Dropout Rate		0	0	0		0	0	0	0
White Dropout Rate	1.5	7.5	5.5	3.4	6.1	8.3	1.7	7.7	0.9
Total Dropout Rates	3.6	4.4	4.4	4.1	5.4	2.6	2.2	3.4	2.4

Source. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007 – 2014.

Graduation Rates. As shown in Table 2, graduation rates since Advisory went into effect have steadily grown. In 2011 the four-year graduation rate was 78.1 percent. This rate steadily grew to 86.6 percent in 2014, and using the 5-year graduation rate high to 89.8 percent in 2013. In 2015 and 2016 there was slight drop to 85.4 percent in 2015, and 85.3 percent in 2016 with the 4-year graduation rate, but hitting a 20-year high with 89.0 percent in 2016 for the 5-year graduation rate. The average graduation rate between 2004 and 2008 was 82.2 percent. With no year during those years (2004 – 2008) over 85.2 percent. The State of Missouri graduation average during those years was around 85 percent. Since the inception of Advisory (2011) Center High School has surpassed the state average for graduation rates.

Table 2. Center High School graduation rate by ethnicity 2011 – 2016

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Asian Graduation Rate (%)	*	100	*	100	100	100
Black Graduation Rate (%)	79.6	78.3	86.1	89.9	88	85.2
American Indian Graduation Rate (%)	*	100	*	*	*	*
Hispanic Graduation Rate (%)	100	71.4	70	85.7	81.8	69.2
Multiracial Graduation Rate (%)	60	100	100	66.67	100	100
Pacific Islander Graduation Rate (%)	*	*	*	*	*	*
White Graduation Rate (%)	72.1	83.3	76.5	78.4	73.7	92.3
Total Graduation Rate (%)	78.1	79.9	83.2	86.6	85.4	86.3

Source. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2011 - 2016

Table 3 identifies the graduation rates of male and female students. Male graduation rates steadily increased between 2011 and 2016. In 2011, just 70 percent of males graduated, with 86.2 percent graduating in 2016. That is 16.2 percent increase over the years Advisory has been in effect (2011 – 2016). Female graduation rates did not increase at the same rate as the male graduation rates. Female rates fluctuated. In 2011, 87.9 percent of females graduated, but that number dropped to 79.9 percent in 2012. The numbers started to increase in 2013 with 89.2 percent of females graduating, with a high in 2014 of 91.4 percent graduating. Between 2011 and 2014, just a 3 percent increase was seen in the female graduation rates. Looking at both male and female graduation rates, an 8.2 percent increase in graduation rates was seen between 2011 and 2016.

Table 3. Center High School graduation rate by gender 2011 – 2016

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Male Graduation Rate (%)	70	76.5	78.9	82.9	80.5	86.2
Female Graduation Rate (%)	87.9	83.5	89.2	91.4	89.9	86.3
Total Graduation Rate (%)	78.1	79.9	83.2	86.6	85.4	86.3

Source. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011 – 2016

Table 4 signifies the total number of graduates at Center High School. Table 5 signifies the total number of seniors. As shown in 2011, 78% of the total seniors graduated. In 2012, the number grew to 80% of the seniors graduated. This number continued to increase in 2013, where 83% of senior's graduate. In 2014, 86% graduated. In 2015, the number decreased slightly to 85%, and then bumped up again in 2016 to 86%. This number is higher than the national average for urban school's graduation rates (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014).

Table 4. Center High School number of graduates by gender 2011 – 2016

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total Number of Male Graduates	77	75	82	87	66	56
Total Number of Female Graduates	80	76	66	74	80	82
Total Number of Graduates	157	151	148	161	146	138

Source. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011 – 2016

Table 5. Center High School number of seniors by gender 2011 – 2016

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number of Male Students	110	98	104	105	82	65
Number of Female Students	91	91	74	81	89	95
Total Number of Students	201	189	178	186	171	160

Source. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011 - 2016

Discipline Rates. Perhaps the biggest indicator of the success of relationship building with Advisory was in the area of discipline events. During the Advisory years, one can see a steady decrease in discipline. Between 2008 and 2010, Center High School averaged between 12.1 and 11.6 incidents per 100 students. In the 2010 – 2011 school year Advisory was enacted, the discipline rate declined to 10.0 in 2011 (a decrease of 1.6 incident rates per 100 students). In 2012, the rate was 7.1 (a 2.9 incident rate decrease by every 100 students) from the year before, and by 2014 the discipline rate had declined to 5.5 events per 100 students (a total decrease of 5.1 incident rates per every 100 students since the inception of Advisory). Discipline reached a high in 2008 of 93 events per every 100 students of total incidences, then went down to 38 events per every 100 students of total incidences in 2014. Between 2011 and 2014 there was a steady decrease in the percentage of discipline events building wide.

Table 6. Center High School discipline incident rate per 100 students 2007 – 2015

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Enrollment	772	770	704	726	697	674	667	688	700
Total Number of Incidents	15	93	59	84	70	48	48	38	52
Incident Rate (per 100 students)	1.9	12.1	8.4	11.6	10.0	7.1	7.2	5.5	7.4

Source. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007 - 2015

The type of discipline event is indicated in Table 7. Drug related incidences saw little or no change between the Advisory years and the pre-Advisory years. These fluctuated between five to eight events a year, with a decrease in in 2007 and 2009 of just one event. Violent Acts jumped to a high in 2010 of 10 events and in 2011 of 12 events, yet in 2012 the number dropped

to five, in 2014 there were two events, in 2014 there were three events, and in 2015 there were two events. There seems to be no correlation between Advisory and weapons in school. The numbers fluctuated in the years prior to Advisory from 0-4 (2007 – 2010), and during Advisory (2011 – 2016) from 0-5.

Table 7. Center High School discipline type and incident rate per 100 students 2007 – 2015

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Alcohol (number rate)	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0	1 / .01	0 / 0.0	1 / .01	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0
Drug (number rate)	1 / .01	8 / 1.0	1 / .01	5 / 0.7	8 / 1.1	5 / 0.7	7 / 1.0	5 / 0.7	7 / 1.0
Tobacco (number rate)	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0	1 / .01	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0
Violent Act (number rate)	1 / .01	0 / 0.0	3 / 0.4	10 / 1.4	12 / 1.7	5 / 0.7	2 / 0.3	3 / 0.4	2 / 0.3
Weapon (number rate)	1 / .01	4 / 0.5	4 / 0.6	0 / 0.0	2 / 0.3	0 / 0.0	5 / 0.7	1 / .01	0 / 0.0
Other (number rate)	12 / 1.6	72 / 9.4	50 / 7.1	69 / 9.5	47 / 6.7	37 / 5.5	34 / 5.1	29 / 4.2	36 / 5.1

Source. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007 – 2015

Looking at the data regarding discipline consequences per 100 students as shown in Table 8, the rates of out of school suspension varied between 8.2 (2009), 11.9 (2008), and 11.6 (2011) per 100 students. With the on-set of Advisory a clear downward trend followed from 2011-2014, with a slight bump in 2015.

Table 8. Center High School discipline consequence and incident rate per 100 students 2007 – 2015

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
In-School Suspension (number rate)	2 / 0.3	1 / 0.1	1 / 0.1	0 / 0.0	4 / 0.6	1 / 0.1	3 / 0.4	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0
Out of School Suspension (number rate)	13 / 1.7	92 / 11.9	58 / 8.2	84 / 11.6	66 / 9.5	47 / 7.0	45 / 6.7	38 / 5.5	52 / 7.4
Expulsion (number rate)	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0

Source. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007 - 2015

The data of 10 or more consecutive days of suspension rates is shown in Table 9. There is not a positive correlation between Advisory and more than 10 consecutive days of suspension. Yet, a steady decrease of students suspended 10 consecutive days happened between 2010 and 2013 from a rate of 11.3 to a rate of 4.3, with an increase in 2014 to 4.6 and 2015 to a rate of 7.4.

Table 9. Center High School discipline duration and incident rate per 100 students 2007 – 2015

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
10 Consecutive Days (number rate)	7 / 0.9	91 / 11.8	58 / 8.2	82 / 11.3	58 / 8.3	39 / 5.8	29 / 4.3	32 / 4.6	52 / 7.4
More than 10 Consecutive Days (number rate)	8 / 1.0	2 / 0.3	1 / 0.1	2 / 0.3	12 / 1.7	9 / 1.3	19 / 2.8	6 / 0.9	0 / 0.0

Source. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007 – 2015.

ACT. Using the ACT as an indicator of academic achievement, there has not been a significant change in the data between 2008 and 2016. All juniors starting with the graduating class of 2016, take the ACT. Yet, at Center High School all seniors started taking the test as early as 2013, as indicated in the drop of the composite score. There is very little change in the

success rate of students based on their composite scores with the ACT. Thus, the data do not show a positive correlation between Advisory and the impact of academic achievement as shown on the ACT.

Table 10. Table of Center High School ACT information 2008 – 2016

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Percent of Graduates Taking the ACT	61.8	60.5	64.3	55.9	65.1	69.3	69.4	77.9	79.6
Composite ACT Score	19.1	18.8	18.6	18.6	18.3	17.4	18.7	18.5	17.9

Source. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2008 – 2016

Postsecondary Attendance. The third goal of the Advisory program was helping students reach postsecondary goals. With the 2011 graduating class, (first year of Advisory) 74 percent of graduates went on to a 4 year, 2 year, or technical institution. The 4-year College/University growth went up from 30.2 percent in 2010 to 40.0% in 2011. In 2010, before Advisory 61.7 percent of graduates went on to a 4 year, 2 year, or technical university. Between 2010 and 2011, with just one year of Advisory, there was a growth of 12.3 percent of students utilizing a postsecondary pathway.

