A Middle School Teacher-Advisory Program Evaluation

Using Teacher and Student Feedback

Erin R. Weiss

Intern Project

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Professional Responsibility: This project has been reviewed by collegial professional peers and has been submitted for on-line publication before being evaluated by faculty members from Portland State University. I am the author and take full responsibility for the project’s contents and quality. This work serves as a baseline for my professional school counselor skills and demonstrates what I have done to develop and/or assess my actions directed toward serving students and schools. In other words, this is a snapshot or one indicator of my work at this stage of my career.

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Abstract

The information presented in this paper is a compilation of an Action Research Project required for a Masters in School Counseling at Portland State University. The project evaluates the teacher-advisory program at Jack London Middle School (JLMS). This paper is divided into three major parts. The first part includes a thorough review of what the literature reveals about teacher-advisory programs and how they can benefit school counseling programs. The second part offers an overview of the teacher-advisory program at JLMS. The third part, the bulk of this project, translates the findings from teacher and student surveys regarding their experience with the teacher-advisory program. These three parts will provide valuable information into current functioning and future success of the teacher-advisory program at JLMS.
A Middle School Teacher-Advisory Program Evaluation Using Teacher and Student Feedback

Introduction and Rationale

In no other stage of the life cycle, are the promises of finding oneself and the threat of losing oneself so closely allied – Erik Erikson

The transition from elementary school to middle school is not simply a move from one building to another. It is a transition out of childhood. At approximately eleven to thirteen years of age, toys are traded in for cell phones and the internet. The world revolves less around family and more around friendships and dating. For most preadolescents, their ranking in the school’s social hierarchy is more important than their science grade. Decisions such as whether to play Little League evolve into whether to have sex or whether to do drugs. Not only are they facing decisions they are unprepared to make, they are also experiencing major physical and emotional changes. Oddly enough, in the midst of all these changes and challenges and difficult decisions, middle school students are screaming for autonomy (Sigelman & Rider, 2003). They want to be their own person. They want to be treated like grown-ups, with greater independence and freedom. However, middle school students still see the world as black and white. They are either popular or a loser, smart or stupid. Consequences of actions are rarely considered. Since they value their autonomy, asking for help would be embarrassing. However, seeking guidance and trusting at least one adult is crucial at this stage in their life.

Life was less complicated in elementary school. Elementary school students remain with one teacher all year for most or all of the day. They will go to their teacher for help, because they trust that their teacher knows them and cares about them. However, the move to middle school changes all that. Middle school students may have five to eight teachers. Each of these teachers has a full load of students. Even though exceptional teaching happens everyday,
teachers do not have the time to really get to know all their students, and students don’t know their teachers. An additional challenge is that middle school students are determined to avoid talking with their parents about what is going on in their lives. Thus, middle school students are making decisions and forming opinions about themselves, their friends, their education, and their family all by themselves or with like-minded peers. This is a little scary.

Students will turn to those they know well and who offer the most autonomy: peers first, teachers second, parents last (Ellis, 1990). As caring adults and school professionals, it is important to encourage students to seek adult guidance. Ellis (1990) believes that “all students, especially at the middle school level, need the support of a friendly adult who cares about them personally; someone they can confide in, who can help them deal with the problems of growing up, keeping up with their studies, and planning their careers.” Therefore, an environment where teachers and students can connect and begin to build relationships must be established.

For some time now, schools across the nation have been experimenting with teacher-advisory programs. The main goal of a teacher-advisory program is that “each child should be known well by at least one caring adult in the school” (Wilson, 1998, p. 100). Jack London Middle School (JLMS) in Oregon State School District has just begun this experiment. JLMS is a new school this year and a prime candidate for starting a new teacher-advisory program.

The purpose of this paper is three fold. First, a thorough analysis of up to date literature is presented. It is important to understand the rationale behind teacher-advisory programs and what constitutes a successful program. Second, the JLMS teacher-advisory program is presented in detail, evaluated, and discussed. Lastly, the implications of teacher-advisory programs for school counselors will be discussed. The teacher-advisory program is known by many names and is interchangeably referred to as advisory in this paper.
Jack London Middle School and Oregon State School District are pseudonyms to provide anonymity to the participating school.

Literature Review

Purpose

Again and again, the literature states that every young adolescent needs to be known well by at least one caring adult in the school (Ayres, 1994; Black, 2002; Convery & Tremble, 2003; Myrick & Myrick, 1992; Wilson, 1998). William Glasser (1986) identified four basic needs in students: the need to belong and be loved, the need to gain power, the need to be free, and the need to have fun. At no time does that seem more apparent than in adolescents. As schools become more crowded and the needs of students become more urgent, school counselors feel the pressure, as does the whole school. School counselors would like to make meaningful connections with every student, but this seems idealistic, even impossible. However, Killin and Williams (1995) provide a solution with the statement, “If counselors are to meet the urgent needs of young people in our rapidly changing society, they will need the cooperation and support of the rest of the educational staff and especially of those who have the greatest amount of contact with students: the teachers” (p. 30). Teachers are key (Ayres, 1994).

Teacher-advisory programs provide a venue for teachers to connect with students outside of the busy academic schedule. Cole (1992) defines a teacher-advisory program as “an organizational structure in which a small group of students identifies with and belongs to one educator, who nurtures, advocates for, and shepherds through school the individuals in that group” (p. 5). She goes on to explain that a teacher-advisory “program makes it possible for students to belong, meets their need to affiliate with a group, and makes caring manageable for a
teacher, enabling the teacher to express concern in a personally satisfying way to a small number of individuals” (p. 7).

The main objectives of a teacher-advisory program may look something like this:

1. Provide an environment and activities that will foster bonding within an advisory group so that students will feel accepted and valued by teacher and peers.
2. Help students cope with academic concerns and set goals, which will facilitate positive school experiences.
3. Give students avenues through which to discover their uniqueness so that they might come to appreciate the many differences among people.
4. Help students develop positive relationships through experiences that utilize group dynamics.
5. Promote critical thinking skills through discussion and problem solving activities so that students can learn to make responsible choices.
6. Develop listening skills and an understanding of the road blocks which hinder effective communication.
7. Build self-esteem in students so that they might become confident, capable young people who accept responsibility for their own actions.
8. Heighten student awareness of good citizenship through providing opportunities for meaningful contributions to their school and community.
9. Provide opportunities for extensive student involvement through shared decision-making.
10. Improve home/school communication and relationships. (Hoversten, Doda, & Lounsbury, 1991, p. 6)
The time allotted for teacher-advisory during the day “becomes, in effect, the students’ home within the school, where they have a supportive teacher and group of peers with whom they can explore personal interests, goals, and concerns” (Myrick & Myrick, 1992, p. 36).

**Design**

There is no one right way to do a teacher-advisory program. Nevertheless, there are some basic elements that most successful programs have in common. It is suggested that advisories have no more than 15-20 students, are 20-30 minutes in length, preferably take place in the morning, and include at least two guidance activities a week (Ellis, 1990). Teachers play a different role during advisory than they do in their regular classrooms. Teachers are encouraged to use various methods of learning and put aside the paper/pencil and lecture styles of teaching (Myrick & Myrick, 1992). In this setting, teachers are more accurately called group facilitators (Killin & Williams, 1995). Many of the guidance activities are structured as group games with discussion following or simply an open dialogue about relevant issues.

During the guidance portion of advisory, students can expect to participate in many activities and discussions: goal setting, academic enrichment, character education, life skill guidance (Convery & Tremble, 2003); activities involving getting acquainted, study skills and habits, self-assessment, communication skills, decision making and problem solving, motivation, conflict resolution, wellness, career development, educational planning, community involvement (Myrick & Myrick, 1992); discussions on drug, alcohol, and tobacco use; sex and dating; friends and relationships; community services; current events; values and ethical issues; school spirit; and problems students have at school or at home (Galassi & Gulledge, 1997). Other activities commonly seen during advisory include supervised study, tutoring, journal writing, silent reading, mini courses, or clubs (Myrick & Myrick, 1992). No matter what activity is chosen for
advisory, it has “to be meaningful and interesting to the students involved. Therefore, no one set of activities can be effectively used by all groups of students, but, ideally, each group of students participates in a program designed to fit its specific needs” (Ayres, 1994, p. 9).

