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Perceptions of the Impact of High School Advisory on Academic Success, Connectdness and Personalization of Education

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PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF HIGH SCHOOL ADVISORY ON ACADEMIC SUCCESS, CONNECTEDNESS AND PERSONALIZATION OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

Public education is a cornerstone of our democracy and social advancement. However, current Vermont graduation rates would indicate that public education at the high school level does not address the needs of all twenty-first century learners. Research has revealed that personalization and creating a connected environment are promising innovations for improving education for all students. One structure that supports personalization, high school advisory, provides each student with an adult advisor that knows them well through their high school years.

This research on high school advisory in Vermont was divided in two phases: 1) an assessment of the current state of advisory in all Vermont public high schools, and 2) a qualitative study that focused on the perceptions of students, advisors and administrators in 4 Vermont high schools with established advisory programs. In the second phase, a phenomenological framework was used to examine the perceptions of how advisory impacted academics, connectedness and the personalization of the high school experience. Document review, focus forum groups and interviews with the sixteen students, eight advisors and four administrators were conducted over a six-month period.

Findings demonstrated that 53 out of 62 high schools in Vermont had some form of advisory program. In the study of four schools, over two-thirds of the students perceived that their high school advisory positively impacted their academic achievement. Advisors and administrators were less clear about the impact, however. Furthermore student-to-student connectedness was described positively by three-quarters of the students. The connection between advisory and personalization of education was the least clear both among students and advisors. All administrators and three-quarters of the advisors felt that in the future, personalization would become an integral part of the advisory program with the advent of Vermont Act 77, the 2013 legislation that mandates personalized learning plans and multiple pathways to graduation. Finally, there was considerable agreement in three schools that a significant roadblock to implementing effective advisories was a lack of support for advisory in the following areas: purpose, time, training and materials.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

> Her plan was to go down to Florida from Rhode Island and hook up with some older guy or some crazy thing. She's only 17 years old! So I told her, "You can't drop out. I won't sign the papers. You *think* you'll get a GED and go to college, but within two months you'll be pregnant and he'll dump you. Then no one will rent you an apartment and you'll be living on the street. So you're not leaving. You're just not leaving." And it worked. She stayed. Sometimes you have to do something desperate like that. By delaying her for a few days, we bought her the time we needed to change her mind. Sometimes you have to be parental, because no one else is doing it. (Levine, 2002, p. 21)

Inasmuch as this excerpt from Eliot Levine's chronicle of one of the Big Picture Schools in Providence, Rhode Island represents an extreme case of advocacy for a student, it is clear that because this adult knew his student beyond her grade point average, he was able to make a profound impact on her persistence in high school. One goal of high school advisory programs is to ensure that all students have equal opportunity to be well known by at least one adult in the building (MacLaury, 2002). All students, however, do not have equal access to an advisor or advisory program. Does that access actually impact the student experience in high school? This study seeks to understand how students, advisors and administrators perceive that high school advisory impacts student academics, connectedness to their school and the personalization of their education. For the purpose of this study, I define high school advisory as a structure that meets regularly

in a small interactive group whose purpose is to ensure that every student is well known by at least one adult in the building (Crawford, 2008; Manning & Saddlemire, 1998; New England Association of Schools and Colleges, 2011).

The goals of advisory and personalized learning are consistent with the intent of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESA) of 1965. The original and still current language from ESA, commonly known as Title One, states that, "The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). In fact, the sentiment that all children should have fair and equal opportunity for access to a high quality education is repeated in Vermont state statute. Equality of education was upheld by the Vermont Supreme Court's decision in Brigham v. State of Vermont resulting in the Act 60: The Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1997 (Vermont Department of Education, 1997) and Act 68, the revision of education funding mechanism in Act 60 (Vermont Department of Education, 2003).

However, as I will demonstrate in the next section, an analysis of Vermont cohort graduation rates would indicate that fair and equal access to education is not the current reality for all students in Vermont school systems. Recent legislation, Act 77, known as the Flexible Pathways Initiative, was signed into law in June 2013, and will require all Vermont 7-12th grade students in the future to be supported by extended learning opportunities, dual enrollment and a personalized learning plan. One goal of this legislation is to "increase rates of secondary school legislation and postsecondary continuation" for all Vermont students (Vermont Agency of Education, 2013). Act 77

will push to the forefront the need for schools to implement structures, such as advisory, to accommodate the new level of personalization.

1.1 Problem Analysis

1.1.1 Vermont Cohort Graduation Rates

This study will use graduation rates as a measure for academic success rather than standardized test scores. Although academic standing does have an impact on high school persistence (Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1985), it is graduation rate that is the predictive factor used in this study to frame future income attainment. Vermont compares favorably on the national scale in their four-year cohort graduation rate, but in 2011 only 87% of Vermont youth graduated from high school four years after entering the 9th grade. This was nine percentage points better that 78%, the 2011 national average tallied from 47 states, the District of Columbia and the Bureau of Indian Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Despite encouraging numbers for the overall graduation rate, there is a significant disparity in the current national graduation rate figures for Black and Hispanic youths, youths with disabilities and economically disadvantaged youths. This trend is a significant social justice issue nationally as well as here in Vermont. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 2, considerable discrepancies exist in Vermont. Consistent with the national trend, there is a 16.9% discrepancy in the cohort graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students, and an even more disturbing discrepancy of 22.8% for students with special needs.

1.1.2 Implications for the Discrepancies

These discrepancies in graduation rates are significant because they are likely to impact the futures of the non-graduates. Based on theories of social reproduction, high school dropouts are less likely to develop the necessary economic, cultural and social capital that will enable them to hold higher paying jobs (Wacquant, 2006). In fact the 2009 labor statistics support this indicating that a fully employed 25 year old male with no diploma or equivalent earned 30% less than a fully employed 25 year old male with a high school diploma or equivalent (Institute of Education Sciences, 2011). As dismal as that statistic is, it does not take into consideration that unemployment rate for high school dropouts was 39.9% for males and 44% for females (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

1.1.3 How Aspects of Size and Personalization Relate to Persistence

Some programs that have proven successful in reducing the dropout rate are career academies (Kemple & Snipes, 2000), summer programs for at-risk youth (Steinmiller & Steinmiller, 1991), increased flexible programming (Reyna, 2011), and after school tutorial programs (Piliawsky & Somers, 2004). Two promising trends in education that help level the playing field for minority and low-income students are a movement toward a greater degree of personalization for high school students (Clarke, 2003; Mac Iver, 2011; Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1992) and the development of smaller schools or small school environments (Howley, Strange, & Bickel, 2000). A 2003 study by the Center for Education Research and Policy at MassInc identified characteristics of high performing non-selective high schools in Massachusetts. Eight of the nine high-achieving public high schools were schools of under 400 students. Three common

sentiments existed across the schools, including: 1) a sense of being known, 2) a feeling of being cared about, and 3) an expectation of high standards. The report quoted one student saying, "You can run, but you cannot hide" (Minkoff, Reveille, & Candon, 2003, p. 20). One quality found in those smaller schools as well as most programs designed to reduce the dropout rate is the element of personal and caring contact with an adult who supports the student (Clarke; Mac Iver; Phelan et al.).

However, creating smaller schools is not the current trend in Vermont. In fact, in 2010 the legislature passed legislation that gives incentives to districts that consolidate and form larger, not smaller, school systems (Act 153, 2010). Over the past 10 years, two Vermont high schools, Grand Isle and Whitingham, have closed their doors due to financial and resource considerations. Grand Isle High School in the Champlain Islands tuitioned out their students to other larger high schools, and Whitingham in the Deerfield Valley created a joint school district with the town of Wilmington. As of January 2014, the school board at a third school, Rochester High School, was considering closing its doors due to financial considerations, but was saved by a vote at the March 2014 town meeting.

Although implementing a high school advisory program does not diminish the size of a high school, it can create a small school environment within a larger school by personalizing education and creating positive relationships between students and teachers. "Children can succeed in school if we reinforce the idea that teachers and other school personnel serve as advocates rather than as adversaries for children, and that they are committed to the proposition that all children can learn" (Boykin, 2000, p. 9). Advisories

are a means of redesigning large impersonal schools into smaller caring communities that provide closer relationships between students and staff (MacLaury, 2002).

In a 1992 study of student perspectives on schools, researchers Phelan, Davidson and Cao discovered that, "Students want teachers to recognize who they are, to listen to what they have to say, and to respect their efforts. In classrooms where personalities are allowed to show, students respond more fully both academically and personally" (p. 696).

1.2 Advisory Model Used in this Study

Although High School Advisory can be accomplished through several different models such as freshman academies or big picture self-contained classrooms, for the purpose of this study, high school advisory refers to a structure that meets regularly in a small interactive group whose purpose is to ensure that every student is well known by at least one adult in the building (Crawford, 2008; Manning & Saddlemire, 1998; New England Association of Schools and Colleges, 2011).

1.3 Statement of Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to understand how students in four Vermont high schools perceived their participation in an advisory program impacted their academic performance, their connectedness to their school environment, and the level of personalization they received. The following questions guided the research.

- How do Vermont students who participate in high school advisory perceive the impact of high school advisory on their academic performance?

- How do Vermont students who participate in high school advisory perceive the impact of high school advisory on their connectedness to their school environment?
- How do Vermont students who participate in high school advisory perceive the impact of high school advisory on the personalization of their education?

The study also sought to understand the advisors' and administrators' perceptions of how the advisory program influenced these factors.

- How do Vermont advisors perceive the impact of high school advisory on their students' academic performance?
- How do advisors perceive the impact of high school advisory on the student connectedness to the school environment?
- How do Vermont advisors perceive the impact of high school advisory on the personalization of their students' education?

Finally, this study sought to understand the current status of advisory programs in Vermont. The following sub-questions guided this research.

- How many high schools in Vermont have advisory programs?
- How often do they meet and for how long?

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1. Sample and Instrumentation

The first phase of the study, an initial three-question survey for all Vermont schools, was conducted by phone or by email. It determined: 1) which schools had high school advisory programs, 2) how often they met, and 3) for how long they met. The

second phase, a phenomenological study, focused on the perceptions of students, advisors and administrators about the: 1) impacts of advisory on academics, 2) connectedness to the school, and 3) the level of personalization at four Vermont high schools. Data from focus forum groups and document review supplemented interviews with four students, two advisors and one administrator from each of the four schools. The sample population was comprised of students and adults from a stratified sample from four Vermont high schools with established advisory programs. These schools were chosen to represent small, large, urban, and rural schools.

1.4.2. Data Analysis

Once gathered, the data analysis revealed clusters and themes surrounding their perceptions of the advisory experience (Hatch, 2010). A priori codes were established from themes that emerged from the review of literature such as for Caring Adult (CARE) or Student-to-Student Connectedness (CONS), and emergent codes were added during the data analysis process.

1.4.3. Data Representation

Although some counts were used to demonstrate the frequency of repeated themes, the emphasis of the data representation was on the individual voice of the participants and their experience as advisees and advisors. Thematic analysis and visual representations through a series of matrices represented the data from the qualitative interviews and focus forum events. These matrices were supplemented by individual quotes highlighting the salient themes. Emergent codes, such as GUIDE for guidance, and +/- for positive and negative attributes were added during the data analysis process as warranted.

1.5 Assumptions and Delimitations

As an advocate for high school advisory, I recognized my bias toward high school advisory programs and was cautious to represent fairly all responses. I used a series of clarifying questions with my participants to verify the intention of their responses, and I also worked with a peer reviewer to help validate the trustworthiness in this research. By using the three methods of inquiry, the interviews, forums and document analysis, and the perspectives of three different stakeholder groups, I triangulated the data as well to increase validity.

As a researcher, I recognize that the research here only represents one form of advisory in Vermont, a highly homogeneous state. Despite my efforts to stratify the sample, most participants were non-minority students because of the demographic profile of the schools. Only five of the 30 students from the interviews and forums were non-white and they were all English language learners. Hence some of this research may not be perceived as applicable to inner-city schools with high minority populations or high English language learner populations. I did not identify students based on the socio-economic status or level of special needs. I learned, however, through the interviews that three of the 16 students interviewed had special needs.

1.6 Significance

Inasmuch as advisory is a cornerstone in the middle school model, (Crawford, 2008; Forte & Schurr, 1993; NASSP, 2004) high school advisory is considerably less commonplace, and research evaluating the success of high school advisory programs is sparse (Mac Iver, 2011; Walloff, 2011). The lack of research-based data to evaluate high

school advisory programs can deter administrators from implementing advisory programs despite national, state, and local laws and policies that require equal access to education. A requirement by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) to demonstrate that "every student has an adult in the school in addition to the school counselor who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations" (NEASC, 2011, p. 1) further supports the implemenation of high school advisory structures as will the 2013 legislation in Vermont, Act 77. Still, comprehensive high school advisories that provide true advocates that know their students well are the exception and not the norm throughout the US. This study intends to fill a gap of research by describing how students, advisors and administrators at four Vermont high schools perceive participation in a comprehensive advisory program influences student academics, connectedness to the school environment and personalization of education.

The most recent studies available about high school advisory have had limited applicability to Vermont for a number of reasons. The Walloff (2011) study about the perceived impact of high school advisory in relation to academic performance and school connectedness only examined one large urban school. In Vermont there are very few large urban schools. Similarly the Borgeson (2009) study researched student perceptions of connectedness, but once again, only at one high school. It did, however, cast a wide net through its quantitative survey. That study was limited to the investigation of how high school advisory impacted the sense of belonging. Of the studies available, only one related weighted grade point average (WGPA) to the perception of advisory (McClure ,

Yonezawa, & Jones, 2010); the study examined the relationship between at-risk students and their perceptions of advisory.

I believe this study will contribute considerably because the emphasis of the research will be on student perceptions. Additionally, it will cast a wide net by researching different schools of different sizes, and will be more comprehensive, considering perceptions of impact on academics, personalization and connectedness.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction to Review of Literature

To date, there has been a narrow range of existing literature and empirical studies about high school advisory (Schulkind, 2007; Walloff, 2011). Previous studies focused on one school, one demographic or one topic of inquiry. However, four recent studies that are highlighted in this review have helped ground my research. These four studies, as well as literature from other disciplines, contributed to developing my research questions and protocols. What has informed my research in addition to the four empirical studies about high school advisory is: 1) the history of academic advising and the advisory movement, 2) middle school advisory, 3) literature pertaining to developmental assets and personal needs of humans, 4) motivational theory, 5) reasons why students leave high school and how this may impact future earnings, 6) the benefits and new trends of personalization, 7) other advising models, and 8) the obstacles encountered by schools implementing advisory programs.

2.2 Definition of Advisory

The structure of high school advisory is known by a wide range of names: Advisory, Teacher Advisory (TA) Teacher Advisory Group (TAG), Morning Meeting Call Back, Flex Time, Academic Success Block, and Learning Teams. There seem to be a wide range of definitions for advisory as well. As stated in the introduction, for the purpose of this study, in line with Manning and Saddlemire (1998), Crawford (2008) and the NEASC (2011), I define high school advisory as a structure that meets regularly in a

small interactive group whose purpose is to ensure that every student is well known by at least one adult in the building.

2.3 History of Advisory

Prior to the 1990s the school guidance counselor performed the majority of formal academic and personal advising. The role of the guidance counselor first emerged in the mid to late 19th century (Gyspers & Henderson, 2001). Their primary function focused on six major services that they offered for students: orientation, assessment, information, counseling, placement and follow-up (Schimmel, 2008). In 1958, the school counseling movement took on a more formalized place in public schools with the formation of the American Personnel and Guidance Association, now known as the American School Counselors Association. The rationale was that we needed more students to enter the fields of math and science so we could compete with Sputnik. Guidance counselors were expected to encourage the appropriate students to pursue those disciplines (Schimmel, 2012). The number of school based counselors tripled between 1958 and 1967 (Wittmer, 2000), and the model of the full time guidance counselor emerged as part of the fabric of public education.

In this new capacity, guidance counselors were now not merely consumed with clerical paperwork of student scheduling and academic placement, but also with promoting "guidance activities and structured group experiences designed to support students in developing the personal, social, educational, and career skills needed to function as responsible and productive citizens" (Schimmel, 2008, p.1). This much more clearly resembles the role of the middle and high school counselor of today. Currently the

National Association for School Counselors (NASC) defines four areas of roles and responsibilities for school counselors that include: 1) school guidance curriculum (teaching students to advocate for themselves and navigate educational systems, and designing and teaching a curriculum of developmentally appropriate skills), 2) individual student planning (academic advising), 3) school responsive services (group counseling, consultation with parents or teachers, and psycho education), and 4) system support (providing professional development and collaborating with teachers) (American School Counselor Association, 2012). The ASCA also recommends that the student to counselor ratio not exceed 250:1; however, in many schools the actual numbers may exceed 450:1 (ASCA). With such an array of duties and unmanageably large case loads, it is no wonder that many counselors meet with students only two or three times a year.

In response to such a lack of regular personalized contact with the school counselor, high schools started to look at adding structures that would increase student-adult contact for the purpose of advising. In part, this was a response to a controversial and influential quasi-fictional trilogy that sparked considerable debate about the condition of education in the US in the mid-1980s. In Horace's Compromise, a book about a semi-fictitious high school, Theodore Sizer (1984) describes school as lacking any resemblance of personalization. "Most high school students have several teachers who know a bit about them, but no teacher who sees them as a whole" (p. 209). One structure that was implemented to improve the student-adult contact for the purpose of advising was Teacher Advisory, a high school advisory program. The concept has been a cornerstone of the Coalition of Essential Schools philosophy, but in general has been

much less widely received in high schools than in middle schools. In a 1988 interview with Ron Brandt of ASCD, Sizer, one of the key architects of the Coalition for Essential Schools, described Teacher Advisory as one of only three periods students have in a coalition school. It is depicted as "a tutorial or an advisory period in which every adult in the building meets with a group of 13-14 students" (p. 3). He then described the advisor as one who attends to student academic, interpersonal and even physical needs if necessary. In his words the advisor was someone who "arranges for students to have breakfast if they haven't had any" (p. 3).

2.4 Middle School Advisory

Middle school advisory has been a part of the middle school model since the mid-1980s, and has been consistently identified as one of the 10 essential elements of the middle school model by the National Middle School Association (Beane & Lipka , 2006; Galassi, Gulledge, & Cox, 1997; Giller, 2010). Once the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (CCAD) endorsed the middle school movement in 1989, a groundswell of change by middle level educators resulted in the redesign of schools serving10 to 15 year olds. The recommendation from the CCAD report that each student have one adult that knows them well, truly paved the way for the development of comprehensive middle level advisory programs throughout middle level education (CCAD, 1989).

Advisory has been a feature of most middle level reform primers since the mid-1990s such as *Breaking Ranks in the Middle* (NASSP, 2006) and *This We Believe* (National MIddle School Association, 2010). Middle school advisory, also called morning meeting, prime time, home base or a litany of other names, is a core tenet of

developmentally responsive middle level programs. Chris Stevenson, the author of *Teaching Ten to Fourteen Year Olds*, regards advisory as one of the best ideas in middle level education. Stevenson (2002) suggests that the one advocate that knows each student well has specific roles: "To guarantee that every student belongs to a peer group, to help every student find ways to be successful within the academic and social options the school provides, and to promote communication and coordination between home" (p. 313). Stevenson also describes advisory as a caring and supportive environment characterized by unconditional love and high, but achievable, academic and citizenship expectation. These characteristics support the resiliency and strengths needed for students to develop individual awareness and personal growth.

2.5 Purpose of High School Advisory Systems

High school advisory programs are considerably less prevalent than middle level programs (Walloff, 2011). Some high school advisory programs in Vermont, such as the one at U32 High School in Montpelier, date back into the 1970s. However, most programs are much more recent additions. Although there is a wide range of stated purposes for advisory and no one standardized articulated curriculum (Galassi et al., 1997; Schulkind, 2007) researchers have discovered common functions that categorize the purposes of advisory: administrative, affective and cognitive. The administrative goals of advisory are not dissimilar to those of traditional homerooms such as taking attendance or distributing student materials. The affective quality of advisory serves to promote a sense of caring and connectedness and requires a substantial time commitment for implementation. The cognitive aspect of advisory provides assistance with study skills,

time management and academic planning and is most focused on academic performance; it also requires a substantial commitment of time for implementation. These tasks require minimal prep and implementation time (Anfara, 2006; Galassi et al.).

Since cognitive function is highlighted as one of the central purposes for advisory, the obvious question might be whether or not research confirms that schools with advisories have higher academic achievement. Unfortunately there is little research that confirms or denies that premise (Schulkind, 2007). There is, however, research that supports that relational qualities of advisors promote caring learning environments (Burns, 2007; Walloff, 2011), and that both students and teachers perceive that advisory improves student academic performance (McClure et al., 2010; Schulkind). That said, there is little quantitative research that demonstrates a positive correlation between middle or high school advisory programs and higher academic achievement.

2.6 Theoretical Rationale for Advisory

There are several theories about human behavior that would support the affective and cognitive roles of advisory. Whether one is considering Maslow's (2011) framework for the hierarchy of needs, Glasser's (1998) understanding of the seven caring habits and five essential needs, or Clarke's (2003) framework for interactions in personalized learning, having a caring relationship with an adult is theoretically at the heart of student success.

In both Maslow's and Glasser's theories of hierarchical needs, physiological needs are the most critical. Those needs are basic to life itself: food, warmth, and medical assistance (Glasser, 1998; Maslow, 2011). Although few high school advisors become

involved with these very basic needs of survival, one repeated goal for advisory is to give students an advocate (Crawford, 2008; NASSP, 2004; NMSA, 2001). In both the Eliott Levine example referenced in my introduction, and also in my personal experience, I have encountered advisors in the role of a personal adult advocate who assisted their advisees with the most basic of needs. These advisors advocated for students' physiological needs because they were homeless, in need of food and clothing, or were in need of medical assistance. Those are extreme examples of advocacy, but there are instances where even the most essential needs for student success are met through their advisor's caring.

More critical to the role of the advisory program is to meet Maslow's (2011) second level of need: to feel safe. "Practically everything looks less important than safety, (even sometimes the physiological needs which being satisfied, are now underestimated)" (pp. 100-101). It is easy to understand how school safety could be at the forefront of a student's mind instead of their weekly algebra quiz. As of January 2014, there had been 86 violent attacks on schools in the US since the Columbine school massacre, which occurred on April 20, 1999. One feature of high school advisory is to provide the continuity and structure for a long-term relationship (Forte & Schurr, 1993; NASSP, 2004; Sizer, 1984). Students feel safer and trust their surroundings when they have a predictable and manageable environment that develops over time. "The average child in our society generally prefers a safe, orderly, predictable, organized world, which he can count on, and in which unexpected, unmanageable or other dangerous things do not happen" (Maslow, p. 129). It is through developing that steady contact with both the

advisor and one's co-advisees that students can begin to feel safe in a consistent environment. Not only do they know what to expect from their advisor, but also from their peers in advisory. In the most recent wave (2007) of a longitudinal study of 12,000 students in 715 schools, there was evidence that a strong commitment to the school and connection to their peers had a positive relation to higher GPA for students (Stewart, 2008). Hence if advisory can provide a safer and more positively connected experience for students, one may assume, based on that 2008 study, that there may be a positive relation to student achievement.

Maslow's (2011) third level of need, love, is characterized by both Glasser (1998) and Clarke (2003) as acceptance. "Every child needs love, affirmation and support" (Scales & Leffert, 2004, p. 21). Maslow considers this to be the most essential need for humans and suggests that this need for love, affectionate relationships and belonging is "so strong that people will strive for it more than anything else" (2011, p. 165). Although adolescents want support and acceptance, it was revealed in a 2004 developmental asset study by Scales and Leffert that "only a small minority of young people actually experience abundant support across all parts of their lives – in their families, their schools and their communities" (p. 31). More troubling was that in the same study there was a reported decrease in all but one support asset across the middle into high school years, and an astounding 30% of the high school students reported they never received support or love (Scales & Leffert). In advisory, there is an opportunity for social interaction and group participation in a safe and accepting environment (MacLaury, 2002). Developing structures that ensure that at least one adult in the school environment will support,

advocate and care for each and every student can mitigate the deficit of support that many students feel.

Table 1

Human Needs Theory

Theorists	Glasser	Maslow	Clarke
Both Glasser and Maslow identify human needs in a pyramid configuration, which I have inverted; the most basic needs are now on top. Clarke, however, does not weight the developmental needs of adolescents.	Survival	Breathing, food, essential needs	Voice
	Love and Belonging	Security of body, resources, property, family	Belonging
	Recognition	Friendship, family Intimacy	Choice
	Freedom and sense of fair play	Self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect	Freedom Imagination
	Fun	Morality, creativity, problem solving	Success

Table 1 demonstrates how Glasser (1998), Maslow (2011) and Clarke (2003) employed different frameworks for their theories. Of particular interest is the incorporation of the concepts of voice, choice, acceptance and being free to create and problem solve are all interrelated.

In James Burns' research about advisory and relational attributes he uncovered five dispositions or personal qualities of middle school teachers who were strong proponents of middle school advisory. One of the attributes defined was the existence of a caring and nurturing relationship among individuals and groups (Burns, 2007). It is because advisory provides safety and acceptance that students can learn to feel supported by their advisor and also by their peers. In Sean Covey's (1998) national bestseller, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, he wisely points out that, "People won't expose their soft middles unless they feel genuine love and understanding" (p. 165). It is only through the consistency of trust and time that students achieve that with their advisor and with one another.

Maslow's (2011) fourth level of need is based on the self-respect and confidence one develops through achievement and the perception their voice is respected. This corresponds with Glasser's (1998) third level of need, recognition and Clarke's (2003) concept of voice. One distinction made between a teacher and an advisor is that "teachers assume responsibility for their classes, but in advisory, students are responsible to and for each other" (MacLaury, 2002, p. 18). When students have this kind of voice to express personal perspective, it creates student agency and a sense of community. To truly achieve an equitable and democratic education, students need to be respected for their

beliefs and need to learn to offer that same level of respect to others as they mature (Clarke, 2003; NASSP, 2004; Vermont DOE, 2002). Having regular discussions in advisory, based on student-generated topics allows for students to feel their ideas are valued and recognized. When students are given an opportunity to express themselves and have their opinions valued, they feel powerful (Clarke). In Glasser's *Choice Theory*, he explores the need and quest for power as being unique to the human species. It is this quest for power that intrinsically motivates students. "By the time we are teenagers, power pushes us far beyond what we would do if our only motivation was to survive and get loving attention" (1998, p. 38). To deny student voice is to deny power. The type of student-to-student relationship that is promoted through advisory can develop student voice in a school system.