Table 11. Table of Center High School postsecondary enrollment by percent 2008 – 2016

CENTER HIGH SCHOOL	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Entering a 4yr. College/University	37.5	34.2	30.2	40.0	38.2	40.4	30.1	36.4	38.3
Entering a 2yr. College	24.3	26.3	29	28.1	32.9	33.1	52.8	38.7	32.2
Entering a Postsecondary (Technical) Institution	2.8	2.6	2.5	5.9	0.0	2.4	3.1	4.0	2.7
TOTAL	64.6	63.1	61.7	74.0	71.1	75.9	86.0	79.1	73.2

Source. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2008 – 2016

A consistent growth of postsecondary enrollment occurred between the years of 2011 to

2014 is seen, with 86 percent being the high in 2014. This data also do not capture those students entering the military. In 2014 over 90 percent of the graduates had a postsecondary plan, when students who entered the military was included in the data (indicated by the school data collected by the Registrar). This is compared to 61.7 percent of the graduates in 2010. The same growth rates would remain true with those students attaining career and technical education options. Advisory seems to make an impact on students in their postsecondary pursuits.

Table 12. Table of Center High School placement rates for career and technical education by percent 2008 – 2016

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Placement Rates for Career-Technical Education Students	70.8	70.9	79.5	82.5	79.7	90.0	86.3	91.8	88.9

Source. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2008 – 2016

Academic Achievement. The Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) does not show tremendous growth in student achievement since 2014. Although Advisory was implemented in the 2010 – 2011 school year, a revised assessment system was implemented across Missouri for the 2014-15 school year. Therefore comparing the testing data prior to 2014 is not possible.

Whereas growth had been consistently made from 2011-2014 (Center High School was nominated for as a Gold Star School by increased student performance), a drop-in achievement data took place in 2015 and 2016. Knowing whether the drop in scores occurred as a result of curricular alignment or connectivity to the school has not been studied. Thus, scores indicate that at least in assessment data, students in Advisory have not increased their state testing scores consistently throughout the Advisory program.

Table 13. Table of Center High School Missouri Assessment Program data 2015 – 2016

Content Area	Grade	Year	Accountable	Reportable	LND	Below Basic	Basic	Prof	Adv
Eng. Lang Arts	11	2015	*	*	0	14.3	0	0	85.7
Eng. Lang Arts	11	2016	*	*	0	0	0	50	50
Eng. Lang Arts	E2	2015	188	188	0	4.8	33.5	47.9	13.8
Eng. Lang Arts	E2	2016	166	166	0	1.8	15.1	67.5	15.7
Mathematics	11	2015	*	*	0	14.3	14.3	42.9	28.6
Mathematics	11	2016	*	*	0	0	50	50	0
Mathematics	A1	2015	76	76	0	18.4	22.4	52.6	6.6
Mathematics	A1	2016	93	92	1.1	22.8	29.3	43.5	4.3
Mathematics	A2	2015	84	84	0	7.1	19	53.6	20.2
Mathematics	A2	2016	99	99	0	6.1	12.1	57.6	24.2
Science	11	2015	*	*	0	0	0	14.3	85.7
Science	11	2016	*	*	0	0	0	100	0
Science	B1	2015	175	175	0	5.7	38.9	44.6	10.9
Science	B1	2016	156	156	0	12.2	43.6	35.9	8.3
Social Studies	GV	2015	152	152	0	5.9	43.4	42.1	8.6
Social Studies	GV	2016	160	159	0.6	15.1	39	35.8	10.1

Source. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015 – 2016.

Qualitative Findings

Costa describes “advisory, as an intervention, are intended to provide adolescents with at least one adult to advocate on their behalf and to provide on-going support...” (Van Ryzin, 2008, p.88) To review, for the purpose of this study, eight students and eight teachers who have participated in Advisory were identified by the criteria outlined in chapter three. Two of the eight students were getting ready to enter their sophomore year, three were getting ready to enter their junior year, two were getting ready to enter their senior year, and one just graduated. Of the

eight teachers interviewed, seven teachers were tenured. Everyone had taught Advisory for at least four years. The teachers had all taught a number of Advisory grade levels, and all but one teacher had been a part of the Advisory program since it started in the 2010–2011 school year. The teachers taught a variety of subjects within the school: one math, one science, two English, two social studies, one family and consumer science, and one counselor made up the teaching staff interviewed.

The remaining research questions guiding the study were addressed through the use of face-to-face interviews with students and teachers, using qualitative data.

1. What are teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness of Advisory?
 - a. Have they implemented it? What parts, pieces?
 - b. What do they like/dislike about it?
 - c. How does it help (or not help) students?
 - d. Why do they think some students are still failing? What would they do about it?
 - e. Do they have a relationship with their students? How do they know?
2. From the perspective of students, what are the outcomes of Advisory?
 - a. How do students describe Advisory?
 - b. Has Advisory made an impact in students' lives? Do students like it? What role do they think it plays in their success (or failure)?
 - c. How has Advisory enhanced students' connectedness to the school?
 - d. What makes it work (or not)?
 - e. In particular, does Advisory facilitate a positive relationship with teachers?

Teacher Perceptions of Advisory. Teachers overall had a very positive reaction to Advisory. They believed Advisory was a key to the success of students. In interviewing teachers regarding their sense of Advisory success, the questions were geared to identify teachers' impressions of student achievement in regard to Advisory. Questions were developed to discover whether teachers believed the themes of Advisory were coming through in actual practice—in the classroom, in student achievement and success. Teachers' responses were captured by the following themes: academic achievement, relationships with students, and postsecondary access.

The following questions were asked of teachers:

1. Do you feel Advisory is effective? Why or why not?
2. Is there a curriculum in Advisory? If so, do you follow the curriculum as given?
3. Do you feel like you have a positive relationship with your Advisory students? Why or why not?
4. Do you think your Advisory students would have been as successful academically without Advisory? Why or why not?
5. What post-high school discussions have been most beneficial to the students as a result of Advisory?
6. What areas could Advisory help to further address to aid in student success through high school?
7. What has been the most helpful component of Advisory for students?
8. If you could work to change an aspect of Advisory what would it be?
9. What have you liked most/least about the Advisory program?

Teachers' Feelings Regarding the Importance of Structure. A group of teachers developed the Advisory curriculum. Various teachers through the years have continued the work on the curriculum differentiating the lessons between grade levels. Advisory meets once a week for the entire school year. Advisory class itself is organized in a way that provides lessons and discussion. Teachers referred to this time in Advisory as the ability and freedom to deviate from the constraints of a classroom curriculum, and the 'permission' to talk about life, classes, and the future. This structural component of a universal school system—centered on allowing those relationships to build in an educational setting—became a key area of positivity for the teachers.

Advisory class meets for 20-minutes, and then has two separate tutoring sessions that students can attend to get caught up on work, meet with teachers, study, or make up tests/projects following the Advisory meeting. The Advisory class starts teachers with a group of freshmen that they follow until their senior year. Teachers all identified having the same group of students, as contributing to the success of the class, and the success for students academically and in post-secondary access. They believed that they grew with the students. Teacher 4 shared: "I've got brand new freshmen (this year) so I've only known them for a couple of weeks now. But the group that just graduated were some of my closest relationships because they were consistent.... getting to see the same twelve or thirteen kids over the course of four years' forms some really tight bonds."

Teachers believed that academically, the students benefited from the tutoring time allotted for them to get caught up on work. In the 2014-2015 school year, the two tutoring sessions originally created for Advisory and in practice since 2010-2011 school year, were reduced to one tutoring session. Teachers liked this change very much. Yet, as shown in the student interviews the change to one tutoring session was not well received by students.

Another theme from the teachers was the belief that the structure of Advisory led to the success of students. The teachers believed in the structure of Advisory itself, which to them, helped build relationships, check on students academically, and encourage postsecondary success. Having teacher's buy-in to the idea behind Advisory seemed to be fueled with their universal feeling that they have input on change. In building a class which is not content specific (i.e., math, science, English, social studies), expanding on the teacher's sense of collective efficacy becomes necessary.

This sense of control over the process, coupled with ideas on continuous improvements on 'how Advisory could be structured to further meet the needs of students', weighed heavily on every teacher's mind. Because the curriculum was one where the teachers had input, there was a greater sense of purpose and connection to the class from the teachers' standpoint. One teacher reported that:

A lot seems to be taken care of this year. So, I'm really excited about that. We kind of did a share-point and Google doc and we did a bunch of different things, that for me, it wasn't very easy to access it. But now we've got the leaders (teacher leaders of grade levels) being compensated and we've got a new website and all kinds of things that I think are really great.... I'm excited for Advisory this year (Teacher 1).

The guidelines for the class have evolved with time. Initially, there were three-ring binders of curriculum notebooks where each week was outlined, scripted, and detailed. Teachers received the books at the beginning of the year, and they knew the progression of the class. The reliability of this structure was not great. Teachers did not get a chance to reflect on the pros and cons of the curriculum, and they did not get to revise the curriculum until the summer when a small group would meet. Therefore, the buy-in of the teachers was not fantastic.

However, that has now evolved, and the teachers respect the evaluation process. They are grateful for the organization and development of the class. This, they believed has helped them, but ultimately has benefited their students the most.

Teachers as Advocates for Students. Teachers believed that Advisory fosters the universal themes it was developed to create, relationships, academic achievement, and postsecondary attendance. As a result of the building of relationships, teachers believed students were more successful academically. Many teachers described this as a sense of advocacy for their students. They believed the connection that students felt toward their teacher was a result of the teacher's willingness to advocate for their students.