Benefits

The benefits for a teacher-advisory program were most eloquently stated by Ziegler and Mulhall (1994):

If students come to experience a teacher as someone who is personally interested in them and eager to help them address their real concerns, and if teachers experience their young adolescent students as people with interests and apprehensions and a desire for respectful but personal relationships to their teachers, it is possible that the motivation both of students to learn and of teachers to guide, instruct, and listen will increase, not only in the advisement situation but in the regular classroom situation. (p. 43)

Convery and Tremble (2003) found teacher and student connections build self-esteem, self-reliance, and independent life-long learners. Burkhardt (1999) saw successful teacher-advisory programs contributing to “increased academic achievement, less vandalism, greater attendance, fewer alienated students, more student-centered learning, and better climate permeating the building” (p. 2). One particular school had a decrease in disciplinary incidents, as much as 60 to 100 fewer incidents, and scored 11% higher on state assessments (Convery & Tremble, 2003). The obvious benefits are strengthened teacher/student relationships, a compensation for the high counselor/student ratio, and greater teamwork between teachers and counselors (Ellis, 1990). A study conducted by Killin and Williams (1995) found that students had positive experiences with the teacher-advisory program:

It helps us accept other people’s feelings.
Because of this program, peers look out for each other more.

The same groups and cliques still exist, but now they communicate with each other.

I feel I can openly share and participate in my advisory group.

I have learned to be a better listener.

I am more accepting of others’ opinions, even though we do not agree.

I am learning to feel good about myself. (p. 46)

Challenges

Despite the valuable purpose behind the teacher-advisory program and the wonderful benefits of its success, there is a lot of controversy and mixed feelings about the program. The literature shows that many programs fail to succeed. Teachers tend to agree that it is a valuable program, but many have reservations and may not want to be advisors (Cole, 1994). Myrick and Myrick (1992) found that 20% of teachers embrace the program, where as 20% are clearly resistant; the other 60% struggle with a few key issues. Van Hoose (1991) listed seven reasons why a teacher advisory program is often not popular with teachers.

1. Parents do not understand the concept and many may oppose it.

2. Many administrators are not really concerned about it.

3. Most teachers have had little formal preparation for service as an advisor.

4. Teachers do not understand the goals of the endeavor.

5. Advisory takes time – time that many teachers believe could be invested more effectively in preparing to teach their subjects.

6. Some teachers do not want to engage in a program that requires personal sharing.

7. When [teacher-advisory] begins with little staff development and leadership, teachers do not receive positive feedback from students. (p. 2-3)
“Many schools found their program expectations unrealistic and impractical once they were implemented…As a result, the programs were often abandoned or altered to the extent that advisory was no longer an appropriate description of the time teachers spend with their student groups” (Esposito & Curcio, 2002, p. 28).

If programs are not carefully planned and implemented they will most likely fail. “Those experienced with [teacher-advisory] programs caution that careful planning and preparation of advisors are keys to the success of a program. Failing to explain clearly the goals of [teacher-advisory] and to gain full teacher acceptance of the program are probably the biggest causes of failure” (Cole, 1994, p. 45).

Oregon Framework

In 2003, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) provided a publication that described the role of counselors in education and components in which to build a comprehensive guidance and counseling program. The Mission Statement found in Oregon’s Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Framework reads:

The mission of comprehensive guidance and counseling in Oregon is to provide
developmental and systematic support to each and every student to ensure the academic,
career, personal, and social development and achievement and support participation in
the broader community. Comprehensive guidance and counseling programs are proactive
and preventative. . . . Comprehensive guidance and counseling programs provide an
array of interventions and supports for students. These are delivered collaboratively with
school staff, families, and members of the community to provide seamless transitions to
each student’s next steps. (ODE, 2003, p. 3)
According to the Oregon Framework, a comprehensive program must address four student development domains: Learning to Learn (Academic), Learning to Work (Career), Learning to Live (Personal/Social), and Learning to Contribute (Community Involvement) (ODE, 2003). Counselors can address these domains through five components listed in the content portion of the Oregon Framework.

1. Guidance curriculum that is developmental, preventative and proactive.

2. Individual planning that assists each student in setting and achieving academic, career, and personal/social goals.

3. Responsive services include collaboration with and intervening on behalf of each student whose immediate needs, concerns or problems are distracting from the four domains.

4. System support and integration contributes knowledge and skills in promoting the infusion of the program throughout the school and overseeing program content.

5. Student advocacy means every student receives equitable access and opportunities to succeed in the four domains.

Counselors may use a variety of methods to facilitate the vision described in the Oregon Framework. However teacher-advisory programs are an invaluable asset to a school’s comprehensive school guidance and counseling program. When teachers and counselors work together on the advisory team all five components listed above are addressed. Appropriate and relevant guidance curriculum can be taught during advisory, meeting the needs of students, counselors, and teachers. In advisory, every student begins the process of individual planning in advisory, as they set goals, discuss careers, and review progress reports. When teachers know their students well, students have their immediate needs addressed more quickly, because teachers notify counselors of their concerns. Teacher-advisories cause guidance to be everyone’s
Teacher-Advisory Program

responsibility, creating greater system support and student advocacy. It is the one time of the
day where all staff and students are engaged in the same activity, providing a sense of unity.
Teacher-advisories provide a venue for counselors to develop a strong and functional
comprehensive guidance and counseling program.

Program Overview

*Jack London Middle School*

Jack London Middle School is the newest addition to the growing Oregon State School
District. The district is located on the outskirts of a large metropolitan city. It now has one high
school, three middle schools, and numerous elementary schools. There were 802 students at
JLMS at the time of this evaluation: 276 eighth-graders, 265 seventh-graders, and 261 sixth-
graders. The district added sixth graders to the middle schools this year. The sixth grade
maintains a format similar to the elementary schools. They remain fairly self-contained and
rarely interact with seventh and eighth-graders. Sixth-graders were not included in the teacher-
advisory evaluation, as they do not have a formal advisory period.

With the addition of a new school, boundaries changed in the district. The JLMS
boundaries include a large portion of low-income families living in rental housing. As a result,
the school experienced an influx of students registering and withdrawing throughout the year.
The poverty rate can be estimated by the number of students who qualify for the free and
reduced lunch program, 69.5% at JLMS.

The ethnic makeup of JLMS is 2% Native American, 10% African American, 10.5%
Asian, 19.5% Hispanic, and 57.5% White (which includes a significant Russian and Ukrainian
population). The school represents 23 countries around the world. English as a Second
Language (ESL) serves 26% of students. Ten percent of students qualify for special education
services. JLMS has experienced more than twice as many disciplinary actions (incidents) and ten times as many suspensions as neighboring middle schools in the district.

*Teacher-Advisory Program*

*Getting started.* The principal at JLMS read several articles by the National Middle School Association explaining that one component of exceptional middle schools involved a teacher-advisory program (NMSA, 1996). The idea was not new to the district, although neighboring middle schools used more of a homeroom format for silent reading and homework. The JLMS principal set out to try something different. She began the school year by requesting advisory coach volunteers, thus creating a team of five teachers, three school counselors, and the principal.

