

What is High School Advisory?

by Beth Brodie & filed under [Family School Partnership](#), [General](#), [Personalized and Proficiency Based Learning](#)

High School Advisory Series Part 1: What is it and why will it help students be more successful in school?

This is the first in a four-part series about high school advisory programs. Some parents, teachers and community members have heard bits and pieces about advisory programs and asked to learn more. This four-part series aims to answer questions about the following: 1) what advisory is, 2) the status of advisory programs in Vermont, 3) how advisory impacts academics, personalization of learning and connectedness to learning, 4) the roadblocks to successful advisory programs, 5) the future of advisory and personalization with Act 77 and 6) a look at the model of advisory and intervention at Vergennes High School. Throughout the series recommendations will be made based on empirical research and human needs theory.

So, what is high school advisory?

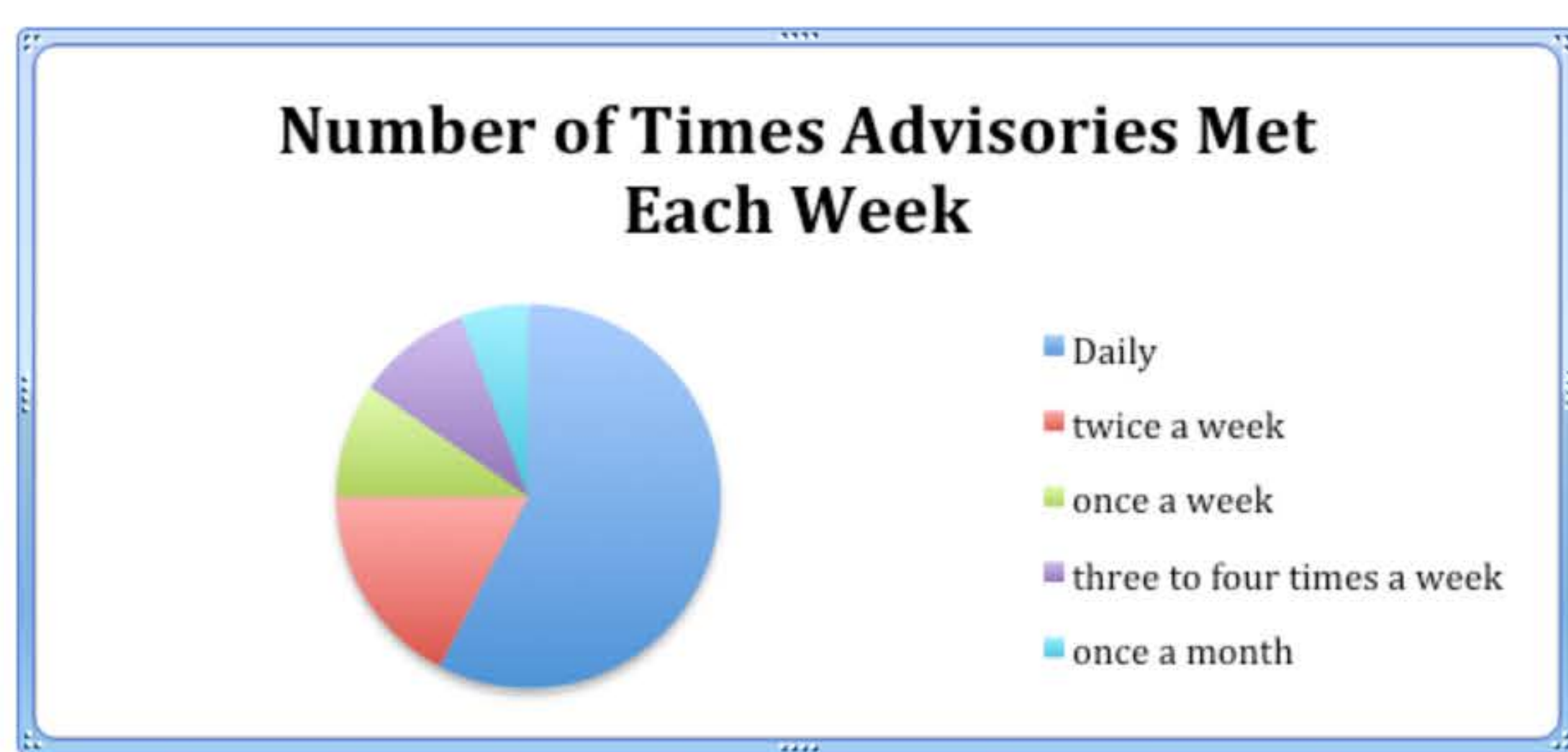
Advisory models are known by many names: Advisory, Teacher Advisory (TA) Teacher Advisory Group (TAG), Morning Meeting, Call Back, Flex Time, Academic Success Block and Learning Teams. There are as many definitions for advisory as there are variations for length of advisory periods and frequency of advisory periods during the week. Essentially advisory gives each student a “point person” and the opportunity to get to know 10-14 students very well over a 4-year period.

