

Frequently Asked Questions about the Academy's Advisory Program

1. What are the goals of the advisory program?

A meaningful relationship between a student and an adult figure in the school increases the student's chances for academic success. Social and emotional support *in addition* to academic goal-setting and academic support is critical in academic achievement. Furthermore, advisory groups can facilitate trust, decency, and accountability between students and their advisors.

A successful advisory group will address both the academic and the personal aspect of students' lives and will allow all students to know that what he or she is doing matters.

Additionally, a major goal of the advisory period will involve academic advising. Advisors will work with the counselor to understand the PST schedule and curriculum and help students select classes and activities for the year. Academic advising will also occur in the form of formalized monthly check-ins with students, discussions of academic challenges and strategies to help with learning, as well as informal weekly check-ins and conversations.

2. How much time will be devoted to advisory each week?

Advisory groups will meet with their faculty advisor each Wednesday during third period for 60 minutes.

3. Will students be assigned to an advisor who also teaches them in a core discipline class?

Not necessarily. When scheduling students in advisories, the goal will be to place students with faculty advisors who teach them in a core class. However, as students progress through PST, some students will have their faculty advisors as teachers early in their experience, while other students may not have their faculty advisors as teachers until later in their experience. Moreover, several faculty advisors will include administrators who are not teachers. Therefore these advisory groups will never have their faculty advisor as a teacher.

4. Will students remain with their same advisor throughout PST or will they change advisors?

Students entering into PST at grade 6 will have the same advisor for grades 6, 7, and 8. At grade 9, all students will have a new advisor. These students will remain with their advisors through grades 9, 10, 11, and 12.

5. Will students be allowed to switch advisories?

If there are issues with an advisor and her advisee or the advisor believes the student would best be served by another advisor, there may be a switch of advisories. This can only happen at two points during the PST experience:

1. At grade 7 following one year with an advisor

2. At grade 10 following one year with an advisor

Requests for advisory switches will be a process in which the advisor, the student, and an Administrator and/or Counselor will meet and discuss the reasons for the move and either approve or refuse the switch.

6. *What will be the scope of the advisory program?*

The scope of the advisory program will address academics, study skills, social issues, self-awareness, and college and career preparation in a flexible manner with much discretion left to the teacher. The major difference between the topics for the 6-8 grade cohorts and the 9-12 grade cohorts will be the emphasis on these topics.

Aligned with recommendation of Tocci, Hochman, and Allen recommend topics will revolve around five major goals:

1. Developing interpersonal relationships through activities possibly including
 - Get-to-know-you games
 - Board games
 - Informal group conversation
 - Formalized check-ins and one-on-one conversations
 - Peer interviews
 - Advisory school / community service project
2. On-going academic support through the development of
 - Study skills
 - Learning strategies and styles
 - Organization skills
 - Test-taking strategies
 - Formalized check-ins and one-on-one conversations
 - Academic planning and scheduling
3. Enriching the curriculum through discussion topics such as
 - Philosophy, science, and current events
 - Conflict resolution
 - Character building
 - Drug and alcohol abuse
 - Current affairs and political issues
 - Decision-making scenarios
4. College and career preparation through discussion of and information on
 - PSAT and SAT information and preparation
 - College admissions, application, and financial aid process
 - College application essays

Dream. Discover. Design.

- College and university visits
 - Career interest activities
 - Resume writing and interview skills
5. Building school culture through
- Inter-advisory activities
 - School / Community service project
 - Spirit-activities and competitions

The design of the advisory period allows for teachers to discuss and address the goals for the week in the manner in which they feel most comfortable. For example, if the designated weekly topic is interpersonal relationships, one advisor may choose to play board games with his students, while another advisor may have her students involved in group get-to-know-you games. Or if the designated weekly topic is global awareness, one advisor may have students bring in a newspaper article while another may invite a guest speaker.

It is also recommended that each advisory group performs an on-going school-service or community-service project and those students in each advisory group play a role in the planning of weekly activities to help the teacher.

7. *Will advisory scope allow advisors to address issues in students' lives and the Academy community as they arise?*

Yes, the goal of advisory is to provide a safe-space for students to interact and discuss issues directly relevant to their lives. The scope of the advisory period will be broad enough and flexible enough to allow for relevant issues to be discussed, from broader community issues to those relevant to the school and classroom.

8. *How will content for the advisory period be determined? Will it be up to individual teachers or will it be planned by a committee?*

Advisory effectiveness is dependent on teacher investment and comfort with the structure and curriculum. Advisors that are simply handed a curriculum tend to feel less-prepared and less-invested in the process of advising. It is also an additional burden to an already demanding schedule. As such, it is critical that teachers and administrators are responsible for establishing the specifics of the advisory within the provided framework.

Students should also have ongoing input into what the content of advisory meetings should be. An Advisory & Activity Committee should have student and faculty representatives modeling some of the most successful advisory programs. Many successful advisories are student-driven, where the students are allowed to set the expectations and guidelines for the advisory group.