Teacher 1 described it in this way:

Being that advocate too, especially if they are a little shy, maybe e-mailing teachers or having teachers send assignments. You know, the idea that, yes you can go talk to your teachers and here is the appropriate time to do that. Here, let me send an e-mail and copy me on it, and we can work together. For me, academically, that's been the best thing. Now my kids will say, 'okay well, I don't have this assignment but can you email the teacher?' or 'I'm going to email the teacher, can you help me?' Or they will be, 'can you call them really quick and ask for us?' which I think is great.

All of the teachers interviewed believed in the power of an advocate. This advocacy was aided in that they have the same group of students for four continuous years, which allows the teachers to truly get to know their students. Teachers believed that the structure of Advisory aligned with tutoring and was a sincere bonus. Having a structure where the students had the ability during the school day to seek help, make up a test, and accomplish any number of needed tasks was fundamental for their students. The teachers advocate for the students, get to know

them through time, and checked on their grades, and then push students to tutoring. Teacher 1 reported that: “Every kid has an advocate, and every kid has an adult connection in the building.” This approach has allowed for students to grow in academics and trust.

Teachers truly believed that the academic success of their students was very much aligned to Advisory and their connection with the students. Teacher 1 asked: “How can I do better?” The teacher participants identified several areas where Advisory was an important component of the school day. Some of these areas included checking repeatedly on the students’ grades, making time to have crucial conversations regarding a sundry of different items such as working through problems of the students, postsecondary conversations, managing difficult situations, and just helping students learn about school.

Teacher 2 shared:

It is a great opportunity to talk to kids about things that they may or may not have the chance to talk to an adult about. A lot of times, just let them vent – trying to explain to them things about how a school has to work, the law. For example, we talk a lot about wise decisions and how public and private are two different things. Stuff like that...I think it is great to be able to do that where there is not really a class for that, per se.”

Teachers’ Beliefs about Relationships. According to teachers, Advisory’s success was centralized on the relationships with students. Several teachers felt that those relationships are fostered during the time that teachers spend with their students. In the Advisory class, they meet once a week, and teachers have the same group of students for four years. One of the primary themes in teachers’ responses was a deep connection to their students that developed as a result of Advisory.

One teacher responded that relationships with the students are crucial to all of the categories, academic achievement, postsecondary, and relationships. Teacher 4 said, “My closest relationships I had with students came from Advisory.” Teacher 2 responded, “That is what relationship is about, giving them an adult.” The key element of Advisory focused on relationships. Throughout the interviews with teachers, these themes of relationships became the driving factor for teachers.

In referencing the relationships with students, many teachers shared the difficulty of teaching in an urban setting. Teachers worried about their students’ personal lives while they were not at school, or after they had left school. This indicates a definite sign of a caring relationship the teachers have with their students.

A constant sense of care resonated throughout the interviews. Teacher 3 stated:

There are sad stories. Sob stories too. You know, student X (name not identified to protect identity), I remember sitting her down and saying, just please don’t get pregnant. Please, just wait and well.... it’s okay, (long pause, eyes filling with tears) she may still go to school...

Every teacher interviewed genuinely believed their group of students was wonderful, and they had amazing relationships with their Advisory students.

Yet, universally teachers never attributed their relationships as a personal success or their own ability to connect with the students. To each teacher—a reason, whether it be the structure of the Advisory class, the curriculum, or the amount of time they had with their students—became the justification for the relationships that were built. Interestingly, the relationships were viewed differently with each teacher; some truly focused on the students’ grades as a relationship builder; some believed that checking in was the most crucial aspect of their relationship with

their student; and some teachers believed that their extreme focus on what the students will do when they leave the school had built the relationship.

Teachers Appreciate the Time in Advisory. The teachers explained the Advisory structure as four years with the same students, small groups, and curriculum which is grade specific. The teachers attributed that structure, as a key factor in the ability to build relationships with students. For example, having a class that allowed for “time,” as in time to talk, time to connect personally with students, where the normal pressure of classes and the need to get through curricular standards allowed both the teachers and the students to relax. Every teacher spoke of “time”. This time was described as the time allotted for Advisory class throughout the school day. Time by others was described as the allowing for teachers to deviate from their regular curricular schedule. Teacher 1 shared: “I think that any time that you see those same kids every week and it gets to be outside of class where you have so much to do, relationships are built.” Time was described as “conversations,” “discussions,” and “Advisory curriculum.” Time was also explained as a class that meets for four consecutive years with students; thus, allowing the teachers to truly know and grow with their students. The teachers did not ever give themselves credit for the ability to build those relationships. Yet, they all recognized the value of their relationships with students, and in each interview, it was clear that there were very strong relationships between the students and the teachers.

According to the teacher participants, the ability to form the relationships was primarily a result of advancements in curriculum (the curriculum continues to change with the needs of the students). The structure (meeting once a week) and number of years spent with students (meeting them four years in a row) played an important role in their success.

Teachers' Ability to Adapt to Advisory. As time, has gone on, the school administration has developed a system where Advisory is able to change with the needs of the students and staff. Currently, a key teacher-leader leads each grade level Advisory. They meet with the administration monthly, and receive a stipend to write, communicate, and prepare the web-site where all the material is found. The teachers universally were quite pleased with the changes that had taken place.

Each of the teacher participants commented on the changes as being positive, meeting the needs of students, being easier, and worthy of their time. The majority of teachers reported that they follow the curriculum most of the time, and as the curriculum has advanced the better they are able to follow it. Teacher 3 shared: "This year, there is a website which I think is a lot easier, as far as getting people on board to actually participate in the lessons. I think that is really helpful, it is just easier."

Teacher 4 shared that what has worked for teachers is feeling that positive change can happen through Advisory. Teachers love the fact that they are given the opportunity to be a part of continual improvement, and are at the point now where Advisory, most of the time, does not feel like one more thing to do.

Teacher 1 shared:

My first year when I got here, we were given a sort of curriculum binder and then there was nobody really checking in, and I wasn't really sure what I should do, so I probably followed it about half of the time. The other half we just kind of did grade checks. Then in the past couple of years I followed it more, 90–95% of the time...I felt that I needed to follow it.

The teachers believed that they followed the curriculum, and it guided them through the building of their relationships with their students. The lessons that the Advisory class gives are crucial in the opinion of the teachers.

Teacher 1 reported: “100% of everything needs to be done, it’s all important. The students learn how to listen. They work in a team and create a family structure through their Advisory class. This is where many conversations happen, planning for the future.” Thus, teachers are able to help them work through problems, communicate with other teachers, and plan for their postsecondary pathway. Teacher 2 explained it as “identify achieved.” Students are able to have time to get to know themselves, take personality quizzes, understand what they like, or do not like, and identify pathways where they feel they might be successful.

Teachers’ Belief in Advisory as a Catalyst for Postsecondary Attendance. Teachers believed that positive relationships were built with their students, which helped them as they worked to help students for future choices. In fact, as a result of Advisory teachers wanted to develop even better methods of getting students into a postsecondary field of study. Teachers 1, 2, and 5 indicated statements regarding ‘how can we, as educators, do more for the students?’ In more than half of the interviews teachers specifically wanted to provide more options for students, and options that are not necessarily college.

Teacher 1 shared:

I think just in my Advisory, which is the only one I can speak of, is talking about...you know...when we say college and career ready... you know...what does that really mean? So, talking about art school or a four-year school or a two-year school, you know vocational school, the military—although I am not really big into that—and just kind of

all the different things college can mean and all the options and then the requirements which is something we started talking about last year.

Through the curriculum, college is the key foundation of the lessons for students. Searching for universities, discovering their majors, and understanding how to financially navigate the college experience were all taught in Advisory class. Teacher 5 explained the push to postsecondary in the way of a University in Advisory as, “there’s been an ACT question of the week and that, you know, is just preparing seniors for those college applications, the expectations of what going to happen the following year.” The teachers believe that there are technical areas where students could find success, and that Advisory needs to do a better job of getting that word out to students regarding all options. Teacher 3 noted that, “The earlier the exposure to non-four year universities needs to increase for kids that feel like they don’t fit into that (college) exact bubble.”

Yet, the teachers did not want to abandon the college push. They believed Advisory lessons on college and the college experience were crucial for students to have the exposure, particularly the lessons associated with the College Fair, Career Jumps (professionals coming in and talking to students), College visits, and ACT test prep; all of which Advisory does. However, when the components of Advisory are not followed by others, a ‘systems-break’ is felt.

Teachers’ Frustrations. Whereas there are truly great celebrations with Advisory, teachers spoke freely during the interviews about the successes and the frustrations surrounding the Advisory program. As in their classroom, teachers are constantly looking at what needs to be different or better. Some teachers feel like their Advisory group is too big. Teachers who follow

the curriculum, build connections with kids, and are reliable feel that they are often taxed with the ever-growing size of their Advisory classes.

Teacher 3 reported:

I took on a senior group. So what happened? A teacher left last year and I instantly in my head said ‘oh my gosh those are seniors, I don’t want them to be with a brand-new teacher their senior year, I know those kids, I want those kids to be okay,’ so can I have this group because it is their last year and they are not going to get someone they know? ...then shortly afterward, I got another Senior Advisory too.

This causes extreme stress for those teachers as they feel like they are not making the connections with students that they want to due to the large group size. In urban schools, often the teacher turnover rate is a reality. There are some teachers who take on the additional students as the turnover occurs. Whereas this is necessary, it limits the quality time spent with the students, and sometimes makes it difficult to build the same types of relationships.