Two half-day workshops were held during the summer for advisory coaches. Coaches were asked three questions: “What do we (JLMS) want to accomplish with the advisory program?”, “What will it take to get us there?”, and “How will we know we got there?” The coaches believed that a teacher-advisory program might build community and relationships at JLMS, as well as connect each child with a supportive adult. They recognized the importance of teacher buy in and the added effort of maintaining a successful program. Surveys, feedback forms, and informal discussions were suggested as means of evaluating the program. Before the school year began the advisory coaches presented their vision to the staff, future teacher-advisors. They were briefed on how to conduct group discussions, appropriate boundaries, and limits to confidentiality. Teachers were encouraged to not get caught up in the schedule, but to take time to really get to know their advisees. As with any new program, participants began with energy and optimism.
As the year progressed, mixed reviews and comments were gathered from teachers. Some thought there were too many activities for such a short amount of time; others wanted more. Some teachers felt free to make advisory fit their needs and the needs of their students; others needed more guidance and structure. Some teachers were really able to connect with their advisory class and experienced great class discussions, while others were pulling teeth to get their students to talk. Overall, however, the teacher-advisory program seems to have progressed rather smoothly for its first year of inception.

*Format.* Each teacher at JLMS is assigned approximately 20 students. They meet first thing in the morning for 25 minutes, five days a week. The first few minutes are busy with attendance and morning bulletin. Teachers follow a JLMS Advisory Weekly Plan created and distributed by the counselors (see Appendix A). Every week teacher-advisors are expected to read the morning bulletin, distribute school information, conduct class discussions, check planners, facilitate locker clean up, and either read aloud or have students silent read. They are also responsible for distributing progress reports, following up with students on their academic progress, conducting parent conferences for their advisory students, reviewing appropriate JLMS behavior, and facilitating activities around the months advisory theme (i.e. Harassment). A weeks schedule may look something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>attendance</td>
<td>attendance</td>
<td>attendance</td>
<td>attendance</td>
<td>attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>morn. bulletin</td>
<td>morn. bulletin</td>
<td>morn. bulletin</td>
<td>morn. bulletin</td>
<td>morn. bulletin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class discussion</td>
<td>Tues. folders</td>
<td>organize binder</td>
<td>activity</td>
<td>read aloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>read aloud</td>
<td>clean lockers</td>
<td></td>
<td>silent reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>check planners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to create a cohesive school culture, all advisories are expected to participate in the month’s theme, such as “Getting to Know You” or Bullying/Harassment. Advisory activities
have included: JLMS expectations, school culture, self awareness, community building, 
inclusion, careers, what to expect in high school, Multiple Intelligences, progress reports, GPA, 
goal setting, organization, study skills, manners, and time management.

Teacher and Student Feedback

Participants

All 541 seventh and eighth-graders at JLMS and all 30 seventh and eighth-grade advisory 
teachers were given the opportunity to participate in the Advisory Evaluation Survey. Three 
hundred and twenty-four students and 19 teachers volunteered to participate in the survey.

The only demographic information asked of students was their grade level, but only half 
of the students answered. Eighty-three students were seventh-graders, 88 students were eighth-
graders, and 153 were either seventh or eighth-graders.

Procedures

After a look at the literature and discussing the teacher-advisory program with JLMS 
staff, a teacher and a student survey was created. The purpose of the surveys was to evaluate 
teacher and student experiences with advisory and to discover if and to what extent the advisory 
program was successful. The teacher survey presented statements related to advisory 
preparation, support, curriculum, connection to students, and the value of advisory. The student 
survey focused on school experience, relevance of advisory, connection to advisory teacher, 
attitude toward their advisory class, and relationship to peers. A list of the survey statements by 
category can be found in Appendix B. Each statement represented a valuable component of 
successful advisory programs or was specific to the JLMS program. The bottom portion of the 
student survey allowed students the opportunity to mark which activities they would like to see 
more or less of in advisory.
Teacher-Advisory Program

Before the surveys could be administered, a Human Subjects Review (HSR) was submitted to Portland State University. The HSR Committee required an overview of the project and submission of forms being used in the evaluation. The review, student and guardian cover letters, teacher consent form, and both surveys can be found in Appendix C. Usually, when surveying minors, it is required to obtain a signed consent form from a guardian. However, this would have greatly reduced the number of participants. In order to obtain a large number of participants, and eliminating the need for a signed consent form, it was necessary to forfeit certain identifying variables. The researcher designed the surveys in such a way that surveys could not be matched with participants. All questions were Likert Scale or multiple choice. No personal information was asked on the surveys and the researcher had no contact with participants. A consent form was drafted for the advisory teachers simply because they were fewer in number and more easily identified. The evaluation presented no more than minimal risk of harm to participants.

Teachers were given a packet of materials with detailed instructions (see Appendix D). On the day surveys were to be distributed, advisory teachers were to give students the Student Cover Letter, which explained why they were taking the survey. A portion of the cover letter read,

You are being asked to take part in this evaluation because you participate in Advisory every day and your opinions and feedback are important. I hope that the information I collect will help us to understand what works and doesn’t work about Advisory. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take a short survey during Advisory, which involves answering questions about your Advisory class experience and your experience at Jack London Middle School. It should take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.
After reading the letter and discussing any questions with their teacher, they had the option to mark at the top of the letter whether they wanted their survey to be included in the evaluation or not. The teacher had two manila envelopes ready when students were done with their surveys. If the student wanted their survey to be included in the evaluation they would put their survey in the “Participating” envelope, and if not they would place it in the “Not Participating” envelope. The advisory teacher, if choosing to participate, would also place their survey in the “Participating” envelope. The teacher was asked not to include their consent form with their survey, but to return it to the researcher. Students were given a Guardian Cover Letter to inform guardians of the advisory evaluation and invite them to share their comments with the researcher. No guardians contacted the researcher. Both “Participating” and “Not Participating” manila envelopes were then returned to the researcher. An average of 13 students participated from each class of approximately 20. This also reflects absences and late arrivals for the day.

Once surveys were collected, the researcher recorded survey results into a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. A number of calculations were explored. All survey statements that were presented in the negative form (i.e. “I do not like school.”) have been converted to the positive form (i.e. “I do like school.”) making the presentation of results more congruent. All responses on the surveys ranged from 1-5 on a Likert scale. The student survey and teacher survey varied slightly in the presentation of responses. The students had the options to respond with a more straightforward format.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitely Yes!</th>
<th>I think so</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>I don’t think so</th>
<th>Definitely No!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The teachers were given a traditional Likert scale format.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nevertheless, both Likert scales are essentially the same. Considering response options were on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 being an affirmative response and 5 being a negative response, it would reason that a lower score would constitute greater satisfaction with advisory or a statement related to advisory.

Results

Student survey. Each student’s total score was divided by 15, the number of statements in the survey, to obtain an average that coincided with the Likert scale. Fifty percent of students had an average score between 2.0 and 3.0. 75% of students scored 3.0 and below and only 25% scored 3.0 and above. Average scores for each statement are demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Mean Scores for Student Survey Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements 1-7</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements 8-15</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All statements received a score between 1.92 and 2.99.
The following results can be found in Table 1 and Appendix E, Tables E1 and E2. Statements with words in italics were previously in the negative form and have been converted to the positive form.

1. I like going to school at JLMS. Students responded with an average response of 2.28. 65% of all students, 79% of seventh-graders, and 74% of eighth-graders responded with either “Definitely Yes” or “I think so.” 20% of all students were unsure, and 15% responded with either “I don’t think so” or “Definitely No.”

2. I feel like Advisory is a good use of time. Students responded with an average response of 2.6. 53% of all students, 62% of seventh-graders, and 50% of eighth-graders responded with either “Definitely Yes” or “I think so.” 19% of all students were unsure, and 27% responded with either “I don’t think so” or “Definitely No.”

3. We discuss important things in Advisory that don’t usually come up in other classes. Students responded with an average response of 2.72. The most frequent response for all students was unsure, at 30%. 42% of all students, 55% of seventh-graders, and 36% of eighth-graders responded with either “Definitely Yes” or “I think so.”

4. I feel like my Advisory teacher cares about me. Students responded with an average response of 2.17. 63% of all students, 80% of seventh-graders, and 61% of eighth-graders responded with either “Definitely Yes” or “I think so.” 24% of all students were unsure, and 13% responded with either “I don’t think so” or “Definitely No.”

