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**ADVISORY PROGRAMS: EVALUATION OF THE PLANNING FOR
IMPLEMENTATION IN AN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL**

by
Laura Martin

A Dissertation

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Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education
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Dissertation Chair: Hector Rios, Ph.D.

Dedication

There are many people who, through giving of their time, knowledge, and generosity have made important contributions to this dissertation. I am very lucky to have had so many people who have supported and encouraged me during graduate school and this dissertation process.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my husband Tim Martin. I also want to thank my two children, Stephanie and Michael, who often helped each other so I could keep working. It was the love, support, and encouragement of my family that kept me going all along the way.

From day one, my mom and dad, Frank and Ginger Killino taught me to "Dream things that never were and say, Why Not?" (George Bernard Shaw). My parents taught me to value education and do my best to create opportunities for all to thrive in the world. They gave so much to help me, supporting me through this dissertation process, graduate school and throughout my life, I am eternally grateful.

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Abstract

Laura Martin
ADVISORY PROGRAMS: EVALUATION OF THE PLANNING FOR
IMPLEMENTATION IN AN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL
2011/12
Hector Rios, Ph.D.
Doctorate in Educational Leadership

A major component of high school reform has been to support small, more

personalized school structures, along with other complimentary strategies that enhance

teaching and learning as being more likely to produce beneficial results. The major

purpose of the small schools movement is to convert failing, comprehensive high schools,

into smaller, personalized settings in order to increase positive school relationships,

student engagement, and higher student achievement. The addition of advisory programs

in high schools is at the heart of small schools' efforts to develop more personalization

within small schools; especially those that contain small learning communities. Advisory

programs are intended to ensure that each student is well known by a teacher and to help

each student succeed academically and socially. Although advisory programs are

widespread, they have been difficult to implement for a variety of reasons. Part of

understanding the problem is to clarify the conditions and challenges educators encounter

when planning to implement an advisory program.

This study researches components of an advisory program in an urban high

school. The findings contribute to decisions about program planning, implementation,

continuation, expansion, modification, or termination. Through program evaluation, this

study identifies driving forces, resisting factors, and barriers of advisory program

implementation, as well as how the processes, structures, and people influence the

initiation and implementation process. This study attempts to address the experiences of

the adult participants as the program is being planned, and understanding roles in any

school reform process that individuals face, when defining and planning for change in an

organization. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used in the study,

and include data such as interviews, observations, field notes, and surveys.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Research on schools designed around small school structures and personalized learning suggests that students are more successful when they attend small, more personalized schools. The literature on small schools extends back to the early 80s and 90s with large quantitative studies, which found that students in small schools generally learn more (Lee & Smith, 1994), graduate at higher rates (Ancess & Ort 1999), and behave better than students in larger schools. Across the country, high schools have been implementing programs to support small school structures and personalization for students and adults in schools. These schools are designed into small settings having several names: small schools, small learning communities, schools within schools, freshman academies, and career academies with personalized programs utilizing such names as advisory, mentor-mentee relationships, families, advisor-advisee, or teacher advocacy programs. These initiatives, whatever the name, feature small groups of students (usually fewer than 20) that meet regularly with a single adult who acts as a mentor or advocate for each student.

Research shows a positive culture within a school can connect students to learning. Such things as a safe and respectful environment, supportive and personalized learning experiences, and personal relationships allow students to develop a connection with the school and attain educational success. They can also help reduce at-risk behaviors and drop-outs. An effective advisory program can provide these elements and allow students to succeed (Klem & Connell, 2004).

The purpose of advisory programs can range from simply being a place where students can have a conversation with an adult to a place where personal learning plans and portfolios of student work are developed and assessed. The goal of an advisory program could even be to strengthen bonds within or among small learning communities or break down problematic cliques that exist within a school (DiMartino & Clarke, 2008). Whatever the purpose, an advisory program is the result of a planned and concerted effort of a collaborative team engaged in meaningful conversation on what is needed in the school and how the advisory program will address those needs.

Effective advisory programs are organized around the intended purpose of the program. The school's purpose or mission should drive the organization and advisory time and should be consistent with the overall personalization plan for the school (DiMartino & Clarke, 2008). When planning and maintaining advisory programs there are four critical components under organization: people and size, time and space, professional development and support, and ownership (Osofsky, Sinner, & Wolk, 2003). If organizing an advisory program in a school where small learning communities are evident, then a fifth component, scheduling will need to be considered (Tocci & Allen, 2008).

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to study a group of educators as they embark on the planning for implementation of an advisory program in an urban high school. The advisory implementation team consists of teachers, teacher leaders, administrators, consultants, counselors, and counseling staff from the urban high school. All team members are volunteers with the exception of the school guidance counselors, whose

attendance on the team is mandatory. The research studies the factors considered essential for the development, planning, and implementation of an advisory program in an urban high school, by those who are developing and implementing it. From the perspective of those who are in the advisor role and implementation team, the planning and development stages are studied to determine what key elements should be in place to ensure that staff gets support needed to meet with success as they move into their role as turnkey trainers for others in the organization. The benefits will help the organization be pro-active in planning for implementation of the advisory program.

Where urban public school students are increasingly low-income African-American and Latino, and the teaching force is overwhelmingly White and middle class, the gap between rich and poor is widening (Orfield & Lee, 2005). It is critical to describe the contributions that advisory programs have on personalized learning in education. This research will contribute to the knowledge of advisory programs by documenting how an advisory team describes and understands the elements of the initiation, planning, and implementation process. The organization of the team and its processes will provide information for professional development for advisory teachers, curriculum for advisory programs, and assessment for advisory program improvement as well as administrative support needed for advisory program planning and implementation. Findings from the study may assist educational leaders who want to implement advisory programs in their school. From the participants' perspectives, educators can get a better understanding of what is involved in planning an advisory program.

The research focuses on the initiation, planning, and implementation needed for an advisory program in an urban high school. Successful advisory programs share

common traits or elements. They (1) have a stated purpose that everyone in the organization knows and accepts as the goal for the program, (2) are organized to meet that purpose, (3) have written content guidance for the routines and activities that take place within an advisory period, (4) have a defined method of assessing the advisory program for improving the advisory system, and (5) have school leaders who embrace the concept of advisory so it is a continuously improving system that supports positive outcomes for students and staff (DiMartino & Clarke, 2008).

In this study I want to learn how an urban high school's newly formed student advisory implementation team describe and understand the elements of development and planning as they implement an advisory program in the school. The advisory implementation team being studied is comprised of 32 staff members: 12 teachers, a vice principal, 3 teacher leaders, 3 child study team members, a work force consultant, 5 mental health clinicians, and 7 school guidance counselors. All members are volunteers, except for the school guidance counselors, whose attendance was mandatory. The goal is to evaluate the planning for implementation of the advisory program.

Context

In 1998, the urban school in this study moved from a large comprehensive high school into nine small learning communities at one campus site. The current structure today contains two separate high schools, one which contains two small learning communities, and another which contains five small learning communities. Over the past 12 years the urban high school in this study has seen increases in dropout rates, attendance rates, and low performance in student achievement. On average, approximately 65% of each freshman class does not graduate from the high school.

Common characteristics of the students include low socioeconomic status, poor academic skills and attendance, and high course failure, which leads to high dropout rates. The ethnic composition of the student body is 57% African American, 38% Hispanic, and 5% other. Approximately 800 of the students are immigrants from 39 countries. Students with disabilities are 14.5% of our student body and 6.9% are classified as Limited English Proficient. The attendance rate in the year 2008 was 84% compared to the state average of 95%, and the eligibility for free or reduced lunch is approximately 66%. Recent end of the year course grades for the ninth graders in Algebra I show a 71.8% pass rate, with a failure of 28.2%. In past years rates have been as low as 50%.

The High School Survey of Student Engagement, issued in the spring of 2009, reveals that the school culture reflects a number of indicators that are below the national norm. In the measure of students' "feeling good about their school," 65% of the student responded positively versus 79% nationwide. Only 32% of the students felt safe in school versus 79% nationwide. The survey also exposed the low educational backgrounds of our students' families.

Reducing grade-level retention, improving course passing rate, and increasing graduation rates are critical. The highest priority is to address the students' basic skills deficiencies, because these skills are necessary to live productive and fulfilling lives. The deficiencies contribute to serious social problems such as high dropout rates, frequent unemployment, and increased crime. Students will not be able to overcome the obstacles that perpetuate social inequalities without receiving a quality education.

Nationally, only about 70 percent of high school students graduate on time, and in many urban districts the percentage drops to around 50 percent. Fewer than 35 percent of those who do graduate are ready for college (NASBE, 2008). In August 2006, New Jersey Governor Jon S. Corzine announced a unified effort between business and education to work on high school redesign in the state. The New Jersey High School Redesign Steering Committee was formed and charged with further developing recommendations resulting from the State Summit for improving New Jersey's public high schools. There were 5 proposed recommendations by the steering committee. Item 4 related to School Redesign – Learning Communities and Personalized Education. The committee proposed a key action step to evaluate and implement models of personalized learning plans for all students. This plan should ensure strong adult-student relationships within the school whereby each student should have an adult mentor to assist with accomplishing goals. Personalized learning plans are to be implemented at the secondary level by the year 2010-2011 in public schools in the State of New Jersey.

Framework

Considering the importance of advisory programs as part of the growing trend of the small school movement, this program evaluation seeks to understand how teachers and other staff members in an urban high school with small learning communities, describe and understand key dimensions of their advisory program as it is being planned and implemented. Advisory programs vary among schools to meet the different needs students experience at different grade levels (Gerwertz, 2006).

This urban high school was chosen for two reasons. First, a survey of the staff in June 2009 indicated that personalization was a key element missing from the small

learning community structure; staff indicated a strong desire to formalize advising and mentoring students. There was a strong indication, by staff, that informal advising was taking place. Second, an environmental scan of the school indicated high drop-out rates, low graduation rates, and lack of adult involvement in the lives of students at the secondary level.

Limitations

My research is limited to the one research site, a large urban high school in New Jersey, with small learning communities (SLCs). Each of the five SLCs is comprised of approximately 35 staff members and 350 students, each with a career focus theme. Included among the staff members for each SLC are a guidance counselor, a vice principal, and a disciplinarian. The student advisory program will remain pure among each SLC. Because it is impractical to select a random sample of this population, I used a convenience sample.

I chose to use convenience sampling, because as an employee of the school I have access to the staff in all the small learning communities and subsequently the advisory implementation team and program. By surveying, interviewing, and observing the staff during the training sessions, I am able to understand the broad perspective of my research questions.

My study is also limited by the sample's lack of inclusion of students and parents whose perspective on the advisory programs planning would also be very important. I would recommend this need for further studies.

The internal generalizability within the research, of the patterns to be identified, will be linked to different participants' experiences during the planning for

implementation of the advisory program. Even though the members of the staff are unique individuals, they are linked through their experiences working in the same school, their experiences as an advisory implementation team member, and the work within their small learning community.

Research Questions

My research study is a program evaluation of the planning for implementation of a student advisory program in an urban high school structured into SLCs. The study seeks to answer the following questions about advisory programs:

- What were the driving and resisting factors for the initiation of the advisory program?

- What barriers were identified in initiating and implementing the advisory program?

- How did the processes, structures, and people influence in a positive or negative way the initiation and implementation of the advisory program?

Definition of Terms

Advisory Program - An organizational structure in which one small group of students identifies with and belong to one adult educator, who nurtures, advocates for, and shepherds through school the individuals in that group (Clarke, 2003).

Advisory Implementation Team - A team of staff members and administrators organized to plan, develop, and implement an advisory program.

Career Academy – A school within a school that focuses on a broad occupational area, such as hospitality management, media technology, business technology and design, science technology, engineering and mathematics, or visual and performing arts. The

career academy curriculum directs students' attention to the application of school-based learning by including in its curriculum work-based learning experiences with businesses in the community (Cotton, 2004).

Personalization – Schooling that emphasizes the needs of students as individual human beings. To personalize learning, teachers must be able to adapt to students' particular interests and styles, so they must know students well. Some of the ways schools may try to achieve personalization include small classes, advisory systems, independent study, and student-parent-teacher conferences (Lexicon of Learning, 2010).

Small Learning Community (SLC) – A school within a school (SWAS) structure operating within a larger "host" school, either as the only SWAS in that school or one of several. SLCs represent different levels of autonomy, but typically have their own personnel, program of study, and their students and teachers are self selected (Cotton, 2001).

Program Evaluation

The advisory implementation committee began its training in September, 2009. The Team, trained by consultants from a local university partnered with the New Jersey School Counselors Association (NJSCA), the New Jersey Center for the Advancement of School Counseling (NJCASC), and the Coalition for Secondary School Reform (CSSR), has been planning for the implementation of a student advisory program and providing subsequent turnkey training to the school staff. Full implementation of the advisory program was to take place during the 2010-2011 school year.

Significance

The study identifies effective practices and barriers that occurred in planning for implementation of an advisory program in an urban high school. It also provides an analysis of planning techniques used by program developers in creating, implementing, and planning an advisory program. This study does not describe a cause and effect relationship, but does describe the process and obstacles that may occur in implementation of a program, and examines ways to deal with problems. While the findings of this study are not generalizable beyond the circumstances of this specific program, the study will add to the body of knowledge concerning high school advisory program planning for implementation in urban schools. Researchers will find this information useful in future programs and similarly related situations.

Summary

Missing from the current research on advisory programs are teachers' and other staff members' perspectives on advisory programs, especially in large schools containing small learning communities with career academies. The development of meaningful relationships between teachers and students is a key concept found in literature on small schools and advisory programs (Gerwetz, 2006). Nurturing relationships among staff members is also a major goal of advisory programs and change. Workshops do not change schools. People, working together toward a shared purpose, change schools. Forming a close working team is surely the first step in high school personalization. Workshops may play a part in developing a general strategy, but successful change depends on the work of many individuals who begin to adapt their practice to fit an emerging view of what happens when students become engaged in learning. When many

people are experimenting with new roles and communicating their discoveries and frustrations regularly, change can grow within the school community. Because time and human energy within any school are usually fully committed to daily teaching and management, a changing high school also must engage people from outside the school in supportive ways (Clarke, 2003). A goal of my study is to expand on the body of knowledge presented by the common patterns for, planning, development, and implementation to build on grounded theory that provides a fuller account of participants' description of the driving factors, resisting forces, and barriers of advisory program implementation, as well as learn how the processes, structures, and people influence the initiation and implementation process.

Chapter II

Literature Review

School districts are asked to raise graduation requirements, align the curriculum with national and state standards, and support schools in developing and implementing improvement plans. Schools are seeking to raise expectations, implement key practices, and offer site-specific solutions to raise student achievement. Review of available literature supports small school structures along with other complimentary strategies that enhance teaching and student learning as being more likely to produce the most beneficial results. Research supports decreasing the size of schools and personalizing the school environment. It shows this as having a direct impact on student achievement if key elements are in place and sustained. Education reformers have increasingly invested in developing small school structures as a central strategy for improving teaching and student learning. A variety of structures have been reported, including but not limited to small schools, small learning communities, schools within schools, freshman academies, and career academies with a variety of programs to support personalized learning. Finding the right fit depends on matching the key elements of small structures and personalization, learning from the successes and failures of the institution itself to move forward, investing in teachers, and sustaining change efforts.

Small Schools

Research on small schools and student achievement suggests that students are more successful when they attend small, more personalized schools. The literature on small schools extends back to the early 80s and 90s with large quantitative studies, which

found that students in small schools generally learn more (Lee & Smith, 1994), graduate at higher rates (Ancess & Ort 1999), and behave better than students in larger schools (Stockard & Mayberry, 1992). Evidence to the contrary between school size and student outcomes was based on correlation studies done by researchers that compared schools of various sizes and frequently found that students attending small schools had better outcomes in these same areas. Byrk (2002) summarizes advantages of small school structures which include: more opportunities for all participants getting to know each other; more varied and intensive opportunities for staff to interact with students; and, a set of shared beliefs about the school's purpose, what students should learn, and how adults and students should behave. He states, "Smaller schools with more personal environments and greater commonality of students' academic and social experience help to engage students in learning and keep them in school" (Byrk, 2002, p. 98).

Although the literature on the relationship between school size and student outcomes suggests that students are more successful when they attend small schools, the optimal size of small schools is the subject of considerable debate (Cotton, 2001; Gewertz, 2006; Klonsky, 1996; Raywid, 1996). Researchers have generally defined the school size in terms of student enrollment, and have suggested that an effective size for high schools is generally between 400 and 900 students (Lee & Smith, 1994; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004), although some researchers argue that schools should have 400 or fewer students (Meier, 2004).

The different definitions of the size of a small school may contribute to the different ideas about the goals of the individual small schools. Raywid (1999) notes that "those who emphasize the importance of the school as a community tend to set

enrollment limits lower than do those who emphasize effectiveness, at least as measured by test scores" (p. 3).

Raywid (1996) indicates that there are individual schools-within-schools that are successful in producing better attendance and more positive student attitudes toward school. Several articles (Cotton, 2001; Raywid, 1996) describe in detail the features of small learning communities or schools-within-schools, including: efforts to increase student participation, personalize strategies, curriculum constructed for academic rigor, and professional development. Teacher collaboration, self governance, empowered decision making at all levels, attitude, increased quality of life and job satisfaction are some of the key elements for teacher success with small school structures. Ancess and Ort (1999) and Ancess (2008) describe the structures that the new autonomous small schools implemented to support their students, notably personalization strategies and performance assessments. They also describe school governance, accountability, pedagogy, board-school relationships, budgetary allocations, and practitioner driven reform.

Small schools provide an optimal setting for learning to take place. Organizational arrangements and instructional methods lead to a more positive school climate and higher student learning. The conditions and practices can enable small schools to achieve their potential: to become true small learning communities. Small learning communities must be given autonomy. Experts insist that this will not happen without total decision making authority. "No school's autonomy is total, of course," writes Raywid (1996), "but unless subunits are granted some degree of freedom to determine how to manage themselves, they will find it almost impossible to establish a distinct identity" (p. 31). Regarding the

New York schools with impressive student achievement and an 89 percent college-going rate, Ancess and Ort (1999) attribute much of these schools' success to the fact that "each school is organizationally, fiscally, and instructionally independent and autonomous" (p. 2). The main point here seems to be that school downsizing planners should establish boundaries so that teachers and students can identify themselves with their community as well as collaborate on decisions concerning it.

High personalization follows closely after autonomy. Smaller schools foster conditions for particular school climate. Quint (2008) states that, "The larger lesson of this may be that structural changes to improve personalization and instructional improvement are the twin pillars of high school reform" (p. ES-10). SLCs can increase student achievement by increasing students' feelings of connectedness to their teachers. Through faculty advisory systems, interaction with one another, extended class periods, special catch-up courses, high-quality curricula, training on these curricula, and efforts to create professional learning communities can improve student achievement.

Research on school size and student achievement suggests smaller schools can have a positive effect on student outcomes (Cotton, 2001; Klonsky, 1996; Raywid 1996). The research on school size overwhelmingly suggests that smaller schools outperform larger schools (Gregory, 2001). However, in a related study, Johnson, Howley, and Howley (2002) examined the relationship among school size, poverty, and achievement. In that study, the authors examined how poverty, school size, and the school district size affected achievement. To determine whether school size and poverty had some affect on achievement, Johnson and colleagues conducted a comparative study of variables related to school and district size, poverty, and achievement. The researchers used comparative

analysis to indicate how achievement scores vary as school size varies in communities with low and high poverty incidence. They examined how schools in different communities reflect the whole concept of achievement. The general assumptions underlying their study are stated by Howley and Bickel (1999) as: Size of school is proportionately related to school performance and the effect of school size is correlated with the level of poverty of the school's community. The authors clearly state the problem of school achievement as a function of size and equity.

Large Urban High Schools

Research on large urban high schools shows they tend to employ the least experienced teachers and have the least engaged parents (Klonsky, 2002), have larger class sizes (Oakes, 1987), and contain complicated governance structures (Howley, 1994). Large urban high schools have been criticized for being costly and for mainly serving as a means for social control rather than an educational function (Lee & Smith, 1994). Students in large urban high schools overwhelmingly perform poorly on standardized tests (Allen, Spencer, & O'Connor, 2002), are less engaged in school, and are more likely to drop out (Klonsky, 2002). Many qualitative studies on large urban high schools have found poor personalized experiences for students are more likely to produce disaffected and disengaged students, and are more likely to produce students who express their distressed voices by exiting the school system and dropping out (Fine, 1994). This research suggests that large secondary school systems in the United States have persistently and disproportionately failed low-income, primarily urban students (Valencia, 2002).