Teachers’ frustration with other teachers was also apparent from the interview sessions. A foundation of frustration with teachers was the feeling that there are teachers who do not buy-in to the Advisory program. Most of the teachers interviewed believed Advisory may be the most important class they have with students. Knowing that other teachers do not follow the curriculum, do not have deep conversations with students, or do not take the responsibility seriously is highly bothersome to the teachers. Yet, throughout the interviews, none of the teachers admitted to not following the curriculum, or not ‘buying in’ to Advisory at some point. Those teachers who were concerned about it heard from their students in the classes when students made comments regarding the lack of curriculum in Advisory, or from random comments in the teachers’ lounge.

Teacher 3 spoke for other teachers when she said,

More people need to buy-in to it. I don't know what I can do to get more people to buy into the fact that we have to talk about these things (academics and postsecondary options) and they need to hear about these things. Because maybe at home they don't hear anything about college, especially if a parent hasn't gone to college.

Thus, the lack of teacher participation in Advisory by some teachers weighs on those who follow the program diligently. It becomes a matter of the heart, knowing that kids are not getting the best, which bothers those who consistently give their best.

Teachers Want to Know What Happens to their Kids. Related to postsecondary success is the teachers knowing if what students say they will do, they actually do. Teachers wanted to know what is happening with students when they leave high school. During interview sessions, multiple teachers mentioned wanting to know what outcomes happen after the student has graduated? Many wondered whether the students completed their pathway.

Teacher 2 shared:

When they get out, I worry the most about our kids that go off with a scholarship, and what happens to them; we don't ever find out. Not that it be any fault of anyone, just something that happens or you know maybe they chose the wrong path or maybe they weren't successful, whatever it is; they made bad decisions on loans or something like that. That bothers me.

Teacher 3 shared:

I want them to be successful when they leave. I think about them. I want to be able to follow up with them. That's my big piece, I want to know how do I do that? I want to

say, are you in school? Are you doing the things you need to be doing? I would love to hear that they made it through first semester.

Overall it was apparent that teachers believed in the value of Advisory, and most liked the connection they built with their students. They become frustrated when they hear from other student's teachers who allow the students to do nothing in the class. They also would like a way to continue to connect with the students after they leave. To all of the teachers, Advisory makes a difference to kids, and also to them.

Student Perceptions of Advisory. A random selection of 8 students were interviewed regarding their feelings for Advisory. In conducting a program evaluation model, I wanted to use perceptions of Advisory to determine if the program design matched the individual perceptions of the students who have had, or currently have Advisory. The following questions were asked of the students:

1. How do you describe Advisory?
2. Do you feel like your Advisory teacher cares about you? Why or why not?
3. Do you feel connected to your Advisory teacher?
4. Do you like your Advisory teacher?
5. What qualities either help you feel connected or keep you from feeling connected to your teacher?
6. Has Advisory helped you become a better student? How or why?
7. Do you feel more comfortable with the idea of receiving an education after high school because of Advisory? Please explain.
8. Do you feel like the Advisory program has helped you be more successful in high school? Why or why not?

9. Is your academic success better because of Advisory? Why or why not?
10. What post-high school discussions have been beneficial to you as a result of Advisory?
11. What has been the most helpful component of Advisory?

Students' answers seemed to fall into themes and patterns including curricular activities, the student's personal academic achievement, the teacher, and their future. In both the teacher and the student interviews, the ability to have time structured into the school with a focus from both the teacher and the student was significantly positive for the students. Teachers viewed this time as a system where the pressures of state testing and standards were not there, allowing for opportunities to deeply connect with students on what they felt mattered in their lives. Students, on the other hand, described this time as "fun" (RaShad and Eric). "I look forward to it all week" (Joya). "I wish there were more days" (Landon). "Could we have it every day?" (Sydney, who had the least positive comments regarding Advisory). "Make it longer, or at least twice a week" (Isaiah). As a whole, the students believe that the Advisory program allowed them the opportunity to talk with their peers and a teacher about their life, their grades, and their future.

Student Descriptions of Advisory. In describing the Advisory program, the students explained it in these ways. Landon shared: "Advisory is more like a time I could get stress off my life without taking that type of time out of classes. It's making sure I could do some work to catch up if I need to catch up, or work to do when I want to get ahead." The effectiveness depends on the students' mood and the lesson that is given. Landon explained that sometimes it (Advisory) is very effective because he is engaged, but his mood matters as far as he is concerned.

Eric shared: “I think Advisory is the time of the week to gather all your thoughts and school work. It helps you catch up on stuff or ask questions, that moment of time in the week, or just to build relationships with people in your class. I think it’s a good strategy.”

Ramiyah added: “I like it. It’s actually organized by whole high school years. Having a teacher check-up on my grades every week; it’s nice. It is something that I look forward to all week.”

The students all believed that the Advisory class is truly about them, their academic success, and their future.

Eric reported: “We made a bucket list one time, you know the stuff you want to do before you die.” I asked, “What was on yours?” Eric responded, “It was a lot. Graduate, get straight A’s, play football in college, raise a family, have a family, get married, all that.”

RaShad added: “But in this class, they help you catch up on other work from other classes, as in tutoring. They help you gather your plans later on for college. It helps you. You do fun stuff, but it’s about planning your next step.” Several students felt like the materials from the class were given by the administration of the school. RaShad explained it as “the Principals want us to think further.”

Even Sydney, who was by far the biggest naysayer regarding Advisory, wanted more, maybe even Advisory every day. Sydney shared her ideas: “I think they should organize it Monday; we talk about discussions about ACT tests. Next day, relax. Wednesday, studying time, stuff like that. Fourth day, just be organized.”

Student Perceptions of the Curriculum. The interviews revealed that some students have a difficult time ciphering out what curriculum is in Advisory. Many students were not sure if they knew the curriculum, or even what the curriculum entailed throughout their Advisory

class. Several responded, “could you rephrase that question?” (Ramiyah). Others stated, “I don’t think it has a curriculum” (Rasheed). “I don’t think there’s one. She lets us do whatever” (Isaiah).

All students spoke about specific activities in the class that they liked that would have definitely been part of the curriculum. Examples of areas the student shared in their interviews included ACT test questions of the week, life scenarios, College Entry Requirements, Missouri Connections, Skits, Projects, letters to underclassmen, notes of thanks and achievement to other students.

Even though the students were asked specifically about curriculum, and were confused, the interviews showed that curriculum exists in Advisory. It is noted that the question should have been asked in a different way, or defined to the students. It is understandable that students would not necessarily know what ‘curriculum’ is, even though their interviews showed their knowledge of curriculum through their explanations.

One Advisory lesson, which was mentioned by several students, was a TED Talk video presentation on future and life. After watching the video, the students wrote and discussed their feelings. One student explained that the video described how to approach people, and how to talk to people. She went on to explain that, “your attitude is everything” (Joya). Landon mentioned skits, giving an example of a skit that may seem inappropriate by many educators. “What would you do if the police pulled you over and one of your friends had weed on them?” (Landon). Yet, this was a skit that was very real for the students. (Center High School has 85% of their student as African-American). They could relate to the situation.

Students continued to describe activities that were impactful to them. Rasheed gleefully shared: “We had to write a letter to incoming freshmen, describing to them what high school

would be like. You know, give advice.” Through the activities they did, students mentioned lessons that reinforced connections with other in the building and in their life, with academic achievement (grade checks, emailing teachers, studying), and in postsecondary attainment (Missouri Connections, Research on Colleges and Entry Requirements, College Fairs, Career Jumps).

Student Feelings Regarding Academic Efforts of Advisory. Positive feelings regarding Advisory, and how it helped with academics existed with almost every student. Even the one who openly stated that he did not like Advisory, and specifically noted his teacher, made statements later contrary to his original statement.

When identifying why Advisory was helpful to their academics, Sydney reported that: “it definitely helps me get my work done.” She went on to explain that “discussing our future, and discussing about finals and tests” is super helpful to her: “Last year, he (the teacher) talked about what we should do for finals, how the test would be, how long it is, which was very, very helpful.” Teachers worked with students on how to communicate with other teachers, and often helped them with this process. Every student interviewed showed a visibly thankful disposition as they talked through the specifics of how Advisory made a difference to them academically. Some said they would even want more. More help, more days in Advisory, more time. Ramiyah shared: “Get back the two tutoring’s. I would like that to come back, just because I could go into Chemistry and finish that assignment, and also go into Algebra II and get help with that assignment.”

Every student mentioned that grade checks were a key component to what happens in Advisory. (Not only a check from the teacher, but a check-in, and a personal conversation with the adult Advisory teacher.) Joya shared: “He pushed me to work extra, extra, extra hard. Now I

have a 3.7 GPA. I've never had nothing like that." Eric reported: "I feel like if I did not have a person looking at my grades every week, I think I would probably slack a little. We would make ways together to make my grades better. That's why I like that."

Ramiyah shared: "I've had three Advisory teachers in three years, (Teacher x) was a first-year teacher and did not get it. (Teacher y) had no control, but this last year we had (Teacher z). She is wonderful. When Advisory comes, she is coming around looking at our paper, and seeing that we have a grade in this class, and she asks us questions, 'What assignments are you missing here?' and 'Email your teacher and see if you can still get this', so it's very effective. She helps me out."

Students who discussed the grade checks a lot mentioned the teacher knowing and having interest in their grade. No student mentioned their parent as being that adult. Every student mentioned the teacher.

With Advisory being a 20-minute class with a session for tutoring following the class, students have natural time built in to receive help and guidance from their teachers. They can either stay in Advisory, or they can transition to another teacher. Advisory began with two tutoring sessions, but in 2015-2016 students were limited to one tutoring session due to teachers concern with the amount of 'regular' class time that was taken away due to Advisory. Tutoring gives the students time to make up assignments, get extra help, or simply work. Tutoring was universally viewed as the most important component of Advisory and their academics from the student interviews.