5. I feel like I “belong” at JLMS. Students responded with an average response of 2.6. 49% of all students, 58% of seventh-graders, and 50% of eighth-graders responded with either “Definitely Yes” or “I think so.” 27% of all students were unsure, and 24% responded with either “I don’t think so” or “Definitely No.”
6. There are adults at JLMS that I would go to for help. Students responded with an average response of 2.46. 49% of all students, 63% of seventh-graders, and 49% of eighth-graders responded with “Definitely Yes” and “I think so.” 24% of all students, 17% of seventh-graders, and 31% of eighth-graders were unsure. 24% of all students responded with either “I don’t think so” or “Definitely No.”

7. Advisory is a great place to get to know my peers. Students responded with an average response of 2.58. 52% of all students, 59% of seventh-graders, and 44% of eighth-graders responded with either “Definitely Yes” or “I think so.” 22% of all students were unsure, and 26% responded with either “I don’t think so” or “Definitely No.”

8. I feel like my Advisory teacher knows me well. Students responded with an average response of 2.6. 49% of all students, 62% of seventh-graders, and 49% of eighth-graders responded with either “Definitely Yes” or “I think so.” 28% of all students were unsure, and 22% responded with “I don’t think so” and “Definitely No.”

9. We discuss issues that are important to me in Advisory. Students responded with an average response of 2.99. 36% of all students, 47% of seventh-graders, and 30% of eighth-graders responded with either “Definitely Yes” or “I think so.” 27% of all students were unsure. 36% of all students and 45% of eighth-graders responded with either “I don’t think so” or “Definitely No.”

10. I will go to my Advisory teacher if I need help. Students responded with an average response of 2.59. 52% of all students, 62% of seventh-graders, and 50% of eighth-graders responded with either “Definitely Yes” or “I think so.” 19% of all students were unsure, and 28% responded with either “I don’t think so” or “Definitely No.”
11. Advisory helped me get used to JLMS (lockers/rules). Students responded with an average response of 2.27. 64% of all students, 76% of seventh-graders, and 64% of eighth-graders responded with either “Definitely Yes” or “I think so.” 11% of all students were unsure, and 24% responded with either “I don’t think so” or “Definitely No.”

12. I have an easy time making friends at JLMS. Students responded with an average response of 1.92. 75% of all students, 75% of seventh-graders, and 81% of eighth-graders responded with either “Definitely Yes” or “I think so.” 10% of all students were unsure, and 14% responded with either “I don’t think so” or “Definitely No.”

13. The things we talk about in Advisory do interest me. Students responded with an average response of 2.99. 33% of all students, 49% of seventh-graders, and 22% of eighth-graders responded with either “Definitely Yes” or “I think so.” 32% of all students were unsure. 34% of all students and 41% of eighth-graders responded with either “I don’t think so” or “Definitely No.”

14. I do like school. Students responded with an average response of 2.58. 52% of all students, 65% of seventh-graders, and 44% of eighth-graders responded with either “Definitely Yes” or “I think so.” 21% of all students and 31% of eighth-graders were unsure. 27% of all students responded with either “I don’t think so” or “Definitely No.”

15. I look forward to Advisory. Students responded with an average response of 2.97. 39% of all students, 53% of seventh-graders, and 33% of eighth-graders responded with either “Definitely Yes” or “I think so.” 22% of all students were unsure. 38% all of students, 30% of seventh-graders, and 47% of eighth-graders responded with either “I don’t think so” or “Definitely No.”
Two hundred and seventy-six students chose to respond to the advisory activities portion of the survey. Students were asked to circle which activities they would like more or less of in advisory. The five activities receiving the most attention (positive or negative) were group games, silent reading, school spirit stuff, read aloud, and homework help (see Appendix F, Table F1). 64% of students wanted more group games and 40% of students wanted more homework help, with very few wanting less. 36% of students wanted more school spirit stuff, while 15% wanted less. 35% wanted less silent reading, while 28% wanted more. 34% wanted less read aloud while 17% wanted more. 30% of students wanted more on careers, with only 6% wanting less. 28% wanted more high school preparation, with only 4% wanting less. 21% wanted less goal setting, while 11% wanted more. 24% wanted less problem solving, while 9% wanted more. 21% would like more on peer pressure, with only 6% wanting less. For more detailed information see Appendix F, Figures F1 and F2.

Teacher survey. Each teacher’s total score was divided by 20, the number of statements in the survey. The mean scores ranged from 1.7 to 3.8. The mean scores for each statement are demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements 1-10</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statements 11-20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following results are drawn from Table 2 and Appendix E, Table E3.

1. I know my advisory students well. Teachers responded with an average response of 1.95. 26% of teachers strongly agreed and 58% agreed.

2. Advisory helps students adjust smoothly to middle school. Teachers responded with an average response of 2.42. No teachers strongly disagreed. However, all other responses were evenly distributed. 52% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed.

3. I was well prepared by JLMS to teach Advisory. Teachers responded with an average response of 3.0. 37% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed. 43% of teachers strongly disagreed or disagreed.

4. I feel satisfied with the amount of advisory curriculum. Teachers responded with an average response of 3.05. 42% of teachers agreed, while 26% were unsure.

5. I would like to see a teacher head the Advisory program. Teachers responded with an average response of 2.89. 32% of teachers were unsure. 26% agreed and 26% disagreed.

6. I believe guidance is everyone’s responsibility. Teachers responded with an average response of 1.42. 63% of teachers strongly agreed and 32% agreed. No one disagreed.

7. I have an easy time understanding middle school behavior. Teachers responded with an average response of 2.05. 74% of teachers either strongly agreed or agreed.

8. My students seem to benefit from Advisory. Teachers responded with an average response of 2.74. 47% of teachers either strongly agreed or agreed. 27% either strongly disagreed or disagreed. 26% were unsure.

9. The Advisory Weekly Plans are well prepared. Teachers responded with an average response of 2.58. 63% of teachers either strongly agreed or agreed. 32% either strongly disagreed or disagreed.
10. I am *comfortable* getting personal with my students. Teachers responded with an average response of 2.47. 63% of teachers either strongly agreed or agreed. 27% either strongly disagreed or disagreed.

11. Advisory is a valuable use of my time. Teachers responded with an average response of 2.89. 16% strongly agreed and 32% of teachers agreed, while 32% either strongly disagreed or disagreed.

12. I would like more training for Advisory. Teachers responded with an average response of 3.16. 43% of teachers either disagreed or strongly disagreed. 32% were unsure. 27% either strongly agreed or agreed.

13. Advisory meets a need that other classes cannot. Teachers responded with an average response of 2.74. 47% of teachers either strongly agreed or agreed. 32% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

14. I have an *easy* time connecting with my students. Teachers responded with an average response of 2.37. 63% of teachers either strongly agreed or agreed. 16% were unsure and 21% disagreed.

15. I *do* feel like my opinions about Advisory are being heard. Teachers responded with an average response of 2.58. 27% of teachers either disagreed or strongly disagree. 21% were unsure. 52% either strongly agreed or agreed.

16. I enjoy being an advisor. Teachers responded with an average response of 2.11. 74% of teachers either strongly agreed or agreed. 16% disagreed.

17. I feel supported by the counselors and administration. Teachers responded with an average response of 2.32. 63% of teachers either strongly agreed or agreed. 21% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.
18. I do feel like I have time to connect with my Advisory students. Teachers responded with an average response of 2.95. 42% of teachers either strongly agreed or agreed. 37% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

19. I have adequate time to prepare for Advisory. Teachers responded with an average response of 3.84. 53% of teachers disagreed. No teachers strongly agreed.

20. I do understand the purpose of Advisory. Teachers responded with an average response of 1.79. 53% of teachers strongly agreed and 21% agreed. 21% were unsure.

Discussion

The evaluation shows that a majority of students and teachers were satisfied and had positive attitudes toward the teacher-advisory program. However, a “majority” only means more than those who responded with unsure or with negative responses.