By giving all students a voice you are allowing for students to improve their self-esteem, which further represents the fourth level of need in Maslow's (2011) framework. In this context, self-esteem is not defined as self-admiration, but rather based on the idea that "one's actions, thoughts, feelings and beliefs count for something: that one has or will accomplish something – for oneself or society" (Hitchner & Tifft-Hichtner, 1996, p. 10). Self-esteem allows students to understand their "worth, strength, capability and adequacy of being useful and necessary in the world" (Maslow, p. 182). It is only once these basic needs of students have been fulfilled, that students are free to achieve at their fullest potential. When Deborah Meier refers to where education for the 21st century dare to go, she suggests the we must put "all our young people in a position to explore and act upon the fundamental intellectual and social issues of their time" (1995, p. 170). This

includes those regular intellectual interactions that might occur in advisory among peers.

Finally, one of Glasser's five essential needs is to have fun, or "invigoration" as defined by Galassi and his colleagues in their 1997 study on middle level advisory (p. 39). Students enjoy learning better when their sense of play is engaged whether through games or fun activitities. As Glasser says in Choice Theory, "It takes a lot of effort to get along well with each other, and the best way to do so is to have some fun learning together" (1998, p. 41). Through team building games and discussions, students can get to know one another on a deeper level, and enjoy doing so.

Human needs theory would almost make advisory seem requisite so that our children can flourish in American high schools. However, as national movements such as the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (US Department of Education, 2010) and the Common Core ramp up high stakes standards-based testing, the battle for contact time in core subjects often supercedes the need for balanced student development. This has recently resulted in the elimination of non-core programs such as advisory programs. A 2006 RAND study on data driven decision making cautioned that many schools are spending increased time on test taking skills and narrowing their curriculum to the subject areas covered on state tests (Marsh, Pane, & Hamilton, 2006). With this trend of narrowing the curriculum, it is easy to understand how something such as advisory could be overlooked when developing a comprehensive high school program.

2.7 Why High School Advisory is a Social Justice Issue

2.7.1 Graduation Attainment and Future Earnings

There seems to be adequate human needs theory that would suggest high school advisory is a structure that could make high school a safer, secure and engaging environment for students. My interest in researching advisory was grounded, however, in the premise that creating opportunities for all students to be well known and supported by an adult in school represented a social justice issue. As Dan French, the executive director of the Center for Collaborative Education and the co-author of Creating Small Schools states, "Educational equity is today's most crucial civil rights issue" (French, Atkinson, & Rugen, 2007, p. 4). In order to appreciate this issue from a social justice perspective, one must consider how high school graduation impacts the lives of our citizens and then, how the components of a high school advisory program can impact graduation rates.

Based on theories of social reproduction, high school dropouts are less likely to develop the necessary economic, cultural and social capital that will enable them to hold higher paying jobs (Wacquant, 2006). The 2009 labor statistics support this, indicating that a fully employed 25 year-old male with no diploma or equivalent, earned 30% less than a fully employed 25 year-old male with a high school diploma or equivalent (Institute of Education Sciences, 2011). As dismal as that statistic is, it does not take into consideration that the unemployment rate for high school dropouts was 39.9% for males and 44% for females in 2011 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

Moreover, if a student does not graduate from high school, he or she is highly unlikely to attend and graduate from college. In fact, a national survey of 18-29 year-olds from the years 2001 to 2009 showed that only 1% of black or white dropouts who had not attained their General Education Development Certificate (GED) were enrolled in any college program, with Asian dropouts faring slightly better at about 6% (Sum, 2012). Although students may apply to college after passing the GED, that same study indicated that only 17% of 18-25 year-olds who attained their GED were enrolled in college. In a separate 2010 study of a GED cohort, only 12% of the GED cohort had actually finished college in a six-year period (Gewertz, 2013). Clearly, students who graduate from high school have a significantly greater likelihood of attending and graduating from college.

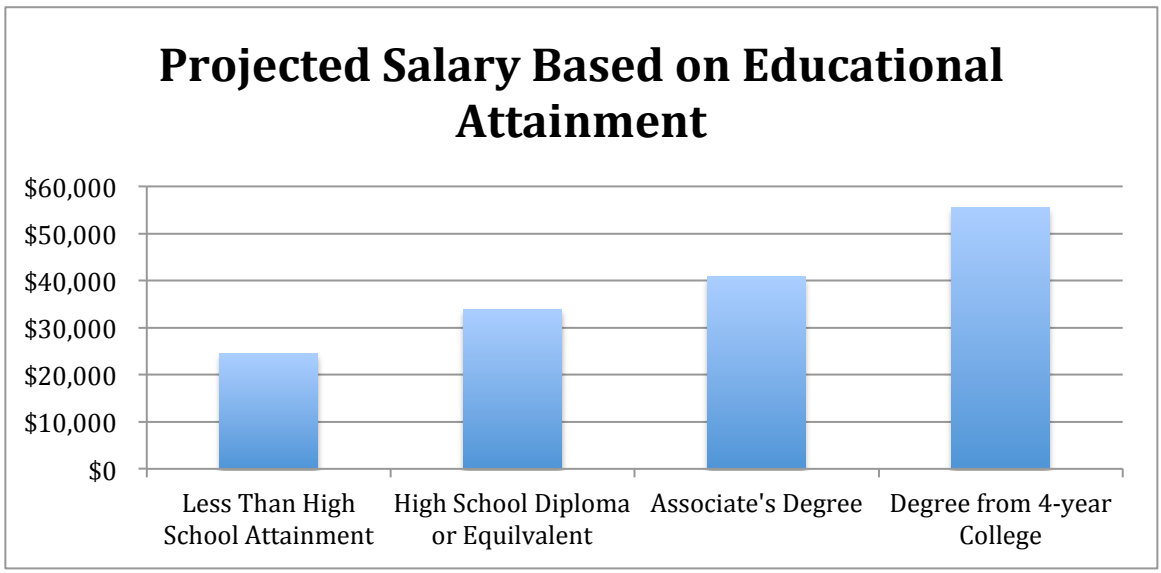

Figure 1: Projected Salary Based on Educational Attainment

As demonstrated by Figure 1 (US Department of Labor, 2013), students who graduate from high school and attend college have a significant financial advantage for

the rest of their lives (NCES, 2013). A high school dropout earns on average half of what a college graduate earns which continues to increase the socio-economic gap of our citizenry.

2.7.2 Graduation Rates in Vermont

Nationally, the most predictive characteristic determining whether or not students stay in school is race (Mac Iver, 2011). In Vermont, however, the most predictive characteristics why students leave school and do not graduate with their four-year cohort are socio-economic status and disability. Table 2 shows the annual Vermont dropout and high school completion rates (Vermont Agency of Education, 2012).

Table 2

Vermont Cohort Graduation Rates 2011

Status	VT Cohort Graduation Rate
White (European Descent)	87.07%
African American / Asian	83.03% / 89.31%
Non- English Language Learners	87.57%
English Language Learners	82.01%
Non-IEP Students	91.03 %
IEP Students	68.93%
Non- Free and Reduced Lunch	94.27%
Free and Reduced Lunch	76.64%

2.7.3 Graduation Rates in Burlington, Vermont

In order to understand a bit more about Vermont's cohort graduation rates, I have also included in this discussion Vermont's largest city, Burlington, a refugee resettlement community. Vermont has little racial diversity in its high school population, standing at 8% (Vermont Department of Education, 2012). This statewide average is well below the 2011 national average of 25% (Davis & Bauman, 2013). One might think that race is not a large factor in why students leave high school in Vermont just because students of diverse ethnic backgrounds do not make up a large percentage of our population. For this reason, I have chosen to represent the cohort statistics from Burlington to highlight that even in a racially diverse school, race or ethnicity is not one of the most predictive factors for why students leave high school. (As an aside, Burlington does not have an advisory program and hence was not a school in my study.)

Although racially Burlington High School is an aberration for the state of Vermont due to a 31% non-white population, the most predictive characteristics for whether or not students leave Burlington High School are still socio-economic status and disability. The Burlington School District is also unique in its demographic for Vermont not only due to its non-white student population, but also because 42% students receive free and reduced lunch (FRL, which is typically used as a proxy for low-income), compared with a state-wide average of 38% (Vermont Department of Education, 2012).

As demonstrated in Table 3, Burlington shows little discrepancy in its cohort graduation rate based on race (.2%), or surprisingly English Language Learners (ELL) vs. Non-ELL (3.2%), there is a 16.9% discrepancy for students who receive free and reduced

lunch, and a staggering 22.89% discrepancy for special education students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP) vs. non-IEP (Vermont Agency of Education, 2012).

Table 3

Burlington Cohort Graduation Rates 2011

Status	BHS Cohort Graduation Rate
White (European Descent)	82.2%
African American / Asian	82.05% / 85%
Non- English Language Learners	85.19%
English Language Learners	81.96%
Non-IEP Students	85.93 %
IEP Students	63.04%
Non- Free and Reduced Lunch	91.97%
Free and Reduced Lunch	75%

As is evident in these statistics, there is very little discrepancy between students identified as white compared with students identified as non-white or specifically, African American. This is a tremendous departure from the 18% discrepancy cited in national statistics (USDE, 2012). But these statistics do indicate there are still particular populations of underserved students that are leaving school at an alarming rate.

2.8 The Connection Between High School Advisory and Graduation Rate

So why do students leave high school and how can advisory help to mitigate some

of those factors? Predictive factors for why students leave high school include gender, race, socio-economic status, and attendance rates (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Jordan, Kostandini, & Mykerezi, 2012; Mac Iver, 2011), poor grades and a sense of failure on standardized testing (Kaplan , Peck, & Kaplan, 1997; Natriello et al., 1985), low levels of family support and low levels of maternal education (Sommers & Piliawsky, 2004). Specific to African American males there was also a perception that school activities were more feminine in nature (Davis & Jordan, 1994) and hence did not engage them enough to keep them in school. Far less predictive of leaving high school is whether one lives in an urban or rural area (Jordan et al., 2012).

Although a high school advisory program that fosters academic support, personalization and connectedness may not be able to impact several of the factors associated with student dropout rate such as race, gender, socio-economic status, or level of maternal education, it can have an impact on attendance rates (Mac Iver, 2011), academic outcomes (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Blum, 2005; McClure et al., 2010) and support felt by students (Burns, 2007; Ziegler & Mulhall, 1994).

2.8.1 Absenteeism

Absenteeism, and especially chronic absenteeism, which means missing 10% of the year for any reason, are two of the most predictive features in graduation attainment (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Rates of chronic absenteeism almost double from elementary to high school and are highest in areas of high poverty. Several studies from Johns Hopkins University and the National Governor's Association cited chronic absenteeism to be the strongest predictor for dropping out of high school after race (Balfanz &

Byrnes; Mac Iver, 2011). In 2008, based on their research of 30 dropout prevention programs, the Institute for Education Sciences created the Practical Guide for Dropout Prevention. In that guide, they recommend that students should be assigned an adult advocate that is able to fully develop a relationship with that student (Dynarski, 2008). One of the cornerstone goals of a comprehensive high school advisory program is that the advisor knows the student well and can advocate for him or her (Crawford, 2008).

2.8.2 Academic Outcomes

Several studies demonstrate that academic outcomes have an impact on student graduation rates as well (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Finn, Gerber, & Boyd-Zaharias, 2005; Rumberger, 2001). Since another critical goal of comprehensive high school advisory programs is to provide an academic coach for all students (Mac Iver, 2011), academic performance may be positively impacted by implementing an advisory program. In fact, in a three-year study of 14 small schools, it was determined that there was a rise in academic achievement for students who had a positive perception of advisory (McClure et al., 2010).

It is important to note that one aspect of the aforementioned study could be construed as not supporting a positive relationship between advisory and academic success. During the three-year McClure, Yonezawa and Jones study of over 4,000 students, it was determined that students with higher, more positive perceptions of advisory actually had a lower weighted grade point average (WGPA) than students with lower, less positive perceptions of high school advisory (2010). One must remember, however, that this demonstrates a correlated inverse relationship, not a causal relationship

(Howell, 2010). There was a degree of relationship between the variables, but by no means did the researchers intend to indicate that that was any predictive quality or reason to believe that advisory actually caused a lower WGPA. The researchers hypothesized that the reason for this was that "the simplest explanation is that students who needed advisory most (i.e., had the lowest grades, etc.) were the ones who valued advisory most" (McClure et al., p. 11). They inferred that students who already had academic supports in place such as family resources, perceived advisory to be less valuable. On the other hand, students who had academic struggles and little support at home appreciated the extra academic assistance and personalization. That said, most students in the study, despite their WGPA level, saw some improvement in their academic achievement when supplemented by advisory (McClure et al.).

2.8.3 Connection to School Environment

In addition to low grades and absenteeism, students often leave high school because they lack a positive connection to their school (Lee & Smith, 1994; Rumberger, 2001). Human needs theory and motivational theory highlight how connectedness to peers and adults also has a positive relationship to academic achievement. Indeed recommendations from the 2007 Wentzel and Wigfield metanalysis of articles focused on motivation and intervention included paying close attention to motivational theory and creating interventions in schools so that positive social intereactions and connectedness with students and teachers can occur. In both a 2008 dropout prevention guide and a 2011 policy paper which made recommendations for dropout recovery, the recommendation to have an adult advocate or coach was clear (Dynarski, 2008; Reyna, 2011). As students develop deep relationships with their advisors and co-advisees, the kind of positive

connectedness that keeps students in school can occur.

2.9 Empirical Studies on High School Advisory

Four empirical studies have been published since I began my research in 2009. Although these four studies demonstrate a more narrow view of the high school advisory experience, looking at either one aspect of advisory or one grade-level, they were invaluable to me in informing my research, and in turn helped me to develop my research questions. In Table 4 you will see a synopsis of their research projects and their findings.

Table 4

Recent Studies on High School Advisory

Authors/Date	Purpose	Method	Demographics	Findings
Walloff (2011) Dissertation	To study connectedness and academic performance	Qualitative interviews	Single urban high school, both students and advisors	Advisory had little impact on citizenship or academics, but had a clear impact on the perception of connectedness
Borgeson (2009) Dissertation	To study the sense of belonging	Mixed method, quantitative survey with some open-ended questions Evaluation of a program	One high school 9th and 10th grade students (only one year) advisors, and 12th grade assistant advisors	Felt the 8 goals associated with connectedness, communication skills and school community were met,
McClure, Yonezawa & Jones (2010) Journal Article	To study perceived levels of personalization and academic outcomes	Survey-Quantitative HLM	Over 10,000 high school students	Higher levels of personalization → higher GPA More favorable perceptions about advisory → lower GPA
Mac Iver (2011) Journal Article	To study dropout prevention through personalization and an adult advocate	5-year study Quantitative – descriptive and cross-tabular analysis (HLM) Some qualitative 1st year	Over 500 Students control and program participants 9th and 10th graders One year of adult advocate	Some evidence of lower dropout rate corresponded with higher perception of personalization

2.10 The Role of Coaching or Mentoring

As my data collection revealed a trend of connecting advisory grade checks with a perception about how advisory impact academics, I realized it was important to gather information about the impact of coaching or mentoring on success at a task. Coaching, mentoring and sponsorship are not, however, to be used synonymously. Coaching in general is focused and very results oriented (Abbott, 2011). An example might be when a coach works with someone to successfully write a grant or when a teacher coaches a student on how to give a live presentation. Mentoring is more relational and is built on trust and mutual respect developed over a longer time. Coaching might be one aspect of mentoring, but mentoring is more personal in nature (Abbott). Sponsorship is more representative of an advocate who can use his or her knowledge, influence or power to help the person sponsored to be successful (Abbott). For instance, when an advisor uses his or her "connections" to help an advisee obtain an internship or when a supervisor writes a recommendation for an aspiring teacher.

Coaching, mentoring and sponsoring all represent roles of advisors in what research defines as a comprehensive advisory program (Mac Iver, 2011; MacLaury, 2002), but there is little empirical research supporting these practices in school systems. A 2004 Australian study looked at the effects of out-of-school hours academic coaching for over 1,700 elementary, middle and high school students. They found that although coaching for specific tasks did help students who already demonstrated motivation to learn, such as those who sought coaching in preparation for college entrance exams (Kenny & Faunce, 2013), it did not demonstrate an increased rate of success for all

students. In contrast, in a 2008 study on Latino youth, it was determined that natural long-term mentoring had a positive impact on absenteeism, academic success and a sense of belonging (Sanchez, Esparza, & Colón, 2008). These studies help to explain the difference between a brief coaching relationship and a long-term mentoring relationship, and how the two impact student success differently.

2.11 National Trends Toward Personalization

One needs to look no further than the professional development shelves of your local school to see a wide array of resources advocating for the personalization of education in the 21st century; differentiated instruction, brain-based lessons, using multiple intelligences to engage students, and creating personalized learning plans based on proficiency based learning expectations are all designed to meet the needs of a wide range of students. As I will discuss in 2.13, Act 77 of Vermont is indicative of the trend to move toward a greater level of personalization.

For the purpose of this review, I will define personalized learning as a blended approach to learning that fosters a collaborative partnership between the teacher, parent, student and school by combining the delivery of education both in and outside of school and tailoring the learning program for each student according to his or her needs (Clarke, 2013). Inherent in the previous definition is the existence of a member of the school staff to forge that collaborative partnership. Personalization is germane to this research because in a comprehensive advisory program, the advisor acts as a point person between the student, school and family.

The concept of personalized learning is not a new concept. The highly

personalized Montesorri approach, developed over 100 years ago, considers every child a unique learner. This constructivist discovery model is used in over 20,000 schools worldwide (Ala, Sari, & Kahya, 2012). The Big Picture School model, which I will address later in this review, offers high school students a fully personalized proficiency-based high school education. In this model, proficiencies are met by student-designed internships and study, and are then presented before an authentic audience (Littky & Grabelle, 2004). More recently concepts such as proficiency based-curriculum, personalized learning plans, dual-enrollment, blended curriculum and multiple pathways have become central themes for professional development and national conferences.

And although the Big Picture model and the Montessori model both represent extreme forms of personalization, there is evidence that more traditional structures that offer personalized options correspond with higher student GPA and more favorable perceptions of school (McClure et al., 2010). In a separate five-year longitudinal study of at-risk students who participated in an advisory program, it was discovered that 81% of the males felt the personalized aspect of the program helped them in school. It was the caring of a committed adult that knew the student well that made the difference (Mac Iver, 2011).

In addition to students having a caring adult in their school, programs that offered multiple pathways such as internships, independent learning opportunities (ILOs), career academies, talent development high schools, charter schools, dual-enrollment options and high school redirection programs were also recommended to keep at-risk students in school (Kemple & Snipes, 2000; Mac Iver, 2011; Reyna, 2011). In a longitudinal study of

1,700 students in career academies, Kemple and Snipes discovered that there were significant impacts on the high-risk students for improved attendance and graduation rate. There was an 11% increase in graduation attainment for students that were a part of a career academy over those who were not. In a 2011 policy brief focused on reengaging dropouts, Reyna suggests that in order to reengage youths, programs must offer flexible pathways that remove Carnegie units as the standard for mastery and implement personalized learning plans. And in Mac Iver's study of over 500 students, there was strong evidence that personalization, specifically in the form of an advisor, contributed to an increased 6% in graduation rate for the program group. Although none of these studies focused on the traditional advisory structure, it is clear that personalization impacts the academic persistence of high school students, especially at-risk high school students.

2.12 Models of Advisory

Although there is evidence that personalization in the high school does impact academic persistence (Howley et al., 2000; Kemple & Snipes, 2000; Mac Iver, 2011; Reyna, 2011; Steinmiller & Steinmiller, 1991), what form that personalization takes can vary widely depending on the school system. There is no automatic formula for the structure of an advisory program in a school system. In fact it was noted in John Burns' (2007) study of middle school advisories that since many of the most salient events that were discussed in relation to advisory actually took place outside of that time frame, that the structure was not as important as the concept of advisory. The extremes run from the full time advisor/practitioner model in the Big Picture Learning schools (Littky & Grabelle, 2004), to Freshman Academies, to systemic advisory systems that meet only

once a week.

Originally known as “The Met” (for Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center), the Big Picture Learning movement began in 1996, resulting in the transformation of six high schools in Providence, Rhode Island. Radical educational theorists Dennis Littky and Elliot Washer proposed “a bold new school dedicated to educating one student at a time” (Littky & Grabelle, 2004, p. ___). The Big Picture schools are based on an educational system where instead of moving from class to class throughout the day, they are based with one advisor who, as a generalist, works uniquely with 8 to 12 students throughout the year. In the Big Picture Schools, students are encouraged to pursue their interests, learn through internships (LTI) in the greater community, and demonstrate their learning through public presentations. The limited number of “outcomes” are overarching and they are demonstrated through exhibitions which are evaluated by a learning team. After, the exhibition students reflect through writing and meetings with their advisors about their learning (Littky & Grabelle).

The model focuses on the importance of the relationships between the students, parents, advisors and community mentors. In Dennis Littky’s 2013 keynote address to the Rowland Conference at the University of Vermont, he stated, “learning can’t happen without relationships” (Littky). Emphasizing the importance of the role the advisor plays in the students’ day-to-day learning, he stated, “I start with advisory. They need people who really know them well…who can call their parent if they need to. Every kid is known well” (Littky).

A unique “outcome” which is required by all students is “getting promoted to a

senior institute" (Levine, 2002, p. 113). This means all students must go through the process of applying to and interviewing at institutions of higher learning. The results have been impressive. Levine cites the 7% rate of absenteeism as extremely favorable compared with the citywide rate for Providence non-Met public high schools as being 20%. More importantly, the Met dropout rate for the years 1996 to 2000 was one-third the dropout rate of non-Met high schools in Providence, and 100% of the Met Graduates were accepted to some institution of higher learning. Due to the successes of the Big Picture Schools in the 1990s, today there are Big Picture Schools in 16 states with an overall cohort graduation rate of 90% (Big Picture Learning, 2013).

Another structure that promotes personalization of learning is the Freshman Academy model. This model has gained popularity as a mechanism to transition middle school students to high school. The Freshman Academy model in many ways mirrors the middle level model in that: 1) students meet separately from the other high school students for a specific part of the day, 2) their teachers are teamed with common planning time, 3) they use standardized protocols, and 4) all freshman (per team) have those same core teachers (Habeeb, Moore, & Siebert, 2008). One articulated purpose for limiting this model to freshmen is to assist in the transition from middle to high school (Habeeb et al.).

Both the Big Picture and the Freshman Academy model significantly impact the schedule and delivery of the educational program. Much more common are advisory structures that supplement existing programs. Whatever the format of the advisory system, there are some common attributes of effective advisories that aim to improve persistence. The most salient attribute is a caring adult who knows the student well (MacLaury, 2002;

Madding & Saddlemire, 1998; Price, Cioci, Penner, & Trautlein, 1990). This adult knows about the student's academic life as well as their interests and to an extent, about their family (Crawford, 2008). By knowing a student as a whole person, they are satisfying the student's basic needs for love and belonging and recognition. A second attribute is that the advisor is an advocate for the student. In addition to, or often in place of a parent, a strong advisor advocates for their student so that they have access to an equal and fair education (Scales & Leffert, 2004). The third attribute is to act as a liaison or resource for the student (Clarke, 2013).

2.13 Vermont's New Level of Personalization

Indeed, personalization in Vermont will be the new norm as schools adopt the intent of §941, Act 77 of 2013, the Flexible Pathways initiative. This initiative calls for schools in Vermont to provide educational opportunities that reflect personalized goals, learning styles and abilities. The language of the bill indicates that all Vermont high schools will provide opportunities for dual enrollment in college courses while still at high school. It also requires that schools utilize work-based learning programs, opportunities for blended and virtual learning, greater access to career and technical schools, and personalized learning plans for all students (Vermont Agency of Education, 2013). There is little doubt that in order to develop such a personalized curriculum, structures will need to be developed or honed throughout the state to accommodate this level of personalization.

One school that has been at the forefront of personalization is Mount Abraham Union Middle High School, Bristol, Vermont. In John Clarke's 2013 book about the

"Mount Abe" model, he describes a model where all middle school students develop a personal learning plan (PLP) based on their exploratory classes. As students progress to high school, 30% of them participate in a personalized learning experience through the Personalized Learning Department, also known as Pathways (Clarke, 2013). He describes the learning through this program as "the capability to engage all students in learning how to manage the work of their minds, no matter what their age, prior learning or early achievement might have been" (p. 77). In this model, advisors are a critical part of the program.

2.14 Current Trends in Advisory in Vermont

As stated in the sub-questions, one of the reasons for this study was to uncover the prevalence of high school advisory and the type of advisory structures that currently exist in the state of Vermont. The Freshman Seminar or Freshman Academy model adopted by the high schools in Burlington, South Burlington and Springfield, Vermont, and advisories that meet as an integral part of the academic day in the format of a self-contained expeditionary classroom as found in the Big Picture model such as at South Burlington, Vermont are widely represented at conferences and in the local papers. However, there is little mention about high school advisory. The most traditional form of high school advisory is the Teacher Advisor or Advisor-Advisee model where students meet at least once a week in groups of approximately 10 to 15 students for a scheduled period of time. This format is generally reflective of the middle school model. As unspecific as that sounds, it is indicative of the most common Vermont experience of high school advisory, as my research will demonstrate. The traditional advisory model is

the focus of this study.

2.15 Obstacles to Implementation of Advisory Programs

Inherent in any affective program is the challenge to quantify the benefits with the same precision as with cognitive programs. This, coupled with a lack of advisory training for educators, makes advisory challenging to implement. Although Chris Stevenson considers advisory one of the most rewarding aspects of the middle level model, he also recognizes that it is one of the least well-implemented aspects of the middle level model (Hopkins, 1999).

Roadblocks to successful implementation of advisory are categorized by conceptualization barriers, support barriers, and resource barriers as well as by a lack of buy-in (Burns, 2007; Galassi et al., 1997; Stevenson, 2002). Conceptualization barriers include not articulating goals adequately and not demonstrating a clear vision of the purpose for advisory. In my experience, addressing the conceptual barriers is a critical step in the process of implementing effective advisories. The goals and vision need to be clearly articulated and created with input from all stakeholders, or the program runs the risk of inconsistent acceptance and implementation. Other roadblocks to implementing comprehensive advisory programs cited were lack of research supporting high school advisory, adequate time for implementation, buy-in by veteran faculty and training for all advisors (Galassi et al.;Schulkind, 2007).

2.16 Summary

Recent research on high school advisory has begun to look at how high school advisory impacts student academics, their connectedness to the school environment and

the personalization of their education. Some positive correlations were discovered, but much of the data is inconclusive. That said, human needs theory and theories on how to reduce high school attrition both support the implementation of comprehensive high school advisory programs. As we move into the age of greater personalization and multiple pathways, high schools are looking again at advisory as a structure that can support student-centered learning environments whether the environments are in the traditional format, Freshman Academies or Big Picture Learning models. It is clear that administrative support and professional development are keys to successful programs and should be further expanded.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Purpose & Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand how students, advisors and administrators perceive advisory in four Vermont high schools. The research was divided into two phases. The first phase was an assessment of the current state of advisory in all Vermont public high schools. The second phase was a qualitative study that focused on the perceptions of students, advisors and administrators in four Vermont high schools with high school advisory programs. The first phase of the study assessed which schools in Vermont had some form of advisory program, how often it met each week and for what length of time. The following questions were used to determine the status of high school advisory in Vermont.