When asked, 'do you think Advisory is effective?' Isaiah responded: "I think it is because she helps us, we have tutoring time." In interviewing Isaiah, his answers needed to be drawn out a little. I asked, "Has Advisory helped you with your grades?" He responded, "Yes,

free tutoring” I continued, “How has it contributed to your academic success?” He responded, “My grades went up higher.” I further pushed him by asking: “Has your teacher done anything to help specifically?” He answered, “One-on-one tutoring.”

Others explained tutoring in various ways. It “allows for time” (Landon). “Definitely helps me get my work done” (Sydney). “You don’t really have that much time outside of school...it helps you get that free time to work” (Sydney). “I need Advisory, and use my time wisely” (RaShad).

Students are involved with school work and activities, family responsibilities, and many do not have internet access at home. The Advisory program provides a structure where what is asked of students can be accomplished at school.

RaShad shared: “I’ll give you an example that I believe...Last year, I was struggling in a class called Anatomy. My Advisory teacher, she was the Spanish teacher, so she didn’t know nothing about Anatomy, but she knew some parts of the body. She would help me out with the work. At the same time, she would call my Anatomy teacher. He would be like, ‘send him down and I can help him out.’ It’s a big thing that my Advisory teacher did. I was struggling. Advisory helped me.” Notably, each student interviewed believed strongly in what Advisory, with the tutoring sessions, provided for them.

Students’ Connection to their Teacher. The students’ overall feelings were that Advisory was a successful program and attributed to the relationship they had with their teacher. The teacher’s words in the lessons resonated with the students, and they wanted to go into detail regarding them.

Most students were very talkative when answering the questions regarding the relationships they had with their teacher. Yet one student was simply straightforward when

explaining the relationship, he had with his teacher. For example, I was wanting to know more about their feelings regarding the Advisory teacher. I asked Isaiah, “Do you like your Advisory teacher?” He responded, “Yeah”. This was not enough for me. I asked, “Why?” He responded, “Because we can relate and talk.” I further asked, “Do you have a positive relationship with your teacher?” He responded, “Yes”. I then asked, “How do you know?” He answered, “I will be with her a lot, in her room a lot.” I took that to mean, that yes there is a relationship, he enjoys talking with her, and he is okay being with her in her classroom.

Other students were very forthcoming. When asked of Landon if he liked his Advisory teacher, he responded passionately, “I *love* my Advisory teacher.” Landon went on to explain that “she takes on the mother-like role. She actually sees me as more than just a student. She sees me as a son.” Landon explained this as being willing to have hard conversations with him, telling him she cares, and being concerned about his choices and progress. More than one student described “loving” their teacher, explaining that it was because the teacher cared so deeply for them. RaShad explained, “Your Advisory teacher makes you comfortable. She gets on you about your grades. It is very helpful for academics.” I asked, “Do you like your teacher?” He answered quickly, “Yes, I love my Advisory teacher. She made me feel comfortable, like I was at home. She got on me like she was my mom, basically. I like her. It is fun.”

Eric had a different way of describing why there was a connection with the teacher: “comment jars.” According to Eric, comment jars are his teacher’s way to connect with the students. There is a physical jar which is there for the students to always be able to respond with comments into. This does not need to be done with their name. He felt like it was the ability to be able to truly tell the teacher what he was thinking. This gave her his respect because she was willing to hear anything the students wanted to share. He went on to explain that she is also

perceptive, and addresses concerns. “When I look down or anything, she’ll come and say, ‘you okay?’ She is just always there, any time I need her” (Eric).

The teacher’s willingness to reach out to other teachers was also a big deal for the students. Students are at times intimidated to talk with their teachers regarding assignments that are confusing, or problems they are having. In such cases, having the teacher reach out to the other teachers on the student’s behalf was a huge component for several students. “She would contact the teacher” (Eric). “She would check on my grades” (Ramiyah). “He created a safe environment for us” (Joya). “He makes me feel comfortable, at the same time that father-figure type ‘you need to do this and you need to get this right in order to do this.’ He showed me the right path” (Joya). Again, the majority of the students spoke of their teacher being like a parent to them, who cared about them and their academic success, and who would advocate for them.

It was important to every student that the teacher cared about them as people. The students naturally connected when they felt the teacher cared for them. Joya shared: “He cares about us. My teacher has a purpose for everything he does.” However, there was one student who did not feel connected to his Advisory teacher. Sydney did not like his teacher. Sydney shared that the environment was “too quiet, too much studying.” Sydney further explained the balance of a teacher, “I went to a conference at the medical center. She told us that there should be a balance between work and relaxation. If they’re off balance, both will mess up. I believe once in a while, throw a party, have snacks, talk to friends, get to know the students and teachers a little bit better.” To Sydney, in his Advisory class, there was not a balance. He did not feel that his Advisory teacher cared for him. He felt like it was simply a ‘study hall’, where students were punished if they were not quiet. “I have the most write-ups from my Advisory teacher.” He did not feel like his teacher cared.

However, for those students who did connect, they mentioned how the teacher connects with them. This seems to be done through the questions the teacher asks, making the students feel like they are interested in the students. When the teacher checked on their progress, had activities, and helped them bridge connections with other teachers, they in turn enjoyed and believed in the Advisory class itself. It was interesting the number of students who associate the teacher to a parent, thus showing an emotional connection to the teacher.

Students' Feelings on Their Postsecondary Goals. One area mentioned by almost every student interviewed was 'Missouri Connections' (a Career Pathway website). This website gives access to ACT Tutorial I, college information, AP suggestions, ACT questions, and an in-depth look at colleges and universities for students and families. Missouri Connections shows the expenses for college, requirements for entry, contact information, and many other helpful pieces for students as they begin looking at where they would like to go, and what they would like to do. Students enjoyed this help in planning.

Each Advisory section has an ACT question of the week, and discussions by the teachers on components of the ACT. This seems to be scripted for the teachers on what is the ACT, how is it structured, and a question from the ACT. Students believe this is directly related to their future.

The students reported during their interviews that they liked working on projects geared toward postsecondary choices. Depending on the grade level of the students, the projects are different. Upper class students explained these as outlining where they would like to be after they graduate. The project includes research on schools, cost, and entrance requirements. Rasheed shared: "We spent a lot of time on college." Isaiah described a different project as creating a 'bucket list', "you know everything you want to do before you die. This is helping us

find out what we want after high school.” According to the interviews, a definite goal of the program is getting kids to know themselves, and think about the next steps in life, the importance of discovering who they are and where they are going.

No students mentioned a postsecondary conversation happening at home or with their parents. All students mentioned postsecondary conversations regarding college or other choices happening in their Advisory class. They all mentioned how helpful those conversations are in Advisory, making one assume that they would not be receiving that insight without such an Advisory program. The students were asked, “What has been the most helpful component of Advisory?” Isaiah responded, “When we talk about the future.” He went on to share, “I want to be a teacher.” Landon explained, “Ever since my freshmen year, college was the big talk. We would do college look-ups. We would search a college that we liked and find out how much the tuition is a year, or a semester, how big it is, what majors do they have. Just college research basically, since freshmen year.” Landon’s goals were specific, “I will graduate from college.”

Joya, a soon-to-be sophomore shared: “I feel like I am actually in high school because I thought high school would be all about ‘college, college, college!’ Now I’ve got to Advisory and I’m actually getting what I thought I would get. I like it a lot.”

RaShad attributed this attention to college to his teacher, “She made me think beyond sports. What did I want to be? Do I want to go to a university, or what do I want to do?” She allowed him to dream.

The Advisory program had every student thinking about the future, and what they would do in the future—from personality inventories, to Missouri Connections research, to discussions, College Fair Week, Career Jumps, ACT questions, FAFSA sign-ups, College Application Week,

essay help, and so much more to help aid and assist the students in their steps for postsecondary success.

Students' Feelings about Other Students in Class. The connection that student participants had with the other students in the class was significant. There was not one student interviewed who indicated that he/she did not like their class, or the students in class. Rasheed reported: "I have graduated, but most people from my Advisory are the people I still talk to now." Joya shared: "I really didn't talk to people in my other classes. I'm an anti-social person. In there, I felt like I could talk to anybody. It was pretty nice...it was *warm*." Through the lessons and discussions in the class, the students made connections. RaShad shared: "Our Advisory is like a team. We all helped each other. I feel that it helps me make connections in other classes, with other teachers." Thus, the Advisory program teaches the students how to collaborate, discuss issues, solve problems, and help each other, which contributed to students building a connection with others.

Student Ideas for Improvements to Advisory. While all but one student loved Advisory, there were many thoughts on how to improve the program. Some of the suggestions from the student participants are as follows:

Isaiah shared: "Talk to students more about their life, their problems." Make it "10 minutes longer." "Advisory should be twice a week." "Students should not waste their time just talking." (Follow the lessons each week).

Several students wanted to return to "Two tutoring sessions" (Landon). In some classes, there have been multiple teachers. Building a connection with the adult obviously works better when there is consistency throughout the years. Eric reported: "I have had three teachers in three years." (In Center, as in other urban schools, the turnover rate for teachers is a high percentage.)

Joya wanted to talk about college more. “I love it so much. I look forward to it every Wednesday. I feel like I am getting more mature as each Wednesday goes by, because I’m learning more and more that I did not know.” She also believed that it was okay for the teachers to push the students, saying: “I think Advisory teachers need to press kids more to get their grades up, they should not settle.” More time is a component the students would like, rather than “the once a week thing, every day something” (Joya).

Even Sydney, the naysayer, wanted “More Advisory days.” Rasheed, the graduate, thought that the large number of students in his Advisory class was difficult, although his teacher truly cared. “My Advisory was very big” (Rasheed).

