

Purposes of Advisory

Advisory is a strong, flexible structure that can support a variety of purposes, as you'll see below. The teacher's responsibilities change depending on the purpose.

Build Student-to-Student Affiliation

Middle school students are in a period of significant developmental changes. They're seeking new connections and learning to navigate new school experiences, and they have increased autonomy. When the primary purpose for Advisory is to build student-to-student affiliation, the Advisory teacher's responsibilities are to foster significance, belonging, and community.

Energize and Re-engage

After sustained periods of academic focus, middle school students can benefit from activities that give them a brief mental break and recharge them for the learning ahead. When the primary purpose for Advisory is to energize and re-engage students, the Advisory teacher's responsibilities center on effectively managing activities that are physically active and energizing while helping students develop positive social skills.

Reflect and Recalibrate

The middle school is the students' community, so there may be times when the primary purpose for Advisory is to take systematic stock of events that are happening in school or to address critical issues, such as safe transitions, taking care of school property, preparing for high school, or bullying. When the primary purpose for Advisory is to reflect and recalibrate, the Advisory teacher's responsibilities focus on providing leadership, clarity, and support. The Advisory is a key time for discussing important issues and helping students become invested in doing their part to create a strong, vibrant, healthy school community where they can flourish.

Theme-Based

During the middle school years, students hone their talents and often develop lifelong hobbies, interests, and skills. A theme-based Advisory may cross grade levels and be organized into groups of students with similar interests. It often extends to service learning projects and may include partnerships with external stakeholders. A theme-based Advisory also provides an opportunity for older students to mentor younger students. When the primary purpose for Advisory is theme-based, the Advisory teacher's responsibilities include providing engaging

and meaningful opportunities for students to learn through explorations, develop their talents, and make strong connections with others who share similar interests. The Advisory teacher also gives students guidance to help them become increasingly independent and competent in their areas of interest.

Academic Readiness

Every middle school has a set of academic goals for its students. An Advisory that has the purpose of helping students achieve these academic goals does so through a “whole child” lens. While the focus is on helping students meet the achievement standards, consideration is also given to helping them develop the academic and social-emotional skills essential for positive academic performance. When the primary purpose for Advisory is academic readiness, the Advisory teacher’s responsibilities include ensuring that students get varied, targeted, and engaging learning activities that are curriculum-based and helping students develop a set of skills that enable them to engage in rigorous instruction.

Advisor-Advisee Relationships

For middle school students to be successful, it’s critical that they have a relationship with at least one adult at school who knows and cares about them and has a positive mentoring relationship with them. When the primary purpose for Advisory is advisor-advisee relationships, the Advisory meeting is structured so that the Advisory teacher can interact with a group of students in ways that build trusting relationships. The Advisory teacher’s responsibilities focus on getting to know each student personally and serving as mentor and advocate.

Communication and Social Skills Development

Sometimes, there’s an expectation that middle school students should already have well-developed communication and social skills. However, these skills must be explicitly taught to all students. When the primary purpose for Advisory is communication and social skills development, the Advisory meeting focuses on helping students develop competencies such as listening attentively, speaking effectively, and displaying cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. The Advisory teacher’s responsibilities include demonstrating these skills in action, providing direct instruction and practice, and having students set goals for developing these skills.

Sample Arrival Welcome Ideas

Variations for Handshakes and Waves

You can add variety by replacing the standard handshake and wave with these variations:

- Micro-wave (wave a pinky)
- Double high five (use both hands)
- “ET” handshake (touch index fingers)
- Elbow rub
- Ankle shake
- High five
- Low five
- Fist bump
- Hip bump

Greetings in Various Languages

Saying “good morning,” “hello,” or a similar salutation in a language other than English enriches students’ learning. Search online or ask native speakers of the language for help with pronunciations and proper usage.

Announcements Responsibilities

In implementing announcements messages and assessing students' skill in interacting with them, keep the following responsibilities in mind.

Teacher's Responsibilities

- Prepare the message before students arrive.
- Model neat presentation and correct grammar and punctuation.
- Incorporate current Advisory topics into the message and any related interactive tasks.
- Vary the kinds of skills required in the related interactive tasks.
- Select an appropriate format for reading the message during the Advisory meeting and vary the format regularly.

Students' Responsibilities

- Read the message upon entering the room.
- Follow any directions in the message.
- Read or follow along with the reading of the message (if read aloud).
- Participate in discussion or work based on the message.