Recently, more rigorous research on the relationship between school size and student achievement has come from the studies of small schools reform. New small schools, or schools containing small learning communities, have proliferated in low socio-economic, minority communities in many cities, including Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston. In most of these districts, schools choose how they reorganized themselves. Some created their own designs while others turned to consultants. Creating small school structures is an enormous undertaking. No particular strategy has a proven track record, but Mary Anne Raywid (1997) has written that the superiority of small schools has been established "with clarity and at a level of confidence rare in the annals of education research" (p. 15). Among the research, key elements were linked to successful small learning communities (SLCs).

The outcomes typically produced by small learning communities in earlier studies included, but were not limited to: higher achievement; reduction of the negative effects of poverty on achievement; increased student affiliation with their school community; greater safety and order; less truancy and many fewer dropouts; similar college entrance exam scores, acceptance rates, GPAs, and completion; higher levels of extracurricular participation in traditional small schools; role of extracurricular participation differs across SLCs; higher levels of parent and community involvement and greater satisfaction; more positive teacher attitudes and satisfaction; comparable core curricula; and, lower costs per student graduated (Cotton, 2001).

SLCs and Teachers

Research suggests small learning communities have positive effects on teachers and teacher work. The literature suggests teachers in SLCs are more likely to experience

autonomy over their work and are more likely to collaborate with their peers (Klonsky, 2002), have better attendance (Allen et al., 2002), express more interest in their students (Johnson et al., 2002), and focus more on instruction (Meier, 1995). Schools with SLCs present more opportunities for staff to engage in instructional practices conducive to student achievement.

Researchers and educators with small school experience are quick to point out that smallness has no absolute power, while at the same time, they clarify what smallness can do. Researcher Michelle Fine says, "small" is simply a vehicle for doing other rigorous, accountable work" (as cited in Gerwetz, 2006, p. 48). To researcher Mary Anne Raywid (1996), "While downsizing provides no guarantee that other changes will follow, it may be a crucial step toward launching change" (p. 51). Small size, in and of itself, is insufficient to produce improved student outcomes. Visher and colleagues (2008) write,

> Researchers who have studied small schools have stressed that reducing school size does not necessarily lead to improved student outcomes, they have concluded that school size should be seen as having an indirect effect on student learning. In other words, school characteristics that tend to promote increased student learning – such as collegiality among teachers, personalized teacher – student relationships, and less differentiation of instruction by ability are simply easier to implement in small schools. (Visher et al., 2008, p. 29)

Change Theory Driving Small School Structural Reform

While small school structures have seemingly produced favorable outcomes, few researchers are asking, what is the theory of change driving small school structural reform? Lee (2006) writes, "The fact is that reformers are out in front of researchers on the issue of high school size, particularly in large urban districts, where many small school structures are being created" (p. 71). Elmore (1995) offers a systemic critique of structural reform to help better understand the thinking that drives the change theory behind small school structural reform.

The premise behind Elmore's theory driving structural reform is the belief that structural change leads to behavioral change (Elmore, Peterson, & McCarthy, 1996). Elmore (2002) found a significant disconnection between the role of school structure in affecting the practices and behaviors of educators, yet Elmore argues that structural reform is pervasive because it is: (1) highly visible, (2) easy to execute, and, (3) often misguided by the belief that structures change people and their practices. He uses the example that in high schools using block scheduling, studies show that there is "no relationship between its adoption and outcomes that you can measure on student performance" (p. 3). He goes on to state emphatically that U.S. high schools,

> Are probably either a close third or tied for second as the most pathological social institutions in our society after public health hospitals and prisons. There are problems in high schools that cannot be solved without making dramatic changes in structure, but in the vast number of cases there is no instrumental relationship between any change in structure, any change in practice and any change in student performance. (Elmore, 2002, p. 17)

Structural reform raises questions regarding the interaction between structural reform's espoused effects and a school culture's basic assumptions. Elmore argues that structural reform often encourages reformers to rearrange schedules, conditions, and people rather that focus on how people engage in their educational practices (Elmore, 1996). Educational researchers challenge reformers and educators alike to understand and study the processes within schools, such as school culture, in order to avoid failure and reproduction of failed reform strategies of the past (Fine, 2000).

To be effective, even the best set of "standards of practice" must be evident in the daily organization and culture of schools. Fullan (2007) argues that the new goal for public education in the 21st century must be to serve successfully 95% or more of the school population. In order to do this, it will be necessary to build an instructional system

that is based on personalization (connecting the unique needs of each student) and precision (connecting in a way that is geared specifically to the students' needs in a timely fashion).

Personalization

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), which, reports on high school reform efforts, defines personalization as a school's ability to create a sense of belonging for students, build the capacity for students to take ownership over their learning, and foster within students the ability to recognize their own choices (NASSP, 1996). This definition, like most seen in personalization reform literature, revolves around academics. Klonsky (2002) argues the importance of relational personalization that is critical for learning to occur in many urban settings. Urban high schools are faced with a myriad of complex issues that are often out of the hands of educators, yet are expected to address the issues in classrooms, schools, districts, state, and national levels.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has recognized the link between student performance and personal connections to school. Recent restructuring of regulations in New Jersey bring new requirements to secondary schools under New Jersey Administrative Code, N.J.A.C.6A:8-3.2. The New Jersey Department of Education conducted a two-year pilot project and evaluation of Personalized Student Learning Plans (PSLP) beginning in the 2009-2010 school year. The Department intends that district boards of education shall develop and implement a Personalized Student Learning Plan, for each secondary school student in grades 6 through 12, according to a schedule developed by the Department of Education. Included in the department's

recommendation to school districts is the support of adult mentors for all students (NJDOE, 2010).

Lee and Smith (1994) contend, while it is unlikely that schools will become smaller, structural changes such as schools-within-a-school concepts need to be considered as alternatives to large school structures. Personalized learning initiatives can increase attendance, decrease dropout rates, and decrease disruptive behavior (NASSP, 2004). In a publication by the NASSP entitled, *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform*, the section titled, "Personalization and the School Environment," challenges high schools to devise a student centered program in which teachers will convey a sense of caring so that students feel that their teachers share a stake in student learning (NASSP, 2004). Also included in this book are seven cornerstone strategies to improve student performance. The two strategies that target personalization are: (1) Increase the quantity and improve the quality of interactions between students, teachers, and other school personnel by reducing the number of students for which any adult or group of adults is responsible; and, (2) Implement a comprehensive advisory program that ensures that each student has frequent and meaningful opportunities to plan and asses his or her academic and social progress with a faculty member. Personalized learning allows students to understand what adult roles seem most desirable, and how to get from here to there in the most productive way (NASSP, 2004).

Advisory Programs

The major purpose of the small schools movement is to convert failing, comprehensive high schools into smaller, personalized settings in order to increase positive school relationships, student engagement and higher student achievement

(DiMartino & Miles, 2006). It is not just the smaller school size that is responsible for increasing student connectedness to the school; teachers' meaningful relationships with students are an important component to the movement (Lee & Ready, 2006). In small schools, teachers typically instruct classes in their core content areas, but also interact with students on a formal and informal basis as advisors. Advisory teachers work with students in advisory groups. Some advisory programs stress that the personalization relationship that forms between the advisor and student is at the heart of an advisory program and what sets it apart from the classroom. Though the implementation of advisory programs varies among schools, programs are usually designed to support both academic and social-emotional needs of students (Rubenstein, Reisner, Coon, & Fabiano, 2005).

Vincent Anfara and Kathleen Brown (2000) note that successful advisory models cannot be divided along academic and socio-economic lines, because students push teachers to make intellectual discussions relevant to their concrete realities. While Anfara and Brown (2000) made strides in addressing the need for research on middle school advisory programs, Anfara (2006b) stated in his research on advisories, "despite an expanding amount of literature on advisory programs, few have systemically probed the subjective experiences of participants in advisory programs" (Anfara, 2006b, p. 2), which is needed because advisory programs still fall short of their intended purposes.

Tocci, Hochman, and Allen (2005) wanted to better understand the challenges schools encountered when implementing advisory programs and highlight the successful ways that schools addressed the challenges, so they reviewed data from 24 schools with small learning communities in New York and Virginia. They found that the most

common goals of advisory programs were: (1) Developing interpersonal relationships among staff and students, (2) Providing academic support to students, (3) Enriching the curriculum, (4) Providing college preparation, and (5) Building a school culture. The most common effective support structures for advisory programs in small schools as identified by Tocci and colleagues (2005) were: visible administrative support for the advisory program as a school wide goal; faculty common planning time to discuss the advisory programs; planning time for advisory teachers; and professional development for advisory teachers.

Supportive school leadership and stakeholder collaboration are key elements to a successful advisory program (Anfara & Brown, 2000). Administrators make critical decisions in support of school advisories, including the type of training advisors receive, when and how often groups meet, and what resources are available for the programs. Anfara and Brown (2000) note that school leaders have both direct and indirect impact on the level of staff motivation and commitment to advisories. Ross Burkhardt (1999) notes that teachers learn to become effective advisors through staff development opportunities that match veteran advisors with beginner advisors.

History of Advisory Programs

In 1996, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, in partnership with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, published *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution. Breaking Ranks* (1996) and *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform* (2004). The first recommended that, "every high school student will have a personal adult advocate to help him or her personalize the educational experience" (NASSP, 1996, p. 31), while the second

suggested the "implementation of a comprehensive advisory program that ensures each student has frequent and meaningful opportunities to plan and assess his or her academic and social progress with a faculty member" (NASSP, 2004, p. 6). Consequently, states and school districts began mandating personalized learning programs in public schools, For example, the New Jersey State Board of Education passed N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.2 to mandate district boards of education shall develop and implement a Personalized Student Learning Plan, for each secondary school student in grades 6 through 12, according to a schedule developed by the Department of Education (NJDOE). A personalized student learning plan is defined by the NJDOE as a formalized plan and process that involves students setting learning goals based on personal, academic, and career interests, beginning in the middle school grades and continuing throughout high school with the close support of adult mentors that include teachers, counselors, and parents.

High school teachers often choose their profession because they have two major interests, their academic disciplines and their commitment to student learning. Elementary teachers often choose younger students because they love kids. College teachers tend to choose teaching because they love their disciplines, and were quite good at them (DiMartino & Clarke, 2008).

At the same time high school teachers spend a good deal of time, before and after school, talking with students who are excited about the subject itself. They typically work with those students in the role of an advisor. Most adults can identify the high school teachers who made a difference in their lives. When asked why those teachers were influential, high school graduates more often refer to a sense of humor as the main ingredient of success (DiMartino & Clarke, 2008). They remember whether a teacher

cared about how they did in school. They think about times a teacher stopped to talk with them. They remember interacting with a teacher informally, talking about sports, entertainment, events, news or life in general. In those settings, teachers show that they do have the skills they need to be effective advisors (DiMartino & Clarke, 2008).

The major purpose of the small school movement is to convert failing, comprehensive high schools into smaller, personalized settings in order to increase positive school relationships, student engagement, and ultimately, higher student achievement (DiMartino & Miles, 2006). Lee and Ready (2006) noted in their case study of five small schools within schools from across the country that compared with larger schools, teachers in small schools play more roles in their students' lives. In small schools, teachers typically instruct classes in their core disciplines, but also interact with students on formal and informal bases as advisors. Advisory teachers work with students in what used to be considered a "homeroom" context. Many advisory programs stress that the personalized relationship that forms between the advisor and student is at the heart of an advisory program. Though the implementation of advisory programs varies in small new schools (Rubenstein et al., 2005), advisory periods are usually designed to support both the academic and social-emotional needs of students. Successful advisory programs share five common traits or elements (Table 1).

Table 1.

Key Elements of Effective Advisory Programs

Element	Description
Advisory Purpose	Understanding the philosophy of advisory
Advisory Organization	Committing adequate time and resources for the advisory
Advisory Curriculum	Providing a developmental curriculum
Advisory Assessment	Evaluating the program
Leadership	Having visible administrative support

(DiMartino & Clarke, 2008, p. 15)

Advisory Purpose

Effective advisory programs are organized around the intended purpose of the program. The school's purpose or mission should drive the organization and advisory time and should be consistent with the overall personalization plan for the school (DiMartino & Clarke, 2008). Successful advisory programs have a clearly defined purpose or purposes that all members of the community understand and support. There are many different purposes an advisory program can be designed to meet and therefore no two advisory programs will look alike. Each individual school must determine what it values and what it hopes to foster within its community. Listed below are some commonly stated purposes of advisory programs, each of which can foster personalization of a student's school experience (Osofsky, Sinner, & Wolk, 2003).

- To advise students about academic decisions and monitor academic achievement

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- To provide developmental guidance (both formal and informal)

- To foster communication between the home and school and among members of the school community

- To encourage supportive peer relationships and practice conflict resolution

- To promote an awareness of diversity and tolerance

- To undertake community service both within and outside the school

- To facilitate community governance and conversations

- To prepare students for life transitions including career development and post-secondary opportunities

- To promote character development and explore moral dilemmas

- To explore the process of group development and have fun

Model Programs

The type of advisory program a school chooses may rely on many factors. The philosophy of the educators within the school system will determine which needs are most important to the students. For example, a school with low dropout rates and few discipline problems may opt for an academic advisory program, as students may not see the importance of an affective program. The culture of the student body or staff may have a significant impact on the decision; a school that has not embraced the personalization movement and ideals may not choose an affective program because of lack of support by teachers, students, or parents. Economics will also play a large part in the decision. If a school has received donated funds for a specific purpose such as counseling services or remediation for standardized test purposes, this may push the school in the direction of a cognitive or affective program, depending upon the funds or resources obtained (Cole,

1992). Some schools will utilize a combination of program types. Advisory programs can be developed in many ways and can still be successful; successful programs will still have common key elements.

New York City has closed more than 20 underperforming public high schools, opened more than 200 new secondary schools, and introduced a centralized high school admissions process in which approximately 80,000 students a year indicate their school preferences from a wide-ranging choice of programs (New Visions for Public Schools, 2005). At the heart of this reform lies 123 new "small schools of choice" (SSCs). These small, academically nonselective, four-year public high schools are open to all students in grades 9 through 12 in historically disadvantaged communities.

SSCs were intended to be viable alternatives to the neighborhood high schools that were closing. SSCs are more than just *small.* They were authorized through a demanding competitive proposal process designed to stimulate innovative ideas for new schools by a range of stakeholders and institutions, from educators to school reform intermediary organizations (Bloom, Thompson, & Unterman, 2010). The resulting schools emphasize strong, sustained relationships between students and faculty. SSC enrollees attend schools that were purposefully organized around smaller, personalized units of adults and students, where students had a better chance of being known and noticed, and where teachers knew enough about their charges to provide appropriate academic and socio-emotional supports. SSCs were not only *new* but were mission-driven. Each SSC also received start-up funding as well as assistance and policy protections from the district and other key players to facilitate leadership development, hiring, and implementation.

Supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the effects of SSCs on students' academic achievement reported encouraging findings, providing clear and reliable evidence that, in roughly six years, a large system of small public high schools can be created and can markedly improve graduation prospects for many disadvantaged students. Specifically:

- By the end of their first year of high school, 58.5 percent of SSC enrollees are on track to graduate in four years compared with 48.5 percent of their non-SSC counterparts, for a difference of 10.0 percentage points. These positive effects are sustained over the next two years.

- By the fourth year of high school, SSCs increase overall graduation rates by 6.8 percentage points, which is roughly *one-third the size of the gap in graduation rates* between white students and students of color in New York City.

- SSCs' positive effects are seen for a broad range of students, including male high school students of color, whose educational prospects have been historically difficult to improve (Bloom et al., 2010).

Advisory Organization

When planning and maintaining advisory programs there are four critical components under organization: people and size, time and space, professional development and support, and ownership (Osofsky et al., 2003). When organizing an advisory program in a school where small learning communities are evident, then a fifth component, scheduling will need to be considered (Tocci & Allen, 2008).

A plan of ongoing professional development and training, consistent with best practices, needs to be set in place, to provide support for the implementation phase of the advisory program. Effective professional supports provide a framework for encouraging and sustaining collaborative learning among teachers (Engstrom & Danielson, 2006). Charles Tocci, Dalia Hochman, and David Allen's (2005) case study on 24 advisory programs at small schools that partner with the Institute for Student Achievement (ISA), an intermediate organization that provides technical support and training to small schools, found that principals' support for advisory, faculty meeting time dedicated to discussing advisory, planning time for advisory teachers, and professional development devoted for advisory were common support structures in effective advisory programs. However, the report did not describe these common support structures in-depth (Tocci et al., 2005). Similarly, Myrick (1993) asserts that developing, maintaining, and nurturing advisory teams is crucial to the success of advisory programs.

Like anything else that happens in a school, an advisory program will work best if it is not just a "top down" decision. The idea to create the program may come from the principal, the guidance department, or from a group of teachers, but it must not be mandated. One suggestion is to start by inviting a team from another school that has already implemented a successful advisory program to make a presentation to the faculty. A second is to have the principal introduce the idea at a faculty meeting and provide staff with a brief overview of how advisory programs work.

One of the first questions teachers often ask is how they will find the time to be advisors and still carry out other responsibilities. School leaders need to be prepared to answer this question. To assure that the program has a chance to overcome teachers'

initial objections and concerns about time, administrators will need to have already

determined how they will address these issues: scheduling, training teachers, developing

a guidance curriculum to be presented by teacher advisors, providing ongoing support

and continuity. Planning and teacher in-service are critical to the success of any advisory

program (Poliner & Lieber, 2004).

One recommended method for the first year is to launch the effort using a core of

interested volunteer teachers. In every school, there is a cadre of enthusiastic teachers

who are willing to volunteer to try new things. As teachers gain experience and

confidence in their advisory roles, they will talk about their experiences to their

colleagues to gain more buy-in for the advisory program. Case study research on small

teams of teachers who worked together in an ongoing structure found that teachers

developed a sense of community within the group and learned from each other (Denevi &

Carter, 2006).

Advisory Curriculum

It is important that the planning process include a curriculum that is based on the

needs of the students. Different needs are affiliated with different types of program

emphasis including curriculum, skills/roles, and structural organization (Galassi,

Gulledge, & Cox, 1997). Some programs emphasize only career planning and goal

setting while others focus on academics or even affective needs of the students. The

following are different types of advisory programs that emphasize distinct advisor roles

and skills, program focus, and curriculum (Table 2).

Table 2.

Advisory Programs

Type	Goals	Advisor skills	activities
Administrative	Taking Care of school school business	Organizer	Distributing information
Academic	Academic tutoring performance	Teacher qualities Personal	Study skills,
Advocacy	Student/adult meetings mentor	Personal qualities concerns for students affective domains	Individual with student

These are only three types of common advisory programs discussed in this literature review. This research study focuses on the combination of academic and advocacy advisory program implementation. The primary goal with combining the two types of programs is to create an environment of caring among the students, the teacher, and the school. The teacher-based advisory program is not a set curriculum per se; it is a process that acquires a set of experiences that builds a rapport between stakeholders (James & Spradling, 2002).

There will be some curriculum mapping with content that must be consistent with the stated purpose and can be accomplished through the organizational plan designed to meet that purpose. The curriculum needs to be organized around essential questions, themes, or skills and be consistent across advisories or vary based on an advisor's knowledge of his/her advisees. Successful advisory programs should follow a common

curriculum that is chosen from an advisory handbook, or include activities organized by advisors to personalize their own advisory experience (Osofsky et al., 2003). Advisory programs are endorsed by several reform organizations and intermediaries that work with urban schools like the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), New Vision for Public Schools (NVPS), the Coalition for Secondary School Reform (CSSR), the Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR), the Education Alliance at Brown University, and the Institute for Student Achievement (ISA) (Allen et al., 2002; Tocci et al., 2005).

America's Career Resource Network Association (ACRNA) provides an extensive body of research on the educational, social, and economical value of career information and services that foster informed and considered career decisions. Many advisory programs include career planning and guidance or "distributed counseling." Much research reveals that career development programs produce outcomes that are in direct relation to the quality, number, and frequency of interventions. These outcomes add to informed and considered career decisions made by students. The U.S. Department of Education published studies of comprehensive guidance programs. These studies provide strong evidence of the effectiveness of career planning and guidance development programs in secondary schools. Students had higher test scores on the ACT exam, enrolled in significantly more Advanced Placement classes, and were more likely to enroll in early graduation scholarships (Gillie & Gillie-Isenhour, 2003).

The Indiana Career and Postsecondary Advancement Center (Gillie & Gillie-Isenhour, 2003) found that having a career plan by the beginning of the high school junior year is associated with better grades, participation in more academically rigorous curricula, and a greater likelihood of expecting to complete four or more years of

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postsecondary education. Latino students who have completed career plans are twice as likely to expect to complete four or more years of college as Latino students without career plans. For all groups of students, having a career plan is associated with a higher level of educational expectations.