The students interviewed had very positive reactions to the Advisory program. They saw the value in the program, felt the relationships they had with the students and the teacher in Advisory, and most wanted more time in Advisory throughout the week.

In trying to determine what part of Advisory was the most helpful, students seemed to have two major themes. The first theme was, “Getting stuff done” (Isaiah). “In high school, all I need is just time and a place to do my work” (Landon). “Staying caught up” (Eric). The second theme, “When we talk about college, we always talk about everything that has to do with college so far as keeping grades up to par, whether you’re going to get scholarships, grants, or are you going to work during college?” (Eric). From the students’ responses, Advisory itself is teaching students pieces of life that they did not appear to be getting in other places. “I want you to know I really love Advisory” (Joya).

Summary of Findings

Echoing McClure et al.’s (2010) question of whether school structures can improve teacher-student relationships, this dissertation found the relationship between Advisory

programs, personalization and students' academic achievement to be positive. Using the quantitative data coupled with the qualitative data findings are positive in review of the Advisory program. Whereas not all quantitative data showed a significant positive correlation, most of the results indicated a positive trend line. The results especially in postsecondary attendance, graduation rates, and lower discipline indicated a positive trend line during the Advisory years.

The Advisory program, which offered access to a teacher mentor for academic gains seems to have acted together in ways that influenced the students' learning processes and education outcome. In looking at the data and growth in postsecondary access, students are accessing options of postsecondary study at a higher rate than before Advisory. Yet, academically there seems to be no quantifiable evidence to show gains. In interviews, students and teachers feel success academically as a result of Advisory.

Students felt they were able to form reliable supportive networks (relationships), which effected their overall growth and development, in their view. Both teachers and students believed these interactions through Advisory facilitate students' access to resources, services, and support. In the process, the resources provided through Advisory, teachers believe contribute to student acquisition and development of competencies that result in students' motivation to learn.

As a result of the Advisory program, students managed their daily work demands better. Barriers to successfully navigating life demands from their home, school, and education system are managed as a result of Advisory. This helped tremendously for students to realize their potential for a higher education, as seen in the data and growth of postsecondary options.

Both teachers and students believe that interactions allowed in Advisory between teachers and students help to create a pool of experiences and behaviors that directly influence students in their educational pathway. Exampeld include how to talk to other teachers, how to

advocate for themselves, how to manage systems such as finals, and how to get into college.

There were also individual experiences that resulted in development of personal competencies that push students to succeed in school. Students developed various strategies that help them cope with their deficiencies in learning, invest in their own education, and social participation.

Students identified these strategies as positive thinking, trying new things, seeking the support of a trusted adult, developing close relationships with specific teachers who provided the necessary support when needed, setting higher goals for themselves, and working hard.

Advisory connects students directly to school through an adult, and helps pave a path for better academic achievement and postsecondary choices.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of student and teacher participants' perspectives on whether the original intentions of Advisory were fulfilled by participants' perceived outcomes of Advisory. These outcomes included (1) relationships building, (2) increase postsecondary options, and (3) academic achievement. An overview of the findings, proposed implications of the research, and recommendations for future research are addressed in this chapter.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to conduct a program evaluation to find out if Advisory as enacted in Center High School is meeting the original intentions of the program. The original goals of Advisory were: (1) build student relationships with an adult, (2) encourage academic success, and (3) bridge the gap into postsecondary entry for more students. The following questions were explored to determine if Advisory was meeting the goals for which it was created:

1. Has Advisory had an effect on student outcomes? Specifically, what are graduation rates, discipline rates, and college application rates at Center High since implementation of Advisory compared to rates on the same indicators for the three-year period prior to implementation?
2. What are teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness of Advisory?
 - a. Have they implemented it? What parts, pieces?
 - b. What do they like/dislike about it?
 - c. How does it help (or not help) students?

- d. Why do they think some students are still failing? What would they do about it?
3. Do they have a relationship with their students? How do they know?
 4. From the perspective of students, what are the outcomes of Advisory?
 - a. How do students describe Advisory?
 - b. Has Advisory made an impact in students' lives? Do students like it? What role do they think it plays in their success (or failure)?
 - c. How has Advisory enhanced students' connectedness to the school?
 - d. What makes it work (or not)?
 - e. In particular, does Advisory facilitate a positive relationship with teachers?

Ultimately, to justify continuing the Advisory program or changing it, it is important to determine whether and how students and staff feel that Advisory is meeting the original goals. This evaluation ultimately answers the question: is the cost of Advisory worth the benefit of the program? Utilizing the program evaluation model and a mixed method research methodology with qualitative and quantitative data, this study suggests that Advisory as enacted at Center High School is meeting the goals it was designed to achieve. Through the interviews with teachers and students and data from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, there have been several positive effects of Advisory. This study did not find that Advisory could be identified as the sole factor for students' and teachers' positive perceptions and data associated to 1) relationships, 2) academic achievement, and 3) postsecondary attendance, but there is evidence to support a positive correlation in most areas between Advisory and the impact of the goals.

Advisory promotes relationships. A key area where Advisory has an important positive impact on students is through relationships. Students who feel connected to school are more likely to attend school and less likely to be involved in fighting, bullying, and vandalism (Schaps, 2003b; Wilson, 2004). The research on school connectedness and sense of belonging has shown that students who demonstrate higher levels of sense of belonging have fewer behavior problems, experience fewer depressive symptoms or anxiety, have higher levels of academic achievement, and stay in school longer (Waters, Cross, & Shaw, 2010). As Pickeral et al. (2009) note, “positive school climate...promotes student learning...cooperative learning, group cohesion, respect and mutual trust” (p.5).

Quantitatively, the positive effects of Advisory’s effects on relationship-building were displayed most significantly in discipline rates during the Advisory years. At Center High School, after Advisory was implemented the amount of discipline decreased throughout the building from 2011-2014, with a slight increase in 2015. Yet even in 2015, the number of discipline referrals was down from the three years before Advisory was enacted. These events decreased in numbers from 12.1 incident rate per 100 students in 2008, to a low in 2014 of 5.5 events per 100 students. Not all areas of discipline decreased from 2011-2016. Discipline that did not see a change, and even increased, were suspension rates of over 10 consecutive days. Heavier discipline acts such as violence or drugs did not seem to decline during the Advisory years. At Center High School, discipline rates decreased during these Advisory years which indicates a connection to students, while teacher’s expectation of student achievement increased. While this study was not able to pinpoint whether Advisory correlated with differences in discipline rates during the Advisory years, it could be that the relationships developed between students and teachers in Advisory helped to facilitate some of the changes in discipline. This is

an area for future research.

In schools without supportive norms, structures, and relationships, students were more likely to experience violence, peer victimization, and punitive disciplinary actions, often accompanied by high levels of absenteeism and reduced academic achievement (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013). The data from Advisory shows there had been a steady increase in graduation rates from 2011-2016, especially among males. Graduation rates climbed from 78 percent in 2011 of the total numbers of seniors graduating, to 86 percent in 2014. During the years of Advisory, there was an 8 percent growth in graduation rates of seniors (DESE, 2016). Connell et al. (1995) found students who reported higher levels of engagement in school also reported the adults at their school provided support for their learning. In this way, Advisory seems to have a positive impact on graduation rates because of the positive support teachers provided through Advisory to students.

Advisory promotes connectedness. Feeling connected to students is also essential for teachers to help facilitate positive outcomes for students, something that Advisory provides intentional space for and reinforces. Research conducted among 80,000 7th – 12th grade students nationally by McNeely et al. (2002) revealed students who felt connected to school had higher grade point averages, and conversely, students who lacked a feeling of connection were more likely to engage in problem behaviors. In this study, teachers believed that Advisory was highly effective. Some even mentioned that Advisory “was the most important thing they do” (Teacher 3). Teachers also benefited from the relationships with students. Goodenow (1993) explains that “belonging is significantly correlated with academic grades, valuing of school work, and school achievement, and negatively correlated with absences and tardiness” (as cited in Perry, 1999, p.115).

All students interviewed except one identified Advisory as having a positive impact on their grades, on their relationships with a staff member, and on their thinking and choices regarding postsecondary attendance. As Pickeral et al. (2009) note, “one of the fundamentally important dimensions of school climate is relational, i.e. how ‘connected’ people feel to one another in school...” (p.6). Even the student who claimed to not have a relationship with his teacher countered with answers indicating that he indeed had a relationship with the students in his class. He was thinking about his choices past high school, and his grades were better as a result of the Advisory class. School connectivity is essential, and for this participant, connectivity seemed to come through connections with peers, which were promoted by Advisory. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) identified four elements are described as closely related to school connectedness: 1) adult support, 2) belonging to a positive peer group, 3) commitment to education, and 4) the school environment. Advisory meets the needs of connecting with students.

Advisory’s impact on relationships was a huge factor for both the students and the teachers. The closest relationships the teachers have are often with their Advisory students. Despite the fact that there are many directions teachers are pulled, and even though at times preparing for Advisory class feels like an added burden, the benefits far outweigh the costs. The students in this study had no doubt that the teachers cared about them and their academic success, and felt a sense that the teachers became like “parents” to them. Research from Seider, Gilbert, Novick, and Gomez (2013), and others (e.g., Battistich, Soloman, Kim, Watson, & Schaps, 1995; Cohen & Garcia, 2008; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Goodenow & Grady, 1992; Solomon, Battistich, Watson, Schaps, & Lewis, 2000; Wentzel & Asher, 1995) indicates that school connectedness has been found to be a strong predictor of academic performance. The

students wanted to please the Advisory teachers and appreciated the care the teachers had for them. Students believed they were stronger academically because of Advisory, and specifically because of their teacher.