As the results show in the student survey, a majority represented approximately 50% on seven statements, with four statements receiving a higher percentage of positive responses and four receiving a lower percentage. The other 50% fluctuated between unsure and negative responses, approximately 25% being unsure and 25% responding negatively. This brings up some questions on how to better serve and meet the needs of JLMS students. Only meeting the needs of 50% is not satisfactory. However, it may only take small changes to move the 25% unsure into the positive realm. Then, there would be 75% responding positively, with the other 25% now spread out between unsure and negative responses. Taking a closer look at which statements received a higher or lower percentage of positive responses may help in evaluating what changes need to be made in the teacher-advisory program.

Do students have a positive attitude toward school? It depends. When students were asked if they like going to school at JLMS (#1), they responded with the second highest
percentage of positive responses. However when asked if they like school in general (#14) the percentage dropped and negative responses increased. It seems there is a positive association to JLMS. It would be interesting to find out what students enjoy about JLMS. Students were also asked if they felt like they belonged at JLMS (#5). Positive responses declined and unsure responses increased, compared to the previous two statements. Students may have been confused by what it means to belong. In retrospect, a more suitable phrase may have been “fit-in.” Nevertheless, fostering a sense of belonging appears to be a need for a large number of students.

Are students connecting with peers? Yes. By far the greatest number of students believe it is easy for them to make friends (#12). Most students seem confident in their ability to make friends, but a quarter of students were unsure or said no. These are the students who need extra support. The majority of students believed advisory was a good place to get to know their peers (#7). It seems that fostering positive peer interaction in advisory may help those students who struggle to make friends.

Do students have a connection with their advisory teacher? It appears that they do. A high majority of students believe their advisory teacher cares about them (#4). This is very positive. Though it should always be a goal for all students to feel cared for. When asked if their advisory teacher knows them well the positive responses decreased (#8), but not dramatically. Most students believed there was an adult at JLMS they could go to for help (#6) and a higher percentage said they would go to their advisory teacher for help (#10). Students seem to have a positive connection with the advisory teacher. However, it is a concern that a quarter of students say there are no adults at JLMS that they would go to for help.
Do students like their advisory class? It seems that students don’t mind going to advisory and even feel like it is an okay use of their time (#2), but they don’t exactly look forward to going to class (#15). They may feel like advisory activities are useful, but not motivating enough for them to look forward to class. This may play into whether students find advisory relevant.

Do students find advisory relevant? No. When asked if issues discussed in advisory were interesting or important to them (#9 and #13) the largest percentage said no or were unsure. These statements received the lowest positive responses. This is important to note. Students do not find advisory relevant to their needs. A greater percentage believed that issues brought up in advisory are not addressed elsewhere in the school (#3), but this statement received the largest percentage of unsure responses. The one area that students did find advisory to be relevant was with adjusting to JLMS (#11). Therefore, advisory is doing a great job in helping students get accustomed to school, but is failing to be relevant to students in other areas.

One way in which advisory could potentially become more relevant for students is providing activities that interest them such as group games. Group games can foster belongingness and connectedness to peers and teachers. Intentionally chosen games can also teach social skills and a number of important skills appropriate for advisory. Students may find advisory more relevant if topics included homework help, career exploration, high school preparation, problem solving, and help with peer pressure. The list of activities at the end of the student survey was not exhaustive by any means and did not allow students the opportunity to write down their own ideas. A similar, but more interactive survey, or even discussion, is advised.

It was interesting to find eighth-graders responded less positively to two-thirds of all the statements on the student survey compared to the percentage of all students. However, seventh-
graders responded more positively on all but one statement. This may be indicative of advisory not meeting the needs of eighth-graders who have already experienced a year of middle school. Seventh-graders, on the other hand, have just entered middle school for the first time and may have a more positive outlook in general. For seventh-graders it may not matter as much what is done in advisory, because it will all be novel to them. It may take more work and intentionality to engage eighth-graders.

The teacher survey provided a wider range of responses, with no particular pattern. Yet, responses were generally positive. Considering only 19 teachers participated in the survey, one teacher represents approximately 5%. When very few students disagree with a statement it is an indication that things are going well. However, when a few teachers disagree or strongly disagree it is concerning. It is important that teacher concerns are addressed and problems are solved proactively. A periodic evaluation such as this can allow teachers the opportunity to express their concerns in an anonymous format.

Do teachers find the teacher-advisory program valuable? The responses varied and were at times inconsistent. The statement receiving the most agreement, 95%, was the belief that guidance is everyone’s responsibility (#6). This is important, because it is a foundational principle of advisory. The guidance responsibility does not simply belong to the counselors or the health teachers. It also isn’t confined to advisory. Teachable moments are found all throughout a student’s day. However, advisory does provide a venue for guidance to occur on a consistent basis while building a relationship with one teacher. About half of the teachers believed advisory met a need that could not be met in other classes (#13). One-third disagreed. This is significant, though not necessarily concerning considering the previous statement. Many advisory activities and even the philosophy could be integrated into the regular classroom. On
the other hand, advisory programs were created because this wasn’t happening. Teachers didn’t have time to build meaningful relationships with their students or incorporate guidance curriculum into their already busy workloads. There needed to be time set apart from the rest of the day to devote strictly to building meaningful relationships and providing guidance activities. Three quarters of teachers understand the purpose of advisory (#20), but the other quarter still don’t quite understand. It might be beneficial to review the purpose of advisory and why it is important. Most teachers do believe advisory is beneficial to their students (#8) and helps them adjust smoothly to middle school (#2), though a significant number are still unsure or disagree. The student survey results may create some optimism in the skeptics. The most inconsistent results were found when teachers were asked if advisory was a valuable use of time (#11), and whether they enjoyed being an advisor (#16). Three quarters enjoyed being an advisor, yet only half felt it was a valuable use of time. It is curious that some teachers enjoyed being an advisory, but didn’t believe it was a valuable use of their time. Again, helping teachers understand the purpose of advisory and that their input is welcomed is vital to the success of the program. For those that disagreed on most of the value statements about advisory, it is possible that maybe some teachers aren’t cut out to be advisors and no one should be forced to do it. Some programs provide these individuals with different responsibilities during this time. It is worth looking into this option, but it does have its pros and cons.

Do teachers feel they were well prepared to teach advisory? No. Almost half believed they were not prepared well enough (#3). This is understandable with very little training at the beginning of the year and the added burden of becoming familiar with a new school. Even so, most teachers would prefer not to have more training (#12). This may be due to teachers feeling like they have figured out advisory in spite of the lack of training or they simply feel swamped
and don’t want to add more to their workload. Teachers were also asked if they feel they understand middle school behavior (#7). This is important, especially for advisory teachers, who are asked to know their students well. The middle school years are a unique stage; a lack of understanding can make it nearly impossible for teachers to connect with students. At least half believed they understood middle school behavior. It appears that some teachers need extra training, but may be reluctant to ask for it.

Do teachers feel supported? Most teachers, 63%, do feel supported by the counselors and administration (#17), but the number decreases when they are asked if they feel like their opinions are being heard (#15). It is important for these numbers to be very high, and they are only a little over half. The counselors and administration have been welcoming of feedback, so it would be interesting to hear from teachers where they feel they are lacking support. Teachers were asked if they would like to see a teacher head the advisory program (#5), although this is confusing. Five of the advisory coaches are teachers and they are on a team with the counselors and the principal. However, it did appear that the counselors had more leadership, because they put together most of the advisory curriculum for this year and were responsible for distributing the materials. It was not intended for it to happen this way. Half of the teachers would like to see a teacher head the program.