Announcements Message Setup

Deciding Which Elements to Use

Greeting

A salutation or heading opens the announcements message. Many teachers use a letter salutation, such as “Dear Seventh Graders” or “Good Morning, Problem-Solvers!” No matter the choice of words, the greeting is friendly in tone and tells students, “This message was written especially for you—come and read it!”

Date (optional)

You may want to include the date in the upper right corner, as it would appear in a letter. Younger middle school students can benefit from seeing the date in a variety of formats: with and without abbreviations or in shorthand such as 3/30/20__.

Body

An announcements message generally consists of two parts:

1. Two or three remarks about a class project, event, or accomplishment
2. A brief list (two or three items) of dates students need to be aware of or things they need to do

Related Interactive Tasks

The announcements message may include a question to think about or a simple activity for students to complete before they gather together. Such interactive tasks are most effective when they’re tied to the body of the message, inviting students to interact in some way with what they’ve just read. See the sample announcements messages for examples.

Working With the Announcements Message

The announcements message gains its power from the teacher-student and student-student interactions it generates when students read the message (independently or as a group) and help each other complete any related tasks.

When to work with the announcements message is up to you. Depending on the purpose of the Advisory, the content of the message, and students’ needs on that particular day, you may decide to work with the message at the start of the Advisory meeting, during it, and/or as you wrap up your meeting.

Acknowledgments

Essentials for Introducing Acknowledgments

Keeping in mind the purpose you chose for Advisory, how will you introduce the concept of acknowledgments to the class?

- ▶ What will you say?
- ▶ What skills and behaviors need to be taught, modeled, and reinforced?
- ▶ How will you do this?

Supporting Students' Speaking and Listening Skills

Here are some ways to support students as they learn to share news and opinions.

Use Sentence Stems (or Starters)—Posting a sentence stem for students to complete will help them focus and also reinforce their use of complete sentences—especially useful with students who are learning English. For example:

- ▶ For fifth graders, a sentence stem might be: “My favorite character in our book is _____ because _____.”
- ▶ For eighth graders, a sentence stem might be: “I want my self-portrait to convey these three key ideas about myself: _____, _____, and _____.”

Give Clear Directions—Whether assigning a topic or a sentence stem to use, be specific. Setting clear parameters in your directions can help students stay on track. For example, instead of saying, “Tell about your engineering project,” narrow the focus by saying, “Tell one important aspect of your engineering project.”

Use Think-Alouds—To model how to decide on one idea among many to talk about, you might do a “think-aloud” to narrate your thought process. If the topic is “Kinds of problems I like to solve,” your think-aloud could sound like this: “Hmm. I really like math, but math problems aren’t the only kind I like to solve. Trying to set up our own soccer game after school can cause problems, like how to choose teams and which team goes first. I like solving that kind of problem, too, so that’s what I’ll talk about.”

5 Days' Worth of Responsive Advisory Meeting Plans

Purpose: Build Student-to-Student Affiliation

	DAY 1	DAY 2
Arrival Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Greet each student by name as they enter. ➤ Remind students to review message. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Greet each student by name as they enter.
Announcements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discuss or review message content and Advisory topics. ➤ Highlight relevant news and events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discuss or review message content and Advisory topics. ➤ Highlight relevant news and events.
Acknowledgments	<p>One-Word Sharing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Remind students to quickly greet everyone in their group before they begin. ➤ Students take turns using one word to tell their small group something they enjoy or something they're looking forward to. 	<p>One-Sentence Sharing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students take turns using one sentence to tell their small group about something they're proud of or something that makes them unique. ➤ A volunteer from each small group shares the group's sentences with the whole group.
Activity	<p>Just Like Me</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Use information from acknowledgments to come up with "Just Like Me" prompts ("I like mystery novels," "I'm excited for the pep rally," etc.). ➤ To reflect/extend, ask: "What did you learn about our group just now?" 	<p>Incorporations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students quickly form and reform groups based on having the same birth month, wearing the same colors, etc. ➤ To reflect/extend, ask: "How many different people were you able to connect with during this activity?"

DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Greet each student by name as they enter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Greet each student by name as they enter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Greet each student by name as they enter.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discuss or review message content and Advisory topics. ➤ Highlight relevant news and events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discuss or review message content and Advisory topics. ➤ Highlight relevant news and events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discuss or review message content and Advisory topics. ➤ Highlight relevant news and events.
<p>Love It or Leave It</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Group members take turns asking and answering “Love it or leave it” prompts about food, hobbies, movies, etc. ➤ Students try to recall all foods, hobbies, movies, etc., discussed within their group. 	<p>What’s the News?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students take turns asking and responding to “What’s the news?” in their groups. ➤ Volunteers report the news shared in their small group to the whole group. 	<p>Making a Claim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pose a scenario: “Someone you know wants to come to our school but is worried about making friends. What would you say to them? What evidence would support your claim?” ➤ Students take turns sharing their pitch with their small group.
<p>Common Commonalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Groups brainstorm things they have in common (favorite foods, sports, games, music, movies, books, etc.). ➤ To reflect/extend: Have groups make posters of their commonalities or come up with a team name. 	<p>Encore</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Groups brainstorm songs with a given word (<i>dream, hope, happy</i>). ➤ To reflect/extend, ask: “What ways did you see us support each other during this activity?” 	<p>Snowball</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students write a response to finish the sentence: “I know I belong in this school because . . .” ➤ To reflect/extend, ask: “What were some things you noticed in our reflections about belonging at school?”

How to Do the Acknowledgments and Activities in the 5-Day Plan

The information on these pages gives you more in-depth directions for the “5 Days’ Worth of Responsive Advisory Meeting Plans.”

Acknowledgments

Love It or Leave It*

Name an item or the title of a movie, TV show, song, etc., and then add, “Love it or leave it?” One by one, students say “Love it” or “Leave it” depending on how they feel about the thing named. This works best when students give their quick reaction rather than taking time to ponder.

Making a Claim

Pose a challenging question for students to answer. For example: “If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?” or “If you could change one thing about national elections, what would it be and why?” Give students a minute or two to think of their answer and jot down notes, including how they’d answer the “why” part of the question. Students then take turns answering the question and providing their rationale. For example: “I’d go to Antarctica because I want to see for myself how penguins survive in such a cold environment and whether climate change might be affecting them.”

One-Sentence and One-Word Sharings

Invite students to respond in small groups to a question or topic you pose, using one complete sentence or a one-word (or short phrase) response. For example, you might say, “In one sentence, tell your group what you’re looking forward to studying next semester.” A student might respond, “I’m excited to use chemicals in science.” A prompt for a one-word response might be, “What’s one word that describes your current mood?” For students who are English language learners, you might provide them with an anchor chart of sentence starters and give them a few extra seconds of “think time.”

What’s the News?*

The first student turns to a neighbor and says, “Juan, what’s the news?” Juan might say, “The news is I’ve got a lot of homework tonight, and I want to watch some of the basketball game.” Juan then turns to the next student and says, “Maya, what’s the news?” and so on until everyone has shared a brief piece of news. This works best if you give the class a minute or two to think of their news before beginning.

**This could also be an activity.*

Activities

Common Commonalities

The goal is for students to discover as much as they can about what they all have in common. Name a topic or two to help students start their discussion (for example, how many siblings they have, local places they've visited, or what they like best about school). As students discuss the topics—and any other school-appropriate ones they wish—to find commonalities, they write down what they all have in common (for example, we all have a younger sister, we all moved here from another state). Challenge students to dig deeper beyond obvious commonalities such as color of hair and eyes.

Encore

This activity calls for teamwork. Call out a word or topic (for example, winter, nature, or food) and set a time limit (five minutes or less). At their tables or desk clusters, students try to come up with as many songs that contain that word (or relate to that topic) as they can. To help students be successful, take a few minutes for everyone to quietly think about songs that contain the word or relate to the topic.

Incorporations

In this activity, students form and reform groups as quickly as possible. The leader gives a signal to start (rings a chime or bell, for example) and then gives directions for forming groups, such as “Get into groups of three.” The leader again signals and gives a new direction: “Get into groups where everyone is wearing the same color socks.” Repeat as time allows.

Just Like Me

Call out a favorite food. Students who also like that food stand up and say, “Just like me!” Repeat using other favorites (songs, movies, books, and so on).

Snowball

Pose a question to the group, such as “What went well today?” “What was most challenging this week?” or “What was the most fun during this grading period?” Students write their answer to the question anonymously on a piece of paper. Then they crumple their paper into a “snowball” and toss it into the center of the room. Next, everyone collects a “snowball” and takes turns reading it aloud. Facilitate a whole group discussion about the responses.