



ADVISORY HANDBOOK

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What Is ADVISORY ?

“Individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean”. – Ryunosuke Satoro

Advisory is a dedicated time of day within the HPCS schedule that allows students a consistent and intentional opportunity to get to know themselves and each other better through community-building activities and character-based lessons.

Goals of Advisory:

The goals for the advisory program at HPCS are:

1. To help middle school students enhance their social, emotional, and psychological growth.
2. To foster a positive and inclusive school environment by creating an atmosphere of trust, support and acceptance among students and staff.
3. To help students foster life-skills that will enable them to become responsible and respectful members of the HPCS school community.

Why Teens Need Advisory & Tips for Advisors.

Advisory has been established to address 4 elements of adolescent development:

1. **Autonomy:** During middle school, students are seeing to be autonomous in their decision making while trying to navigate hormonal and emotional shifts. Although students are capable of making decisions, they often lack the cognitive development to make responsible decisions.

What do Advisors Do to Allow a Balance of Autonomy and Responsible Decision Making? Allow for autonomy within structures that have been developed. For example, allow them opportunities to choose from a list of approved activities or make suggestions for new ideas.

2. **Competence:** Adolescents want to feel that they can think, create, solve problems, and exhibit understanding. However, incompetence occurs when students are unable or unwilling to control their own behaviors or actions.

What do Advisors Do to Build Competence within their Students?: Allow for a continuum of learning. Students need opportunities to learn from their mistakes. This means that an advisor is a FACILITATOR of learning, not a dictator of learning. Advisors must allow students to make mistakes, reflect on their actions and allow for students to repeat the process until they learn.

3. **Relationships:** During adolescent years, the peer group has the most profound impact on a teenager. During the development of the teenage brain, most decisions are made with the fight or flight side of the brain; the amygdala. The prefrontal cortex, the rational decision making portion of their brain, does not develop until the age of 25. **Sound familiar?** Since peers are the most impact people in a teens life at this time, an advisor cannot underestimate the power of a teen's social circle.

What Can Advisors Do to Help Create Positive Peer Groups? Create a safe and inclusive space within your advisory for students to express themselves without fear of judgement or rejection. Conversations based in equity, diversity and inclusion help students to develop their own narratives while being empathetic and understanding of other narratives. Activities that allow for students to feel included and valued helps.

4. **Fun:** Fun, excitement and verve are all crucial to the development of human beings. If we did not have fun learning, why bother to learn at all? Fun allows for people to be more vulnerable and interact with one another because it creates a space where healthy social-emotional needs are being met.

What Can Advisors Do to Raise the Fun Factor? Be vulnerable. Allow yourself to experience the fun too. Students are more likely to buy into an activity if it is introduced in an exciting way. Also, fun is not the same for everyone, so ask students for suggested “fun” activities that they may want to do throughout advisory.

Advisor General Tips:

- ✓ **Be a facilitator** – Ask open-ended questions so that students can be responsible for their learning. Example: Why do you think that? Are there other possible solutions? Is that statement you made based in fact or opinion? When introducing a new activity/character trait/concept, allow for students to predict what they will learn through the “HOOK” do not tell them in advance.
- ✓ **Be consistent** – In order for students to value their advisory, they need to know that it is of value to their advisor; therefore, preparation, level of energy, timing and revisiting your advisory norms is crucial to the growth and sustainability of advisory.
- ✓ **Assume Nothing. Model Everything.** - As Advisors, you cannot take anything for granted. By modeling routines within advisory, you can ensure that not only do students understand the routine, but they understand WHY the routines within advisory are so important; careful observation and accurate description is important in helping students to establish self-efficacy. We cannot hold them accountable for skills we have not taught them and allowed them to practice.

Having Difficult Conversations:

Content adapted from the Center of Innovative Teacher and Learning, Indiana University Bloomington

Discussing controversial subjects is an inherent part of advisory. Topics like race, culture, gender, political views and/or sexual orientation can come up in various conversations and as an advisor, by ignoring difficult conversations you could be enabling students to be misinformed and it may affect your advisory’s ability to be an emotionally safe environment.