Were teachers satisfied with the curriculum? Less than half of the teachers were satisfied with the amount of curriculum (#4). A significant amount were not pleased. This most likely implies that there was too much curriculum, but according to previous feedback some teachers wanted more activities. Most teachers believed the Advisory Weekly Plans were well prepared (#9), but a significant amount did not agree. As seen in other portions of this survey, teachers do not feel they have adequate time to prepare for advisory (#19). Well-prepared advisory
activities, designed and distributed by advisory coaches, should take little preparation on the part of teachers. It is important for teachers to focus their time on advocating and connecting with their students. It would be valuable to ask what teachers would find helpful. In retrospect, it would have been helpful to include a statement in the survey about quality and meaningfulness of curriculum.

Are teachers making meaningful connections with their students? 84% of teachers believe they know their advisory students well (#1). This is very significant. However, students were more apt to believe their teachers cared about them rather than knew them well. Most teachers appear to be comfortable with getting personal with their students (#10), though it is understandable that some will be uncomfortable with this. A similar amount felt it was easy to connect with their students (#14). It is very important that those who did not agree with these statements receive as much support as possible. They may have particularly difficult groups of students or lack the skills necessary to connect on a meaningful level with their students. An important factor that plays into all of this is time. Less than half believed they had enough time to connect with their students (#18). This is difficult to rectify, as there is a specific portion of time allotted to advisory. However, some programs have set aside time for an occasional all day advisory.

As stated above, the evaluation shows that a majority of students and teachers were satisfied and had positive attitudes toward the teacher-advisory program. The study completed by Myrick and Myrick (1992) found that 20% of teachers embraced the program, where as 20% were clearly resistant, and the other 60% struggle with a few key issues. The results of the JLMS evaluation are much more positive with 60% of teachers embracing the program, 20% who are resistant, and 20% who are unsure. According to Van Hoose (1991), some of the principle
reasons a program struggles are that teachers have little formal preparation, don’t understand the program goals, are reluctant to invest the time, and are hesitant to get personal with students. All of these have surfaced in this evaluation, yet the program is still successful and a majority of teachers and students are satisfied. The results of this evaluation do show, however, that there is much room to grow in the teacher-advisory program at JLMS.

**Limitations.** The most significant limitation in this evaluation was that a rough draft of the surveys was not reviewed by any teachers or students. A sample of participants could have offered some valuable input into the development of the surveys. It is believed that a number of the statements may have been confusing or interpreted differently. The high percentage of unsure responses is a possible indication of lack of clarity.

**What’s Next?**

Much was learned this year with the inception of the teacher-advisory program at JLMS. With a year behind them, teachers will feel more confident and prepared for next year’s advisory. The administration is providing two full curriculum days during the summer to design a year-long advisory calendar. Monthly themes and curriculum will be prepared ahead of time. Teachers will have the opportunity to sign up for topics that interest them and help design curriculum that will best benefit their students. Advisory coaches and teachers will discuss how they can motivate those students who have not bought into the program. Sixth graders will be included into the regular advisory period with seventh and eighth graders. Some school wide changes will occur as well that will undoubtedly have a positive effect on advisory.

It is the researcher’s hope that the advisory team will use the results found in this evaluation to improve the program at JLMS. It is advised to use a similar survey in the future and compare the results to this evaluation. It is also the researcher’s hope that the counselors
and teachers will see the unique opportunity they have to work with a program that offers so many possibilities. A successful teacher-advisory program is an invaluable aspect of a comprehensive school guidance and counseling program and a positive school culture.
References


Additional Resources


Appendix A

Sample JLMS Advisory Weekly Plan
Date

Priority Activities:
  ❑ 1. Monday: Explain plan for reducing number of tardies
  ❑ 2. Wednesday: Harassment activity

Ongoing Activities:
  ❑ 1. Tuesday Folders
  ❑ 2. Morning Bulletin
  ❑ 3. Check Planners
  ❑ 4. Clean Out Lockers
  ❑ 5. Student Silent Reading / Teacher Read Aloud
     Suggestions for read aloud:
     ❑ 6. Student Concerns and Questions

Optional Activities:
  ❑ 1. 3-ball toss
     ○ continue challenging students by creating more group goals
  ❑ 2. Questions-of-the-Day

Feedback to Advisory Coaches
  ❑ 1. Check off goals you have accomplished
  ❑ 2. Attach activities you found or used

Suggestions:

Support You Need:

Teacher Name: _________________________________________
Appendix B

Survey Statements by Category

Teacher Survey

Preparation
1. I would like more training for Advisory.
2. I have a hard time understanding middle school behavior.
3. I was well prepared by JLMS to teach Advisory.

Support
4. I feel supported by the counselors and administration.
5. I would like to see a teacher head the Advisory program.
6. I don’t feel like my opinions about Advisory are being heard.

Curriculum
7. The Advisory Weekly Plans are well prepared.
8. I have adequate time to prepare for Advisory.
9. I feel overwhelmed with the amount of Advisory curriculum.

Connection
10. I am uncomfortable getting personal with my students.
11. I know my advisory students well.
12. I have a hard time connecting with my students.
13. I don’t feel like I have time to connect with my Advisory students.

Value of Advisory
14. Advisory helps students adjust smoothly to middle school.
15. I believe guidance is everyone’s responsibility.
16. My students seem to benefit from Advisory.
17. I don’t understand the purpose of Advisory.
18. Advisory is a valuable use of my time.
19. I enjoy being an advisor.

20. Advisory meets a need that other classes cannot.

Student Survey

School Experience
1. I like going to school at JLMS.
2. I feel like I “belong” at JLMS.
3. Advisory helped me get used to JLMS (lockers/rules).
4. I do not like school.

Advisory Relevance
5. We discuss issues that are important to me.
6. We discuss important things that don’t usually come up in other classes.
7. The things we talk about in Advisory do not interest me.

Connection to Advisory Teacher
8. I feel like my Advisory teacher cares about me.
9. I feel like my Advisory teacher knows me well.
10. I will go to my Advisory teacher if I need help.
11. There are no adults at JLMS that I would go to for help.

Advisory Class
12. I feel like Advisory is a waste of time.
13. I look forward to Advisory
14. I have a hard time making friends at JLMS.
15. Advisory is a great place to get to know my peers.
I. Project Title and Prospectus
Title: An Evaluation of a Teacher Advisory Program

Middle schools across the U.S. have been experimenting with teacher advisory programs for some time. Ron Russell Middle School (RRMS) is the first middle school in David Douglas School District to begin this experiment. Each teacher in the building is assigned approximately 20 students and meets with them every morning for 25 minutes. The literature states the main goal of teacher advisories is to create an opportunity for each child to be known well by at least one adult in their school. The potential benefits of an effective teacher advisory program are considerable.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the current teacher advisory program at RRMS. A survey will be given to all seventh and eighth grade students in their advisory class, asking them to evaluate their advisory class and whole school experience. Teachers will be given a different survey to evaluate the teacher advisory program. All surveys are completely anonymous.

The results of this study will prove to benefit future teacher advisory programs in David Douglas School District.

II. Waived Review
Researcher is requesting a Waived Review. Information obtained by surveys is not recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. Minimal risk is involved. Each survey is totally anonymous and researcher will not have contact with subjects.

III. Subject Recruitment
The subject population consists of approximately 550 seventh and eighth grade students attending RRMS and 30 teacher advisors. All middle school students participate in an advisory class. All seventh and eighth grade teacher advisors will be surveyed, as well as their advisees. Each advisory teacher will be given two large manila envelopes for collecting surveys. One envelope will contain surveys from those students willing to participate and the other envelope will contain surveys from students who do not wish to participate. Only surveys in participating envelope will be included in study.

IV. Informed Consent
The researcher is requesting a waiver of signed consent for the student portion of the study. The number of student subjects surveyed at RRMS will be approximately 550. There will be no personal information obtained from any subjects. All surveys are anonymous. The research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside the research context. All questions on surveys are
Likert scale or multiple choice. No open-ended or combination questions will be included on survey that might link subjects to surveys. If informed consent were required it would be the only record linking the subject and the research. The enclosed cover letter will be read by subjects during the advisory class and an additional guardian cover letter will be sent home for guardians to read. An option to decline participation is included on cover letter.