- How many high schools in Vermont have advisory programs?
- How often do they meet and for how long?

For the second phase of the study, a phenomenological qualitative study specifically examined the perception of students on how advisory impacted their academics, connectedness to the school and personalization of education. The research questions were informed primarily by the four recent empirical studies on high school advisory discussed in the review of literature, and secondarily by human needs theory, literature about dropout rate and school environment, personalization of learning, effective advisory practices, and roadblocks to effective advisory practices. All interview protocols are located in the appendix. The student research questions were designed to maximize student voice vis-à-vis their perceptions about their individual experience.

- How do Vermont students who participate in high school advisory perceive the impact of high school advisory on their academic performance?
- How do Vermont students who participate in high school advisory perceive the impact of high school advisory on their school environment?
- How do Vermont students who participate in high school advisory perceive the impact of high school advisory on the personalization of their education?

The study also sought to understand advisor and administrator perceptions of how the advisory program influenced these same factors as well as their perceptions of effective practices and roadblocks to those practices.

- How do Vermont advisors perceive the impact of high school advisory on their students' academic performance?
- How do advisors perceive the impact of high school advisory on the school environment?
- How do Vermont advisors perceive the impact of high school advisory on the personalization of their students' education?
- What are effective advisory practices?
- What are roadblocks to implementing effective advisory practices?

3.2 My Perspective as the Researcher

In order to understand my perspective on advisory, I need to disclose what my advisory experience has been during the past 27 years as an educator. I taught French and Spanish at a small Vermont high school for 22 years. During that time, I was an advisor to a comprehensive student council, an advisor to the leadership project and a key

architect of two significant programs, the Windham Southwest Supervisory Union (WSSU) Mentoring Program and the Twin Valley Advisory Program. Because of the organic model of leadership in the WSSU and in our building in particular, I was able to effect notable change as a teacher-leader and not an administrator. All of these programs were very much based in personal relationships and student voice.

The advisory program, which I designed with a colleague, a parent and four students, was created as part of our school's action plan with the Foundation for Excellent Schools (FES). FES, supported by the Freeman Foundation, worked with a limited number of schools in Vermont to improve education for all students. The advisory program we created was comprehensive on paper. It included an academic component of goal setting and student action plans, a service component to the greater community, a school spirit component of advisories competing each year for the "Wildcat Cup" and a career and college counseling component to help students in their high school path decision making process. There was a 60-page handbook and website with scripts, activities, goals, and responsibilities.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that the initial implementation of the program did not go well. The lessons I learned from implementing a rapid change, with little input from the faculty, little face-to-face support and no clear program evaluation tool have shaped my understandings of processes that need to be considered when implementing advisory programs. Being blind to the underpinnings of change anxiety almost derailed the work we had accomplished to develop the advisory program. "People need to have some reliability and certainty built into their work lives. Change introduces

ambiguity and uncertainty, which threaten the need for a relatively stable, balanced, and predictable work environment" (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002, p. 328). Our greatest error, though, was to claim victory too soon. Change must settle into an organization for 3 to 10 years, since the success of new approaches are fragile (Kotter, 1996). We made the assumption that because we had created a structure, articulated goals, and provided a handbook, the advisory program would be instantly successful. But yet, advisors felt unprepared, perceived it as optional, and implemented it inconsistently. The committee reviewed and revised the program and made adjustments. Three years later it was recognized as exemplary by NEASC, (although I still felt it was implemented inconsistently throughout the school). This experience has biased my understanding of what a comprehensive advisory program is. I did not choose my former school as one of my research schools because I wanted to avoid the perception of bias.

3.3. Research Design – Theoretical Framework

To advance the understanding of the research questions, I needed to uncover the feelings and experiences of the students, advisors and administrators from the target schools. The kind of information I sought would need to be framed in a qualitative study since the variables were complex, interwoven and difficult to measure (Glesne, 2006). The research design was grounded in phenomenology in order to understand the essence of the experience and emotion that would tell the story of these schools and their advisory programs. Since the purpose of a phenomenological study is to "reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of its universal essence" (Creswell, 2007, p. 58), this framework supported my goal of taking each individual voice and creating a

universal experience. The research was conducted through a postmodern constructivist lens surrounding the student and adult perceptions of advisory and their awareness of their own personal interaction with the lived experience (Creswell; Patton, 2002). I also paid particular attention to voice, which allowed me to construct meaning from the highly personalized responses.

3.4 Creating and Testing the Instrument

3.4.1 The Survey Instrument for the Students

The qualitative interviews for students were designed with three descriptive demographic questions (student year, frequency and time allotted for advisory, and number of co-advisees) followed by questions about their general education experience, and finally questions specifically related to their advisory experience. The instrument, located in the appendix, was designed utilizing open-ended questions. Using questions that required an explanatory response allowed for a rich description of the participants' experiences and perceptions. "While the research remains in process, interviewing is a 'what else' and 'tell me more' endeavor" (Glesne, 2006, p. 96). For example, when a student referenced her advisory as a "safe place to talk about stuff," I was able to ask about a time when she felt especially safe, and learned that they had used advisory as a place to process a recent school tragedy. By setting my assumptions aside to dig deeper into the story they were telling, my questions developed differently with each interview.

The qualitative questions for students were divided into two categories: school-wide experience and advisory specific experience. By seeking some general data about the students' perceptions of the school and their educational experience, a deeper context

was set prior to understanding their experience with advisory. These general questions surrounded their overall perceptions of the school atmosphere and connectedness and the academic engagement of the school as a whole. During the general questions, they were also asked whether they felt they were well-known by an adult in the school. Asking this question prior to the section focused on advisory allowed students to consider all adults in the building, without the researcher leading the question toward the advisor specifically.

Two students participated in cognitive interviews to test the questionnaires prior to beginning the interview process. The two students were chosen from a convenience sample of graduated students who had participated in a high school advisory program for four years. I was familiar with the advisory program in which they had participated, but it was not a school from my study. Throughout the cognitive testing of the instrument, the students responded out loud to the questions, allowing me to understand how they understood each question and whether the intent was being realized (Dillman, Smith, & Christian, 2009). I listened for when they felt that the questions were clear and when they had to pause and seek more information. The questions surrounding personalization were the most challenging for the pilot participants. Because of that I added the language "so for example, how does your education differ from every other junior?" After having altered the question, one of the students in the cognitive group was able to talk about being known and being guided by the advisor. The other student was still puzzled, so I added, "What about multiple pathways, for example internships, independent studies, extra-curricular activities, online courses, dual enrollment or honors classes." Because of the cognitive testing, I was able to better describe personalization in a way that the

students could relate to. In the cognitive testing, the students were able to connect their experiences of personalization with their advisor. In the student interviews for the actual study the connection between advisory and personalization was generally less clear.

Because of this, I recognized that I should have not relied merely on a convenience sampling of two students who attended the same high school (a high school that I knew promoted personalization through the advising system). I might have had more success with my attempts to connect personalization and advisory in my protocol, if I had cognitively tested the instrument with students who came from two different high school advisory structures.

3.4.2 The Advisor/Administrator Interviews

The administrator and advisor interviews, which are also located in the appendix, consisted of three demographic questions and eight more open-ended questions. In addition to their perceptions about how advisory programs impacted student academics, connectedness to the school and personalization, they were asked about activities they did with advisees, what they believed were effective practices and what they believed were roadblocks to effective advising. The adult interviews were not cognitively tested. They tended to last for a longer period of time although fewer questions were asked. Both the advisors and administrators were able to discuss the questions at length, although in some cases the answers appeared repetitive.

3.4.3 Descriptive Questions for All Schools in Vermont

The study included some quantitative data, specifically data to uncover the status of high school advisory across Vermont. The purpose of this first phase of my research

was to uncover what schools would be part of an appropriate sample for my research. I called the 62 public high schools in Vermont between May 2013 and October 2013. In my phone protocol, which is located in the appendix, I introduced my research and discovered that for many schools I needed to describe high school advisory before they were able to answer the questions. This was due to the fact that what I described as advisory (a structure that meets regularly in a small interactive group whose purpose is to ensure every student is known well by at least one adult in the building) was known to schools by many different names: advisory, teacher advisory (TA), teacher advisory group (TAG), call back, flex time, academic success block and learning teams. In several schools reaching an administrator by phone became difficult; hence I also emailed those schools. Finally, after nearly six months, I was able to connect with all public high schools in Vermont either by phone, email or in person.

About halfway through my research, since I had encountered such interest in this topic, I added a fourth demographic question surrounding whether the advisories were grouped by grade or mixed grades. That advisory demographic data only represented 30 of the 62 schools contacted. That data were stored in an excel sheet and the counts are represented in Chapter four as a series of pie charts.

3.5 Understanding Multiple Perspectives

The primary emphasis of the study, once the schools were identified, focused predominantly on the student perspective. Between the 14 participants in the focus groups and the 16 student interviewees, the data from this study was rich in student voice. I triangulated the data by including advisor and administrative perspectives as well as a

review of any documents pertaining to the advisory programs (if they existed). This rendered a well-rounded picture of how all three stakeholder groups perceived the advisory programs. The triangulation of data allowed themes that carried across perspectives to emerge, as well as the discrepancies between the stakeholder groups to be revealed. By using multiple sources (students, advisors and administrators) and multiple modes, (interviews, forums and document review) the verification process was built into the design to a greater degree than if the research had just relied on interviewing one group or used one mode (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

3.6 Population of the Participants

The sample population was comprised of students from all grades in advisory. The intentional use of a stratified sample allowed for enough coverage in each group to render an acceptable estimate of the data (Dillman et al., 2009). To further stratify the sample, the four schools in the study were selected so as to represent both small and large schools in rural, suburban and urban settings. Knowing that program development takes three to five years to be well established, only schools that had had an advisory program established for at least five years were selected.

In order to find a wide-range of schools that met the criteria, I used contacts around the state to determine what schools had been using advisory for at least five years as well as previous research I had conducted. Since I designed the advisory program at my former school in 2005, I had already made contacts at a number of schools in Vermont about high school advisory. Ultimately, four schools that matched my intended

demographic emerged and all four had even longer established advisory programs than the requisite five years.

3.7 The Setting of the Schools

3.7.1 Vermont

In order to understand the settings of the four schools in my study, one first needs to understand Vermont, a picturesque and progressive state. Vermont, the 14th state admitted to the union, is located in the northwest corner of New England. It ranks 45th in landmass and is the 49th least populous state with only Wyoming having fewer inhabitants (US Census Bureau, 2013). Despite its small size, it often tops lists for the US in being the "smartest state" (Statemaster, 2011), the healthiest state (America's Health Rankings, 2013), and one of the safest states (Bradford, 2011). Politically speaking it is considered a deep blue state with a libertarian edge. A democratic governor, one democratic senator and one independent senator, as well as a democratic congressman comprise the top offices in the state. Seventy-five percent of the state is forested with much of the rest of the state a bucolic mix of dairy farms, ski areas, quaint towns and a handful of small cities. Educationally it is made up of 62 supervisory unions and supervisory districts. As complicated as the supervisory system is, it pales in comparison to the very complicated funding formula that endeavors to equal out funding disparities between wealthy and less economically prosperous communities.

Prior to 1997, there were significant inequities in the funding mechanism in Vermont for education. For many years land wealthy cities and towns with ski areas and industry had been able to spend much more on education than the less land wealthy

towns of the more rural, less developed Northeast Kingdom. Prior to the 1990s, no efforts toward funding reform had been successful. In response to the 1997 ruling in Brigham v. Vermont, which found the funding of education to be inequitable and hence unconstitutional, the Vermont Legislature passed the historic Act 60 also known as the Equal Education Opportunity Act later that year. With the advent of Act 60, the state of Vermont created a statewide tax system to fund education through categorical grants. Act 60 designated properties into two categories: residential (homestead) and non-residential; the former pertains to one's residence and land and the latter refers to commercial properties and second homes. It also added a provision for income sensitivity so it would not adversely affect economically challenged landowners (Klein, 2010).

Over the years, Act 60 was modified several times and in 2003 the Vermont legislature passed Act 68 which is the current formula used in collecting revenue and distributing funds for education in the state of Vermont. Although Act 68 still relies on a statewide two-tiered tax structure like Act 60, it has eliminated the original concept of the sharing pool. When, however a district spends over 25% more than the previous year, it is considered excess spending and hence must be covered locally as an additional tax to the homestead properties of that district.

There were additional changes made to Act 68 during the 2010 legislative session, however, which do affect the income sensitivity provision in Act 68. For example, interest dividends will now be considered as part of a person's income and Vermonters are only eligible for income sensitivity reductions if his/her income is below $90,000. Also income sensitivity now only applies to persons whose homestead property is

assessed at less than $500,000 (Walsh, 2010). The intent of the several changes to the Equal Education Opportunity Act, as well as very recent discussions to move toward a different funding mechanism, have always been focused on equity of education.

3.7.2 Choice of Schools

In order to maintain anonymity for the participants in this study, I have only briefly described the four schools. Because Vermont is a small state, I have left identifying details out of my description. As previously stated, the four Vermont schools selected were urban, suburban, and rural. Considering the 2012 population estimate for the entire state of Vermont was only 626,011 (US Census Bureau, 2013), the terms urban and suburban may represent different concepts for people not from Vermont. For example, the largest city in Vermont – Burlington – has a population of only 42,000, and only two other cities have a population of over 10,000 people. The two "urban schools" that met the criteria had populations of fewer than 8,000 inhabitants. Hence many people reading this study might feel those municipalities more closely resemble large towns with a city government structure than they do a traditional urban environment.

3.7.3 The Four Schools

The two urban schools chosen were dramatically different schools. The first was a school of over 1,000 9th through 12th graders located in the heart of the downtown area of the city. Their student body was comprised of 92% white students with 12% students on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and a 33% Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) population (Vermont Agency of Education, 2013). Although this school was generally considered average for Vermont in both racial diversity and number of students with IEPs,

it was slightly above average for overall family income. This school had had a high school advisory program for over 10 years and grouped its program by grade level.

The second urban school that fit the criteria was a much smaller urban school of under 250 students. It too was located in the center of its urban area and was housed with its middle school. Their student body was comprised of 50% white students with 9% of student population on IEPs and a 71% FRL population. In addition, 34% of the students were English Language Learners (ELL) (Vermont Agency of Education, 2013). This school had also had a high school advisory program for over 10 years and grouped its program by grade level.

The suburban school that met the criteria was also a large school with a student body of over 1,200 students. Although located in a rural area, the sending towns for this high school were within commuting distance of a city, hence it was considered suburban. Eleven percent of their students were on IEP's and 94% of their student body was white. The FRL population differed considerably, however, from the Vermont statewide average of 39%, with only 12% of their students qualifying for FRL (Vermont Agency of Education, 2013). They too had a high school advisory program that had been in existence for over 10 years; however their advisory system was grouped across the grades.

The rural school in this study had a high school student population of approximately 500 students housed in the same building with 250 middle school students. 97% of the students were white and 12% of the students had IEPs (Vermont Agency of Education, 2013). The level of economic disadvantage was below the state average with 29% of the students eligible for FRL. The school was located near the town center in a

picturesque New England town of just under 4,000 residents (US Census Bureau, 2013). Their advisory program had been in existence for seven years, and it was grouped by grade level.

Table 5

Description of Schools in the Study

School	#1	#2	#3	#4	Vermont
Description	Urban Large	Urban Small	Suburban	Rural	State Average
# of Students	Over 1,000	250	Over 1,200	500	NA
Racial Diversity	92% White	50% White	94% White	97% White	92% White
Free and Reduced Lunch	33%	71%	12%	29%	39%
Students with IEP's	12%	9%	11%	12%	13%

(Vermont Agency of Education, 2013)

3.8 Populating the study

Inasmuch as schools chosen represented a diversity of Vermont High Schools, it was also critical to make sure there was interview data that represented a diversity of students. The interviewed students characterized different grade levels, interests, and academic success levels. Where it was possible, students represented diverse ethnic backgrounds and diverse learning needs. My plans for a very highly orchestrated random sampling procedure gave way to a convenience sampling of students the liaisons were able to access. That said, my convenience sampling met the need for a wide range of

diversity among my interview and forum subjects. In Tables 6 and 7, I have represented the range of grades, special education and English language learners. I do not have data on grade point average or economic diversity, so I needed to rely on the choices the administrators and liaisons made to represent a range of students.

Table 6

Student Demographics - Male/Female and Grade

Grade Level	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade	Total
Male	3	3	5	3	14
Female	5	7	3	1	16
Total	8	10	8	4	30

Table 7

English Language Learners and Students with IEPs

Gender	ELL	IEP
Male	1	1
Female	4	3
Total	5 (17%)	4 (13%)

3.9 The Interviews

The interviews began in May 2013, but they were interrupted by the summer break. Hence the final three schools participated in the process in October, November and

December 2013. I mention the timetable because it impacted the responses of any freshmen participants in the study. The freshmen interviewed in the spring of 2013 had had a longer period of time in a high school advisory setting. This may have had an impact on their perspective.

Students, advisors and administrators were interviewed in a quiet, private location on school premises so that their responses would be perceived as confidential. This was especially important for them if they wanted to speak freely about their experience. Confidentiality was paramount since as a researcher, I had the foremost responsibility to protect my subjects (Glesne, 2006). Students were also informed both at the beginning and end of the interviews that neither their names nor the names of their schools would be used and their responses would be indistinguishable from other participants. From the range of responses I received, I believe they felt safe in knowing their responses would be kept confidential. Although the interview time slots were scheduled for 45 minutes, the average interview lasted between 15 and 20 minutes for students and approximately 30 minutes for advisors and administrators.

The student interview followed a 15-question protocol, with only three questions being informational surrounding grade, number of students in advisory and advisory meeting times. Inasmuch as the protocols were based on 15 original questions, the average length of each interview was 30 questions. Since the nature of a phenomenological study is that the story unfolds as the research occurs (Creswell, 2007), some interviews well exceeded the 30 question average. Student interviews that had

fewer questions asked were actually longer interviews in general since those students needed less prompting and unpacking to respond to the questions.

As with any interview process, reading the emotion of the interview participant was essential in determining how deeply to probe. Was the participant looking at his or her watch? Did the participant keep reiterating what they had already said (and were they becoming annoyed)? Glesne (2006) cautions that feedback can be both verbal and non-verbal, hence being sensitive to the non-verbal cues as well as the verbal ones was important to the interview process.

Probing without employing leading questions was challenging with some of the non-native speakers of English. I felt that some of the explanations of the intent of protocol questions and the probing questions could have been interpreted as leading. For instance when trying to explain personalization of education to one ELL student, I used the example of personal choice with the topic for senior project. With a concrete example, she was able to describe some elements of personalization, but giving such a specific example bordered on leading the question. Therefore, I was constantly aware of how the wording of questions might affect the responses, and used more open-ended questions whenever possible. With a few of the ELL participants, giving as many options as possible in the descriptions and unpacking of questions allowed them to "latch on" to some of the ideas because they were familiar.

3.10 The Focus Forum Groups

The focus forum groups were the most challenging to arrange and so there were only three, not four focus groups. The small rural school did not participate in the formal focus forum protocol. The groups responded only to the three questions:

- How do you believe high school advisory has impacted your academic performance?
- How do you believe high school advisory has impacted your connectedness to your school environment?
- How do you believe high school advisory has impacted the personalization of your education?

Part of the forum process was to have students jot down the responses to the three questions before beginning to share out. We also used a protocol where everyone had a chance to share out once before a student could share out a second time. Equalizing the "air space" was more challenging when trying to include non-native speakers, but for that reason I believe having students write their responses first helped ease them into the conversation. One of the ELL students in the forum was not able to articulate his thoughts clearly. Using an interpreter might have helped that student participate more fully. In general, students were respectful of the process and some very telling themes emerged and were repeated in the three forum events.

3.11 Capturing the Tone with Analytic Memos

After each set of interviews, analytic memos captured the essence of the content and the tone of the interviewees. I did this both because I never trust technology to work

100% of the time, but also because they were "conceptual in intent" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 72). Since they were dated and coded, they helped focus some of the central (a priori) and emergent themes. Also during the interviews, although they were taped, copious notes were scribed on the interview protocols so they too could be coded in the data analysis process for emphasis and salient themes.

I transcribed all the interviews and wrote a second round of memos after each "set" of transcriptions. A set was comprised of the students, the forum events, or the advisors and administrators of each school. Once again, although the student experience is considered as a composite of 16 participants that are not school specific, I wanted to have a record of how students from each school reacted to particular questions.

3.12 Coding

The a priori codes determined by the review of literature were brief yet descriptive (Miles & Huberman, 1994), such as PERS for personalization (Mac Iver, 2011; McClure et al., 2010), CONS for student connection (MacLaury, 2002; Walloff, 2011), CONT for teacher connection (Borgeson, 2009; Burns, 2007) or ACB for academic benefit (McClure et al.; Schulkind, 2007; Walsh, 2010). A list of the initial a priori codes are listed in Figure 2.

CARE	caring adult
CONS	connection to students
CONT	connection to teachers
ACB	academic benefit
PERS	personalization
GOAL	goal setting - changed
SV	student voice
FUN	fun activities
PATH	multiple pathways

Figure 2: Initial A Priori Codes

What became immediately apparent was the need to note whether the coded chunk of dialogue was positive in nature or negative. For instance, when a student discussed academic benefit, there was a significant difference between the responses of the following two students:

Student #1:

> Well like I said, maybe once every two or three months he'll check our grades, and say "you're doing good, or you're not doing so hot" but he won't really help us in anyway. He'll just be like "you gotta get this done." I mean we're all aware of it, so we don't need him to check our grades.

Student #2:

> Oh well we talk with our advisor individually about our grades.
>
> (PI) How often does that happen?

> I'd say once every four weeks or so…so he has a sheet of paper with all our grades and we talk about if there's a grade that's not so well we talk about how we're going to improve it or how we're going to make a grade stay where it is.

Clearly in both instances the grades were being checked, but with the first student her tone and her qualification of the activity led me to believe she viewed this negatively whereas the second student viewed the experience as helpful. Hence where I had originally coded the responses just as ACB for academic benefit, I went back and reassigned a "+" or "—" to the code if they bore a positive or negative tone.

Also, some a priori codes needed to be changed to more closely resemble the essence of the students' comments. For instance "GOALS" became FUT for future. Only in one school did they actually refer to goal setting, but there were clear elements of discussion about the future in several of the schools. I also added a code for purpose (PURP) because there was confusion in the question surrounding the goals of advisory. Early on in the interviews I altered the question from "What do you perceive are the goals of your advisory?" to "What do you perceive is the purpose of advisory?"

Beyond altering code names and adding positive and negative values to the coded text, several codes emerged from the data. The academic benefit of having time to catch up on homework (HOMEW) was a prevalent theme in almost all schools, and the sense of having a break in the day to relax (RLX) was not only common to the student responses, but also the advisor responses. I also added codes for when students and advisors felt there was personal or academic guidance happening (GUIDE), and for when

the student mentioned the advisor demonstrated caring for them (CARE). ACT was also added when students spoke about specific activities in advisory, and the "+" or "—" was used to demonstrate whether the student liked or disliked the activity. Finally I altered the code list by adding ADV+ and ADV— when there was clear language around whether they actually liked advisory or disliked it. In some instances, there seemed to be no appropriate code so I either highlighted the text, or annotated the margins.

In addition to electronic coding in the margins, I coded the interviews with colored highlighters and tabs for a few of the specific questions such as:

- How do you believe high school advisory has impacted your academic performance?
- How do you believe high school advisory has impacted your connectedness to your school environment?

Figure 3 demonstrates the range of visual codes as well as the iterations of coding (once for each color). And in Figure 4, it is evident that some sections were double coded depending on the content. On the following page is a full list of the a priori and emergent codes.

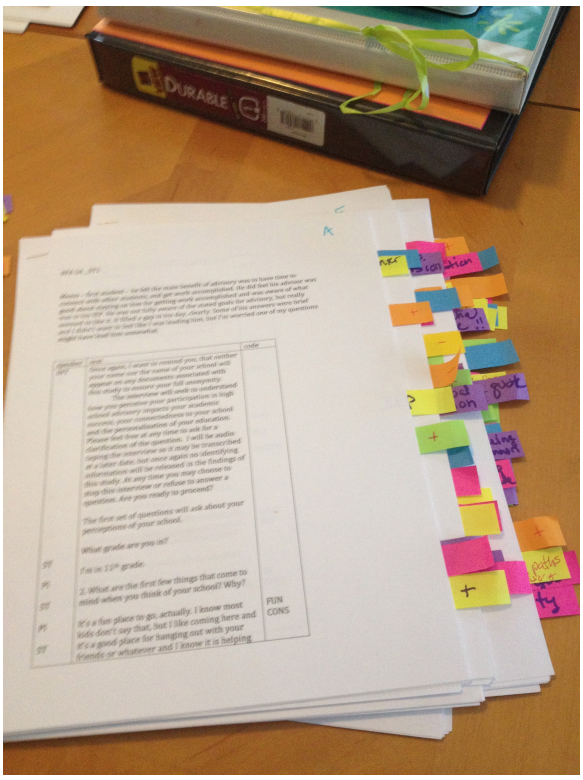

Figure 3: Color Coded Interviews

Colorful tabs represented a visual for academic benefit (orange), purpose (blue), student connection (pink), advisor connection (purple) and personalization (yellow).

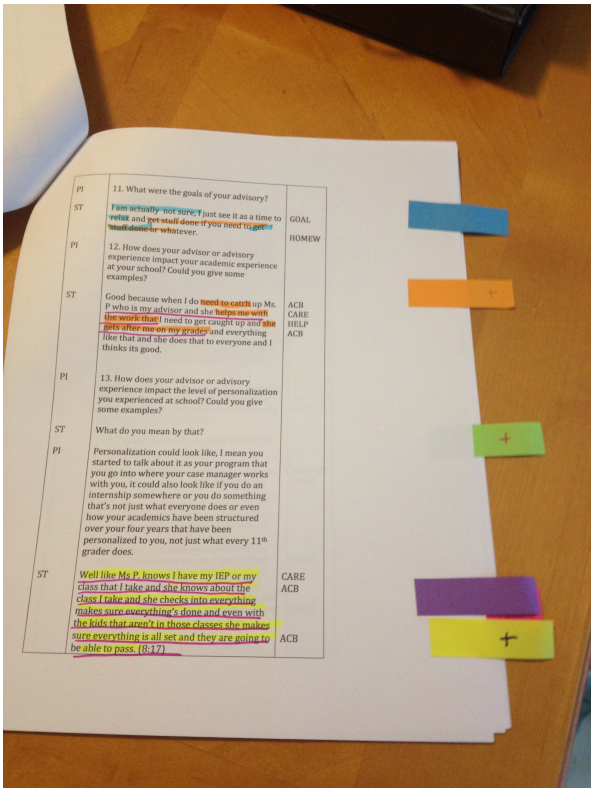

Figure 4: Double-Coding

Many sections were double coded as well when responses demonstrated both.