Preparing for Discussions In situations where you know you will be addressing a controversial topic, you can prepare for the discussion in ways that set the stage for success.

- **Consider possible sources of student views.** On many issues, students’ viewpoints may be wrapped up in their personal identities, influenced by family members, or connected to religious/spiritual/moral beliefs. So a challenge to an idea may be seen as a personal challenge as well. Just being aware of these deeper origins of student opinions—both for you and their classmates—may be useful in approaching delicate conversations.
- **Lead with your goals and reiterate the norms.** Contextualize the discussion within the purpose of the conversation and remind students of your advisory norms. Be ready to reiterate these goals during the discussion, and ask the students to redirect the conversation in ways that return to these goals and norms. The goals for the

conversation answers the questions WHY are we having the conversation and the norms dictate HOW we have the conversation.

- **Provide pre-discussion activities where applicable.** Ask students to participate in an activity or present a related poem, quote, song, video etc...in advance that gives students an opportunity to think and helps them to understand and articulate their own views, as well as others they have heard. Such activities let them do some more logical thinking in advance, before any emotional barriers get thrown up during a heated discussion.
- **Establish some discussion norms.** Work with students to establish a set of norms for class discussion; their input is important here so the rules are part of advisory, not just rules you impose. Some possible guidelines include:
 - Listen respectfully, without interrupting
 - Allow everyone the opportunity to speak
 - Criticize ideas, not individuals or groups
 - Avoid inflammatory language, including name-calling
 - Ask questions when you don't understand; don't assume you know others' thinking or motivations
 - Don't expect any individuals to speak on behalf of their gender, ethnic group, class, status, etc. (or the groups we perceive them to be a part of).
- **Warm up first.** Consider dealing first with some less complex or emotionally-charged topics, rather than just jumping into a very heated issue. Have a reflective discussion about how that discussion went, so students can learn how to handle the discussion and build trust with their classmates.

Impromptu Difficult Conversations *Challenging Learning Moments*

- **Actively manage the discussion.** Be ready to prompt students as needed for follow-up, additional explanation, or evidence. Be ready to remind students of the discussion guidelines, and let them practice re-stating comments as needed. And be ready to steer the conversation back to the stated goals of the discussion.
- **Address the difficulty.** If there is some hesitancy in the conversation, consider asking why it is difficult to discuss, and be ready to reassert any course or disciplinary framework that will help people respond. Admitting your own discomfort in addressing such issues can make students more comfortable with their own discomfort, especially if you explain or model how you can work past it.
- **Provide structured opportunities for reflection and input.** Consider how you can structure opportunities for everyone to stop, think, and reflect, particularly when the conversation lags or becomes contentious. Ask students to write for a few moments, share answers with a neighbor, and come back to the broader discussion with that new focus. Sometimes a short writing break is useful in diffusing tension and refocusing the conversation.
- **Be ready to defer the conversation.** If the conversation gets too heated or off-topic, you may want to reach some sort of closure to the immediate discussion and defer the conversation to another advisory time, for which everyone can prepare. Be certain to explain the purpose of this deferral, and give students some resource or assignment that

will help them prepare to discuss the topic in a more meaningful way within the context of the course and discipline. This is particularly useful in situations where the conversation was spontaneous, not planned.

- **Stay a neutral facilitator whenever possible.** Weigh the impact of you sharing your own opinions on an issue, knowing that could silence students who hold other views. If you do share your own ideas, be sure to elaborate on your thinking process enough to model the disciplinary thinking you want them to do, not necessarily the outcome.

Follow-Up

- **Synthesize the discussion.** Leave some time at the end of advisory for people to synthesize what they heard, particularly in terms of how it relates back to course concepts and the activity's stated goals. Or consider giving students a follow-up assignment outside of class that asks them to do this synthesis and reflection, both for their own benefit and for you to assess how useful the activity was. Part of the purpose here can be to give students a way to process any cognitive (or emotional) dissonance they may have encountered during the discussion.
- **Reflect on the conversation dynamics.** Ask student what they would have liked to have done differently in the conversation—either a reflection on the whole group's behavior or (perhaps more importantly) on how they participated. You might remind them of any frameworks or guidelines as a structure for their reflections. In some cases, it might be worth giving the group a second chance at a discussion.