Considering the small number of teachers surveyed, the researcher is not waiving signed consent for teachers. Teachers will be given a consent form prior to completing survey. Participation is optional.

V. First-Person Scenario
“I went to my advisory class like usual and my teacher explained that we had the opportunity to evaluate our advisory class and the school. She handed us a survey and reminded us to take it seriously, because this would be our chance to help improve our school. It took about 10 minutes and we didn’t put our name on it. I noticed the teacher had to fill out a survey too. We were told to put them in one envelope if we wanted the counselor to use our survey and put it in the other envelope if we didn’t want the counselor to use it. I was asked to take the envelopes down to put in the counselor’s box.”

VI. Potential Risks and Safeguards
The surveys are taken and collected anonymously. No identifying information will be recorded on surveys or at any time during research process. Simply for professional reasons, surveys will remain in researcher care.

VII. Potential Benefits
The results of this study will be used to assist RRMS in providing an effective teacher advisory program. It will be beneficial for the administration and counselors to see current strengths and areas for improvement to better the program in the future.

VIII. Records and Distribution
All surveys will be collected and placed in researcher care, who will place in counselor file and retain for 3 years

IX. Appendix
1. Student Cover Letter
2. Guardian Cover Letter
3. Teacher Consent Form
4. Student Survey
5. Teacher Survey
Appendix C1

Student Cover Letter

Check one after reading letter
  o I am willing to participate.
  o I am not willing to participate.

Dear Jack London Students

My name is Erin Weiss, and I am a counseling intern here at Jack London Middle School, as well as a graduate student at Portland State University. I am beginning an evaluation of the Teacher-Advisory Program, and would like to invite you to participate.

You are being asked to take part in this evaluation because you participate in Advisory every day and your opinions and feedback are important. I hope that the information I collect will help us to understand what works and doesn’t work about Advisory. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take a short survey during Advisory, which involves answering questions about your Advisory class experience and your experience at Jack London Middle School. It should take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

As a result of this evaluation, you may want to discuss your experience with Advisory beyond taking the survey. I suggest you talk with your teacher and possibly begin a conversation in your class. If you would like to talk about Advisory further you are welcome to visit me in the office on Tuesday or Wednesday. You may not receive any direct benefit from taking part in this evaluation, but the evaluation may help to increase knowledge that may help the school in the future.

I will not ask you to write your name on the survey or any information about yourself. I will have no way of connecting you to your survey. It is completely anonymous.

Participation is voluntary, meaning your survey does not have to be included in this evaluation. Your decision to participate or not to participate will in no way negatively affect you. When collecting the surveys your teacher will have two envelopes. Place your survey in the “Participating” envelope if you want your survey to be used. If you do not want it to be used place it in the “Not Participating” envelope. Please share the additional letter with your guardian.

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this evaluation or your rights, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, 111 Cramer Hall, Portland State University, (503)725-4288. If you have questions about the evaluation itself, contact Erin Weiss at JLMS, (503)256-6519, Tuesday or Wednesday.

Sincerely,

Erin Weiss
Appendix C2

Guardian Cover Letter

Dear Jack London Guardians

My name is Erin Weiss, and I am a counseling intern at Jack London Middle School, as well as a graduate student at Portland State University. I am beginning an evaluation of the Teacher-Advisory Program, and have invited all seventh and eighth graders at Jack London to participate.

They are being asked to take part in an evaluation because they participate in Advisory every school day. As part of the evaluation, I’m interested in their opinions and feedback about their experience with Advisory. I hope that the information I collect will help us to understand what works and doesn’t work about Advisory. If they decide to participate, they will be asked to take a short survey during Advisory, which involves answering questions about their Advisory class experience and their experience at Jack London Middle School. It should take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

If you have any comments or concerns about advisory you are invited to call me on a Tuesday or Wednesday. Your student may not receive any direct benefit from taking part in this evaluation, but the evaluation may help to increase knowledge that may help the school in the future.

I will not ask students to write their name on the survey or any information about themselves. I will have no way of connecting them to their survey. It is completely anonymous.

Participation is voluntary, meaning they can choose to have their survey included in the evaluation. Their decision to participate or not to participate will in no way negatively affect them.

If you have concerns or problems about your students participation in this evaluation or your rights, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, 111 Cramer Hall, Portland State University, (503)725-4288. If you have questions about the evaluation itself, contact Erin Weiss at JLMS, (503)256-6519, Tuesday or Wednesday.

Sincerely,
Erin Weiss

Portland State University
Appendix C3

Teacher Consent Letter

Dear Jack London Teachers

My name is Erin Weiss, and I am a counseling intern here at Jack London Middle School, as well as a graduate student at Portland State University. I am beginning an evaluation of the Teacher-Advisory Program, and would like you to participate.

You are being asked to take part because you participate in Advisory every day. As part of the evaluation, I’m interested in your opinions and feedback about your experience with Advisory. I hope that the information I collect will help us to better understand what works and doesn’t work about Advisory. If you decide to participate you will be asked to take a short survey, which involves answering questions about your Advisory experience at Jack London Middle School. It should take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

As a result of this evaluation, you may wish to discuss Advisory concerns. I encourage you to talk with one of the school counselors or Ms. Bassine. You may not receive any direct benefit from taking part in this evaluation, but the evaluation may help to increase knowledge that may help others in the future.

I will not ask you to write your name on the survey or any information about yourself. I will have no way of connecting you to your survey. It is completely confidential.

Participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate or not will not negatively effect you in anyway.

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this evaluation or your rights, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, 111 Cramer Hall, Portland State University, (503)725-4288. If you have questions about the evaluation itself, contact Erin Weiss at (503)256-6519.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the above information and agree to take part in this study. Please understand that you may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty, and that, by signing, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form for your own records.

______________________________________________  ________________________
Signature         Date
Appendix C4

Jack London Middle School
Advisory Program Evaluation
Student Survey

Student’s Grade:  7   8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitely Yes!</th>
<th>I think so</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>I don’t think so</th>
<th>Definitely No!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Circle the number that best fits your answer.

1. I like going to school at JLMS.                          1  2  3  4  5
2. I feel like Advisory is a waste of time.                 1  2  3  4  5
3. We discuss important things in Advisory that don’t usually come up in other classes.  1  2  3  4  5
4. I feel like my Advisory teacher cares about me.          1  2  3  4  5
5. I feel like I “belong” at JLMS.                           1  2  3  4  5
6. There are no adults at JLMS that I would go to for help.  1  2  3  4  5
7. Advisory is a great place to get to know my peers.        1  2  3  4  5
8. I feel like my Advisory teacher knows me well.            1  2  3  4  5
9. We discuss issues that are important to me in Advisory.   1  2  3  4  5
10. I will go to my Advisory teacher if I need help.         1  2  3  4  5
11. Advisory helped me get used to JLMS (lockers/rules).     1  2  3  4  5
12. I have a hard time making friends at JLMS.               1  2  3  4  5
13. The things we talk about in Advisory do not interest me. 1  2  3  4  5
14. I do not like school.                                    1  2  3  4  5
15. I look forward to Advisory.                               1  2  3  4  5

I would like more of these activities and topics in Advisory…(circle as many as you want)

Current Events  High School Prep  Discussion Topics  Homework help
Personal Identity  Group Games  Organization  Peer Pressure
Read Aloud  Goal Setting  Self-Esteem  Stress Management
Relationship Skills  Family Heritage  Careers  School Spirit Stuff
Silent Reading  Problem Solving  Community Service

I would like less of these activities and topics in Advisory…(circle as many as you want)

Current Events  High School Prep  Discussion Topics  Homework help
Personal Identity  Group Games  Organization  Peer Pressure
Read Aloud  Goal Setting  Self-Esteem  Stress Management
Relationship Skills  Family Heritage  Careers  School Spirit Stuff
Silent Reading  Problem Solving  Community Service
Appendix C5

Jack London Middle School
Advisory Program Evaluation
Teacher Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Circle the number that best fits your answer.