A PRIORI CODES:

CARE	caring adult (this was often double coded with CONT)
CONS	connection to students
CONT	connection to teachers
ACB	academic benefit
PERS	personalization
~~GOAL~~	goal setting – changed to FUT or GUIDE
SV	student voice
FUN	fun activities
~~PATH~~	multiple pathways- changed to GUIDE

EMERGENT CODES:

HOMEW	homework
ACT	activities
RLX	felt advisory was a good place to relax
SUGG	students had suggestions to improve advisory
ADV+	liked advisory overall
ADV—	didn't like advisory overall
GUIDE	received guidance from their advisor
FUT	advisor discussed future and goal setting
KNOWN	student felt well known by an adult in the building
SCHED	schedule of advisory impacted the experience
PURP –	purpose of advisory (changed from GOAL)

ADDING PLUSSES AND MINUES – expressed a value for codes

Figure 5: Complete List of Codes

Finally, as I began to work with the data from the adults (advisors and administrators), I added codes that would adequately represent their responses. For instance, I noticed that several advisors had enough institutional memory to discuss multiple changes that had taken place in their advisory program. “Now over time, like somebody might get together with some teachers and decide what we’re going to do in TA and provide a thorough structure and that has never ever worked.” A statement such as that would be coded as CHNG and RDBLK. Likewise there was considerable mention that teachers across all four buildings did things differently. Those were coded as DIF. Altogether the adult section generated six codes that were not in the student data.

ADDED ADULT CODES:	
EFF	Effective practices
RDBLKS	Roadblocks to effective advising
PTL	Potential
SUP	Support
CHNG	Changes that have occurred
DIF	Articulated differences between advisories

Figure 6: Adult Codes

3.13 Student Profiles

In addition to coding interviews and forum transcripts for the a priori and emergent codes, I also made matrices to represent the full range of responses to each question for all of the students and advisors. I did this for sake of transparency and validity, and for quick reference to the reader. The final task in my data analysis was to

create student profiles. These profiles are specifically not related to any school and are mixed so as to maintain the anonymity of the schools and the students. I created the profiles with a mix of the information from the first seven questions, which were not advisory based, and the final eight questions, which were. These profiles, which are located in the appendix, allow the reader to develop non-identifying context for the student responses. These profiles also add to the internal validity of the research because the thick description could help to reveal rival explanations for the students' responses (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Even as there is going to be a desire by the reader to associate specific students or advisors with a particular school, I did not associate individual participants with their schools for two reasons: 1) Vermont is a small state and it is my first duty to protect the confidentiality of my subjects, and 2) it allowed the voice of each participant be heard separately.

3.14 Validity and Reader Reliability

Efforts were made throughout the study to ensure that both internal and external validity measures were applied. For instance the data was triangulated through three respondent groups (students, advisors and administrators) and three modes (interviews, focus forums and document review). Also responses were demonstrated in the findings in table format so the reader could draw further conclusions. This was supplemented by the student profile as well. Finally, coding was checked through three external readers. Two of the readers were researchers highly versed in qualitative research and the third was a colleague with a strong understanding of advisory. I then compared my coding to the readers' coding for validity. This allowed me to readjust some of the a priori and

emergent codes as necessary, and to discuss the findings with the external readers to see if their "gut" reactions bore resemblance to my initial coding memos.

3.15 Iterations of the Literature Review

As themes began to emerge, I went back to my review of the literature and researched these new themes. I expanded on Act 77, Vermont's new legislation about PLPs, which was signed into law after I completed my initial review of literature. A clear grasp of the intent of the legislation became critical to understanding many of the adult responses and their references to the future implementation of PLPs. Sections were also either added or expanded for topics such as the role of academic coaches, personalization, models of advisory and connection to the school environment.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the voices of the students, advisors and administrators share their experiences of how high school advisory impacts student academics, connectedness to the school environment and the personalization of education in the four Vermont schools that are represented in this study. The implications of these findings will be discussed in Chapter 5 with resulting recommendations.

This chapter begins with a synopsis of findings from phase one of the study regarding the current status of high school advisory in Vermont. Following the synopsis are the results from the second phase of the study. I begin with the student perceptions of the purpose of high school advisory and how advisory has impacted their academics, student-to-student connectedness, student-to-advisor connectedness, and the personalization of their education. Following the student perceptions are the perceptions of the advisors and administrators about how high school advisory impacts student academics, student-to-student connectedness, student-to-advisor connectedness, effective advisory practices, and roadblocks to effective practices. In each section I have used tables to demonstrate the essence of the individual responses. Although throughout this chapter the student and advisor letters indicated in the tables will consistently correspond with the same student or advisor, these letters do not correspond in any order with schools one through four for the sake of confidentiality.

4:2 Status of High School Advisory in Vermont – Phase One of the Study

The initial goal of this study was to uncover the status of high school advisory programs in the state of Vermont. As stated in the review of literature and introduction, I define high school advisory as a structure that meets regularly in a small interactive group whose purpose is to ensure that every student is well known by at least one adult in the building. (Manning & Saddlemire, 1998; NEASC, 2011).

Although middle school advisory has been known as a cornerstone of the middle level model since its inception in the late 1980s, it is a structure that has been slow to catch on in high schools (Mac Iver, 2011). Up until recently most high schools used only a homeroom system, if anything, as a source of a home base.

That said, some 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 in Hinesburg. Most, however, have been implemented during the past 10 years. Between May and October 2013, all public Vermont High Schools were contacted and asked if they had advisory programs. If they did, they were asked how long the advisory periods were, and how often they met. As you will see from this data, there is no one model that is being followed in Vermont and a wide range of goals for advisory are the driving force in the configuration of each individual program. This synopsis represents a snap shot of high school advisory in Vermont.

Of the 62 schools contacted, 53 had some form of an advisory program although they were called a wide array of names: advisory, teacher advisory (TA), teacher advisory group (TAG) call back, flex time, morning meeting, academic success block,

and learning teams are among the more popular names given. Nine schools did not have any form of advisory program. Of those nine schools, six of them had graduating classes of fewer than 50 students. One school that said they did not have an advisory program had a daily morning meeting with the entire high school of 74 students. One school called their program homeroom, but upon further discussion, it became clear they were engaging in typical activities of a high school advisory program. Three schools were investigating adding an advisory program. "Not at this point—we are hoping to soon", was a common theme.

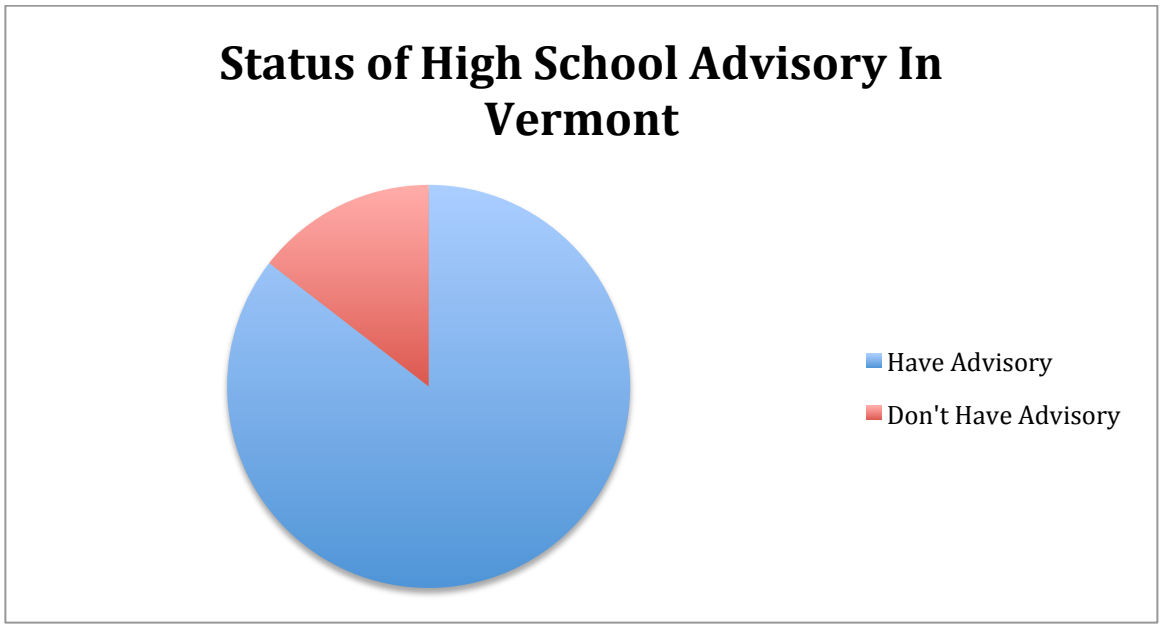

Figure 7: Vermont High Schools with Advisory Programs

The configuration of the 53 advisory programs was as varied as the schools themselves. There was no one model for how often advisories met as noted below in Figure 8. The programs ranged from every day for 50 minutes to meeting once every

other week for two hours. Thirty schools had some form of advisory contact every day. In several of the five-day a week programs, three days a week were shorter meetings (10-15 minutes) and two days were generally longer (30-45 minutes). Nine schools met twice a week and five schools held their advisory programs three or four days a week. Five schools met only once a week and finally there were three programs that identified as an advisory program but only met every other week or sporadically throughout the month.

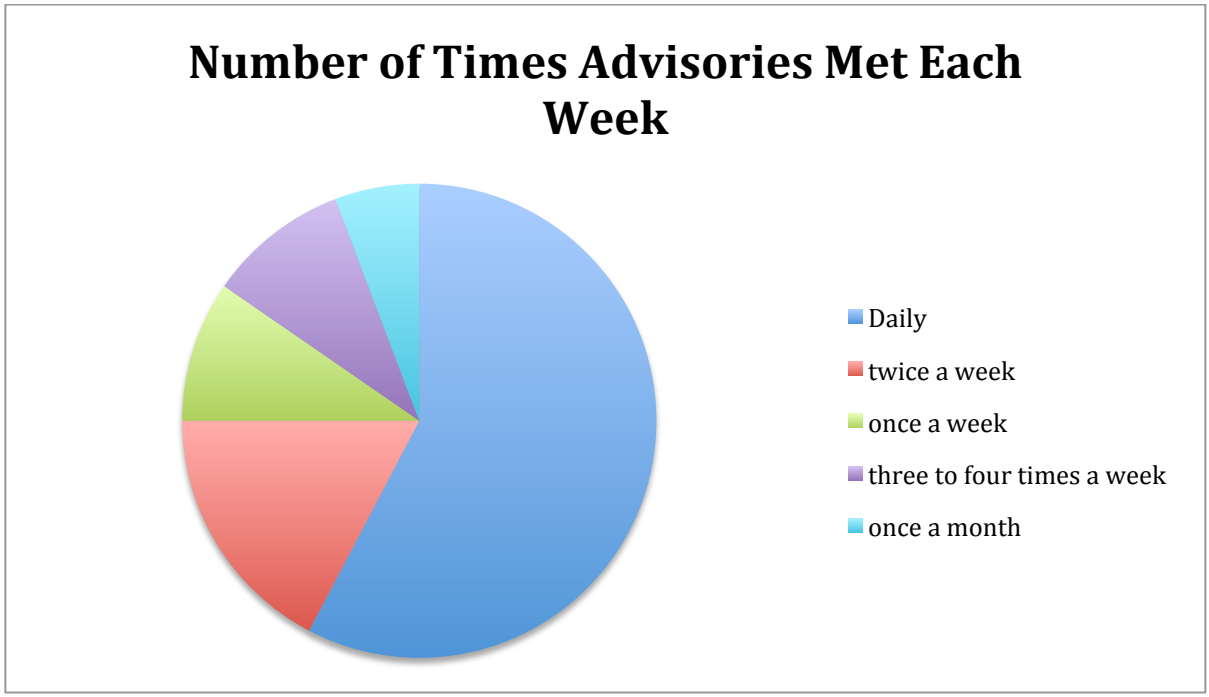

Figure 8: Number of Time Advisories Met Each Week

The time slots allotted were equally as varied as noted in Figure 9. A block of 50 minutes was the greatest daily amount of time allotted to advisory, and the least was 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 had between a 10 and 20 minute advisory period and 22 had between a 30 and 50 minute

advisory period. Three schools had under a 10 minute advisory period, but two of those three schools had plans to add more time next year. Five schools held advisory for different period lengths depending on the day. One program met for two hours every other week, and one program met for a half hour several times a month, although the schedule was not defined by a weekly schedule.

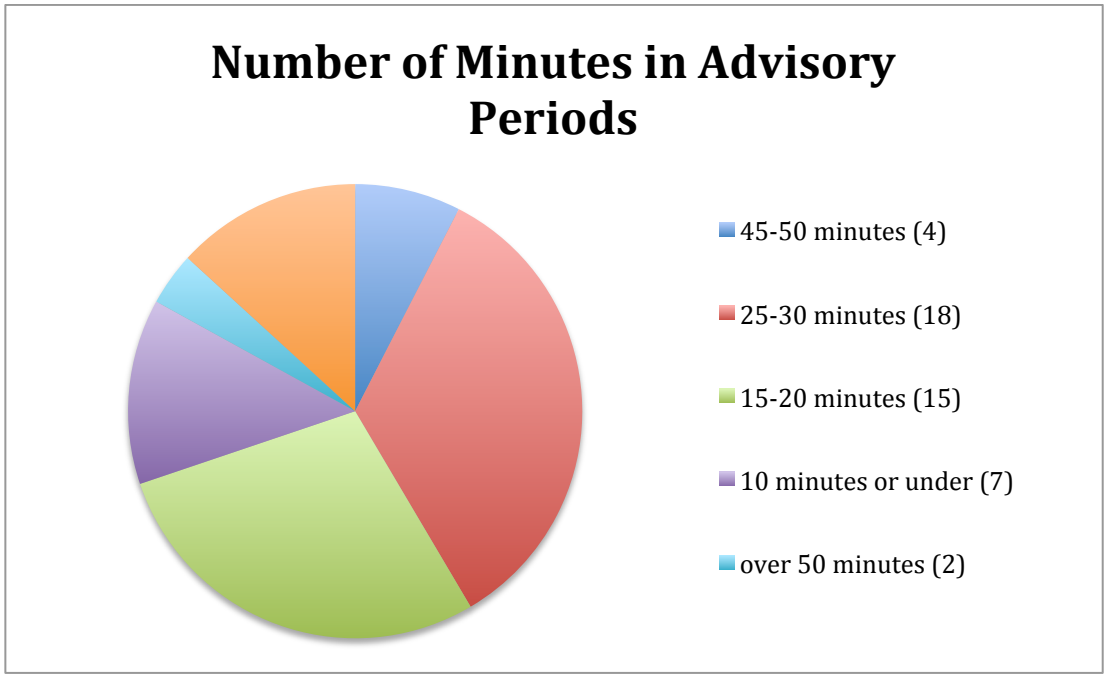

Figure 9: Number of Minutes in Advisory Periods

About halfway through my surveys I became interested in whether schools offered advisory as a single grade or mixed grade program. My data on this does not cover all schools in Vermont; however, of the schools I asked, 25 schools had single class advisories while five schools had mixed advisories. Pros and cons were cited for both. Single grade advisories were more developmentally aligned to the needs of the specific class going through the advisory system. They cited class meetings, guidance information,

freshman orientation, senior capstone projects and grade-based administrative tasks as being primary reasons for grade-based advisory. On the other hand, schools that had mixed-grade advisory mentioned that it created an automatic mentoring system in that the older advisees would often offer the younger advisees advice about high school. They also stated that it created a strong sense of community in the school.

Although there seemed to be a clear preference for the more common structure of 15-20 minutes daily, as seen in a majority of schools, it was the uncommon structures that intrigued me. One school met for two hours every two weeks for a two-hour period. (If this time allotment were spread out over a two-week period they would have 12-minute periods every day). Instead, they offered a more intensive period where they decided on group projects and investigations, as well as service learning projects. The goal of this mixed-grade advisory model was to create a cohesive team and improve climate across the grades. Another outlier was a recently implemented model at a large high school that combined advisory with call-back. This model only met once a week with the advisor and three days a week with other faculty members in a call-back format. Their goal was clearly aligned to improving student access to the individualized help they needed to succeed.

Several schools indicated they were looking to increase and improve their advisory system. One of the schools that did not have an advisory system said they were taking a "year off" so they could completely revamp their system. "We are taking a one year sabbatical from high school advisories in order to re-envision it".

Fourteen schools either began their advisory system this year, were adding to an existing program or were in the process of a major overhaul this year. “We do have an advisory program, two years old, covering the 9th grade. It will be greatly expanded this year to cover grades 9-12.” With the advent of Vermont PLPs, it was clear advisory structures were being revisited as an integral part of the high school program. Twelve schools specifically cited the management of PLPs as a future purpose of the advisory system. One of the administrators in the study believed, “I think it will have to be the structure that manages the PLP, and we are looking at portfolios, like with a student’s best work”.

4.3 Description of Programs of the Four Schools in Phase Two Study

The advisory programs in the four selected schools were varied in length of period and time of day, but they all met five days a week. None of the schools held advisory as the first class of the day. In the first school advisory met twice a week for 25 minutes and three days a week for 10 minutes. The advisories were single-grade and met at different times of the day throughout the week. On one of the longer days, some students at that school attended activity-based meetings. The second school met every day for 25 minutes right after lunch. Their advisories were single-grade as well. The third school met every day for 15 minutes immediately after the first block. This school had mixed-grade advisories. The final school, which was also single-grade, met for 25 minutes a day after the first block. They had recently eliminated the break time thus students had an extended passing time to arrive at advisory. This rendered several different responses for the length of the advisory period.

Table 8

The Configuration of Advisory Programs in the Four Schools

School	Amount of Time	Time of Day	Mixed or Single Grade
School #1	Twice a week for 25 minutes Three times a week for 10 minutes	After first block	Single grade
School #2	Every day for 25 minutes	After lunch	Single grade
School #3	Every day for 15 minutes	After first block	Mixed grade
School #4	Every day for 25 minutes	After first block	Single grade

4.4 Student Perceptions of Purpose

In the four schools, students had a wide range of perceptions about the purpose of advisory. Four students had no idea what the purpose actually was, while several mentioned that they were not sure what the official purpose was, but gave their own perception based on what happened during the advisory period. Twelve out of the 16 students mentioned that connecting with other students and their advisor was a primary goal. They cited the school coming together, students supporting one another and

developing community as part of the purpose for advisory. One student felt it was especially important in the early grades of high school. She felt the goal was "to bring the school together. And it's really good for freshmen because it gives them a group of people that they'll have for, like, four years." Some of the students that thought the goal probably was to develop community, felt their advisory missed the mark. "Well I don't see being in a large group. It defeats the purpose of being in a teacher advisory group, but I don't really see what it's doing since we don't group up and we just socialize."

The next most cited purpose of advisory was that it was a time to seek help or get homework accomplished. There was also a sense from almost half the group that advisory was part of their schedule in order to give students a chance to relax and recharge for the rest of their day. This student was clear about the importance of having time to recharge.

> I think it's a good time for people to come together and relax for a few minutes. I mean especially for sophomores and juniors during the day. You're just going from class to class, and because… nobody likes to get up early in the morning to come to school. So I think after the first period it's a great time relax and slow down and get yourself together for the rest of the day. And that's one thing that my advisory does well.

Table 9 gives the individual answers for the students' perception of purpose.

Table 9

Student Perceptions about the Purpose of Advisory

Student	Perception of the Purpose of Their Advisory Program
A	Not sure, to get stuff done
B	No idea
C	Update yourself on news, socialize, connect with classmates, get things done
D	Offers a break in the day, time to connect with students and teachers, help, academic and personal guidance from an advisor
E	Get to know people, connect with classmates
F	Support, student to student advising
G	Having a set group of people you can count on, getting to know people, connect with classmates
H	Relax, get to know a wide range of people
I	Really not sure, Connect with people, separate out cliques
J	Relax, connect with classmates, develop community
K	Develop connectivity and community in the school
L	Bring the school together, develop a "safe" group of people for each student
M	Class fundraising, connect with students, homework
N	No idea, lg. group defeats the purpose of connecting with one another, socialize
O	Homework, learning, play games
P	No idea, to come together, socialize

4.5 Student Perceptions of Academic Impact

The student perception of how their advisory program impacted their academics ranged from very helpful to not helpful at all. Nine students noted positive impacts, five students noted negative or no impact and one student said it had both a negative and positive impact. The reasons most often given for positive impact were grade checks that kept them on track and teachers watching out for their academics. This students' perception about academic impact reflected the importance of having their advisor check their grades.

> First thing that comes to mind is grade checks. We print off our grades and they sit down with us one to one, and they know what we're capable of. We would sit down and if I had a C they would say you need to do better, or if I have an A or a B….. They're looking out for us and that's what they're there for.

Some of the older students felt grade checks had been important when they were freshmen, but as juniors and seniors they were less important and should be eliminated.

> I think advisory should be a freshmen thing only and just for freshmen to get them acclimated for the high school and so they know what to do. Like if you're not doing so good they can, like, guide you and all. But after that we already know what to do.

Two students actually felt the grade checks had a negative impact on their academic success. This was for two reasons: either there was almost no follow through after the

grade was checked, or they felt they were being hassled. One student expressed her annoyance with grade checks.

> Well like I said, maybe once every two or three months he'll check our grades, and say "you're doing good", or "you're not doing so hot" but he won't really help us in anyway. He'll just be like "you gotta get this done."
>
> I mean we're all aware of it, so we don't need him to check our grades.

This same student, however, mentioned that as a freshman (with a different more caring advisor), they would discuss grades and it would have a positive impact. When discussing her academic connection with her previous advisor she described her as "motherly" but tough on them. "And she was, like, very warm and kind-hearted but could also be, you know, strict, not strict, but like "really? You're going to do that now? You're being kind of dumb."

It was clear in the focus forum groups that whether or not you did grade checks was primarily due to the advisor. In all four schools, interviews revealed that some students participated in regular grade checks with their advisors and other students did not. This became especially apparent when some students at one school were discussing grade checks during the focus forum and another student added in that, "Yeah our advisor doesn't check our grades ever. And then I go to visit other friends in their advisory and they seem a lot more hands on, and it kind of depends on your advisor."

The second most cited academic benefit of advisory was there was often time to catch up on an assignment and finish up homework. "Well it helps me a lot because if I go in the morning, I have a first class and then I have that 15 minutes so if I need to print

something out I have time to do that." In addition to having time for working on homework, several students mentioned that their advisors helped them out during this time as well with their assignments. When asked how advisory impacted his academics, this high school junior responded,

> It's good because when I do need to catch up Ms. P, who is my advisor, helps me with the work that I need to get caught up. And she gets after me on my grades and everything, and she does that to everyone, and I think it's good.

Only one student felt that advisory actually took him away from his academic work.

> Um it has a negative effect really. Because I just walk into the room and just kind of sit there and don't really do anything unless there's one of the mandatory lessons. But even then, they don't engage me because I'm a personalized learner, and I know what I need.

Students in the school with mixed-grade advisories cited the benefit of having older students guide them in both course selection and how to be successful in particular classes. All students at that school mentioned this sort of student-to-student mentoring. One student discussed how students in the advisory would "help each other and support us… like the upperclassmen suggest to the lower classmen courses to take or not to take. Like, about depending on how to deal with homework and rough teachers." In the forum a younger student mentioned, "I think again it's looking at the older kids and the courses they've taken and how their school careers have gone so far, and how I can use what they've learned to my advantage."

In the advisories where there was strong advisor-advisee contact depicted by the activities that took place in advisory, there was a clear sense among students that having that contact made a positive impact on their academics. Common comments reflected the following sentiments: "(She) motivates me by saying if you don't get caught up you'll just have more and more to do," and "She would definitely talk to me about, like, what could she do to help or what are ways she could get me help if she can't help herself". Several students expressed that they felt their advisor was an advocate for them because of how well they knew them.

> I have an advisor that… well because my advisor was in the core they know what kind of student I am. And so, like, that can help me feel more comfortable around them and they can help me learn better because they know how I communicate with teachers.

Even students who did not feel a particularly strong connection with their advisors appreciated the benefits of having a break during the day from academics. One student felt by having that break, it put him in a good frame of mind which impacted the rest of his day.

> If you have a good advisory, you're having a good time. And you're not saying "Oh man I have advisory" and being kind of miserable. If you're going there and being miserable, then the rest of the day you're not really looking forward to the rest of the day or your other classes. But if you go to advisory and laugh with your friends and have a good time, you're going to look forward to the rest of your classes.

Of course the contrary was the case for one student who did not feel connected to her advisory. “I mean I like frequently tell my friends that like 2nd block class is really like my low, and that’s right after advisory.”

Students at one school that utilized the advisory program as the venue for administering their senior projects recognized the importance of the advisor in completing the project. Even this younger student was fully aware of the connection between advisor and the senior project.

> I know there’s a person in my advisory that my advisor really helps them keep on target with all the stuff they need to get done. Like saying ‘make sure you get that in tomorrow’, like that, so they would really keep track and you would have to hand stuff into your advisor.

The senior in that school who participated in the forum also mentioned the critical role his advisor was playing in his preparing his senior project.

Table 10

Student Perceptions about How Advisory Impacts Academics

Student	Student Perceptions	Positive, Negative or No Impact
A	Time for homework, catch up, grade checks Extra help	Positive
B	No academic benefit, no conversations about grades	None/ Negative
C	Helps with specific subjects, grade checks, reminders	Positive
D	Grade checks, scheduling, future, guidance	Positive
E	Other students offer guidance, homework, time to finish an assignment or see a teacher, grade checks, help	Positive
F	Time to finish homework, or see a teacher, grade checks, extra help	Positive
G	Grade checks, but no discussion or help about how to improve	None/ Negative
H	Grades checks helpful (especially when younger), time to get yourself together, help	Positive

I	Time to get into a good mood = better mood in classes, grade checks, help	Positive
J	Grade checks, but no discussion just nagging	None/ Negative
K	Grade checks, but not useful for this student, takes him away from learning	None/ Negative
L	Grade checks, but more useful for freshmen	Positive and Negative
M	Homework time important, connect with teachers, time to regroup, wants grade checks	Positive
N	No academic benefit, takes up time	None/ Negative
O	Grade checks, extra help	Positive
P	Not sure, grade checks, suggestions for improvement	Positive

4.6 Student Perceptions of How Advisory Programs Impact Connectedness

I discovered that connectedness meant many different things to the students I interviewed. Themes emerged for student-to-student connectedness, student-to-teacher connectedness, suggestions to improve connectedness and obstacles to connectedness.