The U.S. Department of Education (1997) reported exemplary comprehensive and developmental career guidance and counseling programs led to a .9 percent dropout rate and a 93.6 percent attendance rate, despite widespread economic disadvantage. The program also reported increased career awareness related to academic content. Wood (2003) reports indirect effects of career interventions include reduced drop-out rates and increased student retention in college.

Advisory programs containing informed and considered career decisions, and career planning components are linked to educational achievement, attainment, and efficiency. Students who make informed and considered career decisions are more likely to graduate from high school and to succeed in postsecondary education.

Advisory Assessment

Assessment processes are also vital to the success of the advisory program. The assessment, whether formal or informal, must utilize feedback to make meaningful improvements to the organization as well as ensure continuous improvement to the program. Assessment should be done at several levels: students, advisors, advisory groups, overall advisory program, and school and program leadership. Determination needs to be made as to whether the purposes of the program are being met, whether participants are meeting expectations, and whether other advisory program-specific outcomes are met. To get an evaluation project off the ground it is desirable to identify

the many reasons or purposes for doing an evaluation. Worthen (1990) suggests that most program evaluators agree that a constructive program evaluation can play either a formative purpose (helping to improve the program) or a summative purpose (deciding whether a program should be continued) (Schurr, 1992).

Advisory Leadership

As with any endeavor to change the culture of the school, strong and supportive leadership is required to implement and maintain an advisory program. Strong leadership is an essential element to successful advisory programs either by an individual or team charged with designing, implementing, overseeing, supporting, and assessing the program. Essential leadership duties include creating buy-in among community members and ensuring that advisors have adequate training, resources, and support. Without effective leadership, any advisory program is doomed from the start (DiMartino & Clarke, 2008). Supportive school leadership and stakeholder collaboration are key elements to the success of advisory programs (Anfara & Brown, 2000; Tocci et al., 2005). Claire Cole (1992) states that administrators make crucial decisions in support of school advisories, including the type of training advisors receive, when and how often groups meet, and what resources are available for the programs. Anfara and Brown (2000) note that school leaders have both direct and indirect impact on the level of staff motivation and commitment to advisories.

Barriers to Implementation of Advisory Programs

Barriers that inhibit the implementation included resistance to change, staffing, availability of resources, scheduling, physical space, and knowledge of pedagogical practices. Change in leadership and subsequently weak school leadership and support of

districts, high levels of staff buy-in, and sufficient space to make programs separate contribute to the outcome of any school initiative, including advisory programs. The *bigger is better* conviction has fueled secondary education in America for years. It has led to the creation of mandates and practices that favor large, centralized, and impersonal schools. These barriers will need to be dismantled in order for new small school structures to stand a fighting chance for success (Gladden, 1998).

A common barrier to a successful advisory program is the lack of teacher support. Van Hoose (1991) lists seven developments that may lead to teachers becoming a barrier to successful advisory programs:

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 to serve as an advisor.

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

5. Advising takes time that many teachers believe could be invested more effectively as preparation time to teach.

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

7. When it is implemented incorrectly and with little staff development and leadership, students do not provide positive feedback.

Allen and colleagues (2002) found that one of the biggest challenges in implementing a high school advisory program was helping the faculty adjust to their new role as advisors. Therefore, it is critical to learn about resources that support teachers'

development. Tocci and Allen (2008) suggest that the curriculum for advisory programs, organizational structure, assessments, and purpose be the work of a collaborative team.

Scholarly literature acknowledges that advisors' beliefs play a significant role in behavior and understanding of pedagogy. Lovat and Smith (1995) indicate that teacher beliefs and a teacher's approach in the advisory have a critical impact on success. Another issue in this regard is the perception that even when teachers learn of a new technique or a guiding principle, it is often difficult for a teacher to change his or her beliefs and in turn change his or her style of teaching (Fullan, 1982). It is worth inquiring about what the research suggests regarding teacher beliefs.

Anfara and Brown (2000) conducted a series of case studies in six different middle schools, Brown (1999) studied one inner city school, and Robinson (1992) surveyed nine schools in one state. In all three studies, researchers found that the teachers did not feel the advisory program was successful, or at least as successful as it could be. In the study by Anfara and Brown (2000), students perceived the program as beneficial, but advisors felt the program lacked organization and structure to make it work. The findings also revealed a movement away from the intended non-authoritarian teacher role to a more disciplined traditional classroom approach. This pattern shows resistance of teachers to adapt to the new program format.

In the case of Robinson (1992), the same issues regarding advisory implementation emerged as were found in Anfara and Brown (2000). Advisors cited a lack of training, a lack of participating staff, not enough time, and reluctance on the part of the staff to fully implement the program. Similarly, Brown (1999) found that advisors failed to establish trusting, caring relationships with students, according to surveys

completed by students. He also noted the importance of this bond in predominantly African-American communities, but cited the lack of major personal and social concerns and relying on the prepackaged curriculum. He concluded that the lack of training and comfort with the role of the advisor was responsible for the gap.

Robinson (1992), Brown (1999), and Anfara and Brown (2000), addressed the teachers' roles in implementation of advisories in their research. The three studies shared a similar research design, in that they were qualitative in nature; the researchers observed classroom activities, and the interview schedule addressed obstacles to advisory implementation, teacher attitudes about advisory, and teacher evaluation of the program. In Brown (1999), the research problem revolved around the effectiveness of commercially viable advisory programs, prepared outside the urban classroom where the study was conducted.

Although it is not surprising to learn that teachers respond differently to change (Fullan, 1982), these studies focused attention on pertinent issues related to school reform. Despite the efforts of Anfara and Brown (2000), Brown (1999), and Robinson (1992) to describe teachers' experiences with advisory, issues of curriculum implementation from the teachers' perspective have largely been ignored. Also many of the reports regarding characteristics recommended for successful advisory programs are concerned with the overall program evaluation, rather than classroom-level analysis. Research points to a lack of clarity about the purposes of advisory programs, curriculum, and instructional activities.

Advising may not come easily to some teachers, or to schools where other traditions prevail. Advisories require staff members to get to know each student within a

group of 15 to 20 students. Staff realizes that getting to know each student can be difficult, particularly if a student is not happy with the school experience. Because content attainment is not the sole purpose for advisory programs, staff often fears they lack the skills needed to work closely with students. "That's for the guidance office," they may say. Staff may also be uncomfortable with the open format of advisory programs.

Advisory programs encourage staff and students to be active participants in their learning outcomes. There is a tendency for the performance of both students and staff to improve when staff and students have a vested interest in the success of the school (Lee & Smith, 1994). Sergiovanni (1994) wrote, "Central to constructivist thinking is the transformation of classrooms and schools into learning communities" (p. 109). Sergiovanni, in one of the most influential descriptions of what community can look like in schools, defined the notion of community in theoretical terms and then applied it to the entire school population, to classrooms, and to groups of teachers. He advocated for a change in the theory of schooling, such that the focus would be on connections of people to purposes, and connections among people based on those connections to purposes. Sergiovanni viewed community as socially organized around personal relationships that rely on common norms, purposes, and values. Through this building of community, he believed that teachers would be more empowered as they focused on shared commitments, obligations, and duties.

These studies communicate that small school structures can create more positive relationships among students and teachers, but they find no connection to achievement and small schools. Creating a personalized climate is valuable in it can certainly lead to

changes in instruction, but the bottom line is student achievement. Change will not happen in the short term and sustainability is a key factor for any reform effort. What is missing is investment in teachers (David, 2008), providing opportunities to engage teachers deeply enough to change instructional practice and develop skills needed to improve teaching and learning. School and district leaders can learn from the successes and failures of the failed reforms. Schools must stop looking for that one size fits all model and collaboratively create a model that works best for their students, school, and community. As Debbie Meier's writes, "We need to learn to use our own knowledge not replicate each other's work" (2004, p. 10).

Summary

Schools beginning to develop and implement advisory programs face a unique group of teachers just as they serve a unique set of young people. Consequently, programs for faculty need to be comprehensive. Professional development may play an important role in creating a common language and setting up structures for a school-wide program. Staff members who assume advisor roles require additional training and support. Because teachers actually do more informal counseling than they realize, they have the capacity to offer more than content in their advisory. To help educators tailor their advisory programs, researchers provide sample program development timelines (Ayres, 1994) or a listing of the "Ten Steps to a Successful Advisory program" (Hertzog, 1992). Others suggest the critical program key dimensions and guiding questions to assist in the organization of the advisory program.

Advisory programs are used in many small schools to develop relationships between teachers and students (Osofsky et al., 2003). Advisory teams are also a support

structure through which advisory staff can derive support and collaborate with other

advisory staff members (Tocci & Allen, 2008). The overall success of these programs

depends largely on the effective planning, implementation, and continued support of the

key elements. Just as students have unique characteristics that distinguish them from one

another, so do successful advisory programs. The rationale behind such programs is to

promote small learning communities of learners, mutually respectful and meaningful, and

provide individual attention to students. Advisory programs provide students with an

opportunity to belong, and provide teachers an opportunity to be actively involved in the

social and emotional development of students.

Chapter III

Methodology

This research design and methods chapter begins with an introduction of the research and theoretical reasoning behind the methods used in the study. The principles of research are described in the design of the study and each aspect of the research technique is described in the data collection section. A thorough description of the site and population of the program of the study is also outlined. The chapter concludes with the steps that were taken to provide data analysis of the information collected during the study.

Design of the Study

In designing and completing this research study, several methods of basic principles of qualitative and quantitative research were used to support fundamental principles of a program evaluation study. Using qualitative techniques allowed for the aspects of planning for implementation of an advisory program to be studied in a natural setting. Interviews, observations, fieldnotes, minutes of meetings, and review of artifacts contributed to the analysis of qualitative data. Quantitative data were collected using a series of surveys. Program evaluation study defined clears terms that meet educational requirements for adding measurable value and for knowing what works and what does not (Kaufman, Guerra, & Platt, 2006).

During this *ethnographic study*, data were collected intensively over a period of time to investigate the variables as they occured naturally rather than in a controlled environment. Ethnography was mainly used by anthropologists, when it was first

introduced as a method of research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Now that it has gained

popularity, it is used by scholars with more traditional backgrounds.

In ethnographic studies, aside from observation, different strategies of data

collection are applied. For this reason, it represents a "multi-instrument research." During

the observation the researcher may be involved or not. This researcher was a participant

observer during some observations.

In ethnographic studies, the interaction between subjects and observers, or the

interaction between subjects are looked into in order to determine the behavioral patterns.

These patterns are described and compared with the behaviors of other subjects in other

cultural or educational settings. Consequently, the differences are pointed out and

suggestions are made as to how to implement the desired patterns and eliminate the

undesired ones.

In this program evaluation study, grounded theory (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) was

developed for the planning for implementation of an advisory program. Review of the

literature's definition of effective advisories, found that the most critical factors in the

successful key elements of advisory programs are: 1) purpose, 2) organization, 3)

content, 4) leadership, and 5) evaluation (DiMartino & Clarke, 2008; Myrick, 1993;

Osofsky et al., 2003). More specifically, the elements include: teachers' understanding of

the philosophy of the advisory program, committing adequate time for the advisory,

providing a developmental curriculum, preparing teachers in guidance and interpersonal

skills, having visible administrative support, and evaluating the program. In the program

evaluation study, I focused on driving forces and resisting factors, barriers, and how the

processes, structures, and people impacted the planning for implementation of the

advisory program in an urban high school. These components guided the development of my interview questions for the teachers, and teacher leader of guidance counselors.

The goal of this study was to explore the planning for implementation of an advisory program in an urban high school. A naturalistic approach allows for greater depth in exploring and understanding the experience of each participant. Creswell (1998) defines qualitative research as an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analysis of words, reports detailed views of information, and conducts the study in a natural setting. Through the use of surveys, interviews, observations, artifacts, and document reviews, this researcher was able to give in-depth examination to the events taking place while considering the wide range of variables and extensive amount of factors that accompany the planning for implementation of an advisory program in an urban high school.

Qualitative methods were used to examine the experiences of the advisory implementation team, the advisory staff, and the administrators, during the planning for implementation of the advisory program. According to Maxwell (2005), this type of research, the amount of control the research has over the studied behavior of events, and the focus of phenomena dictates the appropriate method for ethnographic studies. Qualitative research is a tool for program planning that is frequently more interested in eliciting the stories behind particular individuals or groups. For example, qualitative methods are well suited for the analysis and interpretation for the context within which organizations or groups are operating and programs are implemented (Bamberger, 2000). A case study design allows for greater depth in exploring the understanding the

experiences of each participating member involved (Creswell, 1998). With individual

advisory implementation team members, I was able to explore each participant's

perspectives of his or her role as a team member, view of planning for implementation,

and experience in the turnkey training sessions. In addition, I explored how the

administrative team supported planning for implementation of the advisory program and

supported the advisory staff. Through this type of examination, I came to understand

patterns of similarity and difference in perceptions among team members (Merriam,

1998). My examination of the planning for implementation process through practical

evaluation focused on deriving what worked and what did not, as well as why it did not,

and how barriers could be addressed to make the advisory program more effective. How

processes, structures, and people influenced the initiation and implementation of the

advisory program was also considered.

Site Selection

I choose the urban high school in this study for convenience. I was currently

working at the high school, and had been since 2004. It is the largest of three high

schools, three times the size of the other two, and one of 22 schools in the district. The

school, built in 1932, was built to accommodate 3,000 students. Currently, approximately

1,800 students are enrolled with a teaching staff of 140. This school, like other urban high

schools with large minority populations, faces similar challenges in which minority

students demonstrate low achievement and high academic failure. The goals of the school

are to create a safe, nurturing environment centering on learning and achievement.

Common characteristics of the students include low socioeconomic status, poor

academic skills, and attendance, and high course failure and mobility rate of which leads

to high dropout rates. The ethnic composition of the student body is 57% African American, 38% Hispanic, and 5% other. Approximately 800 of the students are immigrants from 39 countries. Students with disabilities are 14.5% of our student body and 6.9% are classified as Limited English Proficient. The attendance rate last year was 84% compared to the state average of 95% and the eligibility for free or reduced lunch is approximately 66%. Recent end of the year course grades for our ninth graders in Algebra I show a 71.8% pass rate, with a failure of 28.2%. In past years pass rates have been approximately 50%.

The High School Survey of Student Engagement, issued in the spring of 2009, reveals that the school culture reflects a number of indicators that are below the national norm. In the measure of students "feeling good about their school," 65% of the student responded positively versus 79% nationwide. Only 32% of our students felt safe in school versus 79% nationwide. The survey also exposed the low educational backgrounds of our students' families.

Reducing grade-level retention, improving course passing rate, and increasing graduation rates are critical. The deficiencies contribute to serious social problems such as high dropout rates, frequent unemployment, and increased crime. The students will not be able to overcome the obstacles that perpetuate social inequalities without receiving a quality, more personalized education.

The urban high school in this study has been facing the challenges of restructuring and reform for several years. A faculty of 225 teachers working with approximately 3,000 ninth through twelfth graders began efforts to change the school climate and instructional practices by creating small learning communities (SLCs) in 1998. When

SLCs are implemented and sustained they encourage staff and students to be active participants in their learning outcomes. There is a tendency for the performance of both students and staff to improve when staff and students have a vested interest in the success of the school (Lee & Smith, 1994; Raywid, 1996). However, over the past 12 years, the urban high school in this study has seen increases in dropout rates, decreases in attendance rates, and low performance in student achievement. On average, approximately 65% of each freshman class does not graduate from the high school.

In an effort to restore the element of personalization to the small school structure, an implementation team was created to begin researching programs, ideas, and processes that would include personalized learning experiences at the school. Members of the guidance team from the district, in which the urban high school is located, began training with the New Jersey Center for the Advancement of School Counseling (NJCASC). The urban high school in this study was selected to receive monies from a 3-year competitive grant offered by the NJDOE. This grant provided the frameworks for both a theoretical and practical guide to develop and implement statewide systemic reform programs in school guidance and counseling. The attendees brought back documentation on the successful planning and implementation of personalized learning programs for students.

A group of staff members formed a coalition, on their own, to initiate change in the school. The informal group invited all staff to "a gathering" to participate in the initiation of programs, promoting the goals of the school which were seemingly hampered by the political framework currently in place. Implementation of mentors or an advisory program was one of the objectives of this group.

The urban high school had applied for "The School Improvement Grant" (SIG grant). This grant would allow the school to build on recent initiatives, including the implementation of an advisory program, beginning in SY2010-2011. There was intent to create dramatic change that would increase student performance and graduation rates. The implementation of an advisory program would allow continuance of current reforms and the initiation of new, dramatic programs that would embrace cultural differences and contributions of all races as the school differentiates and personalizes learning, establishes reasonable accountability for all stakeholders, creates an effective response/intervention system, and enlists community involvement to establish an environment of learning, trust, responsibility, and achievement. Kaufman et al. (2006) describe practical evaluation as "Mega" thinking and planning, meaning focus is not on one's organization alone, but upon society now and in the future, adding value to all stakeholders. It is responsible, responsive, and ethical to add value to all.

Data Collection Procedures

Four main methods for collecting information regarding the planning for implementation and evaluation of the advisory program were collected. Interviews of staff members involved in the planning for the implementation process, observations of the advisory implementation team training sessions, and the subsequent turnkey staff training sessions, documents written about advisory programs and changes in state policy, personalization, and program evaluation, and survey data were all collected.

Observations

Observations from the eight advisory implementation team training sessions (five full day sessions and four half day sessions) were documented from September 2009

through June 2010. Two of the eight sessions were audio taped with the team's

permission. All audio tapes were transcribed. My role was a participant observer for all of

the advisory implementation team training sessions. The full day sessions were 6 hour

training sessions provided to the implementation team by consultants specializing in the

implementation of advisory programs at the secondary level. Meetings were planned with

the assistance of consultants from the NJCASC. The workshops utilized the foundation

from the "Power of Advisory" workshops provided by The Educational Alliance at

Brown University. The meetings concluded with a plan for turnkey training for the staff

and a report for the administrative team. All observations were documented in

chronological order and teacher conferences from observations are referenced in future

chapters by observation number, followed by page number, then line number [e.g.,

OBS1: p.1:1-4].

Following each of the advisory implementation team training sessions, the team

provided turnkey training to the staff during their administrative preparation periods (45

minutes each). The staff at the urban high school in this study was afforded three

administrative preparation periods each week. The administrative preparation workshop

groups met according to their preparatory block. Each block divided into small groups by

SLC, since one goal of our advisory program was to create greater purity among the

SLCs. One preparation period per month was used to provide training for the advisory

program. The members of the advisory implementation team led the training sessions.

This researcher observed four of the staff turnkey training sessions. However,

documentation from each of the nine meetings was provided by the advisory

implementation team. Documents were listed in chronological order and teacher conferences from observations are referenced as document number [DOC 5].

Each turnkey training period resulted in feedback from the staff that would be recorded and reported back to the implementation team at the next subsequent monthly meeting. A record-keeper was assigned. This cycle was utilized to provide feedback during the implementation and evaluation of the planning for implementation of the advisory program.

The feedback was analyzed, categorized, and evaluated to determine what changes might be considered to create, design, develop, demonstrate, and sustain a viable advisory program indicative to the valid needs of our institution, the community, the district, the state, and society, based on the key dimensions of successful advisories.

Interviews

I conducted interviews with four staff members: one teacher from varying SLCs and one teacher leader. The 30 question interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes to an hour. The interview questions were divided into five categories: data, advisors, advisees, curriculum, and overall (Appendix A). Content validity was established by pilot testing the interview questions with two teachers for readability and content matter. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed with the permission of the interviewees. The same set of interview questions was used for each respondent in order to minimize the possibility of bias. Three of the four interviewees were chosen at random. Each member of the faculty was sent an invitation to participate in the interview process. I randomly numbered all the "yes" responses and selected three. The fourth was purposefully selected due to previous participation in school, district, and global initiatives to develop

and implement advisory programs. All observations were documented in chronological order and excerpts from the interviews are referenced by the interview number, question number, and the line number(s) [e.g., INT1: p.1:1-4].

Surveys

In June of 2009, a 26-question likert type survey questionnaire entitled *Small Learning Community Initiative Implementation Survey* was administered to all staff. The purpose was to collect data from the representative sample to generalize the findings of the SLC initiative as it relates to personalization. My questionnaire survey consists mainly of Likert-type items. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix B. The broad survey questions revolve around the five elements of small learning communities (SLCs) as identified by Cotton (2001). My survey questionnaire was developed around the five elements of autonomy, identity, personalization, instructional focus, and accountability. The first batch of responses yielded 27 out of 93 returned surveys. In an attempt to get a better response, I duplicated the process. This resulted in the 34 more surveys received. The second batch of surveys brought the total number of respondents to 61. This is approximately 66% of my population.