Do many schools in Vermont have advisory?

Yes. High School Advisory programs in Vermont have been in existence for decades, such as at U-32 in Montpelier and Champlain Valley Union High School. A large number however, have been implemented during the past ten years. In fact, in a 2013 study of all Vermont high schools, it was discovered that 53 of the 62 schools have some form of an advisory program (although they are called a wide array of names). Nine schools do not have any form of advisory program, but several of those schools indicated that they would be implementing one soon.

How often do advisory programs meet each week?

The configuration of the 53 advisory programs is as varied as the schools themselves. There is no one model for how often advisories meet since the configuration is based on a school’s specific goals for advisory. The programs in Vermont range from every day for 50 minutes to meeting once every other week for two hours. Thirty schools have some form of advisory contact every day. In several of the five-day a week programs, three days a week are shorter meetings (10-15 minutes) and two days are generally longer (30-45 minutes). Nine schools meet twice a week and five schools hold their advisory programs three or four days a week. Five schools meet only once a week and finally there are three programs that identify as an advisory program but only meet every other week or sporadically throughout the month.



The time slots allotted are equally as varied as noted in figure the figure below. A block of 50 minutes is the greatest daily amount of time allotted to advisory, and the least is six minutes, (although the administrator of that school wrote that they were going to increase the time next year and take on a stronger advising role). Twenty-four schools have between a 10 and 20-minute advisory period and 22 have between 30 and 50-minute advisory periods. Three schools have under 10 minute advisory periods, but two of those three schools have plans to add more time next year. Other schools have varying schedules.



What is the purpose of a high school advisory program?

The purpose of each school’s advisory program is at the heart of its success, but it is as varied as the schools themselves. Most advisory programs aim to 1) give each student a point person who becomes a contact person for that student’s family and teachers, 2) improve school climate by enhancing both student-to-student connectedness and student-to-teacher connectedness, and 3) provide a more personalized and supported educational experience.

How do you develop a vision statement for advisory?

A critical step in implementing a comprehensive advisory program is to develop a vision statement and articulate the objectives of the program, prior to implementation. Establishing a multi-stakeholder group to include teachers, students, parents administrators, and special educators to develop a vision statement and define objectives will lend itself to a lasting organizational change. Creating a general statement that meets the needs of your school system is the first step. For example:

Advisory will provide every student with 1) a small interactive group that meets regularly for the purpose of forging positive school climate and 2) adult advocate and point person who helps them to be academically and personally successful.

Listed below are recommendations for goals and objectives for a comprehensive advisory program:

- All students in the learning community have an advisor who knows them well, is aware of their academic goals and standing, and coaches them academically.
- All students in the learning community have an advisor who is an integral advisor for the personalized learning portfolio process.
- All students in the learning community have an advisor who is a consistent communication link between school, faculty and home throughout their high school years.
- All students in the learning community will have an advisor that can help them to make healthy choices throughout their high school years.
- All students in the learning community will have an advocate who knows them well and supports them at school meetings and conferences.
- All students in the learning community have a structure that allows them to participate in class related activities such as class meetings for elections, fundraising planning, scheduled and informal college and career informational meetings, community service, and planning for school events/school spirit.
- All students in the learning community have a safe environment as a home base where they connect to their advisor and their co-advisees.
- All students in the learning community have time to organize, seek extra help, and confer with advisors and other students about academic issues.
- All students in the learning community have a structure for the dissemination of administrative tasks.