“Improving Students’ Self-Esteem through Advisory Program.”

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Abstract

An advisory program is an arrangement whereby one adult and a small group of students have an opportunity to interact on a scheduled basis in order to provide a caring environment for academic guidance and support, everyday administrative details, recognition, and activities to promote citizenship. Advisory programs have been in place in secondary schools for decades. In 1989, Simmons and Kiarich indicated that Advisory programs had a positive effect on school climate, particularly related to an increase of belonging and security. Advisory programs are often offered for one class period a day and act as a homeroom for the students. The curriculum is tailored to the population but can offer teachings on character education, relationship building, curricular enrichment and productive citizenship. The purpose of the Advisory program is to build relationships and to continue those relationships throughout a student’s time in high school.

Introduction

An advisory program is an arrangement whereby one adult and a small group of students have an opportunity to interact on a scheduled basis in order to provide a caring environment for academic guidance and support, everyday administrative details, recognition, and activities to promote citizenship. Stevenson (1992) stated that the purposes of advisory are "to ensure that each student is known well at school by at least one adult who is that youngster's advocate (the advisor), to guarantee that every student belongs to a peer group, to help every student find ways to be successful, and to promote coordination between home and
school” (p.293). As two educators who have worked in an inner-city high school with nearly three decades of combined experience, we’ve seen quite a few curricular programs come and go. We’ve seen several programs help our struggling students. Read 180 was tested to see if it would assist struggling readers and ELL students. The Cambridge Curriculum was adopted to see if it would aid our general education students. Writing labs and tutoring centers were opened for our students who needed some additional help. The population that was often left to fend on its own, however, was the gifted population. It was wrongfully assumed that this population would succeed just fine without intervention.

In a faculty of more than 200, there were two teachers at this school in the inner-city that had gone back to school and completed the necessary steps to get a gifted endorsement (12 credit hours on gifted education from an accredited university and two plus years of verifiable direct work with gifted students). One of those teachers taught the enrichment course that was an elective for all students but was written for gifted students. The other gifted endorsed teacher acted as the gifted facilitator, which meant she was the liaison between the school and the district and was primarily responsible for testing and labeling gifted teens. That was the extent of the gifted expertise on this particular campus of 5,000 students, with about 150 gifted teens. Both teachers advocated for the gifted population by hosting parent nights, offering professional development, and trying to filter in as many gifted kids as possible into the enrichment course where they would have individual time with those students. However, to change the perception that these kids were self-sufficient, there needed to be a change in philosophy of the faculty. That change would only come with the faculty building personal relationships with these kids.

Some common questions emerged on this campus: How could we inspire those kids who were meeting all the standards to exceed them? What could we do to help our students who seemed so self-sufficient reach their true potential? At the same time, one educator, who did not have any training in gifted education, saw a connection between the testing data and the personal relationship that teachers needed to have with their students. Students who had made this personal connection with an educator on
campus—one who understood their needs and coached them—consistently exceeded the expectations of their teachers. She wanted to increase this personal connection with all students, regardless of their label. It was at this point that this teacher decided to start an advisory program.

Advisory programs have been in place in secondary schools for decades. In 1989, Simmons and Kiarich\(^1\) indicated that Advisory programs had a positive effect on school climate, particularly related to an increase of belonging and security. Since this research, advisory programs have been cemented in secondary education as a way for students to learn to work together and develop a caring school environment. This was it! This was the way to establish that personal connection. Research has proven the success of advisory programs in both high and low socioeconomic status schools, as well as schools in the inner city, the suburbs, and rural areas. With this program being so adaptable, what benefit might it add to the gifted population?