The context of students' relationship-building at Center High School is in an urban environment, which has unique impact on Advisory and the students who are in it. In any environment, students' school life is complicated due to the confluence of individual, institutional, instructor, peer, and family-related factors that directly and indirectly influence their access to education and involvement in their learning process (Jensen, 2009). Individual and environmental-related factors contribute to students' management of education demands and successful outcomes. As Legters et al. (2002) note, "one of the most important factors behind student success, especially that of disadvantaged students, in high school is a close connection with at least one adult who demonstrates caring and concern for the student's advancement" (p.3). By building relationships with teacher mentors, students are able to develop self-determination, competencies, set educational goals, gain access to information and support to further their academic success.

Jensen (2009) outlined contributing factors to schools who have success with students in poverty. He explains that whereas there are multiple factors affecting high-achievement in high-poverty schools, these factors can be narrowed down to 1) support for the whole child, 2) hard data, 3) accountability, 4) relationship building, and 5) enrichment mind-set. Advisory provides all of these factors. Proponents of the character development movement in education propose that one of the outcomes of a student's character education experience is to help the student develop sense belonging or a greater sense of attachment to school (Berkowitz, Battistich & Bier, 2008, as cited in Sojourner, 2014). Teachers at Center High School showed tremendous caring

for students. Their concern for students was obvious in their wanting to know about students when they left, and how much they valued the relationships they have with students. Almost all of the teachers indicated either wanting to know more about their students, or at some level keeping up with their students when they left. According to McAllister and Irvine (2002), empathy is also an attribute in a teacher's effectiveness with culturally diverse students. Empathy involves cognitive, affective, and behavioral components that teachers believed were manifested in their practices. Empathy was definitely shown throughout the teacher interviews.

Advisory promotes academic success. A high sense of belonging is associated with an increase in educational variables such as high grades and academic motivation, and a decrease in connectedness is shown through school drop-out and behavior problems (Meloro, 2005). All of the students in this research study indicated a need for teachers to value them as capable individuals. Teachers provided needed supports, listened to them when they communicated their school issues and personal experiences. Teachers should show compassion, try to understand their students' feelings, their experiences, how they navigate their environments, the challenges they face, and triumphs they make. The students wanted more opportunities to access the general curriculum and other valuable information so they could work toward achieving their education and future goals. It is important that teachers support students by creating safe learning environments and opportunities that foster reciprocal relationships.

Advisory facilitates postsecondary access. Students' level of postsecondary acceptance increased during the Advisory years, which is directly related to their academic performance. In 2008, 64.6 percent of students had postsecondary acceptance rates. In 2009, 63.1 percent and in 2010 61.7 percent had postsecondary acceptance rates. After Advisory was enacted the numbers of postsecondary acceptance rates rose to the high in 2014 of 86.0 percent. The numbers in 2015

and 2016 dropped slightly. In 2016, 73 percent of students had a postsecondary acceptance plan. This percentage was still 13 percent higher than the year prior to Advisory being in place.

Advisory's impact on postsecondary access was apparent in every interview, and its effects are shown through the quantitative data supporting postsecondary enrollment. From 2008-2010, students attending postsecondary education in percentages from the low to mid 60's, which changed to 71-86 percent after Advisory was enacted. Berkowitz and Bier (2005) state that effective programs begin by promoting positive social relationships within the school. Students are involved in pre-college reviews through Advisory. They do career exploration and have college visits. Advisory allows for connections to be made for students on what "could" be, and draw the connection to "how can that be?" Advisory encourages students to prepare for the next phase of their education life. They familiarize themselves with college life early, which dispels fear of the unknown. Appropriate planning and gaining knowledge early on before graduation from high school is imperative for students to be educationally prepared for postsecondary life. As Jensen (2009) notes, "kids who get wraparound support are able to stop dwelling on their problems and limitations and to start focusing on the educational opportunities available to them" (p.70).

Advisory's impact on urban schools. The notion that, "people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care" (Maxwell, 2007, p.91) is especially true in urban settings. Students must have a connection to at least one adult in the building to help them identify the "purpose" of school. In urban schools, the purpose is not present. That fault is not necessarily owned by the school, but environments where "hope" is difficult to find. Many students come from households of parents where education was not a priority. Communities are riddled with violence and drugs, and the future does not stand out as bright. Schools have the

ability to change that for students. According to Lee and Burkam (2003), students were less likely to drop out and more likely to graduate when they felt a positive bond with teachers and others at school. Finn and Achilles (1999) found that self-esteem and school engagement were among the most important factors keeping kids from low socioeconomic backgrounds in school.

Students have to find trust in a system that has often not been trustworthy. Teachers in systems such as these, have learned “why” students are sometimes angry, and respond with care and sensitivity. Hope and learned optimism are crucial indicators for success, which combat and counteract learned helplessness (Jensen, 2009). What Advisory provides is not only the lessons for students, but also the lessons for adults. It was not until the Advisory program was put into place at Center High School that the teachers truly understood that students did not know how to apply for colleges. Students did not know how to approach their teachers and advocate for themselves. Students did not know how to check on their grades. It was not until the teachers cared for them, that they learned to care for themselves. Learned optimism was born.

All urban schools can start with programs to create a connection. What became special about this program was that the teachers championed it. Through their willingness to continue to revise curriculum around the goals, the goals remained constant, but the curriculum took on a life of its own. Thus, Advisory helped teachers meet the needs of students.

Practical Implications

The findings in this study directly contribute to the ability to improve the Advisory program at Center High School, and in schools with similar contexts and programming.

Advisory was found to 1. promote relationships, 2. promote connectivity, 3. promote academic success, and facilitate post-secondary access. The principles underlying Advisory relate to the fact that students require timely provision of support and resources before, during, and after high

school graduation (Jensen, 2009). Fostering positive personal attributes, building home-school partnerships, and ongoing communications is vital to students' overall success. Equally important is the partnerships of high school mentoring programs to counsel, guide, and encourage peer role modeling. Pairing high school students with a teacher to share education and personal experiences can enhance students' academic success. This necessitates providing social opportunities and training programs to enhance their overall abilities, desire, and motivation to learn.

Advisory at Center High School was built on the belief that students need a time and a place to connect with an adult. Not only will students' present character education activities influence how they come to develop a sense of belonging, but, according to Constructivist Theory, students' "prior experiences and mental structures and beliefs" (Luppicini & Schnackenberg, 2000) will also affect how they develop and understand sense of belonging. According to Constructivist Theory, each of us constructs our own reality of the external world and our relationship to it according to our past and present experiences (Hassinger, 2016). It cannot be assumed that those connections simply "happen" at the high school level, especially in an urban setting. Advisory proactively facilitates these connections for students with teachers.

Advisory was implemented in response to what teachers felt was needed at Center High School. Teachers have been a part of the building, implementing, and continued maintenance of the Advisory program. As a result, the buy-in, which is incredibly important to a program, is high. Although there never feels like enough time, as teachers openly shared, the class is critically important to students. Teachers felt like the success of Advisory was due to the structure of the class which allowed for time to deviate from the constraints of their subject curriculum, while also giving them the same students for four years. They believed that they had

a voice in what was taught, and how to improve the class. Thus, the reduction of Advisory tutoring time from the original two tutoring sessions, to the one tutoring session. Yet, it is interesting to note that every one of the students interviewed missed the tutoring session and wanted to return to the two sessions. This leads one to wonder if the student's voice was taken into account on how to improve Advisory, or if the change was done to simply accommodate teachers? Students perceive great success and pride in their school. This is crucial to their success in school and in the future. They believe that they are in a good school, where teachers and staff care deeply for them and their future. This helps the students to believe that there are possibilities in the future.

While it is too early to draw definitive conclusions as to whether the program is achieving all of its desired outcomes, this study will yield critical information for teachers, school administrators, and guidance counselors about early outcomes and directions for program implementation and reorganization. The data suggests that Advisory should be continued. Continued buy in from teachers and students is necessary for it to be effective for both. Having a clear purpose and goals helps establish desired outcomes for students. This study will also help others who are trying to find a way to reach students in the urban core.

Future Research

The findings in this study point to various further paths for research on Advisory and similar programs. As Advisory was found to meet the needs of students who have already been through the program, it would be interesting to examine the outcomes and experiences of new students to the school transferring into an Advisory. Were the positive outcomes limited to the cohort that was studied in this dissertation? Or, are future cohorts of students just as well equipped with the needed skills to be successful in school and in the future? Do new students

feel that Advisory provides a connection with the school? Should there be a different Advisory, or an added component to meet the needs of new students in the system? Can Advisory be combined with other components to affect specific outcomes for students? Further research on these questions would develop a more longitudinal approach to studying the effects of Advisory on multiple cohorts of teachers and students over time, which could be valuable to teachers, administrators, and the discipline.

A deeper dive into why behavior events decreased between 2010 and 2014 is also justified. Why do students get into trouble, and how do adults help them navigate better decisions before they make bad choices? What deters problem behavior in urban settings? This research would be a huge help in determining how to help students. Along the same line, it would be important to try to embed more ways to improve ACT and academic achievement in Advisory. This embedded instruction may also positively influence postsecondary access and acceptance to universities even beyond what this study found Advisory did in the years selected. Similarly, on the social-emotional part of the Advisory curriculum, could a deeper dive into drug awareness and how to get help be a part of what is taught? Since Advisory had zero impact on the number of drug violations, weapons, or violent acts, it seems Advisory could do more to address these areas of concern. A targeted approach with specific curriculum in these areas would be worthwhile to study further and with multiple cohorts of students.