Utilizing SPSS software, the data were analyzed. Frequency tables and percentages were used to compare data. The SLC survey questionnaire was developed around the five key elements of successful SLCs. Frequency tables were utilized to group questions that were indicative of the five key elements of successful SLCs as identified by Cotton (2001) and the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL). The data were replicated for each individual SLC.

Surveys from the two advisory pilots, one on May 12th, 2010 and the other on June 1st, 2010, were collected and analyzed. This 7-question likert type survey was designed to assess advisors perceptions of their advisory experiences. The survey included questions related to student level of participation in the advisory, advisors' level of participation in the advisory, their relationship with their advisees, and the adequacy of time to complete the different types of advisory activities. The survey also included demographic information questions related to the advisory program and the advisors small learning community within the school. Both surveys were entitled *Teacher Advisory Pilot Survey 1 & 2* respectively. Content validity for the survey was established by testing them on the advisory implementation committee.

Utilizing SPSS software, the data from the two pilot programs were analyzed. Frequency tables and percentages were used to compare data. Percentages and the mean value were also used to analyze the data. The surveys were used to identify the significant issues as identified by staff regarding the organizational component of the advisory program.

Review of Documents and Artifacts

The list below provides a list of publications obtained through the course of reviewing documents and artifacts for the purpose of planning for implementation of the advisory program. The documents and/or artifacts were obtained through a variety of sources, including but not limited to: NJCASC consultants, the vice principal program coordinator, Kean University consultants, the NJDOE website, and the CSSR consultants.

Document-artifacts collected between April 2009 and June 2010.

- NJ STEPS: Redesigning Education in New Jersey for The 21st Century-April 2008

- The Personalized Student Learning Plan Resource Guide – April 2009
- N.J.A.C. 6A:13
- N.J.A.C.6A:8
- 21st Century Change Power Point
- Teachers As Educators Assistance Manual
- Small Schools, Big Choices
- Teachers As Advisors: Implementation Guide and Curriculum Framework
- Student Learning Plans: Development and Implementation Guide-Washington
- Teachers As Advisor Program: Career Development Delivery System
- Changing Systems to Personalize Learning: Introduction to the Personalization Workshops
- The Power of Advisories
- Grade 9 Advisory Lessons and Resources: Integrated ELA and Advisory Curriculum

Preparing the Data for Analysis

The next phase of my research was preparing the data for analysis. I began by organizing the data collected into groups as follows:

Qualitative.

- Observed advisory implementation meetings field notes, minutes or documents
- Observed faculty turnkey training session field notes, minutes or documents
- Transcribed-taped advisory implementation meetings
- Field notes - other
- Documents and Artifacts
- Emails
- Interviews field notes and transcribed tapes

Quantitative.

- SLC questionnaire documents, and data results
- Advisory Pilot #1 questionnaire documents, and data results

- Advisory Pilot #2 questionnaire documents, and data results

As stated before, my research was based on five main types of data: interviews, observations, documents, artifacts, and surveys. I transcribed each digitally recorded interview and all field notes. This process helped to address descriptive validity, events, behaviors, settings, time, and place (Johnson, 2009). I printed the documents and began the next stage of data analysis. I read through all of the data pieces, trying to identify keywords and phrases connected to my research questions. At this stage, I looked for a general sense of the information and reflected on the overall meaning. I used a color-coding system to highlight keywords, phrases, and ideas that were often repeated and which could be categorized under one or more of the research questions or components of the research questions such as driving forces, resisting factors, barriers, influencing people, structure, or processes.

Open Coding

I used a system of highlighting and commenting as my initial coding for each transcript. This first round of coding generated codes in the participants' own words. This process helped me to identify repetitive phrases and ideas that seemed especially important and were related to the planning and implementation of the advisory program. In the first phase, I relied on my experience as an observer of the advisory implementation team meetings, the turnkey training sessions, and interviews, allowing the participants experiences to speak from the data in their own language. One of the advisory implementation team activities was to answer the question: "What is your definition of a teacher advisory system?" The responses generated the following codes: "mentor" and "guide." This process helped me focus on ideas that were related to my research questions.

In the subsequent coding, I included codes taken from advisory literature. Searching for and identifying codes was an ongoing process throughout the data collection. The analysis began with open coding. This process generated many distinct codes.

Fracturing the Data

Next, I fractured the coded data. Fracturing is the process where data are identified according to specific categories. The data were fractured and identified according to the "folders" that I created based upon my research questions. Fracturing the data was a categorization strategy that organized segments of interview data into codes. The first step in the categorization process is to "unitize" the data by selecting and grouping phrases that answer each part of my three research questions (Merriam, 1998). I "chunked" the units of data by the effect on the planning for implementation of the program (driving forces, resisting factors, barriers to implementation, and influence of process, structure, and people either positively or negatively) according to each one of the categories as it related to my research questions. Maxwell (2005) noted that rearranging the data into organized categories aids in the development of theoretical concepts, which is a primary goal of analysis.

I created a preliminary list of codes from the literature review and document analysis, and these aligned with the categories of my research questions. I performed an analysis of the codes created based on the patterns expressed and frequency expressed. Coding and categorizing the themes across the data provided another way of understanding the data. After all data were collected and categorized, properties were

searched to clarify relationships between categories and elements in the study. After all

data were analyzed, hypotheses were made to explain the relationships that existed.

Trustworthiness and Validity

My research is limited to the one research site. The internal generalizability in the

research of the patterns identified was linked to different participants' experiences during

the planning and implementation of the advisory program. Even though the members of

the staff are unique individuals, they are linked through their experiences working in the

same school, SLC, and their experiences in the advisory team training sessions and

subsequent meetings over the course of one year. Triangulating the interview data,

observation field notes, surveys and the documents from the turnkey training sessions,

through observation, and survey results allowed me to identify the driving forces and

resisting factors as well as the barriers to implementation of the advisory program.

Utilizing many sources led to a fuller understanding of research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007)

Suggestions for improvement of advisory programs in urban schools containing SLCs

can be offered.

Conclusion

In summary, I conducted a program evaluation using qualitative methods on the

planning for implementation of an advisory program in an urban high school. The

grounded theory generated from observations of advisory implementation team meetings,

turnkey training meetings, interviews, documents, and surveys was compared to existing

frameworks of advisory models. The grounded theory that emerged from the data to

explain the driving forces and resisting factors, the barriers in initiating and implementing

the advisory program, and how the processes, structures, and people influenced either

positively or negatively the initiation and implementation can be tested in the future and provide analytic generalization.

The ultimate goal of my study was to contribute to the body of research related to high school advisory programs containing small school structures. More specifically, my intention was to inform teachers and school leaders interested in supporting advisory programs in urban high schools. Lastly, my study informed the school site directly by providing guidance for future research and reflection. The study will ultimately have value for students and staff. Finding an approach that asks "what is working," and "how can we find ways to create more of what is working" then provides feedback to schools seeking to implement personalized learning programs: more specifically, advisory programs.

Chapter IV

Findings

This chapter presents the results of the case study research about the large urban high school during the planning stages for implementation of an advisory program. The findings are arranged according to the three research questions that guided the study. Each section contains data and observations addressing the issues raised by the research questions. The three research questions were:

- What were the driving forces and resisting factors for the initiation of the advisory program?

- What barriers were identified in initiating and implementing the advisory program?

- How did the processes, structures, and people influence in a positive or negative way the initiation and implementation of the advisory program?

In Chapter III, I presented the research methodology used in this program evaluation. The data collected for the study consisted of the following sources: observations, interviews, surveys, artifacts, and documents. All of the data collected served as sources for answering the three research questions. In conducting the data analysis, I began with a list of start codes based on the literature review. Codes were created from the literature review and document analysis, and then were aligned with the categories of my research questions. Excerpts from the interviews are referenced by the interview number, page number, and the line number(s) [e.g., (INT1:p3:22-24)]. Direct references to teachers' conversations that were observed are referenced by the

Observation number, page number of the observation, followed by the line number [e.g., (OBS1:p5:33-35)].

Research Question 1: What were the driving forces and resisting factors for the initiation of the advisory program?

Driving forces. With the change in leadership and movement of staff, many teachers, particularly those who were new to the school or district and knew they would be working within a team of teachers (SLC) were hopeful for positive changes in relationships. Some veteran teachers were not as outwardly optimistic, their reactions were overcome by the enthusiasm of teamed teachers and the many new teachers on the faculty. The school year began with excitement and expectations of working together utilizing a new school plan, new leadership team, and new grant initiatives.

The introduction of change to the school began with the primary driving factor of personalized student learning plans (PSLP) being a requirement to implement as part of a change in New Jersey State Policy. While providing a limited definition for PSLPs, the policy defined PSLPs as follows,

> Personalized Student Learning Plan is defined by the proposed New Jersey Administrative Code *(N.J.A.C. 6A:8 - Standards and Assessment for Student Achievement)* as "a formalized plan and process that involves students setting learning goals based on personal, academic and career interests, beginning in the middle school grades and continuing throughout high school with the close support of adult mentors that include teachers, counselors and parents." (NJDOE, 2010, p. 1)

Some of the initial driving forces for the advisory program were issues of policy, initiation of stakeholders, advisory implementation team, and detailed planning documents containing successful models of advisory programs. The secondary education transformation (SET) change initiatives by the New Jersey Department of Education

were rapidly effecting the organization and the state. A move towards personalized learning to promote academic achievement through transformed leadership, teaching, and learning were changes being implemented in New Jersey state policy.

Changes in New Jersey state policy. In August 2006, Governor Jon S. Corzine announced a unified effort between business and education to work on high school redesign in the state. The New Jersey High School Redesign Steering Committee was formed and charged with further developing recommendations resulting from the State Summit for improving New Jersey's public high schools.

The Steering Committee's report, *NJ Steps: Re-Designing Education in New Jersey for the 21st Century* proposed five recommendations in the following education policy areas: 1) Standards and High School Graduation Requirements; 2) Assessment Alignment; 3) Teachers and School Leaders; 4) School Redesign – Learning Communities and Personalized Education; and 5) P-16 Alignment.

Under the specific recommendations related to School Redesign – Learning Communities and Personalized Education, the committee proposed a key action step to evaluate and implement models of personalized learning plans for all students. Each New Jersey student was to have a 6-year education plan, encompassing their high school years and two additional years of higher education, workforce training, skilled employment, or military service. The plan was also to ensure strong adult-student relationships within the school whereby each student would have an adult mentor to assist them with accomplishing their goals.

In June 2009, the New Jersey Administrative Code *(N.J.A.C. 6A:8 - Standards and Assessment for Student Achievement)* formally adopted the recommendations of the

steering committee. The urban high school in this study, anticipating the changes in policy, had begun research and training in the area of personalization through a partnership with Kean University. A team of staff had begun receiving training and provided planning documents from the training sessions and shared them with the administrative team and subsequently the staff.

Staff members believed a personalized school environment would increase student achievement. They believed the success of students so far was due to the SLC structure and personalization in our classrooms along with the mentoring and outreach we do with our kids. As many staff members noted,

> Many of us already give up our lunch or prep to meet with students on a daily basis. We give them extra help with their course work, or talk to them about their problems and even help them fill out their college applications. [Doc1:p1:2-3]

> The state renames their mandates, policies, and regulations constantly. Abbott regulations, Secondary school initiatives and now personalized student learning plans, but we know it all boils down to finding ways to get the students in "**your"** school to reach their maximum potential. There will be no one way to do it. [Doc1:p6:10-13]

Planning documents for successful models of advisory programs. While the resource documents on advisory programs gave the reasons for having an advisory program and policy, the program coordinator, and initiation of stakeholders existed as driving factors, the program focus or specific goals existed and was analyzed as driving factors for what the program was to accomplish. In the documents used as research, advisory programs could accomplish many different goals.

In planning to meet the many changes being implemented by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), the urban high school in this study utilized post secondary partnerships, the New Jersey School Center for Advancement of School

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Counseling (NJCASC), and the Coalition for Secondary School Reform (CSSR), with programs designed to develop reform in school guidance and counseling programs, especially programs promoting personalized learning, more specifically advisory programs in high schools.

With one year left in the urban high school's grant with the NJCASC, the administration, along with the counseling team, decided to use the remaining consultation hours from the grant for training in the planning for implementation of a personalized learning program.

This group and subsequent partners became a driving force as they provided documentation and suggestions to the current administrative team regarding the positive effects of personalized learning programs in urban high schools. The following literature was presented to the administrative team and counselors: 1) The Power of Advisories, 2) Changing Systems to Personalized Learning, 3) The Diversity Kit, and 4) The New Jersey Personalized Student Planning Resource Guide.

The first three documents were developed by the Educational Alliance at Brown University; the fourth was prepared by the NJDOE. The Power of Advisories is a series of six workshops through which an implementation team could be trained to do the following:

- Create a vision for advisory groups in your own school or district that is based on theory, research, and field expertise
- Develop specific purposes and address issues of school processes and structures that support or diminish the potential of advisory groups
- Learn about content and activities to use during advisory groups

- Investigate assessment mechanisms

- Learn how to create conditions for long-term sustainability of advisory groups

In the introduction to the "Power of Advisories" workshop document it states,

> Each of us is responsible for our own learning, yet relationships are
> fundamental to the learning process both in and out of school. Advisory
> groups, even in large schools, create the conditions for improving student
> achievement and behavior and enrich the lives of students and teachers
> through personalization of the learning experience. Research demonstrates
> that personalization of the learning environment—enabling students to
> know well, and be known well by, at least one adult in their school—leads
> to improved student outcomes in school (Lee et al., 1995; Newmann et al.,
> 1992; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). Advisory groups are one effective means
> to achieve personalized learning by building supportive relationships
> between students and teachers.
> (Osofsky et al., 2003, p. 1)

Another document provided from the counseling group member training,

provided through the NJCASC, entitled, *Changing Systems to Personalize Learning:*

Introduction to the Personalization Workshops, provided examples of sources of student

engagement, the adaptations schools could make to increase engagement, and the

interactions between schools and students that characterize "personalized learning." Ideas

behind personalized learning seem relatively simple:

- Personalized schools promote the achievement of standards for all students.

- Personalized learning begins with individual interests so each student

  becomes engaged in learning.

- Teachers get to know each student's strengths, weaknesses, and interests.

- With school support over four years, students become self directed learners

  who can use learning to manage their lives.

- As students pursue an increasingly independent pathway, parents become true

  guides and mentors in the learning experience.

- As students explore real options for their futures in the community, community members become involved in the schools in a meaningful way.

- Adults in the school model and benefit from stronger professional and student relationships.

- Against common standards, students learn to set goals and measure success for themselves.

- Students graduate upon demonstrating high performance in a variety of media, not simply norm-based tests.

- Reaching all students depends on reaching each one. (Clark, 2003, p. 19)

The document also revealed,

> High school continuity currently depends on uniform expectations for all students: rules, requirements, schedules, and standards. If the factors that both promote student engagement and improve performance are antithetical to the structures we use to organize the school day, high school educators pursuing personalized learning face one more seemingly impossible task: making sure the school works reliably while creating new opportunities for students to design and carry out a personalized exploration of knowledge. (Clark, 2003, p. 27)

The program coordinator and teacher leader of guidance who led the development of the program used these documents as the beginning foundation for the program focus and goals. The principal felt advisory should be a place for students to vent and feel comfortable with teachers. She wanted advisory to feel like a home base, where students could ask questions that they might not feel comfortable asking others.

Some staff members wanted the advisory program to be a mentor system. Through that mentor system, they wanted the concept of respect, and character education topics to be taught to students. Topics on levels of respect, including respect of races,

respect for other students, and respect for themselves as well as a supporting character education programs were discussed.

In the interviews and AIT Team meetings, the teaching staff stated multiple goals of the advisory program. Goals fell into aspects of mentoring, fulfilling students' needs, teaching concepts, academics or other various goals. There was discussion around mentoring as a goal of the program. Some staff wanted the program to provide students a person they could discuss issues with. One SLC lead teacher believed, "That (advisory) gives students another person they can talk to if they have problems."

Several planning and implementation documents from successful advisory programs were also utilized at the onset of the planning phase. The *Teacher as Advisors: Implementation Guide and Curriculum Framework* (South Dakota, 2007), *Teachers as Educational Advisors and Mentors: a Technical Manual* (Louisiana, 2005), *Teacher as Advisor Program: Career Development System* (Oklahoma, 2005), and *Student Learning Plans: Development and Implementation Guide* (Washington, 2006).

The planning documents, consultants, and research from successful models of PSLP programs were utilized as staff sought to clarify the needs of our school and students, and align the schools goals with a successful advisory model. A team of staff volunteers became the core of the advisory planning team. Eventually all staff members were invited to join the advisory implementation team who led the planning for implementation for the school's advisory program.

Initiative of stakeholders. A group of approximately 50 staff members pointed to the change in state policy as a reason to form a cohort and take action to begin research and planning for implementation of the PSLP initiative. The current principal had

recently announced his resignation, 20% of the teaching staff had been laid off or

transferred due to a reduction in force, and the current administration team would be

informed of their new assignments on July 1st, 2009. This cohort became a driving force

in the future planning for implementation of a personalized learning program in the urban

high school and became the hub of what would become the advisory implementation

team. Comments from the cohort members expressed are as follows:

> Many of us already give up our lunch or prep to meet with students on a
> daily basis. We give them extra help with their course work, or talk to
> them about their problems and even help them fill out their college
> applications. It would be great if we could formalize this process so others
> that want to be a mentor for our students can provide the same assistance.
> [Doc1:p1:2-3]

> Every year we are faced with administrative turnover. Teachers do the leg
> work for new initiatives at the start of the school year when we should be
> doing detailed planning over the summer, especially if the planning
> involves scheduling issues or professional development. We are always
> behind the eight ball. If we know about the change in state policy, let's do
> something about it now instead of a rush job later. [Doc1:p3:3-4]

> There is a team of teachers ready to move on this planning now. Let's get
> it moving. We need to plan properly so we can meet the needs of our staff
> and students. Let's do this right for a change. It would be great to have a
> plan in place before the year begins. [Doc1:p5:12-14]

A team of staff members worked over the summer, voluntarily, working with

selected guidance counselors, and consultants from the NJCASC. By the end of July the

team had two proposals to present to the newly formed administrative team. The first was

the implementation of an advisory program and the second was the implementation of an

electronic career planning portfolio. The team also had a proposed calendar for

professional development and plans to introduce the staff to the new initiative. With the

support of the administration, the team became a driving force for the planning for

implementation of the advisory program.

In order for staff to become vested in the change process and really buy in to it, they must feel they are part of the process and their voices are heard in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the new advisory program. Within the school, collegiality among teachers, as measured by the frequency of communication, mutual support, help, and so forth, was a strong indicator in planning for implementation success. Virtually every research study on the topic has found this to be the case (Fullan, 2007).

Facilitation and coordination. With the driving factors of planning documents, changes in state policy, and the initiative of stakeholders described, the vice principal program coordinator was then recognized as a driving factor. The administrative staff of the urban high school consisted of the principal, and five vice principals. There were also three teacher leaders and four disciplinarians who were part of the leadership team. The teacher leader of guidance had a primary role in the planning and implementation of the advisory program. The four vice principals did not play a role in the planning for implementation of the advisory program. The vice principal program coordinator, this researcher, was the only member of the administrative team remaining from the previous school year. While I did not have a counseling background, nor did I have experience with advisory programs, I utilized the information from the planning documents, state policy, and consultants in order to get background information on advisory programs.

Both myself, and the teacher leader of guidance, as program coordinators echoed the definitions found in the publications, *The Power of Advisories and Changing Systems to Personalized Learning*. Both felt the main reason to create an advisory program was to deal with academic, social, and emotional needs of students as well as career planning,

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and that an advisory was a system where every child should have an adult advocate or mentor. This was also communicated at the initial planning session and to the advisory implementation committee during the September planning session and the advisory implementation team retreat. It was stated,

> Our goal, as we explored options for our school, was to provide an advocate for each student. It's especially important because someone has to stand up for all our students. [DOC3].

The newly assigned principal made the initial decision not to implement the advisory program during the planning because it was recommended to utilize the first year for planning of any advisory program. Planning began by asking the staff what they wanted to see in the advisory program. It was clear from the planning documents the team needed to create a vision for the advisory program, formulate curriculum, and an evaluation system. The vice principal program coordinator invited all staff to voluntarily join the advisory implementation team. The structure of the planning for implementation of the advisory program was set up to be a collaborative process.

Advisory implementation team (AIT). The advisory implementation team began with a 2-day retreat workshop with the consultants. The advisory implementation team began by defining a vision for the advisory program and determining some organizational needs. Their roles were discussed and clarification of roles was sought. A calendar for the training of the advisory implementation team was established along with the procedures for turnkey training for the remainder of the staff.