4.6.1 Student-to-Student Connectedness

Strong student-to-student connectedness was by far the most cited outcome of advisory. With most students, the connection was a positive part of their day and

contributed to how connected students felt to the school and each other. Since all but one school accepted students from sending schools in surrounding towns, there was a strong sense that having advisory in freshman year eased the transition into a large and unfamiliar building. It was common to hear comments such as, "It's great to know other kids from other towns", or

> But it really helped to get to know all the kids from the other seven schools. It can be scary coming into a big school, so advisory gave you a group of kids that you'd know. And then when you went into your classes, you'd know some kids.

In the school that had mixed-grade advisories, all students also mentioned that connecting with older students was an important part of their advisory experience.

> I think originally in the beginning of the year especially for the freshmen it was a great way to be introduced to kids from all grades so not every single person is a stranger when you walk in through the halls.

Several students also cited they had become very good friends with people in their advisories.

> I like advisory because, well, I knew one of the girls a little before advisory, and I don't know if it's advisory that made us really close…it's just you know one of those things that happens over the course of high school, but she is in my advisory and we've become really close.

When I asked that student whether she had been in the same advisory since 7th grade, she answered: "Since 9th. I didn't really know her all that well in middle school, but now (I do)…so it's nice to talk to her and it's nice to have a break with her".

There seemed to be a strong correlation between the level of connectedness students felt to their fellow advisees and the intentional use of certain activities that took place during the advisory period. Students cited activities such as: 1) getting-to-know-you activities, 2) anti-bullying group discussions, 3) students and advisors bringing in food, 4) games, and 5) circling up as ways in which they connected to other students in advisory. Those that cited several activities spoke at greater lengths about the impact of advisory on their connectedness to their school with less prompting than students whose advisories were less structured. Such was the case of this junior boy who discussed the games they played.

> I forget what it's called, but like in the beginning it was a getting to know you game or a personal connection game where everybody can feel more together. Because with advisory, you're going to be with these people for the next four years. And to do that, you're going to have to do these activities.

In three of the four schools students mentioned activities that "they used to do", but there seemed to have been fewer of these activities as the years progressed with some of the advisories as illustrated by this comment. "Since now that we're juniors they don't feel like they need to give us any kinds of activities so we just talk". One student was able to compare a previous advisor's efforts at creating community with her current

advisor. “Like Mrs. W would really bring us together and make us a little community and then our new advisor came and we all kind of separated because he doesn’t really do anything”. Just the structure of circling up had an impact on several students. “We used to circle daily but not anymore. We were supposed to have weekly discussions but it’s all the same, we don’t circle up any more”.

At one school there was a school-wide advisory activity to create an emblem for their advisory. All but one student from that school mentioned it. They felt that the activity, whose purpose was to highlight the personality of each specific advisory, not only pulled the advisory together, but also the school. One boy described the project and why he liked it.

> We’re doing this project right now in advisory, where we’re doing this little emblem that everyone has to come up with…it’s sort of a great way to combine all the advisories together in the school and a great way to show off who your advisory is like as a group. And I know as a group we’re doing these little fun characters because that’s what we like to do a lot is have fun. We laugh a lot, and I think it’ll be great to see how the different advisories showcase themselves. And as an advisory you don’t really get a whole lot of opportunity to be with the other advisories.

In my memo just after this interview I noted that the student became very animated and engaged when discussing the emblem. I later learned from one of the advisors that the emblems decorate the entryway of the school for the majority of the year so that all advisory identities can be displayed with pride.

The two students who felt advisory negatively impacted their student connection made it clear that there were few efforts made by the advisor to connect the group in a meaningful way. One of those students described the lack-luster energy that the advisor brought to the group impacted the entire group. “I mean I don’t really want to blame it all on the advisor, because, um obviously it’s partially our fault, but like when you go in there, the energy always drops.”

One attribute of connected advisories that a few students mentioned was the use of student voice and student choice. Student voice was of great interest to me reflecting on the work of Clarke (2013), so I was interested that only five students mentioned having a role in planning what the advisory was going to do whether it was the weekly schedule or to plan an advisory trip or service project. The students that mentioned it cited that it was a group effort connecting the students even further. The students that did mention planning, in general, had many more comments about connectedness as seen in Table 11. Two other students actually mentioned it as a suggestion for improving advisory. One of the students who really felt advisory did not lend itself to any kind of personal connectivity suggested that by focusing on student voice, the advisory would be much more inclusive.

> So for me as a personalized learner something my advisor might do is say like “B” is going to present about some of the things he’s learning about with fire and safety, or “K” is doing logging, why don’t we look at what he’s doing and so forth and so on.

In Table 11 a synopsis of the student responses coded for when students mentioned student-to-student connection and activities that encouraged or discouraged that connection.

Table 11

Student Perceptions about How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness

Student	Student Perceptions	Positive, Negative or No Impact
A	Group activities, hang out and talk with friends, surveys and discussions on bullying, getting to know a small group of friends as a freshman	Positive
B	World of Difference program, anti-bullying discussions, talk with each other, become close friends, get to know people as a freshman	Positive
C	Talk, socialize, but does NOT feel it impacts the school environment	No impact
D	Getting to know you game, come together as a group and planning, personalized information papers, talk about school guidelines, accepting differences of other students and differences of opinions	Positive
E	Trips, apple picking, all students plan and contribute to brining in food, get to know people in every grade, student mentoring, support, inclusion, circle up every day	Positive
F	Younger classmen get to meet upper classmen, connect with one another, hang out	Positive
G	Safe place to discuss a tragedy, students bring in food, play twister, time to bond, emblem making activity to showcase advisory identity, the makeup of the group makes the difference	Positive

H	Trip, student planning, talking with one another, small group identity, Emblem activity, getting to know kids from other towns	Positive
I	Talking, connecting with each other, separate out cliques, gets people to "put themselves" out there, socialize, but tightly packed group was affected by joining with another advisory	Positive
J	Change of the group changes the dynamic, played games every now and then, but not everyone, developed a close friendship, advisor sets a low energy vibe for all students	Was positive but now is negative
K	Stays to himself…does not feel it impacts his connectedness to the school at all, he offers suggestions about how he might be more included: use student presentations and showcase student work	Negative
L	Hang out with friends, activities to get to know one another, brings school together, good chance for freshmen to meet people from other towns	Positive
M	Talks with friends and socializes with own friends, but notes that they separate off into groups, not inclusive	No real impact
N	Past discussions were student led, previous board games, used to circle up…no longer, large group defeats the purpose of advisory, would like more student voice	Positive
0	Board games, chill day, walk with a friend day or go outside, much better than previous year, feels like she knows students better in this advisory	Positive
P	Board games, chill day, students devised schedule, focus on coming together, but notes they don't all get along so the advisory is working on this together, knows kids in this advisory better than in regular classes	Positive

Students felt that "combining" advisories, which seemed to be a fairly common practice recently, led to the advisory being much less connected. The practice that was described by 10 of the 16 participants was that two advisors and their 8-12 person advisories would join together to create an advisory of 18-23 students with two advisors. Comments often indicated they felt the larger group inhibited the connectedness of the group. "Personally I don't see being in a large group. It defeats the purpose of being in a teacher advisory group, but I don't really see what it's doing since we don't group up; we just socialize." Another student compared the current experience of being in a double advisory with a previous experience of being in a single advisory.

> I feel like when we merged two advisories it kind of eliminated a little bit… like our advisory was a tightly packed group that knew everybody, and their advisory was a tightly packed group and so now it's a little loose ended.

4.6.2 Student-to-Advisor Connectedness

The responses to student-to-advisor connectedness were much more mixed in tone than those for student-to-student connectedness. Students most often mentioned grade checks, help with academics, and discussions as ways they connected with their advisor. This section especially highlighted how the engagement of the advisor highly impacted the student perception of connectedness. Students that felt highly connected to their advisor reflected the sentiments of this junior boy.

> They're there to help us and for 100% positive reasons. And some people have different experiences in advisory, but for me specifically it's been

> good and I think one of the biggest reasons is when they make that connection with you the door's open and you talk about this and they offer advice and it's good.

For students that connected well with their advisors, there was also a clear sense that help and advice were a key part of that relationship.

> Well, like if I want to drop a class he asks me why and he lets me think about it. He like gives me some suggestions, like, before I drop it, I could go to the teacher and see if I could catch up. He helps me with everything.

Group discussions were also noted as important for both student-to-student connectedness as well as student-to-advisor connectedness. Students had very clear thoughts on the importance of the advisor's role in facilitating these discussions.

> So you're kind of forced to, well forced kind of has a negative connotation, but you have to interact with other advisees so you aren't, like, always talking about the stuff that you're always talking about. Like, a lot of the students will be in different clubs and like, someone might be in amnesty, someone might be in key club and you can be introduced to these new clubs through your co-advisees through advisory or you can introduce them to your own club.

Several students mentioned how the intentional inclusiveness in some of the group discussions and activities affected the dynamic.

> Um, well some people don't like advisory, like, because maybe they don't fit in, but my advisory is, like, great. Everybody talks to each other and my

advisor says, like, include the freshmen because they're new here, so we get to talk to them as well and they're fitting in.

Although most the group discussions were not necessarily focused on a set curriculum, students felt that the whole advisory connected around these discussions as demonstrated by the following response to my question about what types of activities they did in advisory.

> We talk about the latest news, like big events that have happened in the news. We talk about a lot of educational stuff.
>
> (PI) Can you tell me about a lot of educational stuff?
>
> It's been a while. Like the Boston massacre bombing. We always talk about the news. It's big and huge. He always asks us our opinion on it and how we would change it if we were in that situation. Sometimes we do projects on the board, well not really projects, but he'll pull up like graphs and things like the weather, we actually just did one we see how like the weather changed. We do, like, interesting, random stuff.

Equally as revealing was the impact of not having group discussions and allowing the groups to disconnect into segregated groups. "Well, I mean because people choose to sit where they do. That one classroom sort of represents, like, the whole of my school where it's set into groups and nobody really talks to each other." Some students mentioned that the advisory did "planned and canned" activities, but that did not really foster a connection with the students or the advisor.

My advisory only participates in the kinds of activities that are required by the administration. For instance this Ted Talk…that's a rare occurrence maybe only happens once a week. The rest of the time, I walk into my advisory, and I know that this is different throughout the school, but my advisor does not do anything….no real connection…there's a clique that talks and then there's another group of us that don't talk, and that's me. I don't really know anyone in my advisory, I've never really had a connection with them.

Longevity in the relationship really helped some students to get to know their advisor, although only two students responded that the person who knew them well in their school was their advisor. This junior felt the time invested in the relationship had an impact.

(PI) Do you think one adult in the building really knows you well? Why do you think that? What does it look like?

My advisor, because I've been with her for three years know and I think she would know a lot about me.

(PI) What does knowing a lot about you look like?

Understand what my work ethics are and overall understand me as a person.

Fourteen out of the 16 students interviewed cited a person other than their advisor as someone who knew them well as noted in Table 12. Their descriptions of what being known well by someone ranged from the teacher knowing about their personal as well as

academic life to someone who was supportive and non-judgmental. Below are the perspectives of three students when asked what it would look like if someone knew them well:

> Well there's a differentiating factor. There's personal life and your private life. If a teacher knows your personal life then you're well connected. If a teacher knows your private life then it's extremely well connected and I think if you can talk about things other than academics then I think you're on a good track for a good personal connection,

and,

> Um they're really friendly and they're just more welcoming. And it's just a whole different environment when you walk in, than with a teacher who doesn't know you how you learn. But if I had a class with Mr. K, I would learn faster and nicer and better and I would be more open to things,

as well as, "What it looks like? They're interested and they ask me about my day and how I am. You just have that comfortable atmosphere and they don't judge you".

What was most clear from the interviews and the focus forum groups was how strongly the engagement of the advisor impacted the advisory experience. As I look back on my composite memos, my own perspectives became clear around the importance of articulating the role of the advisor. After interviewing one student who clearly loved her advisory I wrote:

> There was a real love-fest going on for this student about her advisor. It was clear that her new advisory was filled with a schedule and activities

that she felt were useful. She also felt she had really developed a strong relationship with her advisor and that her advisor helped her academically. It really reinforced how important the role of the advisor is in this process.

Three students interviewed had also had multiple advisory experiences due to either an advisor leaving, having to switch because of a conflict or because they were in their fifth year of high school. They were able to make comparisons between advisors, which led me to write this memo:

> It really strikes me how students who have had more than one advisory experience are able to compare the experience, and are clear how very important the advisor is to that experience. For this student it was all about the energy brought by the advisor. This makes me think of the disposition vs. skills of the advisor.

The following student had a very well articulated understanding of the importance of the role of the advisor. Although she had only had one advisor, she had clear vision about other advisory experiences.

> How do I put this? Other advisories work better because their advisors sort of interact with them more. *SO*, if you're going to have advisories then you need to make sure the advisors are interacting with the kids and they know who they are. And our advisors really don't. I mean they didn't do a very great job freshman year of really getting to know who we are, so that took away from it. I think a lot of kids really love their advisories because

they love their advisors, and if they have that connection it can be really helpful for the four years.

Similarly, in one of the focus forum groups, the importance of the advisor was highlighted in this telling exchange:

(My advisors) ask stuff about what you did over the weekend and get to know stuff that you're into and they'll recommend courses that would be good for you and fit your personality whether it's the tech center or different academic courses.

You have really good advisors….

Yeah I have Mr. X and Mr. Y …

(They laugh.)

Yeah you have really good advisors.

Obviously.

(PI) It sounds like it makes a real difference.

Yeah it does. Like I have friends that have… Well, in my advisory we don't really do a lot, we just have our own time. They're like there for you if you have questions, but my friend's advisory they do different activities every day. It really matters who you have and how it's led because it's so different.

In the Table 13 is a synopsis of the student responses coded for when students mentioned student-to-advisor connection and activities that encouraged or discouraged that connection. The far column also represents the person the interviewees cited when

asked if there was one adult in the school that knew them well. Ninth grade students seemed to have a longer wait time responding to this question and several either mentioned a middle school teacher, counselor or coach as the person they felt knew them best.

Table 12

Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor

Student	Student Perceptions	Person Students Felt Knew Them Best
A	Advisory activities, advisor knows IEP, grade checks +	Case manager
B	Advisory discussions are not with the advisor, advisor doesn't initiate conversations --	Counselor
C	Group discussions led by advisor about current events and random "stuff", helps with math, helps set priorities, talks about school events, throws parties +	Academic counselor
D	Group activities to make advisees feel comfortable, surveys and information sheets to get to know you, games for developing personal connections with group and advisor, grade checks, looks out for advisees, advisors try to make advisees feel happy +	Several teachers

E	Offers guidance, helps academically, regular grade checks, circles the group up and makes sure everyone is included +	Advisor
F	Knows a lot about student work ethic and as a person, discusses school announcements with advisory, talks about life, trips with advisory, regular grade checks, motivates advisees, connects with advisees, fun in advisory +	Advisor
G	Goal setting, games, discussions about current events, fun, food, advisor writes recommendations, currently doesn't know that much about the student (2 ½ months) but is learning about her, grad challenge involvement, insists on full involvement of all students in advisory activities +	Case worker
H	Fills out papers about interests & goals, grade checks, group discussions, trusts and relies on advisor +	Coach
I	Some teacher-led activities, grade checks every now and then, supportive in helping with grades, open with advisees, positive attitude with advisees +	9th grade teacher

J	Previous advisor- warm, motherly, brought in food, celebrated birthdays, positive attitude, developed a sense of community among all advisees, service projects + Current advisor – grade checks every 2-3 months, no help with school work, reads the announcements, low energy --	Counselor & previous advisor
K	Ted talks and required activities, no real connection, would like advisor to learn more about him --	Program advisors
L	Get to know you activities, grade checks, help, used to watch videos together as a group +	Known by many teachers
M	Grade level meetings with advisors, disconnected, advisory doesn't live up to its potential --	Teachers
N	No longer circle up, no discussions and no grade checks, wants it to be helping students form relationships with teachers and have group discussions, teachers socialize with each other and tend to business during advisory --	Middle school advisor

O	Grade checks, help with academics, loves their advisory (has a new advisor) +	2 teachers
P	Schedule of activities, help, fun, grade checks, focus on coming together as a group, guides the group to work out problems, advisor tries to connect with advisees through games and activities, not always successful +	PE teacher
Forum A	Helps when advisor is also your teacher, games, grade checks, course scheduling, some advisors don't talk to them, some advisories too big for discussions because they're combined	Not asked
Forum B	Help with academics, discussions, games, helps students feel comfortable in a group, one advisory circles up, rest do not	Not asked
Forum C	Advocates for students, helps students navigate high school, grade checks, calls home if needed, talks about how they're doing, knows them and their capabilities, academic support, connect with each other through email, food days, guided discussions, announcements, safe discussions about emotional issues, senior/college discussions, help with grad challenge	Not asked

4.7 Student Perceptions of How Advisory Programs Impact Personalization

The impact of advisory programs on the personalization of a student's education was less clearly articulated in the interviews. Most of the responses were brief. Five students said advisory had no impact on the personalization of education they received, and one actually said it had a negative effect. Trying not to lead the students to a response, I needed to be cautious about wording explanatory statements as I tried to elicit more developed responses from the students that still respected their voice.

> (PI) How does your advisor or advisory experience impact the level of personalization you experienced at school? Could you give some examples?
>
> Um, like how often we socialize with kids?
>
> (PI) No, no like more about how you might have learned about some of the opportunities you can have through advisory, whether it's pathways or taking an AP course or taking dual enrollment courses. Or how your advisor knows you as an individual.
>
> Yeah, definitely. Like, your teacher… If you ask them about those things they're going to be very open about it and they're going to talk to you about it, if it's bad, they're not going to be biased.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, with some of the ELLs, it was difficult to solicit information about the personalization of their education. Whereas the concept of personalization of education in many cultures is something that is only found in higher education, the conceptual meaning of personalization was challenging to explain without

using concrete examples. I found in the ELL focus forum group I needed to reword my questions considerably while still asking open-ended questions. Even then there were obstacles to them truly expressing themselves.

(PI) Does your advisor ever talk to you about the courses you can take?

Yes, sometimes. (All nod their heads.)

(PI) What does he say?

(Blank stares.)

(PI) How is it helpful when he talks to you about what courses you can take?

(Several nod.)

She is helpful to me to tell me about courses.

Before asking students specifically about how their advisory experience impacted the personalization of their education, I asked how the school personalized the educational experience to establish a baseline understanding of the students' perceptions of personalization of learning. Several students said that the schools personalized education for them by offering either school-wide options such as independent study programs or opportunities for students to attend tech centers.

So when I first came to (my school) I was so amazed with the amount of avenues you could go down. Not only do you have your core classes, but also you have your business departments you have your health department, the tech center. These are all specialization classes to engage you in what you want to do in your future.

Students also cited special education programs as a way that the school personalized their education for them, especially mentioning how their case managers or counselors helped them out.

> Um well for me personally I have a case manager which gives me a special class to where I have a few kids in the class. But I'm mainly working with a teacher who helps me out with all my work and helps me on my struggles and to do my homework and everything like that.

Some students mentioned that their schools did not feel highly personalized and they would like more options. This was expressed by a frustrated freshman when he said, "I personally feel like the school could expand some of the classes". But a freshman at another school had a different perspective.

> Um.. well, I think as a freshman I don't get as much of a choice for my classes, but I think that's almost a good thing because people can be worried about the transition going into high school. So that can be a lot more stress if you have to think about who you are on top of moving into a much bigger school. As a junior and senior I think well, of all the classes I've heard of there are opportunities for you 100%.

Students most often cited teacher help and connection to the faculty as being how the school personalized the experience for them. One ELL student expressed it thus when asked how the school personalized education for her:

> Our school is the best. Our teachers and our students are working with the teachers and the teachers are helping with the students. Students ask the

questions from the teachers and we communicate, the teachers and the students.

When it came to discussing how their advisory program impacted the personalization of their education, students most often discussed how their advisors offered personal help with academics, and guidance about which classes to take. At the mixed-grade advisory school several students discussed the positive impact of having other students discuss their programs. They felt this helped them with course selection and program selection.

Table 13 shows their responses when asked how their advisor or advisory experience impacted the level of personalization they received in their education.

Table 13

Student Perceptions of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of Education

Student	Student Perceptions	Perception of How Advisory Impacts their Personalization
A	Their advisor is familiar with their IEP	Positive
B	On occasion they discuss school programs	No impact
C	Helps student to prioritize and make sure work is completed, does not discuss student's future often	Positive

D	Discusses schedules, helps guide course selection, talks about future goals, knows student's likes/dislikes	Positive
E	Offers some guidance	Not sure how to answer the question
F	Peer mentoring helps with course selection	Positive
G	Does not yet know advisor well (first year with this advisor) helps older students with grad challenge	No impact
H	Finds self-discovery though group process	Positive
I	Advisor and co-advisees will help guide student about course and program selection	Positive
J	Reads announcements	No impact
K	Advisory detracts from personalization	Negative impact
L	Helps with self-discovery, some grade checks	No impact
M	Sometimes asks students what classes they would like the school to offer	Positive

N	Advisors gives a snack from time to time	No impact
O	General help, grade checks and talks about senior project	Positive
P	Some guidance around course selection	Positive
Forum A	Advisors don't talk about options, they read school announcements, advisors get to know you as a person, advisors suggest courses and programs	Not applicable
Forum B	Advisors suggest courses and programs, advisors are there to help, advisors celebrate the unique gifts of each student, advisors talk about the future	Not applicable
Forum C	Advisors and co-advisees suggest courses and programs, advisors talk about grad challenge, advisors talk about the future and give college information, advisors have celebrations for students	Not applicable

4.8 Whether Students Like Advisory or Not

The final question I asked in the interviews was whether or not students liked advisory. Altogether 23 students said yes: 10 interviewees and 13 forum members. Reactions varied from an emphatic yes, to a more subdued yes. This student clearly thought advisory was a good idea.

> Um I think I love the whole idea of advisory, I think it's nice to have a break in between and I look forward to coming into the room and having a brownie or something and I look forward to seeing (my advisor) every morning.

However, this student was a little more on the fence.

> I do like advisory because it gives me that 30 minutes to get homework done and if I didn't have it I wouldn't get it done. I could also do it during lunch, but I like having the 30 minutes, and if it's between getting a zero or doing that paper…well….

The four interviewees and one forum member that did not like advisory were generally a little more emphatic. Some did not like it because the structure did not really support the function and others felt it seemed to be a waste of time.

> 10 minutes is pointless because it's too short to do anything and thirty minutes is too long. Since now that we're juniors they don't feel like they need to give us any kinds of activities, so we just talk.

The two of those that felt it was a waste of time did appreciate that they could occasionally get their homework done if needed or just chill during that time.

> I personally don't like advisory because my advisory is pretty boring and we don't get along that well like I told you. So I don't super like it. I mean, there are some days I like when we have a chill day and so you can take a break and you don't have to work, work, work. It gives you a time to spend time to relax.

Two students were on the fence about whether they liked or disliked advisory and cited both reasons they did and did not like it.

4.9 Summary of Students' Perceptions

In summary, the student perception of how their high school advisory experience impacted their academics, their connectedness to their school environment and the personalization of education varied from school to school and from student to student. Most students cited that grade checks and time to catch up on work were the strongest academic impacts from advisory. A clear majority of the students also said that connecting with other students and having a safe group of students that they would know for all four years of high school positively impacted their connection to their school. Students in the school with mixed-grade advisories voiced that having older students who could peer mentor them about classes and how to navigate high school was especially useful. The connectedness with the advisor was not as strong as it was between co-advisees with only two students identifying the advisor as the person in the school that knew them best. The perception of how advisory helped to personalize a student's education was frequently characterized by assistance for course or program selection or as an academic watchdog. What was most clear was that the level of engagement students felt from their advisor determined the positive or negative value of their responses.

4.10 Advisors' Perceptions of Impact of Advisory on Academics and Personalization

In this section I will discuss the advisors' and administrators' perceptions about the impact of advisory on student academics and the personalization of their learning. I

have chosen to address them together because the responses for both questions overlapped almost indistinguishably among the adult interviewees.

The advisors' perceptions of how advisory impacted academics and personalization was noticeably different between school systems. In one school system where the expectation for academic discussions was supported by mid-quarter progress report and report card notification, advisors described in detail their responsibilities to discuss academics with their advisees. "We see our advisees' reports and grades and we get all the interim notifications, so I feel like I have a handle on my advisees". The second advisor at that school was more emphatic about how the structure supported the practice.

> So, we get all interim reports and quarter grades. Before, you could seek it out, but now they just come automatically. You almost have to try not to see them. I guess that would be an example of a structure that bumps up the quality of engagement. So if you want advisors to play that role, I think you've got to make it easy for them and have the structures in place.

The perceptions of the advisors at this school paralleled fairly closely what their administrator had revealed. He cited academic impact as one of several goals for advisory noting activities such as regular grade checks, an academic point person in the building and regular time and space for academic discussions as important aspects of the program.

By contrast, in another school there was a clear sense that academics were not the focus of advisory. When asked how the advisory program impacted academics, one advisor's response was, "There's little to none". The other advisor at that school

responded similarly with, “Not sure that advisory has a significant impact (on academics)”. This also aligned with the building administrator’s perceptions.

> It varies from advisor to advisor. I think there are times when the advisors help them with their work and also students can go see a teacher during that time if they need to connect. I also think most of the advisors check in with their students about their grades, but it is not a focus of our advisory. This is really much more about building that connection with one adult in the building.

The advisors from the other two schools responded with mixed perceptions about the academic impact. Their responses ranged from, “It can affect it quite a bit”, to “I think that it helps because there’s a stress reduction moment in the day”, to “Um, I am like another mother. I nag them. They check in with me and share their grades with me”. Impacts that were cited most often were: grade checks and discussions about academic progress (six out of eight) and how to be more successful in a particular class (five out of eight).

Even with the advisors that felt they had little impact on student academics, there was a perception that they impacted the personalization of the educational experience, although the descriptions of personalization varied widely. Certain traits of personalization noted by all advisors included: knowing a student well, being available to talk with him or her, and providing some kind of guidance for that student, either academic or personal. For example, one advisor who felt there was a minimal amount of

focus on academics in advisory did feel that personalization was an important part of the advisory program.

> But you know, if I know a student, and I know their style, such as they'd be interested in *(a particular program*) for instance, I can steer them in that direction for course selections. And we are a small school so we don't have a lot of options, but the options that are available… they don't always see them.

Personalization extended to academic counseling and college and career counseling for all advisors with the connection being extended to parents in some cases. One advisor even mentioned that the current culture of his learning community was one of surprise when this dimension of advisory became a practice.

> But then again, it definitely depends totally on the advisor and depends on the parents and on the student. I mean my students would always be kind of surprised if I asked, "well next year what are you thinking about doing? Have you like thought about that". And it seemed almost like, "That's what I do with my parents, not what I do with you".