**Significance of Study**

Advisory programs are often offered for one class period a day and act as a homeroom for the students. The curriculum is tailored to the population but can offer teachings on character education, relationship building, curricular enrichment and productive citizenship. The purpose of the Advisory program is to build relationships and to continue those relationships throughout a student’s time in high school. The principal drive behind advisories is to create a custom-made environment for learning and encouragement provided by a significant adult figure.\(^2\) An advisory program offers the opportunity and time for teachers and students to develop a relationship that gives students the support they need and improves achievement on all levels of emotional, social and cognitive development. Each year, the student returns to the same advisory, further building on the relationship with the teacher and peers in that course. For our gifted population, that meant gifted students would now be in a position to connect with educators that didn’t know much about the gifted label and would have the opportunity to know them on a personal basis. The advisors (teachers) were able to tailor the curriculum to those specific 30 students. As such, advisory became an opportunity to combat some of the negative behaviors that affect the socio emotional side of being gifted\(^3\) – behaviors that many
teachers had little experience with. Those students, once thought to be self-sufficient, were exhibiting certain socio emotional characteristics such as perfectionism, lack of self-confidence, difficulty forming relationships, disorganization, isolation, and narcissism. Advisory teachers, and other students, were now developing relationships with these gifted teens and were witnessing these difficulties.

**Review of Literature**

Beane and Lipka (1987) indicate the advisory programs could help adolescents deal with relationships with peers and aid in their socio emotional development. This was proving to be true for those 150 gifted students. Suddenly, teachers were approaching the gifted endorsed faculty with questions about how to help their students. What kinds of coping strategies could they teach that might combat perfectionism? How could they help their students deal with over excitability? Teachers who were not gifted endorsed and had no formal training in gifted education were reading journal articles and blogs on what could be done to help these students. There was an awakening that was the philosophical change the gifted teachers knew needed to occur, and it was all started by the third teacher who wanted to connect with her students.

In secondary education, the socio emotional support that an advisory program may offer is often sorely lacking for gifted students. No longer are these adolescents a part of a pullout program, and rarely are gifted students participating in a curricular option that allows for their specific socio emotional needs to be met. There are courses to meet their academic and creative needs, from advanced courses to competition courses and courses in the arts. However, which of those courses meet the gifted students’ socio emotional need to belong? Their need to develop positive relationships with both adults and peers? Where are they learning to cope with some of the socio emotional effects of being gifted?

In the education field, individual attention or personalization for adolescents is important because it is a vehicle to lower student dropout rates, provide individual tutoring and improve student achievement. This suggests that advisory programs inherently benefit underachieving students—what about the gifted? If the advisory program teacher was gifted endorsed or was
operating with the assistance of gifted facilitator at the school or district level, how could this population be served? Curricular options could include coping skills for dealing with perfectionism, rejection or critical competitiveness. Goodenow (1993) expresses the idea of what students want at the high school level in terms of being recognized, taken in, and wanted by others. This is not specific to any population; it is a want of all adolescents, including those who are gifted. They want not just to be liked but also to be supported and held in high esteem as individuals.

The intent of an advisory program is to give the students the self-worth they need to survive the experience of high school on all levels, both socio-emotional and academic. With the sense of belonging being linked to that of academic success, positive feelings of belonging initiate help-seeking behavior in the academic arena. Students who are struggling are more likely to seek the help and advice of an adult or peers they have built a positive relationship with. The fact of the matter is that students who like school tend to be more successful than those who do not. This is just as true for gifted students as it is for their non-gifted peers.

Advisory Programs

Promote student-teacher relationships:

For the past 15 years Eccles and her colleagues have been studying the effects of different school environments and middle level students' declines in motivation, competency beliefs, and general self-esteem after the transition to middle school. Eccles, Lord, and Midgley (1991) concluded that the decline in motivation appears to be linked to specific classroom characteristics, such as declines in the quality of the student-teacher relationships and in opportunities for participation in classroom decision making, and in an increase in classroom ability grouping. They recommended that "serious efforts be made to improve, and expand, the nature of student-teacher relationships in schools that serve early adolescents" (p.539). Arhar & Kromrey (1993) emphasized the importance of social bonding for potential drop-outs and other students who have few quality relationships elsewhere.