When in Doubt, Refer Out:

There are several situations which may arise as an advisor where you may need to refer a student to the school counselor:

- 1) If a student discloses to you during advisory or any other time of the following: (suicide, abuse, family problems, etc.)
- 2) if a student's behavior or thought patterns suggest deep rooted psychological needs
- 3) If you become uncomfortable with what the student is disclosing, and you do not feel equipped to have the conversation

Then, you may say: "I am really concerned about this for you and would like to go with you to the counselor."

Discussion Protocols for Having Advisory Conversations:

- **Think-Pair-Share:** Give participants a minute to think about or write/draw a personal response to the concept/question under discussion. Then have participants turn to their partner and discuss. Time required: 2-5 minutes.
- **Round Robin:** Form the groups and have the participants take turns sharing one reflection about the day's topic. Time required: 1-2 minutes per person in group.



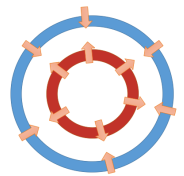
- **Expense Account:** Each person in the group gets 3 tokens (pennies are easy to use). Each time someone speaks, they put a token in the center of the table. If you don't have any tokens left, you can't speak. When everyone is out of tokens, everyone can retrieve their tokens and start the process over. This method gives everyone a chance to speak, but in less structured way than Talking Stick. Time required: 3 minutes per participant.



- **Brainstorming:** Participants are given a task or issue. Brainstorming questions rather than answers is called Questorming. One of the members or an external facilitator is instructed to write down all ideas generated on a blackboard, whiteboard, or a Word document projected digitally against a wall. The members of the group are then instructed to shout out ideas that the facilitator writes down. No one is allowed to criticize or comment upon any of the ideas, because the emphasis is on creativity and generating a lot of ideas first. As with most exercises stressing creativity, there needs to be a lot of trust already developed in the group for unusual ideas to emerge. After the group determines that enough ideas are up on the wall, or after an allotted period of time, participants are instructed to improve or combine these ideas. Participants may elaborate on their ideas to ensure clarity. Duplicate ideas or ones that are infeasible are then removed. At this point, the group selects one or more ideas and determines how they will be implemented.



- **Concentric Circles:** This protocol provides participants with a structure to actively engage in discussions around short text, questions, opinions, or debates on any topic with several different partners. Desks or chairs should be arranged in two concentric circles facing each other. The first pair of students facing will have a specified amount of time to discuss the first question, topic, or section of a reading. When the signal is given, the inside circle rotates one chair (or more) to the right or left, and the new pair moves on to the next question, topic, or section of reading. The inside circle moves as many times as necessary to finish the topics. The last pair should have time to sum-up the conversation and be prepared to share key points with the whole group. Debrief: Share important ideas or common threads to the discussions as appropriate. Variations: Participants could define terms or prep for tests. The protocol could be used to role-play or critique.



- **Gallery Walk/Hosted Gallery Walk :** This protocol offers participants an opportunity to share information with others in a gallery setting. The protocol involves small-group collaboration, while making individuals responsible for the learning and, when hosted, the teaching. Divide participants into groups—the size of group will vary with the topic and how it can be divided, size of class, age of participants, etc. Assign each group a specific segment of the topic (example: legislative branch of government, role of a worker bee, or transportation on the river). Provide each group with additional materials they need to further enhance the study that has already been introduced, probably in a large-group setting (example: government, insects, importance of the river). Allow time for group to read and discuss the new information. Using prior knowledge along with the new knowledge, have each group create a chart with key points and a visual representation that—in the hosted version—each person in the group will use to teach others in the class. Be clear that each person has to understand the text and images on the poster in order to present the information effectively. Allow time for the groups to help one another focus on key components. Post the work around the room or in the hallway. Regroup participants so each new group has at least one member from the previously established groups. Give specific directions at which poster each group will start and what the rotation will look like. The speaker at each poster is the person(s) who participated in the creation



of the poster. When all groups have visited each poster, debrief. Possible debrief questions: *What did you notice/wonder? What were some commonalities? Did anything you noticed make you think differently about your response/s? What did you learn from this activity?