Personalization was also described as having a personal connection to their advisees and helping them to cope with interpersonal or non-academic issues as well. These issues ranged from needing advice about a teacher to dealing with bullying to handling crisis. When asked about aspects of personalization this advisor felt that just having someone to listen personalized the school experience.

> I get the sense that if it hadn't been for advisory their high school experience would have been much more isolated. I mean like they never told me they liked their high school classes, but they were clearly comfortable to be in my room to tell me how shitty their *&^%$ teacher was. I think that made such a difference.

The level of comfort and security in the advisory community was key to how most advisors felt they could personally reach each of their advisees as described by the following advisor.

> The other would be in personal issues, like with the students who were experiencing bullying. And then I had a student who talked to me about another student who was cutting, and that probably wouldn't have happened if they didn't feel comfortable in advisory.

In Table 14, you will note there is overlap between the advisors' perceptions about how advisory impacts academics and the personalization of education for their students. In the following section about student-to-teacher connection, you will also note the overlap between connection, academics and personalization with the relationship between the student and one adult being the keystone for all these elements.

Table 14

Advisor Perceptions of Impact of Advisory on Academics and Personalization

Advisor	Perception of Academic Impact	Perception of How Advisory Personalizes Education
A	Little to none, some parental contact	Provide guidance to a parent about student options, guide course selection, not a current focus
B	Not sure of significant impact, academics not a focus, grade check-ins,	Offer level-appropriate guidance, college and career guidance,
C	Hard to form an academic relationship unless students are also in class, attends IEP & EST meetings	Discuss courses, coach students in how to be successful
D	Occasional grade checks, discuss how students are doing in a particular class, students know their advisor cares about their grades, discusses why students are or are not passing a class, not a significant focus	Know a student's style, steer them in a direction, explain course options, be a point person for parents
E	Grad challenge advisor, receives interim grades and report cards and discusses how students are doing	Provide advice about scheduling, advise grad challenge, guide course choices, inform students of options

F	Grad challenge advisor, mock grad challenge presentations in advisory for feedback, discuss how students are doing and how to talk appropriately to teachers about their progress, discuss scheduling, receive interim reports and report cards,	Provides personalized, in depth communication between the advisor and faculty about students if needed, grad challenge, scheduling, teacher guidance and providing student-to-student guidance, contact with the parents about a student's program of studies, discuss future plans, college planning, 10th grade round table, portfolio
G	Checks in with students about grades and classes, gently "nags" about grades, helps students to not feel overwhelmed about academics	Send students in the right direction for information and guidance, help freshmen transition, help students from feeling overwhelmed
H	Discusses class choices, grade checks every few weeks, helps students deal with academic and social problems that could get in the way of academics, follows a student's curriculum for four years, helps students to learn how to be successful in their classes, four-year academic support	Opportunities for guidance counselors to come in and talk about scheduling, discuss the curriculum and make sure students "make the right choices", personal guidance, know a students 4-year plan, explain program options such as dual enrollment & work co-op programs, communication

4.11 Advisors' Perceptions of Student-Advisor Connectedness

All advisors felt the connection they made with the students in their advisory was the most important aspect of the advisory system. From the most passionate advisor's comments, "So I would say, that's the single biggest thing, you know it might sound goofy but a lot of students think of advisory like a small family within this big school. That's definitely how I present it," to the luke-warm advisor, "The whole point is to

develop relationships with each other and the teachers on a personal basis", the relationship was at the heart of the program. Every advisor interviewed felt the four-year connection they developed had a positive impact on their students' high school experience.

> It's 15 minutes a day, and I don't talk with anybody specifically for that 15 minutes a day, but over four years you get a chance to get to know reasonably well their personalities, their traits, what makes them happy and what makes them sad, and which ones struggle and which ones enjoy school.

What varied between advisors was to what degree that relationship was forged and how. All advisors mentioned having informal conversations and knowing their students well. Seven out of eight advisors also stated that an important aspect of being an advisor was to connect with students academically whether it was by guiding them about high school classes, "Many times we're the only ones that look at their whole curriculum and if their parents are not interested, they have us to be interested," helping them with senior projects, "I basically am the overseer to all my seniors' projects," or checking grades, "I am like another mother. I nag them". Five advisors said being there for students either in a time of crisis or as an adult to talk to was an important aspect of their role with their advisees. Several of these advisors were passionate about the importance of their connection with their advisees and more than one teared up when discussing them. The following advisor described her connection with one of her advisees just days after a school tragedy had occurred.

> And this is where I think there is real power in the advisory system. One of my students stopped me in the hallway and told me one of my advisees was having a really hard time and that the student was outside the building. I went to find him and he collapsed into my arms.

Only four advisors cited being an advocate whether at IEP meetings or in other situations as being part of their practice. This advisor describes his role as an advocate.

> So if there's a problem in a particular class we can talk with them about how they can be more successful or we will schedule a meeting between them and the teacher. I've gone in actually with them… to make them a little less uncomfortable going into the teacher.

Only three advisors mentioned any connection with their advisees' families. In one school, they facilitated the advisor parent contact by having advisors pass out the report cards.

> I think generally I'd be the first one they would call. And like with report cards we're the ones twice a year, who will give out report cards during parent teacher conferences. And I think that's really important because without that they wouldn't have to come to me and there wouldn't be that sort of connection.

One of the advisors favored the possibility of the parent connection being further defined by implementing student-led parent conferences with the advisor. "I would much rather see a student-led conference with an advisor across all the discipline silos than doing this

sort of room to room…and maybe it could happen more often." These and several other ways in which advisors felt they connected with their advisees are listed in Table 15.

Table 15

Advisor Perceptions of Connectedness with Students

Advisor	Ways in Which Advisors Connected with Students
A	Having discussions, advocating, being a class advisor, caring for them in a crisis, knowing their advisees well, guiding them academically
B	Providing games and discussions, just being goofy, being a cheerleader for advisory activities, staying in contact after high school, being a confident, guiding them (about school and post-secondary, engaging with them, reading and responding to their advisory journals, knowing students inside and outside of class
C	Providing discussions, checking grades, knowing a student's IEP and attending meetings for them, advocating, checking in with students, knowing a student's background, supporting students in a crisis, having informal conversations with them
D	Attending class meetings with them, checking grades, making students feel welcome, talking informally, knowing students' lives outside of school, being open and trusting, having a relationship with some parents, providing someone for students to talk to
E	Talking and eating, talking about rules and navigating high school, being a senior project advisor, meeting with students and parents, getting to know their personalities, and traits, strengths and challenges, providing students with a connection and an adult to talk to

F	Providing discussions, playing guitar with students, building a four-year relationship, celebrating advisees' accomplishments, advising senior project, guiding students, fostering community among the group, advocate, connecting with parents, using portfolios with advisees, attending first day lunch, staying in contact long after students graduate, being a point person for the student, helping students to be successful
G	Having informal conversations, learning about students' lives outside of school, "nagging" them about grades, showing youtube videos, being a point person for student questions, working to make sure freshmen feel welcome, providing an adult connection
H	Developing personal relationships, checking grades, advocating for the student, being a point person, guiding students about both academic and personal issues, helping students to be successful in their classes, discussing student's options, knowing students well, making sure students don't slip through the cracks, relaxing and talking with students informally

4.12 Advisors' Perceptions of Student-to-Student Connection

What was not highly discussed in the interviews with the advisors was the value of the student-to-student connection, although it was mentioned twice as often in the mixed grade advisory school than in the single grade advisory schools. When it was mentioned, it was described as creating a safe environment for kids during their school day, providing a needed structure for transition into a high school, or having student-to-student mentoring. One advisor noted the significance of a student who had been distant and how advisory help her to connect.

> A classic example in my advisory I have two students that are kind of loners and just last week they started to kind of talk to each other…so giving an opportunity for students that might have a hard time socially.

Three advisors commented about how having advisory helped freshmen adjust to high school. "We do mix the kids so you don't get that 'freshman are all evil' or 'seniors are all evil' and that kind of stuff, and there is some real camaraderie that goes on." Both advisors at the mixed-grade advisory school mentioned the student-to-student mentoring that occurred as noted by this advisor's comment. "There is always some advice giving…take this class, don't take that class and that kind of stuff." The other advisor at that school really supported mixed grade advisory model for exactly that reason.

> Really practical things just like if you take this course it will cue you up for that course. Just navigating through graduation requirements. That's a cool collaborative piece and you could make the argument that that's a real advantage to having a multiyear advisory.

Despite being mentioned only by three of the eight advisors, the student-to-student connection was mentioned by all four administrators as being an important component of the advisory program. "I think it definitely gives students a cohort where they can make connections with other students as well as the two advisors. So I think that as far as a social emotional, I think that element is strong," was echoed by several administrators. In fact one administrator attributed some of the school's improved environment partially to advisory.

> We take students in from five different towns, and I think it's important for them to have that group of kids, especially in their freshman year. I've noticed a marked improvement in the atmosphere of the school in the past several years. It's not all advisory, but I think it has an impact.

This sentiment was strongly supported by one of the comments relating to environment from one of the advisors in that building as well. Like the previously quoted administrator, several advisors also mentioned the "immeasurable impact" of advisory as affecting their students in a more global way. One advisor had had experience with two other similar schools and could not fully attribute the environment to advisory, but he had a gut feeling about it.

> It's immeasurable, but the demographics of the three areas are not significantly different. In all three areas the schools are pretty similar in size and socio-economically, so you start to say what is the difference? I don't see the issues here that I saw there. So my guess is, if you had to assess it, that it (advisory) does benefit the kids in some way.

Another advisor had a similar sense that behavior and school environment had dramatically improved, but could not definitively say it was because of advisory, but rather that advisory was part of the whole structure. "The implementation was simultaneous with PBIS and a few other programs so it was a part of a bigger picture. The climate definitely changed with all of this though." Finally, in three of the schools there had been a recent tragedy, and the advisors felt that advisory had helped students to connect with one another and return to learning.

> And when you talk about student learning, that (grief) in itself is a learning opportunity that through the discussion (in advisory) allowed the student to mesh back into the community more easily and to get back into his academic world. It's really all about the relationships we build, and it's really hard to measure the impact on learning.

4.13 Advisors' Perceptions of Effective Practices

Unlike with the student interview protocol, I specifically did not ask advisors what they felt the purpose of advisory was. My reasoning was that I wanted their perceptions of purpose to unfold in their descriptions of their stated practice and their beliefs surrounding effective practices as opposed to a recitation of a written mission statement located in an advisory guide somewhere. What I discovered was there were significant discrepancies between what most advisors practiced and their beliefs about effective practices.

When asked what advisors thought were effective practices of advisory programs, responses ranged from the more mundane daily activities such as reading the announcements or checking in with students daily, to more in-depth guidance practices such as formalized meetings with the student's parents. Being a point person was represented in the responses of four advisors and all the administrators as being an effective practice. However only three of the advisors actually mentioned formalized contact with the parents of their advisees as being a current practice. Many of the responses to the question about effective advisory practices reflected what advisors and administrators wished for advisory in the future, not what it was presently. In Table 16, I

have listed current activities and practices coded from their interviews alongside what they responded they felt were effective practices. Comments from five advisors indicated they felt their advisory program could be more effective. “Being an advocate, being in touch with the parents like the person they’d call. I think we could do much more for being an academic guide, and maybe that will change”. When discussing how advisory impacts the level of personalization at the school this advisor felt, “As far as it relates to personalization there’s a lot on room for improvement here”.

In addition, all the administrators felt the advisory programs were only as effective as the individual advisor leading the program. All administrators felt that some advisors were more effective than others within their own building. At one school where the advisory program was considered part of the contract, the administrator stated that he believed that most advisors achieved the articulated goals, even though there was not an evaluative tool. When asked about effective practices, one administrator responded, “I think (we need) to have more prescribed programmatic defined outcomes, and I don’t think our advisories do that. I think everyone is sort of left up to their own devices”. Every participant group in the study indicated that there were vast differences between advisories and advisors. Some of the differences were attributed to the disposition of the advisor to interact with advisees.

> There are people who are fairly gregarious and find it easy to have a conversation and jump in without feeling like “oh I have to put together a plan or put together questions on a worksheet”. And then there is the other end of the spectrum where people want a canned curriculum like “what am

> I supposed to do in those 25 minutes like give me a question for what I'm supposed to do during that time" because there is a reluctance to just have it be casual.

One of the administrators stated that future hires would be hired with some consideration of those dispositions. "I think as we move forward and hire new teachers we have to look at this being part of their skill set".

Some of the differences in advisory were founded in the advisor's beliefs about effective practices. "I've just tried so many different things and kids just sort of tune it out, and what I find really works for me well is having one to one conversations with the kids". One of the advisors stated that because there was not formal oversight, the advisory program was not implemented effectively. "My general sense is that it is not utilized in a way that it's intended to be". Some advisories that shared a space even had different approaches to advisory in the same room.

> And so yeah we could do things more structured, but I feel that doing things in a more structured way reduces personal connection. Unless there's a real value to that other structure then I would just as soon avoid it. The other teacher that is in here is a much more structured person and so we have that conversation frequently.

There was a sense that flexibility was essential by most advisors and administrators, but this advisor's comments reflected that too much flexibility was not effective.

> But then again there's a wide range of involvement depending on the student and depending on the advisor. … The levels of the involvement

and the types of involvement are totally left to the discretion of the advisor and the advisee and that's a good thing and a bad thing.

Table 16 reflects the advisors' responses about their current practice and what they believe are effective practices for advisory programs.

Table 16

Advisor Practices and Beliefs about Effective Practices

Advisor	Current Practices	Beliefs about Effective Practices
A	Unstructured, talk with advisees, previously games, scheduling, working on class projects	Advisory linking graduate expectations to personalized learning plans, advisors as advocates, contact person for families, knowing advisees well, be an academic guide
B	Games, discussions, students create the schedule for activities, go outside, grade check-ins, advisory projects, college and career counseling activities, journaling with advisees	Give advisees voice, always engaging with advisees during the advisory period, being a point person, journaling with advisees to get to know them, games, tie advisory to portfolios
C	Advisees make schedule, unstructured time, music, videos, games, grade checks, informal academic coaching	Theme based advisories, knowing advisees well, personalize advisory to students, informal conversation, fun
D	Class meetings, unstructured time, check in with students, grade checks, informal academic coaching, group projects, hand out report cards	Unstructured time, monitor future proficiency-based personalized learning plans, point person for students, guide, work with advisees on school resumes, create cohort bonding opportunities

E	Talk and eat, celebrate birthdays, advisory emblems, class discussions, relax, advice about classes, discuss school rules, advise senior project, school events, get to know you activities, meet with students, meet with families, see grades, interim notifications and reports cards	Daily program, engage with students, informal discussions as well as more formalized structures, senior project, what we do is right on target,
F	Food, birthday celebrations, youtube videos, music, newspaper articles about local and national topics, celebrate student success, advisory trips, advisory service projects, advise senior project, advise students how to be successful, scheduling, see grades, interim notifications and reports cards, advocate for students, meet with parents, 10^{th} grade electronic portfolio, new student lunch,	Meets daily, clear expectations about the academic, aspirational and emotional support role of the advisors, effective advocate, regular advisor-parent meetings, structure for hands on off-campus experiential learning, heterogeneously grouped, center pole of the educational program, know the whole student, personalized learning plans
G	Updates, grade check-ins, daily announcements, informal conversations about life outside of school, unstructured time, videos	Informational check-ins, schedules, get things done for classes, discuss end-of-year activities, housekeeping, discuss class activities,
H	Relax and talk, discuss scheduling and curriculum, grade check-ins, coach students how to be more successful, connect students with resources, advisory activities to connect to the school, anti-bullying program, read announcements, explain program options, discuss current events, communicate everything about the school	Academic check-ins, school-wide activities, advisory community service activities, relax and talk, school-wide focus such as reading, be a point person for students, house a personalized learning plan for students

All but one advisor had suggestions for making advisory more effective such as having the time of day and length of period be consistent, and articulating more clearly the purpose for advisory. “I think a common belief among faculty (is needed), but I don’t know how you achieve that. But I know advisory would be a lot more effective if everybody treated it with the same level of seriousness,” demonstrated the frustration one advisor felt in his school. The most quoted suggestion for improving advisory was to add support for the advisors, a topic that will be discussed at length in section 4.15 of this chapter under Roadblocks to Effective Advising. The only advisor that did not feel they needed improvements expressed that because he felt they were already on target for the articulated advisory goals.

4.14 Connection Between Advisory and Personalized Learning Plans

As you can see in Table 16, five of the eight advisors and all of the administrators believed that advisory would play a role in the process of developing personalized and proficiency based learning plans required by Vermont Act 77, the Flexible Pathways Initiative. The Act that was signed into law in June 2013 will require a PLP for all students in grades 7-12. One of the advisors that did not mention the future of PLPs was interviewed prior to the act being signed into law, and one of the other advisors who did not mention PLPs during the interview added comments after the interview finished. There was a clear sense that advisory would become a critical structure to support the PLP. This advisor summed up the sentiment of most of the comments.

> As far as more structured things, I do think that as we move toward proficiency based and personalized learning plans there will be pieces of

> that which will really need monitoring by someone. And that shouldn't happen through some random, unconnected classroom opportunities, whether they're the most advanced personal choice types of classes you can imagine or whether they're a traditional class. The teacher's going to have their hands full just assessing what the student's are accomplishing in that class. And you need something outside of that. You need someone to be looking closely and it's way too much for there to only be one person, like a guidance counselor, to handle it. So I think that the role will be advisory.

One of the other advisors saw an even stronger, more comprehensive connection between advisory and a student's plan.

> I'm not talking about advisory as just supporting academic pursuits. I'm talking about advisory should be the pole, the central place where a student plans everything out from there. Like what do you think about your educational plan, dual enrollment and site-based learning multiple pathways. Obviously when you think about student learning in a broader way with electronic portfolios, I think that would be the place.

All four administrators clearly echoed that the advisory structure would have to take on an important role with the upcoming PLP requirements.

> I think it will have to be the structure that manages the PLP, and we are looking at portfolios, like with a student's best works. It (advisory) should

definitely guide students about life after (his school) and provide a point person for each student.

4.15 Roadblocks to Effective Practices in Advisory Programs

The data demonstrated a clear disconnect between what advisors and administrators felt were effective and future practices, and what was currently occurring in their advisories. The critical question arose as to why that was the case. The survey question about the roadblocks to effective practices rendered some very consistent responses. Three themes emerged from the adult perceptions of roadblocks to effective advisory practices: 1) support (contractual, materials and training), 2) purpose (lack of articulation and lack of process to develop it), and 3) lack of consistency (teachers in the same building, and occasionally in the same room, employing very different practices).

4.15.1 Support

Half of the advisors and administrators alluded to the fact that the teacher responsibilities as advisors were not addressed in the contract. This sense of "it's beyond my contract" was cited as being a significant historical roadblock in times when contract negotiations had not gone well. One advisor described how when the new contract was negotiated there was no language about advisory added. "The school decided to do it (implement advisory) in the middle of a contract, so when the new contract came up, they didn't really mention it and it was pretty contentious." Equally as important was the perception that since time for advisory was not considered part of a teacher's prep responsibilities, it flagged the program as not being a high priority.

> It's beyond the contract and so there's no prep time associated with this, so I think if they were really to take this seriously they would say TAs is your sixth class. There are ways they could show they are serious about it.

In fact, in the one school that did treat the advisory period contractually as the "sixth prep", both advisors mentioned time in the context that they felt they did not have enough time with their advisees. In contrast, the other six advisors referred to time in light of a lack of time for them to prepare.

Six out of the eight advisors also discussed a lack of support in training or materials as a roadblock to developing their practice as advisors. Several advisors mentioned that at one time there was support either in the form of a committee or an advisory coordinator, but that the resources had evaporated as priorities in the school changed. "Over time because of other professional responsibilities, that job (the advisory coordinator) was sort of dissolved and we're sort of seeing that things aren't happening due to a lack of anyone really overseeing it". By contrast, the other advisor in the building remembered when there was a committee and resources were available.

> A committee of teachers from the school got together and one teacher from each team, and "M" was stellar. But they produced a binder, and the most useful thing was that freshman advisory would do such and such and get to know you, sophomore's would do something else that was level appropriate. So by the time they got to be seniors, it was really about next steps.

One advisor who felt their program was fairly well established recognized they would need more support to elevate advisory to the next level.

> I mean it's not just enough to say have meaningful relationships, you have to scaffold it for them and give people the time and place and tools for them to get at that and still allow them a modicum of liberty and personalization on their end… so you need to throw out the homeroom, get people the information they need and put your administrative needs elsewhere so you can really do it right.

4.15.2 Purpose

Cited by six of the eight advisors was a lack of purpose for the advisory program. This is consistent with the wide range of perceptions by students about the purpose of their advisory programs. Several advisors were not adverse to advisory, but felt the purpose needed to be made clearer for effective practices to be implemented. One advisor felt the purpose of connecting with students through fun and games was enough for middle school students, but not developmentally appropriate for high school.

> Other road blocks?… Kids not taking it seriously. I don't think that makes them bad kids or anything. I just think by high school it's a lot harder to get kids to play fun games like in middle school, so maybe that's a question of purpose, so maybe that's a roadblock.

Describing how a sense of purpose would improve the advisory system school-wide, this advisor stated,

> For one thing having a clear set of goals that fit into the school wide set of goals. Such as goals for advisory that clearly connect to goals we have for our school, I think. And add to that, certain amount of guidance for us how to do that in a certain way, a program,… having a program, it doesn't have to be a detailed program, but it might be.

There was also a sense that the process used to develop advisory programs was not intentional and that an effective process should include input from all stakeholders.

> I guess it would be giving the time for faculty and students to get together to organize what they think is the most beneficial concept and then design it from there. I mean we kind of just jumped into it.

The two advisors that did not cite lack of purpose as a roadblock worked in the school that disseminated clearly articulated support materials annually.

4.15.3 Inconsistencies in Practice

Finally, seven out of eight advisors mentioned that they felt discrepancies in practice created a significant roadblock. In some cases this was attributed to the lack of purpose. The following advisor sounded anguished and bitter when he described how his advisory was affected by the discrepancies in practice.

> I know advisory would be a lot more effective if everybody treated it with the same level of seriousness, because one of the challenges that I have is that there are definitely teachers that refuse to do it because there is no prep time…It isn't in the contract, and since it isn't in the contract they'd just sit there with their kids, and so word gets around. And so if I'm

> having an off day, it doesn't become about how I'm having an off day, it becomes about how much advisory sucks. So if there were universal expectations about advisory then that message would be sent to all students.

One advisor took some ownership of the advisor's role in the success of advisory. "And one might say that the consistent variable is me, but I don't think that's the whole story." Another advisor felt that sometimes it is just the mix of students in the advisory that changes the practice during the advisory period.

> I have sophomores now, but my previous group, we played games four years straight until senior year. And this group hates games. So we just sit around and talk about current events and things that are going on in the community.

One advisor was clear that the purpose should not be to satisfy an exterior mandate such as, "You have to have it for NEASC accreditation. So now we just have it for 15 minutes because we have to, which is the worst reason ever." There was also a sense from several advisors that not measuring advisory in any way contributed to the discrepancies in practice and the buy in from students.

> So I think you could easily see one of the structural problems with advisory is that it doesn't count. Like even with attendance we don't want to make you feel badly if you don't come, so I think even *we* don't believe in it enough.

More serious than the lack of student buy in was the sense that because it was not part of the observation cycle, practices were left up to the discretion of the advisor.

> We've never had an opportunity where it was part of our observation from the administration even if it was to check off about what do you do or what don't you do. So there's been no accountability for advisors. And even just yesterday I was in a meeting and even one of our assistant principals sort of said advisory is a wreck because there isn't any accountability so…

In Table 17 the essence of the advisors' perceptions about the roadblocks to effective advisory practices are represented.

Table 17

Advisor Perceptions about the Roadblocks to Effective Advisory Practices

Advisor	Roadblocks to Effective Advisory Practices
A	Current group hates games, no longer a committee for support, no data, no more support materials, no accountability for advisors, not part of the observation cycle, not important enough, beyond the contract
B	No prep time, no common belief about purpose, beyond the contract, inconsistencies in practice, no longer a committee or support, lack of motivation
C	Very chaotic, advisees aren't necessarily your students so it's tough to know them and coach them, it has never worked, students tune out many activities, no prep time, the administration doesn't take it seriously (because if they did there would be prep time), no clear purpose other than NEASC accreditation, prefers multi-grade advisories, looks too much like homeroom, based on administrative, not developmental reasons, kids don't take it seriously, beyond the contract, no professional development

D	Two advisories in one room, inconsistency in practice, feels structured advisory time is less personal, too many iterations, no clear set of goals/purpose, beyond the contract, no prep, no training, time of day can be a roadblock (don't have it at the beginning of the day)
E	Sometimes kids are taken out of advisory for some other activity and it can water it down.
F	No clear curriculum, room for improvement for personalization, parents not yet accustomed to talking with advisors about academic planning, needs a little more structure, advisors some times feel like "club med" director, not measured, it doesn't count, still reflects outdated homeroom model, need support to really do it right, more time with students, need to articulate expectations and give time and resources
G	PLP's fizzled out, inconsistent length of periods, no accountability for students, complaints from both students and advisors, some wanted canned curriculum, some wanted loose curriculum, purpose not clearly defined, not enough time to plan
H	Change of administration, no curriculum, no structure, no time to prepare, no support, no student voice in the design

4.16 Changes in Advisory Over the Years

Quite noticeable in the data were the many references to the various iterations of advisory programs the adults had seen through the years at all four schools. Although discovering about how advisory had changed over the years was not reflected in any of my interview questions, I do not feel I can ignore the data that emerged due to the prevalence of the references. I have included several of the quotes below about how programs had changed. Some advisors had been advisors for decades and had experienced several iterations of advisory. In my memos, I noted that the changes in

advisory were often characterized with intonation that resembled a "been there, done that" tone of voice. The following memo also reflected how the past experience of veteran teachers could help programs move past some of the roadblocks to effective advising practices.

> It was great to be able to interview someone with 19 years of experience who had seen several metamorphoses of the program. I silently chuckled as he rattled off several revisions of advisory with good humor. From his previous comments, I believe he will approach the next model of advisory with both hands on the wheel. He had excellent insights to the importance of PD and a sense of intentionality for the program.

Changes were noted in time allotted for advisory, time of day, curriculum, levels of support and expected practices. Listed below is a sampling of the comments. Each set of exchanges are highlighted by an asterisk.

> *When it started it was only once a week and then it became a daily advisory a few years ago.
>
> *Sometimes it's been first period in the morning, and then of course it was an issue of attendance. Some kids would just come late every day, and we've had it after first block.
>
> *Well it's changed… a lot. (sigh)
>
> (PI) So tell me about the metamorphoses of the advisory programs.
>
> (He chuckles)

(ADV) Well one year for instance someone came up with the idea to use the 7 habits of highly effective teens and there's a booklet out that has a whole series of activities, and that really bombed. We didn't have training. We didn't have time.