The advisory implementation team met once a month. These team members would then provide turnkey training during the staff's administrative preparation period

once per month. Administration decided that the curriculum would be systemized in order to allow for certain themes throughout the year.

Once initial planning was established, the team provided an overview of the advisory program, purpose, and calendar for staff. There was a presentation on the first day of school, an introductory "kick-off" workshop. The team presented an outline of how professional development would take place for the remainder of the year, along with the statistical data from an environmental scan and the changes in the New Jersey State regulations and policy. This was done in small teams in our community room by our advisory team with the help of consultants. The staff also engaged in an activity entitled, "Colors." The activity is used to get people talking as well as to learn about themselves and others.

Staff members were introduced to the proposal of an advisory program in September of 2009 and worked with consultants from NJCASC who provided training in planning for implementation of an advisory program. Using a variety of protocols and activities, staff members learned about their personality types as well as those of their colleagues. The activities and protocols were also chosen to help students understand teachers and help teachers work better with one another. The activities and protocols showed staff how they can base their lessons and teaching styles on students' needs, rather than requiring that all students adjust to the staff member's personality.

One member of the AIT team, RD, said her experience as a special education teacher, her experience with advisory programs in college, and her upbringing in the city of the urban high school in this study helped shape her understanding of personalized

learning through advisory programs. When asked if she felt the protocols and activities were beneficial she responded:

> Some people feel they are a waste of time. Me personally, I did many of the activities in the summer at my residency so I was familiar with them. I guess there's two ways to look at it, first, you get a better understanding of your needs. You get a better understanding of what your needs are and you can be more proactive about your own learning plan. I think the same thing works for us as individuals. But the other side of it is there needs to be a model, top-down. You have all different types of people; some people need everything laid out for them, other people just go with the flow and will feel things out. We are all different. To say that we now know we are all different but we are going to treat everyone the same would be contradictory, especially since we are expecting to differentiate learning in our classrooms and personalize learning as part of advisory program. (INT1:p4:10-19)

Another teacher, one who teaches the Peer Leaders course, commented on the similarities of the protocols and activities with the scripted activities of the Peer Leaders curriculum. Teaching tolerance and communication were key themes along with building relationships and personalizing experiences for students:

> Because of past scheduling staff members in the same SLC always had off during the same block. This year that won't be the case. For the first time ever, professional development will force people to actually work, talk, and get to know others from different SLCs. It will be interesting to watch this in action since the past structure of the school isolated people in the SLCs.

> The protocols promote tolerance and communication among people. It has implications for relationships and deeper understandings of where people are coming from. You can start to look at people in a different light. The experiences taught staff what they can expect from different personality types and how they can react to those types to be proactive for future endeavors. It all comes down to building the best relationships to make things work. (INT2:p6:8-19)

One of the primary goals of the advisory program, as defined by staff, was to create a caring school climate. How teachers and students got along and how they worked together by sharing ideas, resources, and offering support to one another was echoed during the training sessions by both new and veteran teachers. Additionally, staff

mentioned the influence of administration at both the school and district level. All staff members were given the opportunity to be part of the advisory implementation team at the introductory meeting.

Staff buy-in. Staff buy-in is the greatest challenge most schools face when trying to implement an advisory program. It is imperative that everyone involved believe in the overall objectives of the program, and have a direct role in the development and implementation of the advisory program (Clark, 2003). Teachers reported that they must see the program as a sincere effort to achieve real change, and believe their hard work will result in more than a one-year quick fix. Respondents reported the following as they worked on the planning of the advisory program:

> During the turnkey training to faculty, my passion for this program has been contagious. I see myself mentoring other staff members and they are cooperating with other colleagues I've never seen them talk to before. Great ideas and relationships are building among staff which is a great start. [INT4:p2:7-11]

> I am very excited and I am excited about something we are finally going to launch and there are so many people, particularly among the faculty and staff that have worked to make this happen. If we can get them to continue to nurture this excitement I think we will have something very special for our students and our school organization. [INT3:p3:43-46]

> The teachers who are in the training have been very positive. The other teachers I've talked to say it's a general sense of, well it's one more thing or here is something else they're going to try and there will be no follow through with. It's pretty much a sense of here's one more responsibility I have and one more thing I have to do. [INT2:p6:7-10]

RD reported that administrative support and involvement is critical in creating a caring school climate. The only administrator at the initial planning session for staff was the vice principal for coordinating the advisory program. She reported:

> A lot of teachers were concerned asking, where is the administration at this planning meeting? I am finding out that there's a lot of uncertainty between administration at the school level here and at central office. It's a cause for

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concern. Staff members were glad to see the vice principal and coordinator for the advisory program, a familiar face for many years, and there were undertones of hope for the program. [INT1:p6:22-25]

BC a new teacher at the school expressed how helpful staff members, especially administration, were in his transition as a new teacher and as a new member of our school community. He commented:

District policy mandates mentoring for new staff members at the school, showing the importance of transitioning and building relationships for staff. It is difficult to believe we don't afford our students the same opportunity. I can easily see how I might have fallen through the cracks of such a large institution without the assistance of a mentor and my colleagues. [DOC2]

Several respondents referred to the lack of administrative presence at the professional development training sessions during the planning for implementation of the advisory program. BW noted some administrators never observed the professional development trainings, which was opposite to the regular school program. "I mean, teachers are contractually obligated to attend the sessions and administrators are supposed to monitor these things." BW noted, "If teachers don't attend, how do we really know if they're on board?" [INT4:p1:9-13].

All the volunteer staff members of the advisory implementation team were versed on key elements of successful advisory programs. The team was provided with literature of model advisory programs from schools around the country along with the literature obtained by the counseling team on how to plan and implement successful advisory programs. Planning and implementing an advisory program, like any other aspect of school programming, is an ongoing process. Consultants from CSSR and NJCASC assisted during the first year of planning and implementation of the advisory program in the urban high school.

During several advisory turnkey training sessions, staff members working within their SLC groups identified advantages and needs for the school's advisory as the following: building better relationships, creating a caring school climate, assisting students in making responsible choices, accepting responsibility for their actions, monitoring student records, including parents in the students education, and providing staff with the training and knowledge to accomplish the goals.

There seemed to be a collaborative effort, supporting and working with members of the advisory implementation team, by staff attending the professional development sessions. Staff members gave input towards the purpose, curriculum, organizational issues, assessment, and leadership of the advisory program. There was a supportive, collaborative effort by those who attended the sessions. The staff attending the turnkey training sessions was a driving force in the planning process as they worked with the advisory implementation team.

The administrative team. With the driving forces of policy, planning documents and successful models for planning advisory programs, initiative of stakeholders, and the advisory implementation team described, the administration was then recognized as a driving force in the early months of the program. A newly appointed principal and new vice principals joined the existing administrative team. Each vice principal was charged with the operations of their SLC and various overarching functions of the school as well as assisting the principal with daily operations.

At the onset of the study, the elements of administrative support were in place for planning for implementation of the advisory program. The following was planned: 1) school-wide visible support for advisory; 2) faculty meeting time was devoted to

discussing advisory; 3) planning/preparation time for advisors; 3) training/professional development devoted to advisory; and, 4) orientation for students to the advisory program. In order to embed advisory into the culture of the school and achieve "buy-in" from important constituents, it is important for the school leadership to implement support structures for the program (Tocci et al., 2005).

The administration believed that buy-in would be created through the turnkey training provided by the advisory implementation team members and through the support structures implemented. The administrative team, especially the principal and program coordinator, began establishing communications with central office to make every effort to re-establish the SLC common planning time that had been removed due to scheduling conflicts [DOC 3]. Other factors the administration made sure to do was provide the advisory implementation team with several resources related to advisory planning, personalized learning, advisory curriculum, and assessment from various schools and organizations [DOC 6]. Staff members also kept detailed journals and binders of their experiences. These documents became useful tools for reflection at the advisory implementation team meetings and turnkey training sessions as the administrative team was informed of logistical, curricular, and evaluative processes during the planning year.

At the AIT team 2-day retreat, the principal came to address the advisory implementation team to clarify their role in the planning for implementation process as well as emphasize her support and the support of the entire administrative team. She addressed the following: "The collaborative decisions of this team, the staff, and the administration as well as the students and parents will ultimately guide the advisory program forward."

The principal provided an explanation of how the professional development calendar was put in place to provide support for the new curriculum of the schools as well as support for the advisory program. She further described her understanding of the changes in state policy and its effect on the school's recent scheduling changes as they were based on school data and students needs. She addressed the recent changes in scheduling and the teams' concerns about the integrity of the SLCs. She expressed her support for the advisory program and her hope that the advisory program would help bring integrity back to the SLCs. She agreed to work with central office and the scheduling team to bring back the common planning time and student-staff SLC purity. She concluded by reiterating how she would be waiting for the advisory implementation team and the staff, with the guidance of the CSSR and NJCASC consultants and program coordinators, to be the primary force in the development and evaluation of the advisory program from year to year [OBS5:p2:25-49].

In the beginning of the planning for implementation of the advisory program, the principal and subsequent new administration verbally supported the program. The follow-up actions of the principal and subsequent administrators sent a different message to the staff. Two months into the program the principal and vice principals did not demonstrate ongoing support of the program. PL, a member of the AIT team noted, "I haven't seen an administrator at any turnkey training session yet, except for the program coordinator. Staff are beginning to think this will be another quick fix solution" [INT 3:p3:12-18].

Advisory pilots: Preparing for the role of advisor. Staff believed that an effective program needs to be consistent. One teacher said it best, "Just when we get some momentum going with a new program, the players change, the circumstances

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change, or the program disappears." According to DiMartino and Clarke (2008) and Osofsky et al. (2003), the goal of personalizing the high school environment is to create an atmosphere that connects students to their school. Constant staff and administrative turnover and school restructuring do not support getting to know students well and establishing the trust needed to form bonding relationships.

Two pilot sessions were planned and conducted. The advisory implementation team planned two advisory pilot sessions. The advisory implementation team organized the logistics of the day for each session. The staff members were provided turnkey training on one of three scripted activities they could use for each of the themed days.

Both advisory pilot sessions were 40 minutes in length, held on a Tuesday, and scheduled identically during the middle of the day. The staff was trained in advance using the prescribed activity for each session, during professional development training. Information obtained from the two pilot sessions was utilized for planning for implementation of the urban high school's advisory program. The use of prescribed activities, the grouping of students, the scheduling of advisory, and the advisors' feedback regarding preparation for their role were driving forces in the planning process.

The first pilot session revolved around a "getting to know you" theme. Advisors for ninth, tenth and eleventh grade students were provided three activities, from which advisors would choose one to do with their group. At the end of the activity the teacher filled out a survey. The twelfth grade students were provided small group sessions regarding financial aid and college application processes. Feedback surveys from the advisory sessions were collected and information was analyzed. A frequency table of the advisor surveys is listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Survey Pilot 1 – Results

Survey Question	6-10	11-15	20 or more				Total
Number of students in the advisory group	14	10	11				35
	AE	BN	HRT	MT	VPA	Not Listed	
What is your SLC	7	4	6	6	4	8	35
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often			Total
I felt comfortable participating in the advisory activities	3	3	7	22			35
I encouraged my advisees to share their thoughts and opinions	0	4	8	23			35
I listened more than I talked during the activity	0	4	13	18			35
At times I felt torn between being a teacher and being an advisory	10	8	13	4			35
I had adequate time to complete the activity	1	3	10	21			35

The most significant occurrence, as indicated by the surveyed staff, was lack of parent and community involvement and adaptation of the master schedule to support the small learning community initiative of personalization. The next most popular response was providing supports and interventions for students.

The survey suggests that advisors participating in the activity felt comfortable with the activity. Eighty two percent of the advisors indicated feeling comfortable participating. Approximately 89 percent of the advisors were more willing to let the students do the talking. I interpreted this to mean that students were actively engaged in the activity more so than the advisor. Advisors struggled with the separation between their role as an advisor and their role as teacher. This indicates more training should be provided for advisors in this area. Lastly the survey indicated the pre-planned activities were provided ample time to be executed as approximately 89 percent showed enough time was offered.

The second turnkey training session took place and the theme was "academic planning." Staff was to do an activity entitled "scavenger hunt" to assist students with navigating the course curriculum handbook. This activity was to familiarize staff and students with the document. A frequency table of the advisor surveys is listed in Table 4.

Table 4

Survey Pilot 2 – Results

Survey Question	0-5	6-10	11-15	20 or more			Total
Number of students in the advisory group	2	4	7	2			15
	AE	BN	HRT	MT	VPA	Not Listed	
What is your SLC	2	3	3	2	0	5	15
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often			Total
I felt comfortable participating in the advisory activities	2	0	4	9			15
I encouraged my advisees to share their thoughts and opinions	0	1	7	7			15
I listened more than I talked during the activity	0	3	6	6			15
At times I felt torn between being a teacher and being an advisory	2	5	4	4			15
I had adequate time to complete the activity	1	0	7	7			15

The survey suggests that advisors participating in the activity felt comfortable

with the activity. Eighty seven percent of the advisors indicated feeling comfortable

participating. Approximately 93 percent of the advisors were more willing to let the

students do the talking. I again interpreted this to mean that students were actively

engaged in the activity more so than the advisor. This survey, as with the first survey,

indicated the advisors struggled with the separation between their role as an advisor and their role as teacher. This indicates more training should be provided for advisors in this area. Lastly the survey indicated the pre-planned activities were provided ample time to be executed as approximately 93 percent showed enough time was offered. It should be noted that 20 less advisors participated in the second survey. This advisory pilot took place after staff members were notified of a reduction in force. It is this researcher's opinion that staff members might not have been eager to cooperate in the survey under such circumstances, or they were absent from school and another staff member filled in for their advisory group.

Of those that did participate, the surveys reflected similar results. Advisors felt comfortable using the prescribed activities, students were engaged in the activities, and ample time was given for the activities. The one exception noted was advisors feel torn between the role of advisor and teacher.

Summary. The driving factors in the planning for implementation of the advisory program include: planning documents and successful models of advisory programs, initiative of stakeholders, the advisory implementation team, change in policy, results from the advisory pilots, and administrative support. Advisory curriculum, ongoing advisory professional development, and advisory evaluation were spearheaded by the advisory implementation team with the assistance of consultants in collaboration with the administration and staff. Further logistics would be discussed as the program progressed.

Resisting factors: Logistics. A variety of resisting factors arose during the planning stages of the program. Logistical factors included people and size, time and space, and professional development and support. A second resisting factor was differing

philosophies among diverse staff members regarding the purpose of the advisory

program, staff buy-in, and staff communication.

The underlying goal of personalized student learning plans is to motivate students

to become engaged in school by having them work with an adult mentor to set personal,

career, and academic goals and establish a plan for success. The "personalized" element

should reflect both the fact that students are setting individualized goals for themselves,

and that each student has an opportunity to develop a mentoring relationship with a

school staff member. When group sizes are held in average class-size groups, the students

are less likely to develop a close relationship with the facilitator and may be less likely to

be engaged in the advisory group experience (NJDOE, 2010).

People and size. If every staff member acted as an advisory the school could

manage a ratio of 15:1. However, members of the advisory implementation team, having

provided much of the turnkey training with SLC members seemed concerned about

personality differences, teacher lack of interest, and teacher attendance issues [DOC7].

The advisory implementation team made recommendations for their individual SLC

advisory groups. Each group was determined to be no more than 25 students. It was

determined if advisors expressed apprehension with their role they would be paired with

another advisor. Teachers with a high rate of absences were also paired with another staff

member [DOC 7]. This led to high student to teacher ratios in the advisory groups.

Administration made a decision that all staff should participate in the advisory

program in some capacity. The advisory implementation team members were free to

decide how to best utilize their team's resources: staff members, guidance counselors,

disciplinarian, and vice principal. Many advisory implementation team members noted

the disciplinarian and vice principal were always getting called out to "emergencies" in the building and it would be a waste to place them with a group if coverage would always be needed [DOC 7], again leading to high student to teacher ratios.

The advisory implementation team within their SLC groups also realized the urban high school had 132 classrooms in the school, not including large areas such as the gym, cafeteria, auditorium, library, and community room. The student population was at 1728 and the entire certificated staff was 150 (not including administration). If every classroom was used the group ratio could be 12 students to 1 teacher, but 144 classrooms would be needed. Large areas of the school would have to be used for multiple groups to accommodate the remaining 12 advisory groups. If advisory was held at the same time during the day; built into the schedule, this would be logistically impossible with the number of students and classrooms in the building. Some suggestions were to hold advisory at different times of the day, or by SLC, which would require extensive scheduling changes to be made. This could only be done at the central office level and would require additional time away from instructional time, which concerned many teaching staff members [DOC 9].

As stated before, major changes in scheduling had already taken place at the start of SY2009-2010. It was suggested to utilize the old "homeroom type" schedule for advisory groups. This could only be done with cooperation of the "mass scheduler" at central office. Students were not assigned to a grade level homeroom for the first time since 1998. Although the school did not meet regularly in homeroom, students had previously been assigned to a grade level homeroom on their schedule. Homeroom was used at the beginning of each semester to disseminate information, lockers and locker

combinations, student schedules, and first day information. Homeroom became such a costly endeavor due to the additional staff contact time with students, the school decided to handle the dissemination of such information during first block. It was noted at several meetings by many staff members bringing back additional contact time with students could become costly for the district unless a workable agreement could be made with the union members [DOC 7].

Administration decided to work with the central office scheduler to reinstate "homeroom" or possibly call it another name after first block. This would allow for grade level grouping, taking of school attendance, possibly the advisory sessions, and other school functions. This was a suggestion by the advisory implementation team, stemming from conversations during the turnkey training. A resisting factor to reinstating homeroom would be the monetary component and/or working with the union or central office to make this part of the urban high school's teacher contract [DOC 7].

Time, space, and scheduling. Scheduling was a major challenge in planning for implementation of the advisory program. A major reason was the scheduling was done from the central office. One scheduler worked in solitude when developing the school master schedule for SY2009-2010. Since it was decided the advisory program would not begin until the following school year, there would still be time to make necessary changes in scheduling as needed to accommodate the advisory program [OBS5:p2:15-18].

Time and space for professional development for both the advisory implementation team and the turn key training sessions became a resisting factor as common planning time for SLCs in designated areas was not scheduled by SLCs during

the SY2009-2010 for the first time since 1998. Staff members were still contractually obligated to meet for professional development during their administrative preparation time, three times per week. The staff members would not meet in their smaller SLC groups in several different areas, but instead, in larger groups in the community room.

The administrative team developed a professional development calendar for these sessions, and the staff members were supposed to come to the community room (a large room in the urban high school) for the meetings. However, tracking the people became an arduous task, since staff would be absent, needed for class coverage, called to an unscheduled meeting, or just not attend. In the past the vice principal for each SLC would be charged with overseeing the administrative preparation time for their SLC.

A second concern was space for the professional development sessions. The community room was one of the school's most popular areas to hold events. It was used by the entire district for many celebratory events. Therefore, the professional development sessions would get cancelled or moved to another location at the last minute. Most locations could not hold the larger numbers assigned to the meetings. The urban high school in this study is extremely large and staff became frustrated when they would arrive for professional development only to find out it was cancelled or moved unexpectedly. One member of the advisory team stated in his interview:

> Administration has to take the training seriously. If we are going to have professional development three times a week and advisory program is something they are serious about, and they should be, they should make sure the time and space are set up so we can meet with our groups under the right conditions. It's already hard enough for the staff to accept the changes this year. This can't be another case of getting emails the morning of or night before, saying its being cancelled until the next month or moved to a new location. Some people won't check their email first thing in the morning. Also, administration has to be serious about the training and accountability of it. [INT 2:p7:24-32]

A proposal was approved by the Board of Education to provide half-day sessions twice a month for the purpose of planning for implementation of the advisory program. This proposal was developed in isolation of the advisory implementation team and went against the collaborative nature of the planning team and best practices for change. Concerns from the staff and consultants were expressed as follows:

> If we have advisory after a half day of school, what will stop students or staff, for that matter, from just leaving the building? Are we taking attendance? Are we holding people accountable? Are we using this time for the intended purpose? I think it sends a negative message that decisions are being made top-down. [DOC 7].

> The "team" decided the advisory program should be after second period. Most of staff has arrived to school by that time. It should also be during the middle of the week when there are fewer absences. [DOC 7]

Professional development and support. The advisory implementation team provided turnkey training to the staff. Concerns arose when staff members retired in the middle of the school year and new teachers were assigned. The new staff was unprepared to step into the advisor role. The professional development training, although in the planning stages, would need to consider how to address this highly transient student and staff population.

The urban high school was known for its difficult and mobile student population, students' low socioeconomic status (SES), and overall low academic achievement. These factors contributed significantly to high teacher, administrator, and student turnover rate, and in turn, this made it difficult to form strong relationships. Keeping the staff, administration, students, and community stakeholders properly supported with the most up-to-date information was a daunting task.

Consistency. The lack of consistency in the population at the school had a strong

influence on the overall climate of the school. Teachers knew fewer of their colleagues,

as staff members commented:

> I don't know as many staff or students this year because so many people left and
> so many people are new, plus they changed the schedule and we don't teach the
> students in our SLC. [DOC 5]

> I was new last year and in a different SLC, now my room has changed and I don't
> know hardly anyone; students or staff. [DOC 7]

> Administration needs to demonstrate the importance of this program to both staff
> and students. They have to demonstrate that this is something they are serious
> about, and this is something they value by making sure that when they say we're
> going to have a meeting once a month or three times a week it's actually carried
> out. It can't be a case of emails sent the day before cancelling the meeting or PD
> until next month. Also, they must be serious about the training and the
> accountability of it. [INT2:p7:36-42]

In the beginning of the year, staff members had high hopes for the new professional

development plan even though it was a big change from the norm of past years. The

advisory team members would report positive feedback from the turnkey training

sessions with regard to participation, staff attendance, and enthusiasm for the program.

However, after the second month, several meetings had been cancelled or moved to new

locations. As the year progressed, staff members were discontent with the new

professional development plan stating it was an ineffective use of time, it lacked purpose,

and it was creating a lack of trust and communication between staff members (OBS1:p3).

One of the veteran teachers remarked,

> We don't really work together as a team because some of us get so frustrated with
> the others who obviously don't want to be there, and the structure of the whole
> thing is just not helpful to anyone. [OBS1:p4]

> Most of the staff members' feelings about the new professional development

structure became negatively impacted by the constant cancellations and changes. The

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imposed structure led to a lack of established trust and purpose and further impurity of the SLC structure in the urban high school. This left many staff members feeling discontent and disconnected to their SLC, the collaborative work in our school, and the advisory program in general.

Rapidly changing school environment. Several staff members made comments about too much change happening too quickly, which led to more negativity and resistance. The schedule changes, new courses and curriculum, the professional development changes, the new administrative team, and the new privatized security staff along with approximately 350 more students in the school with less staff, seemed to bring more disorder to the urban high school. According to Fullan (2001), "Many school leaders compound problems with relentless "projectitis" (p. 109). In 2000, Thomas Hatch studied 57 school districts from 1992-1995. Reports from the study revealed a typical urban district pursued more than 11 significant initiatives adding to the endless cycle of initiatives, sapping the strength and spirit from the schools and communities.

Members of the implementation team expressed frustration because the scheduling structure had been dramatically changed during the planning year as opposed to previous years, in which scheduling was reflective of the SLC structure. This abrupt change did not sit well with many staff. The school was structured into small learning communities and common planning time was used to offer students more time and energy. The teachers are also able to keep better tabs on students who struggle and can discuss the students amongst themselves to identify needs and ideas to work with individuals as the group of teachers share the same students throughout the day.

For the first time, SLC students were not scheduled with consideration to the SLC staff members. SLC staff members were not given common preparation periods either. This was due to the introduction of new curricular courses to assist a majority of the ninth grade population in Language Arts and Mathematics. Many staff members felt these changes would make it difficult to encourage staff buy-in of the advisory program. Some of the comments were as follows:

> It's like we're not even in SLCs anymore because we teach all students from every SLC. We don't have common planning time during the day like we used to. This makes it more difficult to handle daily problems that occur with students in our SLC, students that we are directly accountable for. I am not saying that all students aren't our students, but we are being held accountable for our SLC more so than the rest of the students. Too much change at once will cause resistance. [OBS6:p4:41-49]

> During the training session, a staff member asked me, how are we going to get teachers to feel they are part of the program with all the recent change going on? How do we get staff to understand this is something useful for them and that they should be spending extra time with it? [INT2:p6:15-17]

> There was some resistance due to the demand of dealing with the recent changes and the demand on people's time to prepare. [INT4:p2:23-25]

> Some people are going to do it because it's an obligation it's not really a heartfelt kind of thing so if a student is not there the advisor is not really going to follow up to find out how that student is doing or what's going on. I don't think that kind of person is going to be concerned about implementing the program in such a way that it will meet the needs of students. If staff buy into it and really see that it makes a difference and they really care about making a difference, it will definitely make a difference here. [INT5:p5:29-34]

> Unless activities are clearly laid out you may see some resistance. Some of the comments from the turnkey sessions staff made were, why am I doing this its more work for me? [OBS6:p31:3-5]

> We don't even know the students in our SLC, let alone the new staff members. How are we supposed to collaborate on strategies to improve on student learning, when our common planning time has been taken away? [OBS6:p8:18-22]

As the vice principal program coordinator I would debrief the principal and the administrative team at the weekly administrative team meetings. I informed them of the concerns of the advisory implementation team as they perceived a lack of administrative support, problems getting staff training coverage, maintaining integrity of the SLCs, and the planning process for the advisory program as non-collaborative and unplanned. One of the consultants mentioned at a meeting:

> There was tension among the group members. She specifically noticed that the body language of many in the group confirmed that they also felt administrative support was lacking. She specifically mentioned one teacher, one teacher leader, a clinician and a counselor that were non-attentive, confrontational, and emotional about recent changes. Specifically when others were vocal about lack of administrative presence or change in administration. [OBS4:p11:26-30]

The principal did not have secondary school experience. Her knowledge of advisory programs came from discussions with the vice principal coordinating the advisory program, the teacher leader of guidance, and the NJCASC and CSSR consultants. She was verbally supportive of the advisory program, however, she was new to secondary education, which meant much of her initial time at the beginning of the school year was learning about the school culture and climate of the organization, the people, and inner-workings of the institution. When she talked to the staff on the first day of school she gave the impression that plans were already set for the advisory program: the organization, the curriculum, the grouping of the students, and the assessment. One advisory implementation team member stated:

> It seems like the principal has already made up her mind, no matter what this group decides. Is there already a plan in place? At the first day meeting administration made it sound like there would be a collaborative effort to the implementation and maintenance of the program. [OBS4:p10:15-18]

> What happened to working collaboratively? Is the principal going to make all the decisions before we have a chance to look at our data, the research documents and

go through the training? It's great she is supporting the program, but we need to work together through some decisions.

Clarity of program purpose.

Staff buy-In. The administration recognized early that staff buy-in was critical to

the successful implementation of the advisory program because the staff were responsible

for delivering the curriculum. The administration and the members of the advisory

implementation team found that obtaining teacher buy-in, especially the willingness to

take an active role in the program, was difficult. Staff members who did not believe in the

program were not going to put the effort into making it work. After each turnkey training

meeting, members of the advisory implementation team (AIT) would debrief the team at

their next AIT meeting. Three advisory implementation team members stated that many

teachers expressed uneasiness with some of the curricular topics involved with

implementing the program [DOC 7]. The two pilot surveys indicated that 50% of the staff

members who participated in the advisory pilot sessions struggled between their role as

teacher and their role as advisor during advisory sessions [SURVEY1 & 2:Q6]. Several

staff members stated they did not understand the program in its entirety. The following

comments were made by the interview candidates:

> During the turnkey training sessions, comments from, I really don't know what it is we're doing, are we mentoring kids, are we talking to kids, and is there a curriculum? What is this program is it half day or are the kids supposed to go home? There doesn't seem to be a real plan as to how this program is going to function or what the expectations are for the teachers, what the expectations are for the staff, or for the students. [INT1:p3:41-45]

> I still think there is a mystique where people are asking, what is my role? How will you use me? How much time will be involved? Ongoing professional development will be useful to help define roles and be useful and serve us all well. Staff is asking for more time to collaborate that's the thing. [INT2:p4:5-9]

Meaningful interaction and participation. Formal interactions among staff are

fixed since they are formally constructed by the administration due to the new schedule.

Staff have no decision making power when it comes to formal interaction during

administrative preparation periods or professional development, the groups and context

were constructed by the administrative team. In other words, during the advisory turnkey

training sessions, staff members were scheduled during a specific time, on specific dates,

and with staff members. However, when staff interacted informally on both a personal

and professional level with other staff members, two main reasons were cited for doing

so: peoples' personalities and SLC affiliation. The same reasons were listed as reasons

for limiting interactions among colleagues. Most staff at the urban high school expressed

their frustration from time to time over being forced to work with people who they

termed as having negative or conflicting personalities, whether in their SLC or not. One

staff member commented: "Eventually, you figure out who you can work with both in

and out of your SLC because of personalities" (DOC 5).

Teacher attitude was often an issue during turnkey training sessions. Some staff

came to the sessions resentful of the time it took away from other activities they

considered more beneficial. It seemed to be the same people with positive attitudes, who

were focused on accomplishing the goals of the day, while those with negative attitudes

did nothing or vented frustration, taking time away from accomplishing the task at hand.

Teachers who shared perspectives regarding the advisory program interacted together

more. One staff member remarked:

> I think there are many personalities that annoy me, and when I'm forced to sit
> next to them during the administrative preparation time it takes a lot of effort to
> be tolerant of them. I wish that more of them were willing to be participants, at

least make the time go better. If I could change one thing, I would really prefer not to work with negative people. [DOC 7]

Summary. Planning for implementation of the advisory program invoked a variety of logistical problems, which arose throughout the initial planning year of the program. The program coordinator worked closely with the advisory implementation team, who continually provided turnkey training to the staff to seek out problems in the design of the program. The advisory program was modified as staff had a direct role in the development of the program throughout the planning phase. Driving forces and resisting factors often work against one another as change was introduced during the planning year.

Research Question 2: What barriers were identified in the initiating and implementing the advisory program?

Barriers. In planning advisory programs there are a variety of potential obstacles to be addressed during the planning stages. One barrier is a rush to implement an advisory program, especially when there are so many prototype programs available in package forms, as kits. A second barrier to implementation is the top-down effect of the principal's verbal support but "lack of action" for the advisory program's implementation and evaluation, and its negative influence on people in the organization. A third barrier is consideration of the current workload of those involved in planning, implementing and evaluating the advisory program.

Rush to implement the advisory program. Advisory proponents have stressed the importance of intensive and extended planning and staff development not only prior to, but also during the implementation of an advisory program. Plans are likely to change between the initiation of the program and implementation phase. Utilizing the *Power of*

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Advisories training workshops, and many of the pre-packaged curricular, grade leveled activity kits that were afforded the school, the staff and the administration made it rather quick for the team to provide a themed curriculum for the program.

The scripted activities seemed to require little preparation for staff, and at the turnkey training sessions, the modeling of the activities among staff members did not produce the same results as when the activities were applied with the students during the pilot sessions. Staff members reported the following:

> I was unprepared for students' questions and I did not know the answers, it felt demeaning to me, I have a reputation to protect. [DOC 10]

> I had to do preparation before I met with my group. I know my kids. This was a lot more work than I had anticipated. [DOC 10]

> I felt I was doing the job of a guidance counselor. I didn't feel trained to answer students' questions about course selection, especially with all the change taking place regarding the SLCs. [DOC 10]

Despite the work of the advisory implementation team and the collaborative effort of the staff, it seems the cultural pattern of the urban high school, finding the easiest solution, took precedent over staff and students' needs in seeking a continuous evaluative process. Pressured by the change in state policy to implement personalized student learning plans (PSLP) by the end of the school year and dealing with a 20 percent turn-over of staff and administrative personnel, the organization failed to combine meaning with action to achieve a program that would provide "continuous improvement" on a sustainable scale (Fullan, 2007). One advisory team member recounted:

> What I am finding about advisory programs or any change effort is that you do a lot of independent study so that you can stay current. There is not always going to be PD to help you understand what's coming down the line for your students' or parents in the workplace or marketplace. I've been schooled enough to know that I can reach out and research to be more beneficial to students and I am trying to parlay to all staff and students; it's all about lifelong learning. I continue to learn

better ways and more efficient ways to deliver services to students but I am more than prepared to do that. [INT3:p3:33-39]

Principal's verbal support but lack of action. Principals who signal strong administrative support for an advisory program during the planning and implementation stages, but refuse to follow-up action, send the message that the initiative is not a long-term priority worthy of teacher buy-in. Several staff members commented that lack of support from the principal was a major challenge in the implementation process. In many instances, the staff expressed concern over the school schedule, SLC purity, or providing coverage for staff at advisory implementation team training sessions. The requests were never addressed directly or were perceived as unsupported by the principal [DOC 9].

Staff members expressed concern that their efforts towards this initiative would be wasted, as with past programs that had been discontinued after only a brief implementation and planning period. Therefore, there were staff members who chose not to support the program, which affected teacher buy-in. Teachers often look to the principal to determine the degree to which a new program will ultimately come to fruition. However, as stated before, this urban high school has seen five new principals in the previous five and half years. Reverting back to the status quo has become part of the culture, as staff believes it to be the safest way to precede in times of uncertainty. Ten staff members, including members of the advisory implementation team, noticed there were no administrators, other than the vice principal program coordinator at any of the training sessions or subsequent turnkey training sessions [DOC1 & 2], [OBS4]. One advisory implementation team member stated:

> It seems like the principal has already made up her mind, no matter what this group decides. Is there already a plan in place? At the first day meeting,

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administration made it sound like there would be a collaborative effort to the implementation and maintenance of the program. [OBS4:p10:15-18]

Another participant echoed this sentiment, stating, "I believe the group does not feel supported by administration" [OBS5:p1:9-10].

The professional development calendar for the advisory implementation training sessions was developed over the summer. Members of the advisory implementation team were to be provided substitute coverage, where applicable, for the all day training sessions. Names, dates, and teaching blocks were provided for the entire year for each member who needed coverage. However, on many occasions staff did not receive coverage. BW, one of the advisory members, reported in an interview:

> The vice principal that runs the substitute coverage did not provide the subs on many occasions. This shows a lack of communication, lack of administrative support not only at the school level but at the central office level. It's one thing when it happens once, but when it happens every time we are suppose to meet, it shows a true lack of support for the program. Eventually people give up because the message is clear – The program won't last! [OBS4:p4:36-42]

In an effort to show administrative support, the vice principal program coordinator tried to work out some compensation time and to provide coverage for future meetings. At least five of the original volunteer members of the advisory implementation team relinquished their commitment to the team. This logistical problem created inequity with the number of staff on the advisory implementation team representing each SLC, especially during the four blocks of turnkey training for the staff. It also became a barrier to the implementation process, showing evidence of further lack of administrative support and a move towards SLC integrity and sense of community [OBS5:p2:25-49].

Staff members who missed training sessions, especially one that modeled an activity to be used with students, sometimes conveyed feelings of being unprepared and awkward with the activity,

> I was unprepared for students' questions and I didn't understand the scavenger hunt activity. I did not have time to review the activity before I had to do it with my group. It was very last minute. I felt very uncomfortable. [DOC 10]

Consideration of workload. Advisory implementation team members rotated responsibility for taking minutes during their turnkey sessions. It became an additional responsibility to their workload and many found it difficult to get the task accomplished within a reasonable timeline, or at all. Some members resorted to providing verbal accounting of the meetings or training documents such as flip chart brainstorm etchings from the sessions instead. Many staff members were realizing the advisory program was going to be addition work for staff [OBS 2].

Over the years, those working in the educational field have been assigned a range of responsibilities. As school budgets decrease and demands for increased programming are on the rise, new duties get added, while old ones are never dropped. Implementation of an advisory program is one more, time consuming responsibility for all those involved. In the case of the urban high school in this study, the concern was so pronounced the teacher's union filed a grievance stating the advisory program was an additional preparation period for the staff involved. The organization had to halt all advisory activity until the grievance procedures were exhausted.

Summary. During the planning for implementation of the advisory program at the urban high school, barriers existed. Planning and implementation occurred in a particularly difficult political and budgetary environment for this urban high school and

in the State of New Jersey. Many changes had occurred outside of the normal systemic changes of past years. There was a rush to implement the advisory program using the cheapest and fastest means. The newly assigned principal verbally supported the program, but lack of action to support her words affected staff attitudes towards the program. Consideration of the additional workload to staff became a barrier where staff felt so strongly of their workload increase, a grievance was filed when the principal ignored their request for a meeting.

Research Question 3: How did the processes, structures, and people influence in a positive or negative way the initiation and implementation of the advisory program?

      Processes – Planning. Planning of the advisory program began with a team of counselors participating in a 3-year grant on "Systemic Reform of School Guidance and Counseling." The 3-year grant was awarded in 2007. A team of counselors from two of the urban high school campuses was provided training by the New Jersey Center for the Advancement of School Counseling (NJCASC) to create significant change in the way school counseling programs are delivered in New Jersey. An overarching goal of the reform movement was to develop statewide systemic reform in school guidance and counseling based on the implementation of comprehensive, developmental programs, focused on promoting life and career development and student achievement through partnerships between state government agencies, state school counseling agencies, and institutes of higher learning. The counseling team members were provided training, literature, and consultation hours for their school. With personalized learning being mandated under state policy in the form of personalized student learning plans, the team began to organize a group of volunteers to meet and think about structuring the

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personalized learning experience. The process for meeting state graduation requirements was changing. The urban high school in this study struggles to graduate students under the current requirements. Communication of changes in the graduation requirements must be communicated to all stakeholders. Through the proper planning and implementation of an advisory program, staff, students, and parents could receive this information through a formalized process. The process of pre-planning, training of the counseling team, and coordinating with the state department was a positive influence on the planning for implementation of the advisory program.

The principal, at the time, was supportive of the guidance team's efforts. He worked collaboratively with central office providing information on the work of the team, keeping the proper administrators informed, as well as the central office stakeholders.

In June of 2009, surveys were conducted: the school climate survey and the small learning community initiative implementation and sustainability survey. From these surveys, and the changes in state policy, it was decided that the school would form a committee to formalize personalized learning in the school. Volunteers were recruited for the committee to work over the summer with the consultants from NJCASC and CSSR, the guidance team, and the administration to begin planning. Working collaboratively, using data to inform decision making, and consulting with experts in the field were processes that positively contributed to the planning for implementation of the advisory program.

Structures.

Change – top down. Many changes to staffing occurred by June of 2009. The urban high school in this study replaced 60% of its guidance team and administrative

staff, including the principal, as well as approximately 20% of the teaching staff. SLC purity was non-existent as a new schedule was designed to accommodate new curricular courses in ninth grade Language Arts and Mathematics. Common planning time among teachers in the same SLC no longer existed and scheduling purity for students to staff within their SLC was scarce at best.

A professional calendar was developed over the course of the summer by one of the new vice principals, as staff was still contractually obligated to attend three administrative preparation periods per week. It was more or less a "one size fits all" professional development plan. Past practice for professional development at the urban high school was for staff to work collaboratively within their SLCs to develop a vision, goals, and calendar aligned with the goals of the district, school, and the needs of the students in their SLC. This new initiative caused many to retaliate against professional development altogether. On interviewee wrote:

> We are being PD'd to death during the day. We can't meet together to help kids like we used to. It makes it difficult to collaborate for the students, for the subjects, and for us. [OBS4:p10:8-10]

At the first day of the advisory training retreat, many members of the advisory implementation team expressed frustration because the structure of the SLCs had been changed so dramatically from the previous year. There was a lot of uncertainty regarding the SLC members and their role. One member stated:

> It's like we're not even in SLCs anymore because we teach all students from every SLC. We don't have common planning time during the day like we used to. This makes it difficult to handle daily problems that occur with students in our SLC, students that we are directly accountable for. I am not saying that all students aren't our students, but we are being held accountable for SLC more so than the rest of the students. [OBS4:p9:41-49]

> The consultant also commented that the body language of many in the group confirmed the lack of collaborative effort on the part of administration has

negatively impacted the onset of planning efforts for the advisory program. She specifically mentions non-attentive individuals who are lead members of the group. (OBS4:p11:21-25]

The staff expressed deep resentment for the new "top down" professional development initiative. With the planning for implementation of advisory program being including in the professional development initiative, it created initial resentment for the advisory program. This non-collaborative structure was seen as a negative influence in the initial planning for implementation of the advisory program.

Changes in leadership style. The vice principal coordinating the advisory program (this observer) and the teacher leader of guidance acted as chairs of the advisory implementation team, which began by looking at the needs of the students and school, in hopes of designing a program to meet those needs. The chairs introduced the planning documents and models of successful advisories as a starting point. In order to begin to design the program, the chairs laid out the theory for advisory programs, with the help of lead consultants from NJCASC, for the committee and gave them a timeline for developing a plan. They led the team through writing and planning during the fall of 2009 for the planning for implementation and turnkey training for staff. A new calendar was developed for the year through the collaborative effort of the advisory implementation team, the advisory chairs, and the consultants [DOC 4].

The chairs believed staff buy-in would be created as the advisory implementation team communicated and provided training for the staff in their SLCs. Structuring the planning for implementation of the advisory program this way was seen as a positive influence by the staff. The chairs believed this collaborative structure would allow staff time to address concerns as they were going through the process.

The collaborative nature of this structure allowed for the development of an advisory curriculum. It was decided the curriculum would be themed by month, then by grade level [DOC 4]. It was decided the advisory implementation team would work with staff to develop a curriculum including a variety of activities arranged by grade level and themed. The advisor could then choose one of the many they were provided to do with their group. The advisory curriculum binder would be kept electronically on the school website [OBS6:p33:1-5].

After each session both the advisor and each student would be required to complete a survey. The surveys would be tallied and the results would be shared with the staff at each subsequent advisory administrative preparation meeting or advisory implementation team meeting [OBS 6:p33:22-28].

The urban high school had also started looking into an electronic career portfolio through NJCAN. There were concerns regarding lack of technology to cycle students through labs as well as staff training on the program. This is still an option being considered.

Using a collaborative approach in the planning for implementation of an advisory program had a positive impact on those involved; however, some staff remained skeptical due to the rapid pace of the changes and the culture clash in the school.

People.

Committed staff. There were many committed volunteers as staff members who already felt they were participating in informal advisory sessions with students during their lunchtime and after school. Several staff members indicated a desire to formalize an advisory program and were willing to give up time over the summer of 2009 to get

started [DOC1]. Many of these members eventually became the hub of the advisory

implementation team. The advisory implementation team consisted of volunteer staff

members who were trained by consultants and/or worked together to plan, implement,

and evaluate the advisory program. Another critical function of this team was to

communicate evaluative information, changes in state policy, and create a learning

community with other stakeholders, as well as provide turnkey training for staff

members. These committed members positively influenced the staff and administration as

they worked as part of the advisory implementation team [DOC 1].

Administration decided that one administrative preparation meeting per month

would be set aside for turnkey training in advisory. The first year was for planning

purposes. Beginning on Sept. 8th, 2009, the consultants provided a school wide

professional development for all staff introducing the concept of advisory programs. At

that time, all staff was invited to join the advisory implementation team. The veteran staff

members did a great job recruiting the new staff members [DOC 2]. These staff members

were a positive influence on the planning for implementation of the advisory program.

Overwhelmed staff. The consultant, the AIT chairs, and several committee

members noticed the staff resistance during the turnkey training sessions. Feedback by

AIT committee members was as follows:

> Some people are just going to do it because it's an obligation, it's not really a
> heartfelt kind of thing so if a student doesn't show up they would follow through
> or be concerned about implementing the program in such a way that it meets the
> student's needs. [INT1:p5:29-34]

> Many teachers say, "it's one more thing I have to do," or "here something else
> they're going to try and there will be no follow through with it." There's a sense
> of more responsibility being put on teachers without any being taken off.
> [INT2:p6:7-10]

This program can very successful if it done correctly; not put on staff to make it feel like a burden but rather a family working together for the good of all. [INT4:p3:48-53]

Many AIT members echoed the comments of their SLC colleagues after conducting advisory pilot number 2 regarding the scavenger hunt activity using the course catalog. Many staff members were unfamiliar with the document themselves and were unprepared to answer students' questions outside of those presented in the scripted activity. Many staff members felt the questions should be answered by guidance counselors and were unprepared to answer the students' questions regarding curricular choices and graduation requirements [DOC 10].

Staff members had very different philosophies regarding the advisory program as a new program being implemented in the urban high school during a time of many changes. Some staff members were opportunistic, with new administration, new scheduling, and a major opportunity for a team to develop strategies to initiate a sustainable change effort in the organization. Others faced the many changes in the urban school with uncertainty, as it seemed many top down changes were being implemented at the same time as the advisory program. Implementing too many disconnected, episodic, piecemeal, superficially adorned projects, compounds the problems in schools by creating "projectitis" (Fullan, 2001).

Ineffective leadership. It was discovered that the principal had submitted a proposal to the board for two half days per month to be used for planning for implantation for the advisory program. It was the principal's intent that the advisory would take place at the end of the half day. This proposal was written in isolation of any other staff or administrative input. The proposal, now a board approved document,

seemed to have a negative effective on the current process of using a collaborative

decision making process. The advisory implementation team and subsequently the staff

wanted the advisory period to be after second block for 30 minutes, once a month on

Wednesdays. The reasoning behind this was, students and staff were present most on

Wednesdays, during Block 2 [DOC 7]. When the dates for the half days were upon us,

students were sent home and the school provided professional development for staff.

However, communication to the board, parents, or other stakeholders was never

established stating the change in venue. The professional time was then allocated for

other purposes and not used for planning for implementation for the advisory program.

Several staff members felt this action did not shine a favorable light on the advisory

program [DOC 6].

Several staff members felt a lack of administrative support in observing the

planning for implementation of the advisory program. Aside from the vice principal

coordinator, there was no oversight or support of the staff's efforts regarding planning for

implantation of the advisory program. One member noted, if more emphasis were placed

on the program and more monitoring of the turnkey training sessions, people might take

it more seriously [DOC 5].

Many staff members expressed disappointment from past experiences when they

contributed their efforts to initiatives that were discontinued after a brief implementation.

Therefore, many staff members chose not to support the advisory program because they

deemed it to be of low priority for the urban high school for one reason or another.

Ultimately, the principal of an organization will affect teacher buy-in because the

teachers look to the principal to determine the degree to which new programs and

initiatives are worthy of buy-in. Lack of support from the principal, especially supporting

the professional development of the staff during the training for planning for

implementation of the advisory program, negatively influenced the support of staff

(NJDOE, 2010).

 Summary. The initial planning process involved working collaboratively, using

data to inform instruction, and involving all stakeholders in decision making. This

positively contributed at the onset of the planning for implementation of the advisory

program. It inspired a group of committed people to take the initiative to research and

plan independent of school support structures; this led to a collaborative structure of the

planning for implementation of the advisory program. The change in administration at the

onset of the planning year, along with changes in the schedule, curriculum, and "culture"

of the urban school negatively impacted the planning for implementation of the advisory

program. The verbal support offered by administration, lacked follow through, as many

decisions came from top-down, lacking the collaborative approach staff had experienced

previously. Teacher morale, no doubt, affected attitudes toward taking on new roles and

responsibilities for the advisory program.

Chapter V

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to study a group of educators as they embarked on the planning for implementation of an advisory program in an urban high school and to evaluate the process as the team moved through the planning stages. The urban high school in this study was researched over a period of one year. I will present an overview of the research questions that guided my study and discuss the implications of the findings that emerged. I will also discuss ways in which those findings answered the research questions. Then I will make specific recommendations about planning for effective advisory programs. I will discuss the limitations of my study and make suggestions for further research.

Exploration of school reform over the past two decades has increased, leading to a greater focus on the importance of community in schools (Sergiovanni, 1994), teachers' work lives, and teacher community (Byrk, 2002; Cotton, 2001; Raywid, 1996). During the same period of time, a movement toward smaller school structures has emerged, advocated in large part by the need for more personalized learning environments for students. As one of the more popular reform strategies, the small learning community model reorganizes traditional, comprehensive high schools into smaller schools so that students are grouped into small learning communities. The benefits of this small school structure are not only seen as beneficial for students, but also for teachers. Working within a smaller schools framework, the literature suggests that teachers may build more

personal connections with their colleagues and collaborative work may increase, leading to better teaching and higher student achievement.

Historically, educators have often viewed the aim of providing social and emotional support as separate from addressing academic goals; however, recent research suggests that both components are needed to achieve high-level academic achievement, especially among low-income students (Tocci et al., 2005). Advisory literature on small schools reveals advisory programs are used in many small schools to increase personalization between students and teachers, and at times, supplement the formal curriculum (Allen et al., 2005; Gewertz, 2006; Osofsky et al., 2003). Advisory teams for teachers can be a place where teachers find professional support (Myrick, 1993). Implementing advisory programs may require schools to make major changes in how they structure themselves. One of the key goals of this program evaluation was to study the urban high school and identify challenges faced and understand the strategies used to address them. By identifying the strategies used and offering suggestions for other actions the urban high school might have taken to address the barriers encountered, this evaluation seeks to highlight effective ways to promote successful planning of advisory programs in the future.

Driving Forces and Resisting Factors

Driving forces. Research question one investigated the driving forces and resisting factors for the planning for implementation of an advisory program in an urban high school.

NJ State Policy. The primary driving force for planning for implementation of an advisory program in the urban high school was a change in New Jersey State policy. In

August 2006, Governor Jon S. Corzine announced a unified effort between business and education to work on high school redesign in the state. The New Jersey High School Redesign Steering Committee was formed. The High School Redesign Steering Committee grew out of the Education Summit on High Schools. Members of the Committee include the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA), New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE) at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, New Jersey Commission on Higher Education, New Jersey United for Higher School Standards (NJU), New Jersey Presidents' Council, and Montclair State University.

The Steering Committee's report, *NJ Steps: Re-Designing Education in New Jersey for the 21st Century* proposed five recommendations in the following education policy areas: 1) Standards and High School Graduation Requirements, 2) Assessment Alignment, 3) Teachers and School Leaders, 4) School Redesign – Learning Communities and Personalized Education, and, 5) P-16 Alignment.

In June 2009 a change in N.J.A.C. 6A:8 required secondary schools to implement personalized learning models in public schools by the year 2009-2010. The policy outlined components of personalization to be included in secondary schools, never addressing, "how" schools should implement Personalized Student Learning Plans (PSLPs). Effective personalized student learning plan initiatives have been implemented in schools throughout the United States in a variety of forms and with varying success. Past research suggests that successful PSLP models can positively affect the daily personal experience of students if they receive the active support of the entire school

community (DiMartino & Clarke 2008). If the state policy did not mandate the change

the urban high school may not have moved forward with the planning for implementation

for the advisory program. The change in policy created a sense of urgency in the urban

school. Literature shows organizational change cannot occur without the cooperation of

the affected stakeholders. As a result, creating a sense of urgency for a needed change is

the first step in gaining the cooperation of employees. Creating a sense of urgency alerts

the organization that change must occur and it begins the preparation for change. It must

be done well for a change effort to have a meaningful organizational impact (Kotter,

1996).

A guiding coalition. A committed coalition was created during the planning for

implementation of the advisory program. Throughout the study approximately 32 staff

members participated on the Advisory Implementation Team (AIT). The team was

created to support the planning and implementation of the advisory program as well as to

represent their SLC during the change initiative. The members of the AIT team were

given the power to plan, design, and create a program with guidance from consultants and

administration. As noted by Kotter (1996), "Because major change is so difficult to

accomplish, a powerful force is required to sustain the process. A strong guiding coalition

is always needed" (p. 51). Kotter describes this "change team" as a guiding coalition. The

advisory implementation team (AIT) served in this capacity. According to literature,

successful advisory programs often establish a committee to develop curriculum and act

as a liaison between teachers and administrators (DiMartino & Clarke, 2008; Poliner &

Lieber, 2004). Establishing a steering committee is a major component of many

successful advisory programs. The committee's task does not end with the announcement

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of the initial planning and implementation schedule. The team in this study monitored the

program, solicited feedback from the teachers during the turnkey training, and proposed

necessary changes in design or professional development supporting the program. They

also conducted necessary research about materials and activities. They provided public

relations for the program, highlighting the benefits for students, teachers, and the school

as a whole, in an attempt to prevent negativity. The team needs to feel a sense of

ownership during the planning and design process and be empowered sufficiently to

accomplish its task (Poliner & Lieber, 2004).

A program coordinator was appointed to guide the planning for implementation of

the advisory program. The program coordinator (this researcher) organized training

sessions for staff, the AIT team, coordinated turnkey training, assessments, and surveys. I

also acted as liaison between administration, central office, parents, and students.

Many schools implementing advisory programs appoint an advisory program

coordinator who guides the overall initiative. Studies show successful program

coordinators start planning early, before the school year begins, and delegate tasks to the

implementation team. The program coordinator is typically responsible for coordinating

the professional development for school staff, overseeing the development and delivery

of the curriculum, planning for carrying out the sessions, and maintaining communication

with school administrators, teachers, and counseling staff, students, and the community.

The vice principal program coordinator in this evaluation study was also this researcher.

There was also the teacher leader of guidance assisting with the implementation of the

advisory program. The role required a lot of work and planning. I often broke down the

work into manageable tasks and distributed them across the members of the AIT team.

Committed school leaders. School leaders must empower the guiding coalition. In this study, the AIT team had enough organizational power to lead the change effort and keep it on target. It is important for school leaders to keep staff informed of changes in state policy. School leaders must be consistent with communicating changes to staff. They should create opportunities in which staff can share their experiences about the changes by engaging in professional conversations to remain focused on the goals and expectations of the school. Findings by Tocci et al. (2005) of 24 schools in New York and Virginia revealed the importance of school leadership to implement support structures. Because the school leaders in the study faced competing demands and hectic schedules, how each chose to prioritize program goals of their advisory program ultimately affected how the goals were perceived and implemented by others, thus affecting the success of the advisory program as perceived by staff, students, and parents.

The success of a change effort largely depends on the quality of the guiding coalition and the attention school leaders give to its work. When the importance of this step is downplayed or overlooked it often leads to unsuccessful results for the change efforts (Kotter, 1996). At the onset of the planning year, members of the AIT team were encouraged by the leadership team, as support structures for the program and the team seemed in place. The AIT team, program coordinators, and consultants worked collaboratively throughout the planning for implementation of the advisory program. The members of this school leadership team forged ahead through the planning process, attempting to address logistical and individual concerns that came up. The team leading this change initiative was seen by those involved as a positive coalition.

Program focus. The focus of the program was identified as a driving force, including the purpose or vision of the advisory program, and the goals as seen by the staff at the urban high school. The purpose or vision of the program, as discussed by the planning documents that served as the basis for the program for the AIT Team, consultants, and the program coordinators, provided a wide array of possibilities including: a mentor program, fulfilling student' needs, teaching character concepts, academics, career development, as well as several other goals. Staff members agreed the students in the urban high school could benefit from an advisory program.

Breaking Ranks II (NASSP, 2004) recommends the liberty to create and increase student academic and social programs. All too often central administration fails to do this because they dictate the structure of school programs without input from staff or administrators at the school level. A certain degree of autonomy at the school level allows freedom to address issues as they arise. Tocci et al. (2005) warn that the program focus of an advisory program should be clear and well defined, as one of the most common barriers to implementing an advisory program is teacher buy-in due to lack of understanding of the scope and content.

Teacher buy-in. Many staff members took pride in the urban high schools SLC structure, especially the collaborative, personalized structure that accompanied each SLC. Several staff members expressed concern when this structure was dismantled due to curricular changes, and many believed the advisory program would help bring some degree of purity back to the SLC structure. These staff members became a driving force in the planning for implementation of the advisory program. Not all staff agreed with the advisory program or saw its value, and some chose not to "buy-in" to the advisory

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program for a variety of reasons. These teachers did not provide a formal protest to the program, but voiced concerns during turnkey training sessions, faculty meetings, or some simply boycotted the turnkey training sessions altogether. The AIT Team tried to address all concerns of faculty, either during the training sessions or the AIT Team meetings, and brought all concerns to the administrative team via memos or through discussions. Some staff argued about the increased workload, calling the advisory meeting time an additional preparation period. When administration failed to address this concern, staff went to the union and all advisory activity was halted. Teachers have a major impact on the success of new initiatives and programs. Leaders who promote teacher buy-in allow teachers to ask questions, voice their concerns, and include them in the general planning process.

The most common effective support structures for advisory programs in small schools, as identified by Tocci and colleagues (2005), are: visible administrative support for the advisory program as a school wide goal; faculty common planning time to discuss the advisory programs; planning time for advisory teachers; and professional development for advisory staff. To implement and sustain programs successfully, we need better implementation plans; to get better implementation plans, we need to know how to change our planning and follow-through process; to know how to change our planning process, we need to know how to produce better planners and implementers, and on and on (Fullan, 2007).

Resisting factors.

Ongoing administrative support. At the onset of this study there was administrative turnover in the urban high school. This was nothing new for this large

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urban high school, as it had seen five new principals and a host of vice principals over the past five years. Initially, the new school leadership team became very involved with the planning for implementation of the advisory program. The team worked with staff to provide for training and professional development devoted to the advisory program, school-wide visible support was apparent, faculty meeting time was devoted to discussing advisory, and orientation for students to the advisory program was planned.

As the year progressed, even as early as one month into the planning year, the empowerment of the AIT team began to collapse, due to an absence of administrative support for the program and the AIT team. Team members noted lack of follow through on team decisions and isolated decision making by administration when the principal announced board approval of the advisory program's "reduced day" schedule for the remainder of the year, and a pre-set professional development calendar developed solely by administration. The common planning time for teachers had been taken out of the staff schedule due to the introduction of new curricular courses, and SLC purity among student schedules was nonexistent. This "top-down" approach to the planning phase negated the work of the AIT team. The principal set the tone for much of what happened.

In a study of six middle schools in Philadelphia and New Orleans, by Vincent Anfara and Kathleen Brown (2000), advisory programs failed after two years due to a lack of administrative support and accountability. Staff members in the failed schools were enthusiastic and willing to try the program, but when administration did not live up to its promises the enthusiasm turned to resentment. With little administrative support it is easy to see how staff attitudes towards an advisory program, or any change initiative, can be affected.

Leaders who signal strong support for programs when they are first introduced to staff and who work to accommodate the program and support staff, send a strong message that the program is important. Leaders who offer verbal support or do otherwise and refuse to take follow-up action send the message that new programs and initiatives are not worthy of teacher buy-in. Leaders are faced with guiding an effort that will require staff members to rethink their roles in a way that challenges their core beliefs. Without effective leadership, any advisory program is doomed from the start (Anfara & Brown, 2000; DiMartino & Clarke, 2008; Tocci & Allen, 2008).

Kotter (1996) explains a common mistake of leaders is often failing to stay actively engaged with their guiding coalition after they form it. He describes ongoing leadership participation with the guiding coalition as essential to the success of a change effort. Without this ongoing participation, the guiding coalition will be unable to counter the inevitable resistance to change that so often occurs from various stakeholders. A resisting factor in this study was active participation by the leadership team.

Time, space, and scheduling. A second resisting factor in planning became scheduling issues, and time and space for professional development and support. Similar findings were found by Kotter (1996), who writes, "New initiatives fail far too often when employees, even though they embrace a new vision, feel disempowered by huge obstacles in their paths" (p. 10). He goes on to say, "Perhaps worst of all are supervisors who refuse to adapt to new circumstances and who make demands that are inconsistent with the transformation" (p. 10). School leaders must put appropriate processes and structures in place so the guiding coalition can be effective. This begins with letting the team work outside of the normal hierarchy with a direct reporting line to school

leadership for the change effort. This is necessary to ensure that decisions are made for the good of the overall organization. Change literature suggests the coalition should participate in off-site team building activities for coordinating team efforts and keeping the group focused (Kotter, 1996; Lencioni, 2002). Staff members became indifferent about the advisory program as logistical problems went unaddressed. Even the most enthusiastic and passionate members of the staff expressed concern for the future of the advisory program.

Literature also suggests finding time for advisory programs in an already busy, pre-scheduled day for students, teachers, and counselors is difficult. In some schools, especially those with limited resources, implementing advisories is nearly impossible. The constraints of collective bargaining agreements limit how many hours staff spend teaching. This made it difficult to schedule time for them to participate in the advisory program components.

Another resisting factor was lack of SLC purity due to scheduling conflicts. Organizational structures became road blocks to the change process often undermining change efforts and staff buy-in. These obstacles, often un-confronted, caused cynicism for the program to grow, and the whole effort soon came to a crawl. Teachers no longer experienced strong connections within their SLCs; instead of sharing common goals and common experiences with their colleagues they expressed a general sense of isolation**.**

> Teacher isolation and it's opposite, collegiality, provide the best starting point for considering what works for the teacher. Within a school, collegiality among teachers, as measured by the frequency of communication, mutual support, help, and so forth, was a strong indicator of implementation success. Virtually every research study on the topic has found this to be the case. (Fullan, 2007, p. 138)

Implementation barriers. Research question 2 was to identify barriers in the initiating and implementing of the advisory program. As with any change process, a variety of logistical problems arose throughout the process. The high momentum from the beginning of the school year began to slow mid-year as some of the logistical problems went unaddressed, or were placed on hold, while other more pressing matters were addressed by administration. This caused the purpose of the program to shift focus midway through the year. Staff members began to seek clarity of the advisory program as far as its purpose/vision. Change in leadership and subsequent weak school leadership and support, high levels of staff buy-in, and sufficient space will contribute to the outcome of any school initiative, including advisory programs (Gladden, 1998).

Professional development. Sufficient staff development time is needed to provide appropriate development for an advisory program. Professional development for the implementation team should occur first with staff training to follow. VanHoose (1991) sites a common barrier to successful advisory planning and implementation is the lack of teacher support. Tocci & Allen (2008) found one of the biggest challenges in implementing a high school advisory program was helping faculty adjust to their role as advisors. Therefore, it is critical to learn about resources that support teachers' development. *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) supports the establishment of guidelines and a proposed list of topics to be discussed during advisory settings. They also maintain, "Professional development is critical to the success of an effective advisory program" (p. 6).

Because teachers are the largest portion of a school staff, they must be a part of the process of change for a new organizational system to be successfully implemented.

Without their understanding and support, new initiatives will not gain the momentum necessary for either short-term or long-term progress. Teacher support during professional development by providing substitute coverage, administrative presence, and accountability became a barrier during this evaluation study.

Planning time for teachers to prepare for advisory lessons should be part of the professional development plan as identified during a study by Tocci et al. (2005). Because schools include social-emotional issues in their advisory curriculum, schools need to consider the preparation time needed for staff to prepare. Considering the overwhelming demands made on teachers, is important for school leaders and implementation teams to provide the required time and professional development when planning for an effective advisory program.

Administrators and school leaders play a critical role in setting priorities and functions of schools. Because school leaders face competing demands and hectic schedules, how they choose to prioritize program goals affects how the goals are perceived and implemented by others. In order to plan a successful advisory program, it is critical for school leaders to signal strong administrative support for the advisory program throughout all phases. The principal has always been the "gate-keeper" of change, often determining the fate of innovations coming from the outside or from teacher initiatives on the inside (Fullan, 2007). With the initiation of site-based management across the world, more and more onus for initiative has landed at the principal's doorstop. Principals are now expected to lead change, and thus they have become a critical source of initiation (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Kotter (1996) would describe such support as attention to short term wins. For example,

supporting the vision of the advisory program by making posters, signs, etc. When curricular calendars and activities were developed, this could have been given due attention as well. Parent and student notification of the advisory program should have been announced and feedback solicited. By putting almost no emphasis on short-term results during the planning for implementation of the advisory program, the leadership team did not build credibility needed to sustain the efforts in the long haul.

Vision/purpose of program. Teachers noted that communication and input are vital to a successful advisory program. The administration must communicate their ideas prior to implementing them in order to solicit teacher input. As one teacher commented, "Administration may have good intentions but they need to include us in the decision making." *Breaking Ranks* (NASSP, 1996) and *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) support this type of planning and design. A shared vision would be created if administration opened the line of communication between them and the teachers and solicited teacher input. Fullan (2001) states that a shared vision is a critical part of any school improvement initiative. "When a school's vision grows out of strong, passionate feelings, about the transformative power of education, it helps to sustain the interest, participation, and commitment of teachers, parents and students" (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 101).

As part of any process of building buy-in, it is crucial to confer with the teacher's union and the school board. This advisory program was first implemented on a volunteer basis but with the formalization of the AIT team, members of the local union were included to establish a liaison relationship. The School Leadership Council of the urban high school, whose membership included administration, union members, teachers, community members, parents, and students were frequently updated on the progress of

the planning for implementation of the advisory program. Having formal and informal meetings with union leaders and school board members is recommended as a proactive step in planning an advisory program (Poliner & Lieber, 2004). This was not part of the planning process and should be recommended for future planning and implementation of further advisory program planning.

Processes, Structures, and People

Research question 3 asks how did the processes, structures, and people influence in a positive or negative way the initiation and implementation of the advisory program. As the State of New Jersey revealed plans for change in policy, the urban high school in this study put formal processes in place to provide training for staff and work with consultants, coordinating with the NJDOE to meet the impending policy changes. The principal, at the time, surveyed community, students, and staff, used data to inform decision making, consulted with experts, collaborated with stakeholders, and involved administration in planning for implementation of the impending change. These processes positively contributed to the initial planning for implementation of the advisory program. School leadership, at the time, had an accurate understanding of the organizational barriers that might hinder the change process. This is one area where the wisdom of consistent school leadership in selecting a guiding coalition whose members come from different levels of the organization with position power, credibility, expertise, and leadership responsibilities pays off in a huge way (Kotter, 1996).

Consistency. The urban high school in this study, like many inner-city, urban schools, experienced a large turnover of staff, and administrators. This urban high school has been led by five principals in the last five and a half years. This made implementation

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and sustainability of the advisory program difficult. The phrase, "schools are always in a

constant state of change" profoundly defines the politic frame of the urban high school in

this study. The federal government provides for the budget of the school district. For

many years, school leaders and union leaders provided supplies, programs, and

professional development with the belief that written justification would relinquish them

of further responsibilities to provide results, data, implementation, or effectiveness.

Without communication among different groups, coalitions, and departments, the school,

and subsequently the departments gain little perspective regarding each others' work.

Conflicts exist over resources as everyone fights for power over one another. In such a

large organization where the players are constantly changing, trust becomes a factor in

the fight for implementation of new programs. Allies become hard to find. Bolman and

Deal (2003) write,

> The traditional view sees organizations as created and controlled by legitimate
> authorities who set goals, design structures, hire and manage employees, and
> ensure pursuance of the right objectives. There is no guarantee that those who
> gain power use it wisely or justly. (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 156)

Fullan (2001) reminds us that "ultimately, leadership in a culture of change will

be judged as effective or ineffective not by who you are as a leader, but by what

leadership you produce in others" (p. 137). I am reminded of the role that team members

will play as "change agents" in the organization. Ultimately, it will be the collaborative

efforts of the followers, and opportunities made available, to build this advisory program

to capacity and bring about its successful implementation and sustainability. Working in

such a large urban district there are constant change factors in the organizational structure

that can wreak havoc on routine procedures and the status quo. Working in a school that

is structured into small learning communities, it is important to empower and motivate people, working towards the planning for implementation of the advisory program.

A momentum will ultimately need to be created by the "right people" who are passionate about the advisory program to build a culture of discipline within the organization. The people in the organization, if given the freedom and responsibility, can experiment and find ways to make the right decisions for the students and stakeholders within the organizations. Goleman (2002) reminds us that resonant leaders nurture relationships, surface simmering issues, and create human synergies of a group in harmony. Building a great organization means creating a culture and operating practices that preserve the core values and purpose of the organization through generations of leaders and multiple cycles of products and programs.

Because principals are instrumental in creating a positive and supportive work environment for teachers, high principal turnover can lead to decreased teacher satisfaction and tenure; teachers often cite support from school administrators as an important element in their decisions to support school programs and even remain in certain schools (NJDOE, 2010; Plecki, Elfers, Loeb, Zahir, & Knapp, 2005). Moreover, Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) suggest a link between principal turnover and student outcomes. They find that the length of a principal's tenure at a given school positively affects student achievement, with five to seven years at the same school indicating the length of tenure necessary to implement effective change.

As Meloro (2005) discovered, inconsistent effort from the varying administrative perspectives over time left the staff feeling dismayed, disenchanted, and frustrated with the advisory program. Variability in this study led to some SLC groups flourishing in

dynamic and culture, while others seemed to stagnate. This is an issue that needs to be addressed from the onset of the program. All efforts from administration, the program coordinator, and those leading the implementation of an advisory program need to be focused on establishing quality and stability in and among all involved. Ongoing supervision and evaluation needs to be in place in order to ensure cohesion and school wide effectiveness.

Advisor roles. Clearly the advisory program required extra planning and preparation for all involved. Anfara and Brown's (2000) research discovered that teachers considered the advisory period an additional preparation. Tocci et al. (2005) said that teachers often felt like advisory was an extra class to teach without the adequate preparation time. Teachers in Tocci et al.'s study also said that many teachers expressed angst with regard to the advisory program reporting that it felt like another class, resulting in an exhausting day. The teachers in this study unanimously agreed that the program demanded additional preparation, which ultimately affected their school and personal time. This was a critical issue that seemed to go unresolved. Effective advisors saw advisory preparation to be a professional responsibility not to be dismissed; consequently they tended to it accordingly.

While the school's effort to carefully plan and devise school-wide lessons for the advisory program was intended to relieve the teachers of additional planning, the opposite was the case. Teachers spent their own time preparing for the advisory period, supplementing the scripted plans with activities that were more meaningful and relevant to the needs of the students. Teacher preparation time seemed to be overlooked when implementing the advisory program. Therefore, teacher frustration in this regard was

apparent. With regard to the school wide lessons, teachers expressed disparaging thoughts about their unfamiliarity and uncomfortable feelings in this new and challenging role, thus leading to resistance and negativity.

Limitations

This study described the perceptions of 32 members of an advisory implementation team as they began for the first time, planning for implementation of an advisory program in an urban high school. A vice principal program coordinator was assigned to work with the team and coordinate with other staff and administrators. As already discussed, this research was limited because of its sample size. I limited my study to one urban high school because of my access to the population. As a result, my case study does not represent the larger population of urban high schools with small school structures, namely SLCs. My study was also limited by the sample's lack of inclusion of students and parents whose perspectives on the advisory programs are also very important. I purposefully chose to focus on the perspectives of the advisory implementation team for the purpose of the program evaluation study.

Therefore, the study is limited in the sense that grounded theory that emerged to address planning for implementation of an advisory program is based on the general patterns of the participants, and particular to the context of the AIT team members, the staff involved in the turnkey training sessions, and the administrative team of the urban high school in this study. However, as noted earlier, internal generalizability was sought (Maxwell, 2005) as patterns were identified that linked to different participants' experiences. Even though the participants are unique individuals, they are linked through

their experiences working in the same school, their experiences as an advisory implementation team member, and the work within their small learning community.

Triangulating the data through observations, interviews, documents, and surveys enabled me to corroborate the participants' descriptions of driving forces, resisting factors, and barriers as well as identify processes, structures, and people's influence on the planning for implementation of the advisory program that emerged from the data.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are directed to those educators who may be responsible for planning and implementation of an advisory program. While it is not assumed that these strategies can be employed in all schools, they may be of benefit in whole or in part, depending upon the individual circumstances in each school.

The school must first collaboratively determine and establish a need for the program. Tocci et al. (2005) reported frustration among teachers resulting from a lack of clarity in the purpose and goals of the advisory program. In this program evaluation the urban school's need stemmed from a change in state policy as well as low academic achievement. Establishing a common vision/purpose and gaining support from the staff is absolutely essential. The planning and implementation of the advisory program will be ineffective without a shared belief system establishing a vision, clear goals, and objectives for the program. This should also assist in attaining building-wide support from the teachers. The lack of teacher support will undoubtedly lead to teacher resistance, apathy, mediocrity, and inconsistency in the planning and implementation process.

Based on the findings of this program evaluation study it is recommended that school leaders and/or administrators planning for implementation of an advisory program

be an integral part of the strong leadership, where the school leader and/or administration creates a team within the school community that is charged with designing, implementing, overseeing, supporting, and assessing the program. Essential among the duties of the school leader and subsequent planning team is creating buy-in among community members and ensuring that advisors have adequate training, resources, and support. Proactive leadership is vital to avoiding or overcoming barriers to successful program planning and implementation. The school leader should demonstrate her support for the program by working with the program coordinator and planning team to make scheduling changes, and provide resources and flexibility related to training as well as assessment. The school leader and or leadership team, as well as the planning team, should have a presence at training sessions and promote the vision of the advisory program when talking to staff.

Planning for implementation of advisory programs should not be done in isolation of other school programs or structures. Advisory programs alone will not change a school environment. Advisory programs should be linked in a way that is organizationally consistent and reinforced in the school. For example, if the school is in SLCs, advisory should be assigned within those SLCs. Advisory programs should also be consistent with the vision, values, and culture of the school and community.

Planning an advisory program and shaping the environment to implement it successfully are not simple tasks. Establishing a planning team is a critical component to the research, design, and promotion of the advisory program. The research should include learning about the students' needs, the organization's needs, successful advisory programs in other schools, reading literature and sharing articles, and exploring the

challenges of structural change. The design component should involve a vision for the advisory program as well as shaping the program to make it work within the organization. Involving all stakeholders in the planning is critical. Everyone needs a chance to speak and feel heard by the planning team or they are not likely to listen and more importantly "buy-in." Providing a forum for consistent feedback and assessment is a recommendation to keep stakeholders in the loop. Promoting the advisory program or building buy-in has to start early, and last as long as it takes. Buy-in is the greatest challenge most schools face when trying to plan to implement an advisory program. Because the success or failure of an advisory program rests almost entirely on the advisors and advisees, it is imperative that they believe in the overall objective, and have a direct role in planning and implementing the program.

Part of the buy-in process would be to confer with the local teachers' union and the school board. It is important for the planning team to include union members and establish a liaison relationship with the school board, keeping them informed throughout the planning process. Constraints of collective bargaining agreements may make it difficult to incorporate time in teachers' schedules for them to participate as advisors and compensation may become an issue.

Consistency in planning for implementation must be supported by the administration and district. Inconsistent staff training along with decreased administrative support throughout the planning year can leave many advisors feeling unprepared for advisory sessions, especially if quickly implemented without proper training. Inconsistent teacher training will lead to inconsistent results for students. Teachers who attend more training will ultimately be more prepared and more comfortable with the program while

other teachers will remain skeptical towards it. The end result will be inconsistent implementation for students. To that end, the school leader and/or leadership team must maintain consistent ongoing support of the program through subsequent actions, sending the message that the advisory program is important.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research should be completed utilizing and investigating the recommendations for planning for implementation of an advisory program suggested above. It is recommended that a researcher conduct survey and qualitative research to determine the success rate of a program implemented with these suggestions. It is also recommended that students and parents as well as staff be included in the study.

Best Practices

Pitfalls of implementation. Research has shown the political dynamics in school systems often determine the nature of school improvement efforts. If school leaders want to implement and sustain change they must develop implementation processes that pursue three goals: helping staff members develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture; foster teacher development; and improve group problem solving. Only when school leaders share a genuine belief that their staff members as a group can develop better solutions than the principal alone will they be on their way to second order change within their organization. Educational researchers, reformers, and policy makers have pointed out that improving the educational system for all students is vital to strengthening our nation and preparing students to compete in a global economy. The literature supports the personalization of high schools characterized by a student centered environment and supported by adult mentors (Cotton, 2001; NASSP, 1996, 2004).

The data obtained in this evaluation study highlighted several important findings that are significant in understanding the impact in planning and implementing an advisory program. The newly appointed principal verbally supported the program developed by the team of volunteers, but often improvised her own aspects of the plan. This created power relationships and negated the movement towards collaborative decision making and maintaining a collaborative culture. Ownership of the program was not internalized by the participants. Further analysis showed the breakdown of the small learning community structure through new scheduling structures. This new schedule took away teachers' common planning time with their SLC; a large part of the embedded culture of the school. The students go through a selection process picking their SLC based on the career focus theme and campus site. The new scheduling pattern negatively impacted staff buy-in of the advisory curriculum and other new curricular courses. If you do not allow staff and students to have a say in new models and schedules, the success of any initiative is compromised. The new scheduling pattern also affected space for professional development for staff. With the SLC structure dismantled, a common location was determined for all professional development as opposed to the SLC pre-selected rooms of the past. However, there were many conflicts with the availability of the common location that were not communicated in a timely fashion to staff. Lack of communication negatively impacted the planning for implementation of the advisory program professional development training sessions. Staff members were also affected by the increased workload that came with the role of advisor. Even after the school purchased scripted curricular activities and ran two pilot advisories, the staff felt the workload for advisory required addition time. Over the years staff are often assigned a

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range of responsibilities to get mandates accomplished. As school budgets decrease and demands for increased programming are on the rise, new duties get added, while old ones are never dropped. In the case of this study the concern was so pronounced, the teachers' union filed a grievance claiming the advisory period was an additional preparation period for the staff involved.

The advisory program was implemented in isolation of other school programs. A school's context can help "make" or "break" the implementation of any new program. Dennis Sparks, executive director of the National Staff Development Council, explains,

> Usually when people begin change efforts, they discover that there are some invisible barriers. And those invisible barriers almost always reside in the context. They reside in the norms and structures of the school that make it more difficult for people to move ahead. (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989, p. 46)

Because of its complexity, creating a context for school change and improvement may be the most difficult step in the implementation process. It involves more than just deciding to implement an advisory program. It may mean changing organizational and physical structures. Even more difficult, it may mean changing the school's culture to provide a supportive atmosphere where trust is pervasive and leadership is shared, a collegial culture where teachers are free to discuss problems and practice, and where continuous learning among the staff is valued.

The Right Way

No two advisory programs look alike. Each individual school must determine what it values and what it hopes to foster within its community. Implementing a successful advisory program is a complex endeavor, but the chances for success dramatically increase if it is implemented with patience, collaboration, and supportive school leadership. Researchers agree there are five key elements successful advisory programs

should have: 1) PURPOSE, 2) ORGANIZATION, 3) CURRICULUM, 4) ASSESSMENT, and, 5) LEADERSHIP. An effective advisory program has a clear mission that is closely aligned with the school's goals for student achievement. The program mission, created collaboratively by stakeholders, should drive decisions around program development, delivery, and evaluation. The mission should be clear yet flexible as needs change over time. Behind every effective advisory program is an enthusiast. This may be the principal, a member of the instructional leadership team, a group of teachers, or parents. To be effective advisors, staff must trust the administration will support them. Some schools have added advisory to their staff's job description. Whether or not advisory is part of staff's official job description, supporting advisors to ensure buy-in is critical. Advisor buy-in will increase if the administration frequently supports the program. School leaders need to communicate their support for their advisory program, verbally from the start, and demonstrate their ongoing support of the program through subsequent actions. Principals set the tone for much of what happens in their immediate school environments. Principals must work to accommodate scheduling and all other needs of the program. This will send a strong message to the staff that the program is important. Administrators can reassure advisors by committing to actions like limiting interruptions during advisory, providing professional development time, and giving advanced notice for changes to the advisory schedule. An advisory program requires patience of all sorts. Frustration is sure to mount if those involved expect immediate results. Too often programs are discontinued in a hurry, before their potential is maximized, because they are not immediately producing dramatic outcomes.

Researchers agree, without the 5 key elements and having a plan in place there will be little chance for sustainable change and success.

The political dynamics in school systems often determine the nature of school improvement efforts. If school leaders want to implement and sustain change they must develop implementation processes that pursue three goals: helping staff members develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture; foster teacher development; and improve group problem solving.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Data

1. Name_____
2. Gender   _____Female   _____Male
3. Current position_____
4. How many years have you been in your current position? _____
5. How many years have your been in our school? _____ District? _____
6. What certification(s) do you currently hold?
   _____
7. What is your highest level of education?
   _____
8. What other languages do you speak?
   _____
9. Have you ever participated in an advisory program? _____yes_____no

OPENING STATEMENT

I am taking a course as part of my doctoral studies. I am interested in learning more about advisor-advisee programs. I want to know about your attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. I would like you to answer the questions as completely and honestly as possible.

I would like your permission to record your responses on tape. Once the tapes have been transcribed they will be destroyed. The transcripts will identify you by a letter only and will be kept strictly confidential. Your participation in the study is voluntarily.

May I have your permission to tape?   _____yes _____no

ADVISOR

10. How did you become a member of the advisory team?
11. Briefly describe how you see your role as a member of the advisory team?
12. How do you see your role as advisor?
13. What rewards do you feel advisors receive from such a program?
14. Do you feel the initial preparation that you received was adequate?
15. How do you currently feel about being part of the advisory team?
16. How do you see colleagues collaborating regarding the advisory program?
17. What challenges might need to be considered regarding advisors?

ADVISEES

18. In your opinion what rewards will advisees gain from this program?
19. Do you feel any preparation is needed for advisees?
20. What do you perceive to be the current attitude of advisees to the program?
21. Do you feel relationships between advisee and advisor will change as a result of this program?
22. What challenges might need to be considered regarding advisees?

CURRICULUM

23. How do you think curriculum should be planned and disseminated?
24. Do you think advisors should improvise or stick to a pre-determined curriculum?
25. Who do think should be involved in monitoring and improving curriculum?
26. How do you think curriculum should be evaluated?

OVERALL

27. How might you attribute the success or failure of the advisory program?
28. How do you predict parents will respond to the program?
29. How do you see the role of administration in the overall advisory program?
30. Do you have any additional comments that you would like to make about the program?

Appendix B

Advisory Pilot Teacher Survey - #1

	0-5	6-10	11-15	20 or more
Number of Students in your advisory group				

What SLC are you in?	AE	BN	HRT	MT	PA

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
I feel comfortable participating in the advisory activities				
I encouraged my advisees to share their thoughts and opinions				
I listened more that I talked during the advisory activities				
At times I felt torn between being a teacher and being an advisor				
I had adequate time to complete the advisory activity				

While you are not required to participate in this survey your answering would be greatly appreciated. Your completion of the survey represents informed consent.