1. I know my advisory students well.  
2. Advisory helps students adjust smoothly to middle school.  
3. I was well prepared by JLMS to teach Advisory.  
4. I feel overwhelmed with the amount of advisory curriculum.  
5. I would like to see a teacher head the Advisory program.  
6. I believe guidance is everyone’s responsibility.  
7. I have a hard time understanding middle school behavior.  
8. My students seem to benefit from Advisory.  
9. The Advisory Weekly Plans are well prepared  
10. I am uncomfortable getting personal with my students.  
11. Advisory is a valuable use of my time.  
12. I would like more training for Advisory.  
13. Advisory meets a need that other classes cannot.  
14. I have a hard time connecting with my students.  
15. I don’t feel like my opinions about Advisory are being heard.  
16. I enjoy being an advisor.  
17. I feel supported by the counselors and administration.  
18. I don’t feel like I have time to connect with my Advisory students.  
19. I have adequate time to prepare for Advisory.  
20. I don’t understand the purpose of Advisory.
Appendix D

Advisory Evaluation Instructions

I want to make this as simple as possible, so I have created a checklist. You are welcome to adjust it to fit your needs.

- You should have 1 teacher letter and survey; a class set of student letters, surveys and guardian letters; and 2 large envelopes.

- Look over the materials before you begin in case students have questions.

- You can fill out your own survey at any time. Place your survey in the “Participating” envelope and your consent form in the “Teacher Consent Form” folder in the Advisory hanging file in the supply room.

- Hand out student letter and surveys to all your students. Read the letter out loud. Answer any questions. Make sure students DO NOT write their name on the letter or survey. Have them mark whether they want to participate or not.

- All students will take the survey, whether they want to participate or not. Explain that this is their chance to have their voices heard.

- When surveys are complete place them in the appropriate envelope. However you want to organize this is fine.

- Hand out the guardian letters and encourage students to bring it home to their guardians.

- Have a student bring the envelopes to the office. I’ll have a box on the counter that they can drop the envelopes in.

- Don’t forget to bring down your consent form.

I really appreciate your willingness to participate in the evaluation. I apologize for the formality of the whole process. It is my hope that this evaluation will give us some insight on how to improve advisory for next year.

Thank you,
Erin Weiss
### Percentages of Responses on Surveys

**Table E1**

*Percentages of Student Responses on Student Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey statements</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I like going to school at JLMS.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel like Advisory is a <em>good use of time</em>.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. We discuss important things in Advisory that don’t usually come up in other classes.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel like my Advisory teacher cares about me.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I feel like I “belong” at JLMS.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. There <em>are</em> adults at RJLMS that I would go to for help.</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Advisory is a great place to get to know my peers.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel like my Advisory teacher knows me well.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. We discuss issues that are important to me in Advisory.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I will go to my Advisory teacher if I need help.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Advisory helped me get used to JLMS (lockers/rules).</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I have an <em>easy</em> time making friends at JLMS.</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The things we talk about in Advisory <em>do</em> interest me.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I <em>do</em> like school.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I look forward to Advisory.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Statements with words in italics were previously in the negative form and have been converted to the positive form.
Table E2
Percentages of Student Responses on Student Survey by Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey statements</th>
<th>7th grade responses</th>
<th>8th grade responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I like going to school at JLMS.</td>
<td>33 46 12 5 6</td>
<td>32 42 14 8 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel like Advisory is a good use of time.</td>
<td>40 22 17 12 11</td>
<td>23 27 22 10 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. We discuss important things in Advisory that don’t usually come up in other classes.</td>
<td>27 28 30 10 6</td>
<td>9 27 33 19 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel like my Advisory teacher cares about me.</td>
<td>39 41 13 5 2</td>
<td>35 26 26 10 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I feel like I “belong” at JLMS.</td>
<td>18 40 28 4 10</td>
<td>19 31 27 11 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. There are adults at JLMS that I would go to for help.</td>
<td>46 17 17 11 8</td>
<td>26 23 31 13 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Advisory is a great place to get to know my peers.</td>
<td>30 29 18 14 8</td>
<td>16 28 28 17 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel like my Advisory teacher knows me well.</td>
<td>27 35 27 5 8</td>
<td>27 22 27 13 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. We discuss issues that are important to me in Advisory.</td>
<td>18 29 27 14 11</td>
<td>13 17 25 25 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I will go to my Advisory teacher if I need help.</td>
<td>40 22 14 14 11</td>
<td>28 22 19 16 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Advisory helped me get used to JLMS (lockers/rules).</td>
<td>54 22 7 10 8</td>
<td>40 24 11 14 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I have an easy time making friends at RJLMS.</td>
<td>53 22 6 6 14</td>
<td>53 28 13 6 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The things we talk about in Advisory do interest me.</td>
<td>27 22 27 10 14</td>
<td>11 11 36 14 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I do like school.</td>
<td>41 24 12 11 13</td>
<td>16 28 31 10 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I look forward to Advisory.</td>
<td>31 22 18 17 13</td>
<td>17 16 22 22 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Statements with words in italics were previously in the negative form and have been converted to the positive form.
Table E3

Percentages of Teacher Responses on Teacher Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey statements</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I know my advisory students well.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Advisory helps students adjust smoothly to middle school.</td>
<td>26 58 11 5 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I was well prepared by JLMS to teach Advisory.</td>
<td>26 26 21 26 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel <em>pleased</em> with the amount of advisory curriculum.</td>
<td>0 42 26 16 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I would like to see a teacher head the Advisory program.</td>
<td>11 26 32 26 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I believe guidance is everyone’s responsibility.</td>
<td>63 32 5 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I have an <em>easy</em> time understanding middle school behavior.</td>
<td>32 42 16 11 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My students seem to benefit from Advisory.</td>
<td>21 26 26 11 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The Advisory Weekly Plans are well prepared.</td>
<td>26 37 5 16 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I am <em>comfortable</em> getting personal with my students.</td>
<td>26 37 11 16 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Advisory is a valuable use of my time.</td>
<td>16 32 21 11 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I would like more training for Advisory.</td>
<td>11 16 32 32 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Advisory meets a need that other classes cannot.</td>
<td>21 26 21 21 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I have a <em>easy</em> time connecting with my students.</td>
<td>21 42 16 21 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I <em>do</em> feel like my opinions about Advisory are being heard.</td>
<td>26 26 21 16 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I enjoy being an advisor.</td>
<td>42 32 5 16 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I feel supported by the counselors and administration.</td>
<td>42 21 16 5 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I <em>do</em> feel like I have time to connect with my Advisory students.</td>
<td>16 26 21 21 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I have adequate time to prepare for Advisory.</td>
<td>0 11 16 53 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I <em>do</em> understand the purpose of Advisory.</td>
<td>53 21 21 5 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Statements with words in italics were previously in the negative form and have been converted to the positive form.
Appendix F
Advisory Activities

Table F1
Percentage of Students Responding to Advisory Activities in Order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>group games</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silent reading</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school spirit stuff</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read aloud</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homework help</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current events</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>careers</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem solving</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high school prep</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goal setting</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discussion topics</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peer pressure</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationship skills</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stress management</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community service</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal identity</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family heritage</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This sample represents 276 students.
Figure F1

*Percentage of Students Requesting More of an Activity*

- group games
- homework help
- school spirit stuff
- careers
- high school prep
- silent reading
- current events
- organization
- read aloud
- relationship skills
- discussion topics
- community service
- stress management
- family heritage
- goal setting
- self-esteem
- personal identity
- problem solving
- peer pressure
Figure F2

*Percentage of Students Requesting Less of an Advisory Activity*

- silent reading
- read aloud
- problem solving
- goal setting
- peer pressure
- discussion topics
- school spirit stuff
- current events
- organization
- stress management
- community service
- self-esteem
- personal identity
- relationship skills
- family heritage
- homework help
- group games
- careers
- high school prep