*Presently? It's changed over the course of the past five years, but presently it is time for the students to relax and talk to the two advisors.

*Yeah I think it's fallen by the wayside because it requires for someone to do it (a transition essay with eighth graders) to make sure that happens. And at least for a couple of years that happened.

* Right now, I couldn't say (if there's any academic impact) because we don't have any data. Like when we had our steering committee, we were collecting data each year.

* We've done away with credit and personal learning plans.

*(PI) Do you have PD around advisory?

(ADV) In the past there have been maybe 4-5 years ago, but it's not regular.

These comments demonstrate that like with any program, stages of readiness, development and support impact the continuum of implementation. The continuous tweaking of the program is an important part of improving practice; however, in none of the schools studied was there an evaluative process to inform the changes.

4.17 Summary of Findings

Several clear patterns emerged from the perceptions of the students in the interviews and focus forum groups, the advisors and the administrators that participated

in this study surrounding how high school advisory impacted academics, connectedness to the school environment, and the personalization of education. In addition, perceptions of effective practices, lack of consistency in practice and roadblocks to effective advisory practices also emerged. How these perceptions interrelate will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Over two-thirds of the interviewed students said that advisory had a positive impact on their academics due to grade checks, academic advising and help. Just over half the advisors felt that academics were a focus of advisory, however. Twelve out of 16 students felt the connection they felt with the other students in advisory positively impacted their school environment. All students from the mixed-grade advisory school mentioned peer mentoring as being important. Another theme reported from the three schools that received students from sending schools was that advisory, especially in freshman year, helped students to acclimate to an unfamiliar school. Interestingly, student-to-student connection was mentioned far less by the advisors (except at the mixed-grade school), but was mentioned by all four administrators as being an important component of high school advisory. Although the concept of having a point person for students is often cited as the most salient objective of advisory programs, only three-quarters of the students described their relationship with their advisor as positive. Moreover, only two students interviewed described their advisor as the person who knew them best. In contrast, all advisors described their relationships with their students in terms of knowing them well.

Whether high school advisory impacted the personalization of education was not clearly determined by this study. Students were often confused by the concept and

reiterated elements of academic impact as how their education was personalized such as grade checks. All advisors and most administrators did describe guidance activities that occurred in advisory, although three-quarters of the advisors and all the administrators felt that role would be more highly defined and critical to advisory once PLPs required by Act 77 were implemented.

Finally there was considerable consensus surrounding the roadblocks to effective advisory practices. In all but one school, the advisory obligations were considered "outside the contract". All six advisors in those schools mentioned a lack of time to prepare and lead advisory as being a roadblock. A lack of professional development was also cited by over half the advisors as being a roadblock. In three schools there were no articulated purpose statements, goals or support materials for advisory disseminated annually. Advisors in those schools felt the lack of purpose and materials led to highly inconsistent implementation of advisory in their buildings. In fact three-fourths of all advisors and administrators recognized there was tremendous inconsistency in implementation of advisory and that the success of the advisory was highly related to the individual advisors. This sentiment was fully corroborated by students in both the interviews and focus forum groups at the schools where no materials were disseminated.

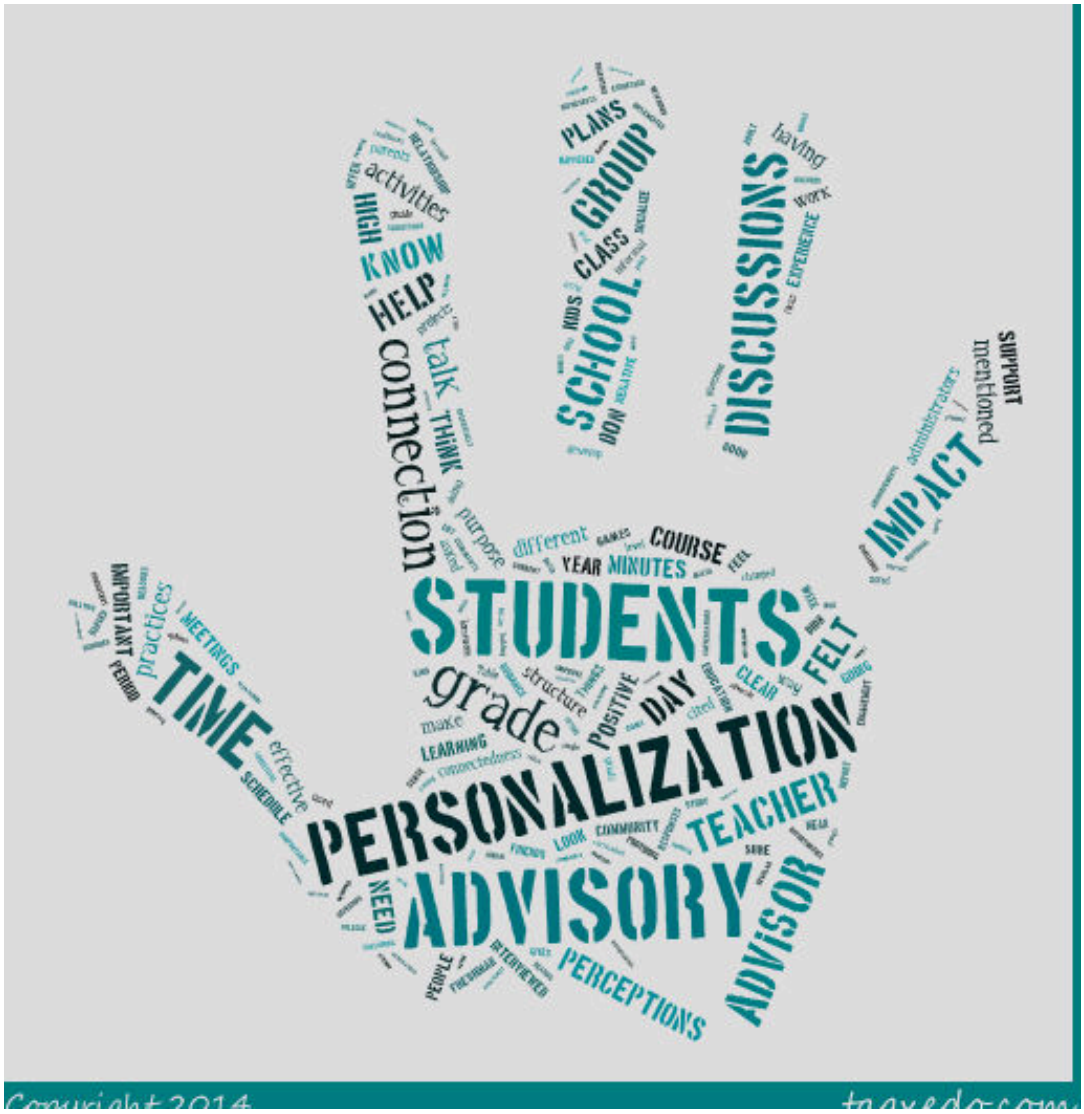

Figure 10: Word Cloud for Chapter 4

Chapter 5 – Discussion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses what research from this study revealed about high school advisory and what still needs to be learned on this topic, as well as the limitations of this research. In the final part of this chapter the reader will find recommendations that have emerged based on data from the study and the review of literature.

5.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand how students, advisors and administrators perceived that high school advisory impacted student academics, connectedness to their school and the personalization of their education. Critical to these questions was the understanding about what advisors and administrators believed to be effective practices and what they felt were roadblocks to these effective practices. The research questions were informed primarily by four recent empirical studies by Walloff (2011), Boregeson (2009), Mac Iver (2011) and McClure et al. (2010). Secondarily, a review of the literature on human needs theory by Glasser (1998), Maslow (2011) and Clarke (2003) further contributed to the development of the questions. Literature about dropout rate (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Jordan et al., 2012), school environment (Lee & Smith, 1994; Rumberger, 2001), personalization of learning (Clarke, 2003; Littky & Grabelle, 2004; McClure et al., 2010), effective advisory practices (Crawford, 2008; MacLaury, 2002; Tocci, Hochman, & Allen, 2005) and roadblocks to effective advisory practices (Galassi et al., 1997; Stevenson, 2002; Ziegler & Mulhall, 1994) all informed

the study as well. Additionally the study sought to understand what the current status of advisory was in the state of Vermont.

5.3 Method

The study was conducted in two phases: the first assessed the current status of high school advisory in all high schools in the state of Vermont, and the second phase was conducted in four Vermont high schools with long-running advisory programs. Data for the first phase of the study was obtained through contacting all Vermont public high schools by phone or through email to determine whether they had a high school advisory program, and if so how often it met and for how long. The data collection for the second phase of the study consisted of qualitative interviews of 16 students, 8 advisors, 4 administrators and 14 student focus forum participants. Limited document review was also utilized. The selection of schools was determined by which sites would render diversity in socio-economic status, size, and rural versus urban setting. The students in the population were 47% male, 53% female, 17% percent non-white (Vermont average: 8%) and an estimated 13% students with IEPs (Vermont average: 13%). The interviews took place between May and December 2013. I analyzed the content of the 28 interviews and three focus forum sessions and coded the chunks of data using seven a priori codes and 11 emergent codes with six additional codes for adult participants (Wolcott, 2009).

5.4 Synopsis of Findings

5.4.1 Purpose of High School Advisory

The students' perceptions of purpose were fairly consistent with the advisors' descriptions of activities that occurred in advisory. In the school where activities were

highly focused on circling up and working together in a small group, all four students perceived that the purpose was to get to know a wide range of people and get support. In that particular school, the advisory guide specifically stated that the role of the advisor was to actively develop a sense of community in advisory. In one school where activities were described as casual interaction in which advisees sat at various tables, students perceived the purpose of advisory was to get homework done or socialize with their friends. In *Student Advisories in Grades 5-12,* MacLaury (2002) discusses how proxemics (how and where the group sits) and how advisees interact (one-way conversation, two-way conversation or disengaged) can be indicative of how the advisory group forms and how the group atmosphere develops. If indeed one purpose of advisory is to create a sense of connectedness to the school environment as suggested by Clarke (2013) and MacLaury, creating the dynamic where some students could be left out appears to defeat that purpose.

5.4.2 Impact on academics

Of the 16 student interviewees, nine perceived advisory positively impacted their academics, five described either no impact or a negative impact, and one described both a negative and positive impact. Most cited electronic grade checks with their advisor as having a positive impact on their academics due to the gentle kick-in-the-butt or "motherly reminders" that helped them stay on track. Some older students felt the grade checks were important when they were younger, but as they approached their final years of high school felt they could better self-monitor grades and assignments. One student expressed that grade checks that were not coupled with advice or assistance actually

negatively impacted academics. One other student responded that he could see how grade checks might help some students, but for him, the lack of a personalized discussion about academic progress negated any positive academic benefit. In one school where advisors were responsible for guiding students with their senior project, all students mentioned how the advisor impacted academics positively. This is consistent with Schulkind's (2007) findings that in effective advisories students had the perception that advisory positively impacted their academics. Students cited two other common academic benefits. Half responded academic help from the advisor was useful and four students mentioned the benefit of advisory (not the advisor) as a time to get homework accomplished. In only one school did the students or advisors discuss academic goal setting as part of the advisory program although goal setting has often been described as one of the recommended academic outcomes of advisory programs (NASSP, 2004; Tocci et al., 2005).

5.4.3 Impact on Student-to-Teacher and Student-to-Student Connection

Regularly cited as a goal of high school advisory programs is to create a "point-person" for each student and make sure all students are well known by at least one adult in the building (Forte & Schurr, 1993; Imbimbo, Morgan, & Plaza, 1999). However, this research does not support that students perceived their advisors as a point person. When asked what person in the school building knew them the best, only two students suggested it was their advisor. A third student, who had just changed advisories indicated that currently she did not know her advisor well, but was beginning to get to know him. All three of those students were from the same school. No students in the other schools

identified their advisor as the person who knew them best. Students who had caseworkers for IEPs or counselors with whom they met regularly tended to cite that person as knowing them well. Six students identified a non-specific teacher that was not their advisor as the person in the school that knew them best, with one student athlete identifying a coach and one freshman identifying his middle school advisor as the person who knew them best. Only four advisors mentioned being the "point person" and having contact with their advisees' parents either through student-led parent conferences or as a person the parents would call for information and only one of the advisees mentioned any regular advisor-parent contact.

Despite not being cited as a point person by their advisees, there was some evidence that students perceived that high school advisory did positively impact their student-to-teacher relationship and strong evidence that it positively impacted the student-to-student connectedness in their schools. Eleven of the 16 advisees described their interaction with their advisor as positive. They described academic activities such as grade checks or academic assistance, academic or personal advising, and social events such as parties, food days, group discussions, and collaborative activities as ways in which they connected with their advisors. However, five of the students described little connection with their advisor due to a double advisory grouped together, a lack of interaction with the advisory by the advisor, or a lack of interest on either the advisor or their part. To the contrary, all advisors believed advisory positively impacted student-to-teacher connectedness and all but one felt they knew their advisees well. It was interesting to me that the administrators' perceptions mirrored that of the students more

closely. They admitted that only "some advisors" really knew their students well, revealing a lack of consistency within the program.

One specific example highlighted the importance of the individual advisor in the success of the advisory group. An 11th grade student had had a previous advisor for two years with whom she had made a strong connection. The previous advisor had brought baked goodies and asked about their weekends. She checked their grades, gave them suggestions on how to improve and regularly interacted with the advisees during the advisory period. When that teacher left the district, her advisory received a new advisor. By comparison, the new advisor did not participate regularly with the advisees and only once brought in goodies after being cajoled by an advisee. The student's body language, tone and description revealed excitement about one advisor's efforts to connect with students versus disappointment when discussing the other advisor's lack of effort to connect with students.

Fourteen out of 16 students perceived that advisory positively impacted the student-to-student connectedness. Planned activities such as advisory parties, games and service activities as well as casual time to chat with friends were cited as ways in which students connected with one another. This would indicate that advisory in these schools was able to meet the needs of students represented by Maslow's (2011) and Glasser's (1998) second and third levels of need: love, belonging security, recognition and friendship. All four of the interview students as well as the forum participants at the school with mixed-grade advisories mentioned getting to know students in other grades as a positive feature of their advisory program. The two advisors and the administrator

from the mixed-grade advisory school also discussed the importance of integrated socialization to the overall climate of the school. In the non-mixed-grade advisory schools, however, only one advisor mentioned how advisory positively impacted the student-to-student connection even though all the administrators perceived it did. I believe the advisors may have omitted discussion about student-to-student connectedness because they were discussing the student-to-advisor connectedness at length. The interview question about connectedness did not specify student-to-student connectedness, but rather connectedness to the school environment, which they interpreted to mean them. This response might also speak to a perceived lack of purpose. If there is not a clearly articulated objective that advisory will foster student connectedness to the school, their advisor and to one another, then that connectedness may be lost in the practice.

5.4.4 Impact on Personalization

This study revealed that neither students, nor advisors, nor administrators perceived that advisory impacted the personalization of the student's education much at all in its current state. Some students were confused by the question about personalization whereas others repeated grade checks and some academic guidance as how the advisory program impacted the personalization of their education. Similarly, advisors most often cited grade checks or discussing school programs as ways in which they personalized education for their advisees, but they did not indicate that personalization was an essential goal of the existing advisory program. All four administrators and six of the eight advisors believed that the advisory would, however, play an important role in the future implementation of PLPs soon to be required by recent Vermont legislation under

Act 77, the Flexible Pathways Legislation. Both advisors and administrators indicated that it was likely that advisors would guide students in the preparation of student PLPs through goal setting, guidance around multiple pathways, learning styles and interests in the future.

5.4.5 Effective Practices

There were considerable discrepancies between the beliefs by the advisors and administrators about effective practices and current practice. There also appeared to be considerable discrepancies between what the students reported as advisory activities and what the advisors believed were current practices. However, since there was no planned correlation between the advisors and students that were interviewed, it was not possible to gauge if that discrepancy existed only because the students were in different advisories (e.g., ones that were not described by the advisors) or if it was a discrepancy of perception. Most advisors cited mundane administrative activities, academic support or getting to know their students through conversation, discussion or games as the current practice. Only one advisor felt that advisory was utilized to its potential. The rest of the advisors and all the administrators believed their advisories could be more effective. Five advisors cited being an advocate and a point person for advisees as being an effective practice, even though they did not currently identify themselves in that role. In contrast, all administrators cited being a point person as being a central role of the advisor. Creating opportunities for service learning projects, and knowing advisees well were also cited as being effective practices. Guidance around academics, multiple pathways, dual

enrollment and personalized learning plans were cited as potential effective advisory practices in the future.

5.4.6 Roadblocks to Effective Advisory Practices

Three themes emerged from the adult perceptions of roadblocks to effective advisory practices: lack of support (contractual, materials and training), unclear purpose (no clear articulation of purpose and lack of process to develop it), and lack of consistency (teachers in the same building, and occasionally in the same room, employed very different practices). Six out of eight advisors cited a lack of support from the administration as being the most significant roadblock because it was considered "outside the contract" (in three of the four schools), and because they received little to no professional development around effective advisory practices. American Federation of Teachers vice-president, Adam Urbanski, recently indicated to the Partnership for Change, that if you are going to add something onto a teacher's workload, you must first consider what you are going to take away from their workload (2014). In only one school had the school structure taken away a block so that advisory could be considered part of the teaching load.

Also, most advisors felt untrained and unprepared to accomplish effective advisories. Advisors in the one school where advisory was considered a part of the contract did not mention a lack of support as a roadblock. The theme of inadequate support felt by six of the eight advisors was consistent with previous research that showed teachers feel they lack adequate time and professional development as advisors (Galassi et al., 1997; Ziegler & Mulhall, 1994).

Six out of eight advisors cited unclear purpose as a roadblock to effective advisory practices. Only one school actually had a clearly articulated vision for advisory that was shared annually with the staff. The three other schools referenced previous goal statements and suppport materials that had been created and shared at one time, but were no longer in use. In all three of those schools advisors referred back to a time when there was a specified coordinator for advisory activities and materials, but added that their schools no longer had such a person. In the one school where there was an advisory coordinator that sent out materials annually, there was a much greater consistency among student, advisor and administrator perceptions about expectations and the impact of advisory on academics and connectedness to the school environment. Also, in the school that provided support for advisors, all interviewees and forum participants viewed advisory favorably.

In a 2003 study by the Institute for Student Achievement (ISA), the researchers found that many teachers, especially newer teachers, felt that having a more standardized purpose and activities would be helpful (Tocci et al., 2005). The lack of a clear purpose led to the percpetion by all advisors that "everyone does it slightly differently". This perception was also echoed by all four administrators. Although several advisors mentioned that program flexibility was important, there was a sense in three of the four schools that the lack of purpose left advisory adrift and subject to the individual advisor's style. One of the reported outcomes of the inconsistency between advisors and advisories was a perceived lack of buy in by students and advisors. The feeling that "other

advisories" did not have to circle up or be accountable was not only cited by half of the advisors, but it is consistent with the ISA study as well (Tocci et al.).

5.5 Limitations

Although two of the four Vermont high schools studied were considered urban by Vermont standards, the challenges that large urban areas face may not have been addressed in this study since Vermont's largest city has under 45,000 people. Furthermore, because of the qualitative nature of this study, there were only 16 student interviews with another 14 forum participants. Of those 16, only two seniors participated in the individual interviews versus five freshmen. Liaisons tried to even the numbers, but seniors, who could have offered a four-year glimpse at advisory, were more challenging to schedule because of senior open-campus policies. Perhaps by using both qualitative and quantitative instruments I might have been able to obtain the rich phenomenological story about advisory while also reaching a larger percentage of the student body with a quanitative survey tool. Another limitation was that schools were chosen on demographic as well as past reputation for effective advising practices. Because of the nature of the many itterations of advisory in Vermont schools, some of the reported effective practices I had wanted to study were no longer being implemented. This uncovered some excellent comparative data from teachers and students who recalled previous practices, but did not render as much rich data about effective practices as had been expected.

5.6 Future Study

Although there have been a handful of recent studies concerning high school advisory, there is ample opportunity for future study in this area. One area for future study is to research these perceptions in larger urban schools where urban issues more strongly influence graduation rate. Since in the state of Vermont poverty and disability are the most significant factors that contribute to non-completion of high school (Vermont Agency of Education, 2013), a more urban study that reflects areas where chronic absenteeism (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012) and race (Rumberger, 2001) are the greatest contributing factors to non-completion of high school might be more useful to larger, more metropolitan school systems. Also, despite revealing the impact of a lack of support for advisory, the study did not reveal what kind of professional development would most benefit advisory programs and how much preparation time would be optimal to foster effective practices. There is no doubt that a study on professional development practices, including preservice training for secondary teachers, as well as support practices for existing advisors would be useful. Another area for study that might prove fruitful to this research is to uncover effective tools for evaluating advisory programs, and how those tools are used in improving advisory practices. Researching the myriad of advisory models would uncover options for schools and provide support for schools that plan to implement minimal as well as comprehensive advisory models. Looking at the length of time, the number of times the advisory met and the configuration of single grade advisories versus multi-grade advisories could continue to shed light on best practices. Finally, from a Vermont perspective, future study about how high school

advisory impacts the implementation of the PLPs mandated by Act 77 will be critical to creating enduring successful practices for personalization of education.

5.7 Discussion/Recommendations

Several repeated themes emerged from this research: 1) neither students, nor advisors nor administrators have a unified perception of the purpose for advisory, 2) in order to achieve effective advisories, time and resources must be allocated, 3) advisors make a significant difference in the efficacy of the advisory group, 4) students value the student-to-student connectedness they feel in advisory, and 5) advisors and administrators in Vermont believe advisory will become a keystone component for the implementation of Act 77. In this section of the final chapter, I will make recommendations for advisory. These recommendations have emerged from the interviews and practices at the school in the study, the review of the literature and other visitations to schools with established advisory programs that were not part of the study.

5.7.1 Define Purpose

As stated in the section above and in the findings, the lack of a stated purpose led to a lack of student buy in, inconsistencies in advisories and a lack of an evaluative tool to measure the effectiveness of the advisory program. Quotes such as, “If you have a good advisory you’re having good time. And you’re not saying ‘Oh man I have advisory’ and being kind of miserable,” and “Other advisories work better because their advisors sort of interact with them more” indicated the students’ frustration with the inconsistencies**.** Advisors also felt a lack of purpose impacted the way advisory was being implemented. “I just think by high school it’s a lot harder to get kids to play fun games

like in middle school, so maybe that's a question of purpose, so maybe that's a roadblock. What's the purpose?" It would be unrealistic to think that any academic program could be effectively implemented without standards and a curriculum, but three out of the four advisory programs had no such guidance. It was not surprising that several students reported they had no idea what the purpose of advisory was since advisors in their schools approached the program with such vastly different approaches.

Hence the first recommendation is to establish a purpose for advisory through a committee of all stakeholders, including teachers, students, administrators, and parents. If organizational change is the task of a single person, there may be continued lack of buy in. However, by utilizing multiple levels of influence (Burke, 2008), and by empowering committee members (Stanford-Blair & Dickman, 2005), the organizational change will be perceived as group process not just an administrative dictate. The committee should begin with an overarching vision statement such as 'advisory will provide every student with a small interactive group that meets regularly for the purpose of forging positive school climate and will provide an adult advocate and point person who helps them to be academically and personally successful'. These broad statements, however, must be supported with clearly articulated goals for the program that are devised to meet the needs of the school. On the following pages are examples of goals for advisory:

- ❖ 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 integral in the planning process for students' personalized learning portfolios.

- ❖ 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, planning for class fundraisers, 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.

In addition to developing goals statements, the committee should also develop clearly articulated roles for the advisors based on the needs of the school system. Listed below are some example roles for the advisors in an effective advisory system:

A Bridge for Communication

Each advisor

- ❖ maintains appropriate ongoing contact with teachers and parents about academic and social progress of their advisees.
- ❖ uses advisory time to be in contact with advisees about academic and personal goals, school information, scheduling, and barriers to learning.
- ❖ attends meetings pertaining to their advisees (IEP, 504, discipline conferences) when appropriate.
- ❖ facilitates student-led parent conferences.
- ❖ connects advisees with appropriate resources to achieve goals in PLP's.

Academic Advisor

Each advisor

- ❖ Oversees the personal learning portfolio for each advisee.
- ❖ Assists advisees with appropriate course selection and multiple pathway choices and long range academic planning.
- ❖ Knows and understands each advisee's program and rationale for academic choices.
- ❖ Knows each advisee's schedule.
- ❖ Consults with parents on schedule changes.
- ❖ Encourages academic decisions based on long-term planning and goals.
- ❖ Advises students about the process and responsibilities of their service learning commitment, senior project or other graduation requirements.

An Advocate

Each advisor

- ❖ Takes time to connect with each student by actively engaging with students during daily advisory period.
- ❖ Provides constructive support for advisees before or during significant disciplinary hearings.
- ❖ Works with advisees to help them to communicate appropriately with others.
- ❖ Encourages responsible decision making

Personal Advisor

Each advisor

- ❖ Creates opportunities for periodic individual meetings.
- ❖ Comes to know advisees - personal talents, interests and goals.
- ❖ Helps advisees to develop a sense of self direction through personal goal setting.
- ❖ Is familiar with referral resources and makes referrals as necessary.
- ❖ Gets to know parents and the best way to communicate with them (e-mail, work phone etc.).
- ❖ Creates a safe environment for students to engage in student driven discussion.

5.7.2 Enhancing Academic Benefit

One purpose of this study was to uncover how high school advisory impacted academics. Every administrator and six out of eight advisors identified providing a point person for a student's academic program as being an important role of high school advisory in the future. To achieve this, systems and protocols must be accessible to

advisors as well as the expectation that academic advising is a component of the program. Listed below are some recommendations for practices that support the role of academic advising:

- Students, parents and other faculty members view the advisor as the point person for advisees.
- Advisors and advisees review grades regularly.
- The committee develops a school-wide protocol for improvement plans which are implemented between advisor and advisee.
- Grades and assignment grades are easily accessible to the advisor.
- It is easy for faculty to identify their students' advisors.
- The administration strongly encourages a culture of inter-faculty communication about advisees.
- Resources for multiple pathways, dual enrollment, course listings, independent learning opportunities, and other services for students are easily accessible by faculty, students, and parents.
- Student-led parent conferences with the advisor become the format for conferences.
- Structures allow advisors to attend IEP, EST, 504 and disciplinary meetings as the advisee's advocate.
- Although some administrative tasks and guided study may be a part of some school's advisory structure, there is a clear expectation that advisory is neither homeroom nor study hall.