Address general self-esteem and competence beliefs:

In a study of 1,850 7th graders, Wigfield and Eccles (1994) found children's self-esteem
decreased following the transition to a typical junior high school. They noted, "Decline in social competence beliefs illustrates the impact of the transition to junior high. This decline probably occurs because the transition disrupts early adolescents' social networks, at a time when social activities are becoming increasingly important" (p.123). Advisory programs attempt to promote self-esteem by recognizing each student and providing time in small groups with a caring adult.

**Provide social exchange and peer recognition in a safe environment:**

Students' concern about peer pressure, not wanting to appear able, and the resultant self-handicapping strategies result in poor academic performance (Midgley & Urdan, 1995).

**Link parents and school.**

Advisory programs can provide a vehicle to link parents with adolescents. Petersen and Epstein (1991) noted, "Peers become increasingly important in adolescence. nevertheless, values of an adolescent's peer group are more likely to support or complement parental values than to be in conflict with them, a finding that deviates sharply from earlier views of an oppositional peer culture" (p.375). Paulson (1994) found higher levels of both maternal and paternal responsiveness were related positively to achievement outcomes, and that "despite declines in parental involvement in higher grades, it continues to be important for achievement" (p.262). Wigfield and Eccles (1995) pointed out that "continued parental involvement in education is crucial to early adolescents' success in school" (p.7). Based on the literature that links parenting and academic performance, Wentzel (1994) proposed social and emotional adjustments as mediating variables between parenting and academic performance.

**Mediate between academic and social concerns.**

The advisory curriculum supports achievement by addressing the range of intervening variables such personal factors (self-esteem, attitudes, behavior, motivation, well-being, anxieties), interpersonal factors (peer relationships, belonging, acceptance) and practical strategies for success (study habits, test-taking techniques, peer-coaching) as compared to self-defeating behaviors. Research studies include the following: Following a four-year research
program of young adolescent sixth grade boys provided evidence of the role of emotions and restraint in linking family functioning and academic achievement. Wentzel (1994) noted, "children's academic achievement in middle school is related significantly to their levels of emotional distress and self-restraint" (p.278). Linn and Songer (1995) examined the "powerful influence of the social context in which learning occurs. This social context gains importance during adolescence in conjunction with increased awareness of social relationships and social influences" (p.379). Other findings, reviewed by Wigfield and Eccles (1994), include "adolescents' competence beliefs and expectancies for success are the strongest predictors of subsequent performance in math, stronger predictors in fact than previous math performance" (p.133).

Concluding Remarks
This study examined the relationship between advisory program behaviors and school connectedness for both students and advisors. Additionally, the data were analyzed to determine to what extent there was a difference between advisors and students, beginning and experienced advisors and gender of students. Analysis revealed a positive relationship between school connectedness in relationship to advisory program behaviors. However, gender and an advisor’s years of experience had no significant difference in the relationship. School administrators can Use the results of this study to plan appropriate professional development for their own advisory program. Increasing a student’s school connectedness can positively impact the success of the whole child. Policy makers and school leaders must assess the holistic needs of adolescents and be willing to address not only their academic needs but also their affective needs Implementation of an advisory program is one initiative that can provide a developmentally responsive learning environment to assist in addressing the needs of adolescents.

Recommendation
This examine reviewed the connection involving advisory plan conduct along with institution connectedness regarding both college students along with analysts. In addition, your data had been analyzed to ascertain as to the magnitude there were a difference involving analysts along with college students, beginning along with
encountered analysts along with sexual category connected with college students. Evaluation exposed a confident relationship involving institution connectedness in relationship to advisory plan conduct. Even so, sexual category along with a great advisor’s decades connected with experience got no significant difference inside relationship. Institution staff can easily Use the connection between that examine to plan suitable specialized development for his or her individual advisory plan. Raising some sort of student’s institution connectedness can easily confidently influence the achievement of the total kid. Insurance plan designers along with institution frontrunners need to measure the cutting edge of using requires connected with youth and turn into prepared to address not only their educational requires but their affective requires Rendering associated with an advisory plan will be one motivation which could provide a developmentally responsive learning natural environment to support in addressing the requirements connected with youth.

References


i. Nashville, TN: Incentive