Icebreakers and Energy Boosters:

Icebreakers and energy boosters are great tools to use to increase positive energy, boost morale and strengthen community within advisory. They can be used at any time and students can lead them once they have developed an understanding of how they are done.

Big Wind Blows: Big Wind Blows is an icebreaker game that combines aspects of musical chairs with a get-to-know-you task. It can be humorous and entertaining, especially when you discover interesting facts that you might not expect about people. **Set Up:** To set up the game, arrange several chairs facing inward into a medium sized circle. There should be one chair for each player, minus one. **Do:** One person starts as the “Big Wind” in the center of the circle, with everyone else seated. The Big Wind raises both arms and spins around, while saying the following: “*The Big Wind blows _____*”. The blank must be filled with a true statement about himself or herself, such as “The Big Wind blows everyone who has been to Canada” or any other true fact. At this point, any of the players who share this characteristic (including the person who is currently the Big Wind) must stand up and quickly find a new seat. For each statement, no player is allowed to sit in the same seat or a seat directly adjacent to his or her previous seat. One person will be left without a seat. This person becomes the new “Big Wind” for the next round. This game is especially interesting when players use unique, unexpected, or funny statements. For example, a player can say embarrassing statements such as, “Big Wind blows those who have gone without a shower for three days.” **Debrief:** What commonalities did you find interesting? Ask students to expand on their answers, for example: When did you go to Canada and what did you do?

Paper Airplane: **Set Up:** Paper for making planes. Everyone makes a paper airplane and writes their name and two questions to ask (questions should be get to know you questions). **Do:** On cue, everyone throws their airplane around the room, picks up others’ airplanes, and keeps throwing them. The leader says stop after one or two minutes. Everyone must have one paper airplane. They must find the owner of the airplane they have and answer the questions on the airplane. **Variations:** Questions could be geared towards something specific like...What is your definition of fairness?

Categories: **Set Up:** Ball light enough to be tossed without doing harm. Students are in a circle. **Do:** The person with the ball yells out a category like: “States that start with N” each time the ball is tossed to another person they must give an example within that category . If they hesitate or are incorrect, they step out of the circle.

Who Is It? **Set Up:** People write down something about themselves they think no one knows. **Do:** The leader reads the slips of paper and others guess whom the person is. It is amazing to see the things some people reveal about themselves.

Two Truths and a Lie. Have participants say three things about themselves. Two should be true and one should be a lie. Have participants guess which response was a lie and give their reasoning.

Balloon Pop: **Set Up:** Have everyone form a circle. **Do:** Instruct the participants to put one piece of information about themselves on a small slip of paper, fold it, and put it in a blown up balloon. Throw the balloons in the middle of the circle and then have people take turns popping a balloon, reading the piece of paper, and guessing to whom the information applies.

Birthright: Set Up: Divide people into four groups: youngest, middle, oldest, and only children. **Do:** After they have gathered, have each group write down the pros and cons of their particular birth order. One of the youngest children might say, “I always got stuck with hand-me-down clothes, but I was allowed to get away with more.” This offers people a chance to connect quickly over shared experiences.

The Four Cs: Ask each person to name a cartoon character, a color, a car, and a cuisine that best describes his or her personality and explain why.

Object Stories: Set Up *in Advance*: Collect together a number of objects and place in a canvas bag. The objects can include everyday items i.e. a pencil, key-ring, mobile phone, but also include some more unusual ones i.e. a fossil, holiday photograph, wig! **Do:** Pass the bag around the group and invite each young person to dip their hand into the bag (without looking) and pull out one of the objects. The leader begins a story which includes his object. After 20 seconds, the next person takes up the story and adds another 20 seconds, incorporating the object they are holding. And so on, until everyone has made a contribution to your epic literary tale.