5.7.3 Fostering Connectedness

Twelve out of 16 students cited student-to-student connectedness as a positive attribute of advisory because it gave them time to be with friends and connect in a nonacademic way. A 1995 study of 241 high school freshmen suggests that positive school climate can impact academic motivation and achievement (Niebuhr, 1995). The importance of climate on academic achievement is consistent with a 2007 paper published by the University of Maryland highlighting motivational interventions that improve achievement in school (Wentzel & Wigfield, 2007). On the other hand, some students interviewed felt very disconnected to their advisory and discussed how students sat apart and only interacted with their friends, leaving some students feeling isolated. The size of the advisories also contributed to the level of connectedness students felt, leading two students to comment that larger advisories might even defeat the purpose of advisory. In the school that had mixed grade advisories, all students, advisors and the administrator mentioned the positive impact of older students mentoring younger students. The 2009 study of freshmen and sophomores that were coached by 12th grade assistants revealed that all eight goals for connectedness and school community were met (Borgeson, 2009). This and discussions with other schools that were not in this model, lead to some recommendations for creating strong student-to-student connections through advisory.

- Advisories will meet regularly in groups of fewer than 14 students.
- Advisory groups will circle up or create an environment where students will not be isolated.

- ❖ Advisors will practice positive group dynamics.
- ❖ There will be a structure for inter-grade mentoring either through mixed-grade advisories, mixed-grade peer mentoring programs that occur occasionally during the advisory period, or "buddy advisories" that are two grades apart from them that meet regularly (e.g., 9th and 11th would be buddies, and 10th and 12th would be buddies) for the purpose of mixed-grade interaction.
- ❖ Advisories will participate in some form of interactive activities from time to time.

5.7.4 Student-to-teacher connectedness

Both students and adults (advisors and administrators) recognized that an important component of the high school advisory program is the effective connection that is forged between advisors and students. In fact, this study does support that three-quarters of the students and all advisors believed they had developed a personal student-to-teacher connection because of their advisories. Although the students mentioned most often the advisor's attention to their academics in the form of grade checks and guidance, the advisors mentioned knowing the student and their interests as the way they knew their advisees best. The students that did not report a strong connection to their advisors were either in larger advisories or in advisories where the teacher reportedly did not interact with the group often. In a 2007 study of three middle school advisors, James Burns (2007) discovered that it is the relational work and caring which emerged as "critical attribute of teacher and learner efficacy" (p. 229). The benefit was not merely the outcome of activities during an advisory period, but the more global disposition of a continuous caring adult that made a difference. A 2010 study of high school freshmen

and sophomores echoed the perception that all students can feel "special" in advisory (Walloff, 2011). The suggestion that advisors recognize special events such as birthdays often meets resistance because the advisor assumes that means they need to spend their own money on the event. Having students alternate who might bring in the advisory goodies, or accessing the parent connection, could relieve the financial stress of celebrations. Also, some religions do not recognize birthdays or other holidays. One way to remain inclusive is to just call it "Raquel's day" or "Mohamed's day" and give that student the ability to choose the activities for the day. The following are recommendations to promote the development of student-to-teacher connectedness:

- Define and develop the role of the advisor thoughtfully with attention to the previous recommendations.
- Create a school-wide expectation that advisors interact with their advisees always during advisory period.
- Create structures where advisors can meet alone with advisees on a consistent basis, perhaps through an advisory buddy system or other structure.
- Revise job descriptions for new hires to reflect the responsibility of being an advisor.
- Develop systems that allow advisors to share best practices so advisors can learn through their peers.
- Define minimum aspects of connectedness advisors and advisees should develop as a guide for advisors to gauge their practice. For example, an advisor should

know an advisee's extra-curricular activities, or advisors should recognize student birthdays or special events.

5.7.5 Providing Support for Advisors

The area of greatest concern for the success of high school advisory lay in the clear lack of support teachers felt for developing effective practices. Only in the school where advisory was considered a part of their teaching responsibilities and was represented thus in their contract did teachers not mention time and the contract as roadblocks to effective advisory practices. What Gallassi et al. (1997) discovered in their study of advisory programs still rings true – advisory programs are often implemented without consideration of how the program will impact a teacher's current workload. As high schools shift into more personalized learning environments with: 1) multiple pathways, 2) online learning, 3) extended and individualized learning opportunities, 4) dual enrollment, and 5) personalized and proficiency based learning as described by League of Innovative Schools at their January 2014 conference, schools need to readjust the teaching day and the configuration of classes so that the personalization can occur. As most advisors indicated clearly, there needs to be a shift in teacher workload, not just an addition to teacher workload. School schedules that consist of six to eight daily classes or four 90-minute blocks a day might need to reconfigure schedules so that some of that time can be devoted to developing plans, moving forward with personalized learning, and monitoring and reflecting on progress on learning plan goals.

Second only to time was the concern that there was little support or direction for the advisory program. Once again, all teachers described a lack of articulated

expectations and support materials as a roadblock to effective advisory practices except in the one school that did provide annually updated materials. In all the other schools there were references to a previous coordinator that provided materials in the past, but the materials were not provided once the coordinator position was eliminated. This highlights the need for a multi-stakeholder committee to develop the advisory vision and a point person to oversee the ongoing implementation of the advisory program. Whether the position is supported by a stipend or as part of the coordinator's day, this study demonstrates that in order to keep the program vibrant there does need to be someone spearheading the program and materials that guide the advisors in their practice.

Finally, advisors indicated that there was a lack of training provided for them to skillfully accomplish their advisory programs. Unlike with their content specialties, advisors both in this study and in other schools visited expressed concern that they are not "trained" as a counselor. By defining the roles clearly and providing time and training, advisors can develop skills and dispositions necessary for the implementation of effective advisory practices. It is important to note that most secondary teacher training programs at colleges and universities only mention advisory as a cursory part of their curriculum. In the Center for School Success' *Promising Practice Series on Advisory*, the authors reinforce the need for training and materials for younger teachers who are just starting out, as well as seasoned teachers who perceive their role only as a classroom teacher and are uncomfortable in the role of advocate for a student (Imbimbo et al, 1999). In addition to time, materials and training were the need for advisory to be "taken seriously" by the administration. In none of the schools was advisory a part of the evaluative process

leading advisors to comment that it was not valued by the administration. Although evaluation of effective programs can be challenging (Galassi et al., 1997), developing an advisory rubric and having advisory be part of the evaluative process would not only demonstrate that advisory "counts", but also give advisors valuable feedback upon which they would be able to improve their practice.

Recommendations for supporting advisors are:

- Develop support materials that reflect the advisory committee's vision for advisory including: 1) a vision statement, 2) goals for advisory, 3) expected roles for advisors, 4) possible themes or curriculum aligned with the vision, 5) calendars for expected activities, and 6) optional scripts for teachers who request them. Make sure these materials are easily accessible and updated annually.
- Appoint an advisory coordinator and maintain an advisory committee that is populated by all stakeholders.
- Create structures that include advisory as part of, not in addition to, the advisors' workload.
- Develop evaluative processes for advisors and the advisory program that value advisory and classroom teaching equally.
- Develop professional learning opportunities for advisors to get the training needed either through summertime professional development, professional learning communities, release time for workshops, or inservice.
- Make sure advisors are prepared before implementing the advisory program.
- Ensure that coaching for advisors is available.

- ❖ Request that local colleges and universities develop courses to support teachers in adapting to 21st century personalized learning

5.8 Joey

I leave this study with the reflection of a personal experience. I was the advisor to a student I will call "Joey". I had seen this boy struggle through his early years of high school. I had sat in with him during those first years encouraging him that he could in fact graduate with his class, while working with teachers, the guidance counselor and his mother to make sure he had met the proficiencies he needed in order to get enough credits to graduate. Because he had only passed half his classes in his freshman year, he had a grueling schedule in his senior year. By November of his senior year, the task seemed insurmountable. Joey could now drop out of school with no permission needed from his mother. He announced one morning in advisory that he was going to drop out. Our jaws dropped in amazement. He had worked so hard. What I then witnessed was what led me to this work. One by one, Joey's co-advisees told him he was crazy, and that he would regret dropping out of school for the rest of his life. They told him they would help him get through senior year and that they would all graduate together. And they did. Joey graduated on time with his cohort because of the love and commitment of his co-advisees. A few months after graduation, I ran into his mother at the local grocery store. She confirmed what I had felt. She told me he would never have made it through high school without his advisory. Every student needs this opportunity.

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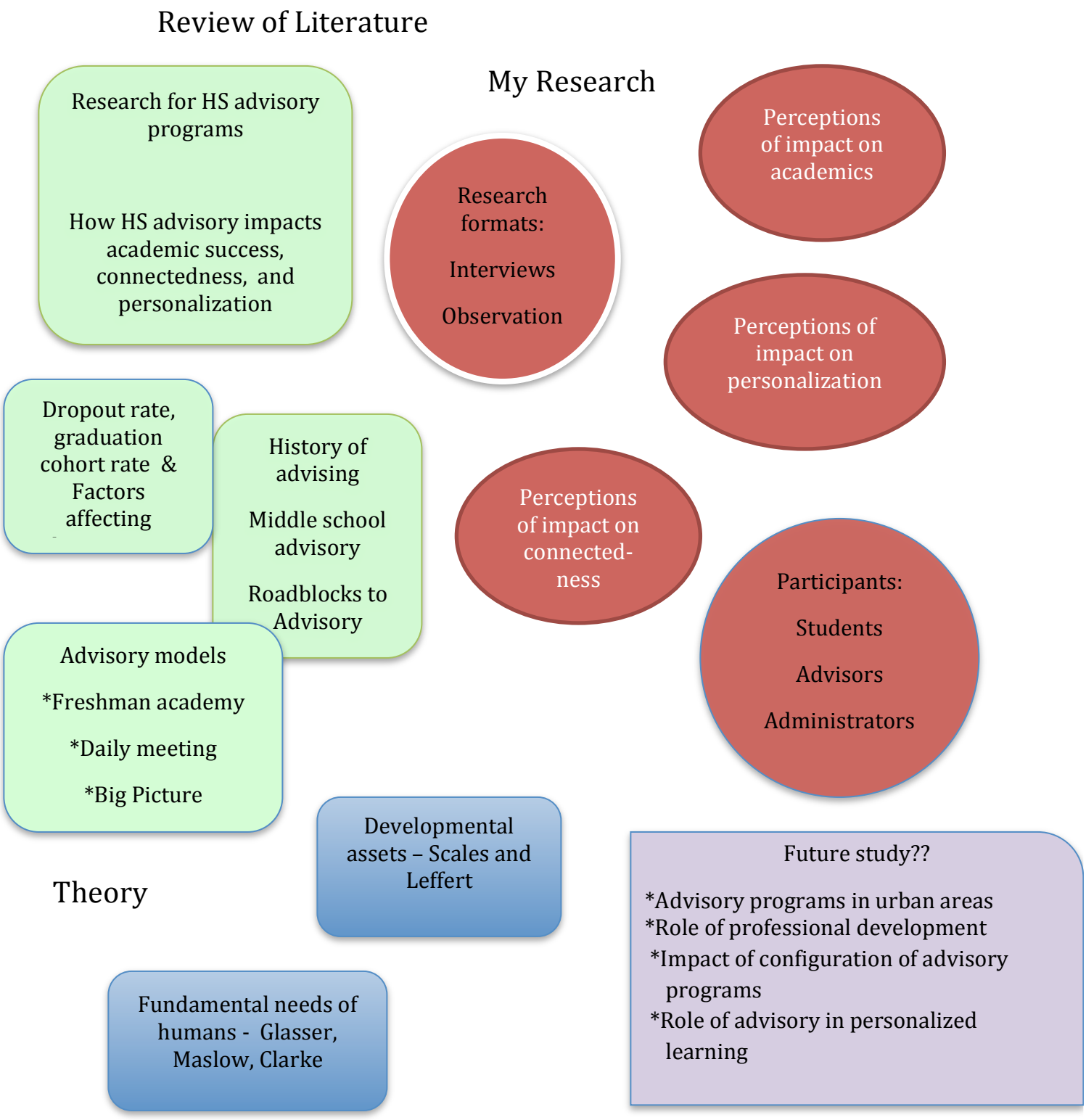
Appendix A: Concept Map for Dissertation



Appendix B: Phone Protocol for All Vermont High Schools

Call and ask for an Administrator or Guidance Personnel.
Good afternoon, My name is Beth Brodie and as part of my doctoral program for UVM, I am trying to assess the status of high school advisory in Vermont. I would like three quick questions about high school advisory. It should not take more than a minute.
Are you familiar with the term high school advisory? If yes, skip to questions.

If no, explain: for the purpose of this study: I define high school advisory as a structure whose purpose is to ensure that every student is well known by at least one adult in the building and that meets regularly each week in a small interactive group.

Questions:

- Do you have a high school advisory program?
- If so, how many times a week does it meet?
- How long are the advisory periods?

Added for the final 30 schools:

- Is your advisory grouped by grade or is it a mixed grade advisory.

Appendix C: Student Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol for the Experience of High School Students who Participate in a form of Advisory Program

Thank you for participating in this survey about your experiences as a student at your school. Once again, I want to remind you, that neither your name nor the name of your school will appear on any documents associated with this study to ensure your full anonymity.

The interview will seek to understand how you perceive your participation in high school advisory impacts your academic success, your connectedness to your school and the personalization of your education. Please feel free at any time to ask for a clarification of the question. I will be audio taping the interview so it may be transcribed at a later date, but once again no identifying information will be released in the findings of this study. At any time you may choose to stop this interview or refuse to answer a question. Are you ready to proceed?

The first set of questions will ask about your perceptions of your school.

1. What grade are you in?

2. What are the first few things that come to mind when you think of your school? Why?

3. How would you describe the academic engagement of students at your school? Why?

4. How would you describe the environment in your school?

5. How does your school personalize your education for you?

6. Do you think one adult in the building really knows you well? Why do you think that? What does it look like?

7. Do you think you will graduate on time? Why or why not?

The second set of questions will ask information about your advisory experience.

8. How often do you meet in your advising groups, when and for how long?

9. How many students are in your advisory group?

10. What kinds of activities do you do during your advisory time?

11. What are the goals of your advisory?

12. How does your advisor or advisory experience impact your academic experience at your school? Could you give some examples?

13. How does your advisor or advisory experience impact the level of personalization you experienced at school? Could you give some examples?

14. How does your advisor or advisory experience impact what you think about your school environment? Could you give some examples?

15. Tell me about why you like or dislike advisory.

16. Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you for taking the time to take this interview. If you have anything you would like to add, you may send it to me via email at My email address at bbrodie@sover.net . If I think of something, may I contact you for clarification or further explanation? The results of these interviews and the survey will , but once again, I want to assure you your name will never appear in any association with the information presented. Thank you.

Appendix D: Advisor/ Administrator Interview Protocol

Thank you for participating in this survey about your experiences as a high school advisor. Once again, I want to remind you, that neither your name nor the name of your school will appear on any documents associated with this study to ensure your full anonymity.

The interview will cover questions surrounding your perceptions of how participation in a high school advisory program impacts student academic success, their connectedness to their school environment and the personalization of their education. I will also ask about your perceptions about effective practices in advising and roadblocks to effective advising. Please feel free at any time to ask for a clarification of the question. I will be audio taping the interview so it may be transcribed at a later date, but once again no identifying information will be released in the findings of this study. At any time you may choose to stop this interview or refuse to answer a question. Are you ready to proceed?

The first few questions are demographic in nature.

1. How many students are in your advisory?

2. How often do you meet and for how long?

3. How long have you been an advisor?

The following questions are designed to understand your perceptions about your advisory and how it impacts your students' educational experience.

4. What kinds of activities occur during the advisory period?

5. How do you perceive advisory impacts the academic success of students?

6. How does the advisory program at the school impact the school environment? Are there specific activities you do with advisory that impact the school environment?

7. How does the advisory program impact the level of personalization your students receive in their education? Can you give an example?

8. Do you feel you know your advisees well? What does that look like?

The final two questions are designed to understand what you feel in general about high school advisory programs.

9. What do you believe are effective practices of a high school advisory program?

10. What do you believe are roadblocks to effective advisory programs?

11. Do you perceive that the advisory experience in high school positively impacts students? How so?

Thank you for taking the time to take this interview. If you have anything you would like to add, you may send it to me via email at My email address. If I think of something, may I contact you for clarification or further explanation? Once again, I want to assure you your name will never appear in any association with the information presented. Thank you.

Appendix E: Focus Forum Protocol

Icebreaker - mix people up, get them with heterogeneous groups

Make sure the facilitator/recorder has flip chart, pencils, paper and markers per group and taping device.

Group process:

Have group members write their thoughts on the three questions

Ask first question: go around for brief input from all until list is exhausted

"Unpack" what they say...dig for meaningful examples

Look for themes

Ask second question: go around for brief input from all until list is exhausted

"Unpack" what they say...dig for meaningful examples

Look for themes

Ask third question: go around for brief input from all until list is exhausted

"Unpack" what they say...dig for meaningful examples

Look for themes

See if there is anything anyone would like to add.

Three questions :

How does your advisory program impact your learning?
How does your advisory program impact the school climate?
How does your advisory program impact the personalization of your education?

Appendix F: Complete List of Codes

A PRIORI CODES:

CARE	caring adult (this was often double coded with CONT)
CONS	connection to students (student to student)
CONT	connection to teachers (student to teacher)
ACB	academic benefit (either short term or long term)
PERS	personalization
~~GOAL~~	goal setting – changed to FUT or GUIDE
SV	student voice
FUN	fun activities
~~PATH~~	multiple pathways- changed to GUIDE

EMERGENT CODES:

HOMEW	homework
ACT+	liked the activities
ACT—	didn't like activities
RLX	felt advisory was a good place to relax, "chill"
SUGG	students had suggestions to improve advisory
ADV+	liked advisory overall
ADV—	didn't like advisory overall
GUIDE	received guidance from their advisor
FUT	advisor discussed future and goal setting
KNOWN	student felt well known by an adult in the building
SCHED	students felt the schedule of advisory impacted the experience
PURP –	purpose of advisory (changed)

ADDING PLUSSES AND MINUES – expressed a value for codes

EFF	Effective practices
RDBLKS	Roadblocks to effective
PTL	Potential
SUP	support
CHNG	changes that have occurred
DIF	articulated differences between advisories

Appendix G: Student Composites

Composite of Perceptions for Student A – Grade Level: 11	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	Not sure, to get stuff done
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Academics	Time for homework, catch up, grade checks Extra help
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	Positive
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	Group activities, hang out and talk with friends, surveys and discussions on bullying, getting to know a small group of friends as a freshman
Perceived Value of Impact on Connectedness	Positive
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	Advisory activities, advisor knows IEP, grade checks
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	Case manager
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	Their advisor is familiar with their IEP
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	Positive

Composite of Perceptions for Student B- Grade Level: 9	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	No idea
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Academics	No academic benefit, no conversations about grades
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	None/Negative
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	World of Difference program, anti-bullying discussions, talk with each other, become close friends, get to know people as a freshman
Perceived Value of Impact on Connectedness	Positive
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	Advisory discussions are not with the advisor, advisor doesn't initiate conversations
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	Counselor
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	On occasion they discuss school programs
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	No impact

Composite of Perceptions for Student C – Grade Level: 10	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	Update yourself on news, socialize, connect with classmates, get things done
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Academics	Helps with specific subjects, grade checks, reminders
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	Positive
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	Talk, socialize, but does NOT feel it impacts the school environment
Level of Impact on Connectedness	No impact
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	Group discussions led by advisor about current events and random "stuff", helps with math, helps set priorities, talks about school events, throws parties
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	Academic counselor
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	Helps student to prioritize and make sure work is completed, does not discuss student's future often
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	Positive

Composite of Perceptions for Student D – Grade level: 11	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	Offers a break in the day, time to connect with students and teachers, help, academic and personal guidance from an advisor
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Academics	Grade checks, scheduling, future, guidance
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	Positive
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	Getting to know you game, come together as a group and planning, personalized information papers, talk about school guidelines, accepting students and differences of opinions
Perceived Value of Impact on Connectedness	Positive
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	Group activities to make advisees feel comfortable, surveys and information sheets to get to know you, games for developing personal connections with group and advisor, grade checks, looks out for advisees, advisors try to make advisees feel happy
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	Several teachers
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	Discusses schedules, helps guide course selection, talks about future goals, knows student's likes/dislikes
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	Positive

Composite of Perceptions for Student E – Grade Level: 10	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	Get to know people, connect with classmates
Student Perceptions Student Perception of Impacts Academics	Other students offer guidance, homework, time to finish an assignment or see a teacher, grade checks, help
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	Positive
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	Trips, apple picking, all students plan and contribute to brining in food, get to know people in every grade, student mentoring, support, inclusion, circle up every day
Perceived Value of Impact on Connectedness	Positive
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	Offers guidance, helps academically, regular grade checks, circles the group up and makes sure everyone is included
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	Advisor
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	Offers some guidance
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	Not sure how to answer the question

Composite of Perceptions for Student F – Grade Level: 11	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	Support, student to student advising
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Academics	Time to finish homework, or see a teacher, grade checks, extra help
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	Positive
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	Younger classmen get to meet upper classmen, connect with one another, hang out
Perceived Value of Impact on Connectedness	Positive
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	Knows a lot about student work ethic and as a person, discusses school announcements with advisory, talks about life, trips with advisory, regular grade checks, motivates advisees, connects with advisees, fun in advisory
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	Advisor
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	Peer mentoring helps with course selection
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	Positive

Composite of Perceptions for Student G – Grade Level: 10	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	Having a set group of people you can count on, getting to know people, connect with classmates
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Academics	Grade checks, but no discussion or help about how to improve
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	None/Negative
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	Safe place to discuss a tragedy, students brining in food, play twister, time to bond, emblem making activity to showcase advisory identity, the make up of the group makes the difference
Perceived Value of Impact on Connectedness	Positive
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	Goal setting, games, discussions about current events, fun, food, advisor writes recommendations, currently doesn't know that much about the student (2 ½ months) but is learning about her, grad challenge involvement, insists on full involvement of all students in advisory activities
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	Case worker
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	Does not yet know advisor well (first year with this advisor) helps older students with grad challenge
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	No impact

Composite of Perceptions for Student H – Grade Level: 9	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	Relax, get to know a wide range of people
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Academics	Grades checks helpful (especially when younger), time to get yourself together, help
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	Positive
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	Trip, student planning, talking with one another, small group identity, Emblem activity, getting to know kids from other towns
Perceived Value of Impact on Connectedness	Positive
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	Fills out papers about interests & goals, grade checks, group discussions, trusts and relies on advisor
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	Coach
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	Finds self-discovery though group process
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	Positive

Composite of Perceptions for Student I – Grade Level: 10	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	Not sure, Connect with people, separate out cliques
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Academics	Time to get into a good mood = better mood in classes, grade checks, help
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	Positive
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	Talking, connecting with each other, separate out cliques, gets people to "put themselves" out there, socialize, but tightly packed group was affected by joining with another advisory
Perceived Value of Impact on Connectedness	Positive
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	Some teacher-led activities, grade checks every now and then, supportive in helping with grades, open with advisees, positive attitude with advisees
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	9th grade teacher
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	Finds self-discovery though group process
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	Positive

Composite of Perceptions for Student J – Grade Level: 11	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	Relax, connect with classmates, develop community
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Academics	Grade checks, but no discussion, just nagging
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	None/Negative
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	Change of the group changes the dynamic, played games every now and then, but not everyone, developed a close friendship, advisor sets a low energy vibe for all students
Perceived Value of Impact on Connectedness	Was positive, but now is negative
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	Previous advisor- warm, motherly, brought in food, celebrated birthdays, positive attitude, developed a sense of community among all advisees, service projects Current advisor – grade checks every 2-3 months, no help with school work, reads the announcements, low energy
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	Counselor & previous advisor
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	Reads announcements
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	No impact

Composite of Perceptions for Student K – Grade Level: 12	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	Develop connectivity and community in the school
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Academics	Grade checks, but not useful for this student, takes him away from learning
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	None/Negative
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	Stays to himself…does not feel it impacts his connectedness to the school at all, he offers suggestions about how he might be more included: use student presentations and showcase student work
Perceived Value of Impact on Connectedness	Negative
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	Ted talks and required activities, no real connection, would like advisor to learn more about him
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	Program advisors
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	Advisory detracts from personalization
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	Negative impact

Composite of Perceptions for Student L – Grade Level: 11	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	Bring the school together, develop a "safe" group of people for each student
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Academics	Grade checks, but more useful for freshmen
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	Positive and Negative
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	Hang out with friends, activities to get to know one another, brings school together, good chance for freshmen to meet people from other towns
Perceived Value of Impact on Connectedness	Positive
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	Get to know you activities, grade checks, help, used to watch videos together as a group
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	Known by many teachers
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	Helps with self-discovery, some grade checks
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	No impact

Composite of Perceptions for Student M – Grade Level: 11	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	Class fundraising, connect with students, homework
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Academics	Homework time important, connect with teachers, time to regroup, wants grade checks
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	Positive
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	Talks with friends and socializes with own friends, but notes that they separate off into groups, not inclusive
Perceived Value of Impact on Connectedness	No Impact
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	Grade level meetings with advisors, disconnected, advisory doesn't live up to its potential
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	Teachers
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	Sometimes asks students what classes they would like the school to offer
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	Positive

Composite of Perceptions for Student N – Grade Level: 9	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	No idea, lg. group defeats the purpose of connecting with one another, socialize
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Academics	No academic benefit, takes up time
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	None/Negative
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	Past discussions were student led, previous board games, used to circle up…no longer, large group defeats the purpose of advisory, would like more student voice
Perceived Value of Impact on Connectedness	Positive
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	No longer circle up, no discussions and no grade checks, wants it to be helping students form relationships with teachers and have group discussions, teachers socialize with each other and tend to business during advisory
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	Middle school teacher
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	Advisors gives a snack from time to time
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	No impact

Composite of Perceptions for Student O – Grade Level: 12	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	Homework, learning, play games
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Academics	Grade checks, extra help
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	Positive
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	Board games, chill day, walk with a friend day or go outside, much better than previous year, feels like she knows students better in this advisory
Perceived Value of Impact on Connectedness	Positive
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	Grade checks, help with academics, loves their advisory (has a new advisor)
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	Two teachers
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	General help, grade checks and talks about senior project
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	Positive

Composite of Perceptions for Student P – Grade Level: 9	
Student Perception of the Purpose of their Advisory Program	Not sure, coming together, socialize
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Academics	Not sure, grade checks, suggestions for improvement
Perceived Value of Impact on Academics	Positive
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts Student-to-Student Connectedness	Board games, chill day, students devised schedule, focus on coming together, but notes they don't all get along so the advisory is working on this together, knows kids in this advisory better than in regular classes
Perceived Value of Impact on Connectedness	Positive
Ways in Which Students Connect to Their Advisor	Schedule of activities, help, fun, grade checks, focus on coming together as a group, guides the group to work out problems, advisor tries to connect with advisees through games and activities, not always successful
Person Students Felt Knew Them Best	PE teacher
Student Perception of How Advisory Impacts the Personalization of a Student's Education	Some guidance around course selection
Perceived Value of Impact on Personalization	Positive