Finally, what more can Advisory can do to help achieve the academic goals that are transferable to testing? Studying how Advisory can play an even more direct role in academic achievement is warranted. Or, what attributes do the teachers possess who have the highest levels of connectivity in their classes? Are there teacher traits in urban schools that are necessary for student success and achievement verses in suburban or private schools? And, how can these

traits be transferred to pre-teachers or college curriculum, to better prepare students in all teaching contexts, and specifically in urban schools? These are all potential paths for future research related to Advisory that branch off from this study.

Limitations

I was an employee of the District in the capacity of Director of Human Resources and Director of Student Services while interviewing students and teachers which could have had an impact on the answers given. When Advisory was implemented I was the Principal at Center High School, and a part of the implementation team. This could influence my view of the data collected, and would give me a different view and insight into the data. In the 2013 – 2014 school year, school policy made it a requirement for all students to graduate to have at least one testing measure (ACT, ASVAB, or COMPASS). The data from DESE does not indicate all students as having a measurement of assessment.

Conclusion

Advisory cannot be identified as the sole factor for students' and teachers' positive perceptions and data associated to 1) relationships, 2) academic achievement, and 3) postsecondary attendance, but there is evidence to support a positive correlation in most areas between Advisory and the impact of the goals. Quantitative analysis of student data on achievement and associated behaviors was reviewed to see if retention for students increased, decreased or leveled out during the first four years of Advisory. Quantitative data analysis suggests change in performance of students in some areas. On the other hand, qualitative analysis suggests there are still areas where Advisory needs to improve according to the participants, the overarching belief is that not only is Advisory successful, but the students want more time in Advisory.

In continuing to promote a deeper understanding among faculty regarding how to best meet the needs of students, it is imperative that schools recognize the importance of building quality, ongoing relationships with high school students. This program evaluation single-study model validated the original intent of Advisory. Creation of the Advisory program at Center High School did create more positive adult student relationships, foster academic success, and did contribute to increasing student's knowledge or and access to postsecondary pathways. Perceptions from teachers and students confirmed that the original intent of the program was being achieved through Advisory. These findings contribute to program implementation models, best practices for schools in high need, specifically in urban areas, and purpose-driven instructional models.

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Appendix A
Student Recruitment Letter
For Parent

Dear Parent and/or Guardian;

You are being asked to consider a research study for your child. Participating in research is different from getting standard medical care. The main purpose of research is to create new knowledge for the benefit of future patients and society in general. Research studies may or may not benefit the people who participate.

Research is voluntary, and you or your child may change your mind at any time. There will be no penalty to you or your child if your child decides not to participate, or if they start the study and decide to stop early. This consent form explains what your child will have to do if they are in the study. It also describes the possible risks and benefits. Please read it carefully and ask as many questions as you or your child need to, before deciding about this research.

You or your child can ask questions now or anytime during the study. The researchers will tell you and your child if they receive any new information that might cause you or your child to change your mind about participating.

This research study will take place at the Center High School Library with Beth Heide as the researcher.

Why is my child being asked to take part in this study?

Your child is being asked to take part in this study because they take an Advisory class, and we would like to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the class.

Why is this study being done?

“By doing this study, we hope to evaluate this program and others like it to ensure the benefit to students.”

What is being tested in this study?

Nothing is being tested. Students opinions are being evaluated to ensure best practice.

How long will my child be in the study?

The interview will take approximately 30 – 45 minutes.

What will my child be asked to do?

Answer questions related to Advisory.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

There are none known about. If at any time the student wished to stop or not answer a question that is fine.

Are there benefits to being in this study?

The benefits are being a part of helping educators create the best possible classes for students.

Will it cost anything to be in the study?

Absolutely not.

Will my child get paid to participate in the study?

In fact, the student will receive a \$25.00 Quick Trip Gift Card for their participation

Will the researchers get paid for doing the study?

No.

Always include this paragraph:

If you think your child have been harmed as a result of participating in research at the University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC), you should contact the Director, Human Research

Protection Program, Mail Stop #1032, University of Kansas Medical Center, 3901 Rainbow Blvd., Kansas City, KS 66160. Under certain conditions, Kansas state law or the Kansas Tort Claims Act may allow payment to persons who are injured in research at KUMC.

Does my child have to be in the study?

Being in research is voluntary. You or your child can choose whether or not to participate. Even if you or your child decides not to join the study, you or your child can still come to KUMC for services and treatment.

What other choices does my child have?

You or your child can choose not to be in the study.

How will my child's privacy be protected?

The researchers will protect your child's information, as required by law. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed because persons outside the study team may need to look at your child's study records. By signing this consent form, you and your child are giving permission for KUMC to use and share your child's statements. If you decide not to sign the form, your child cannot be in the study.

The researchers will only use and share information that is needed for the study members of the KUMC Human Subjects Committee and other committees and offices that review and monitor research studies.

By signing this form, you are giving Dr. Twombly and the research team permission to share information about your child with persons or groups outside KUMC

CONSENT

Beth Heide or the research team has given you and your child information about this research study. They have explained what will be done and how long it will take. They explained any inconvenience, discomfort or risks that your child may experience during this study.

By signing this form, you say that your child is freely and voluntarily consenting to participate in this research study. You have read the information and had your questions answered.

You will be given a signed copy of the consent form to keep for your records.

Date ___ / ___ / ___

Child's Name: _____

Child's Age: _____

Parent's Name: _____

(please print)

Parent's Signature: _____

Name of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

(please print)

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Appendix B
Student Recruitment Letter
Assent Form

Dear Student,

My name is Beth Heide. I am interested learning about Student Perceptions of Advisory because I want to make sure students feel like the goals of Advisory are being met. If you would like, you can be in my study. I would like you to take part in a onetime interview, which would be held after school, and should be completed in time to catch the late tutoring bus. The interview will take place in the library break out room. It will be audio-taped so that I can transcribe the interview to use in my research. I would like to ask some questions about your experiences and feelings in regard to Advisory, and how you think these things affect how you feel about Advisory.

If you decide you want to be in my study, you will just need your parent permission, and we can set up a time to meet. You will receive a \$25 gift card at the completion of the interview. There are no risks with the study. You can stop at any time, and your name will not be identifiable in the research.

Other people will not know if you are in my study. I will put things I learn about you together with things I learn about other students, so no one can tell what things came from you. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name, so no one can tell who I am talking about.

Your parents or guardian have to say it's OK for you to be in the study. After they decide, you get to choose if you want to do it too. If you don't want to be in the study, no one will be mad at you. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that's OK. You can stop at any time.

If you don't feel like answering any questions, you don't have to, and you can stop speaking with me anytime and that will be all right. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have now or when we are talking together. Do you want to take part in this project?"

If you have any questions, please contact:

Beth Heide

816-985-7732

bheide@center.k12.mo.us

University of Kansas Dr. Susan Twombly

stwombly@ku.edu

785-864-9721

Joseph R. Pearson Hall

Room 418

University of Kansas

1122 West Campus Rd

Lawrence, KS 66045-3101

Appendix C
Teacher Recruitment Letter
Adult Consent Statement

Student Attitudes Toward Advisory

Qualitative Study on the Perceptions of Advisory

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Center High School is a small urban school in Kansas City. Advisory has been in effect at Center since the fall of 2011. The purpose of this study is to determine whether the original intent of Advisory is being met. The original goals of Advisory at Center High School were to create relationships with an adult, encourage academic success, and to bridge the gap into

postsecondary school. Research will be conducted to determine whether the original goals of the program are being met. Both quantitative and qualitative methods will be used to explore goal attainment. While it is too early to draw definitive conclusions as to whether the program is achieving its desired outcomes, this study will yield critical information for teachers, school administrators, and guidance counselors about early outcomes and directions for program implementation and reorganization.

The purpose of this study is to find out if Advisory as enacted in Center High School is meeting the original intentions of the program. Interviews will primarily be used to assess Advisory success in regard to academic achievement, connectivity in school and finally postsecondary access.

Has Advisory had an effect on student outcomes? Specifically, what are graduation rates, discipline rates, grades and college application rates at Center High since implementation of Advisory compared to rates on the same indicators for the three-year period prior to implementation?

PROCEDURE

You will be asked to participate in an interview which addresses your perceptions of Advisory. Approximately an hour per participant will be needed. The interview will be audio-taped for ability to transcribe later. All participants will be given the option of having the taping stopped at any time. The only access to the recordings will be the researcher and a hired assistant will be transcribing the recordings. When the study is over all recordings will be destroyed.

RISKS

There are no risks involved in this study. Participants choose to participate in the study, and have the ability to stop at any time. Their personal data will not be shared with anyone, and their interviews will be destroyed when completed.

BENEFITS

The benefits of this research study will identify the positive or negative perceptions as they relate to Advisory, and show the administration where Advisory is true to the goals of the program initially. As a result, this study will yield critical information for teachers, school administrators, and guidance counselors about early outcomes and directions for program implementation and reorganization.

PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS

Participants will receive a gift card for \$25 at the completion of their participation.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

Your name will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher(s) will use a study

number or a pseudonym rather than your name. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission.

"Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form, you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future."

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: *Beth Heide, 8715 Holmes Road, Kansas City MO 64131*

If you cancel permission to use your information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher(s) listed at the end of this consent form.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email irb@ku.edu.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

Type/Print Participant's Name

Date

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher Contact Information

Elizabeth A. Heide
8715 Holmes Road
Kansas City MO 64131

816-985-7732

Susan B. Twombly
Professor and Chair
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Appendix D

Student One-on-One Interview Protocol

1. Purpose: I want to thank you for taking the time to talk to me today.
2. Structure:
3. Confidentiality:

Interview Questions:

Appendix E

Teacher One-on-One Interview Protocol

1. Purpose: I want to thank you for taking the time to talk to me today.
2. Structure:
3. Confidentiality:

Interview Questions: