Advisory Period

PURPOSE
A team of teachers and administrators sought to find a way to support school and district initiatives through the creation of time during the school day. The school's Senior Institute program requires every senior student to be teamed with a faculty advisor. Advisors and advisees expressed that finding time to meet has been a great challenge. The school will be implementing the Middle Years Program of International Baccalaureate during the 2013-2014 school year. This program also requires all faculty members to advise students during the students' sophomore year to complete an MYP Personal Project, thus compounding the need for advisory time during the school day. Additionally, other school and district initiatives could benefit greatly from an advisory period, such as:
- Education Career Action Plan (ECAP) development
- PSAT/SAT/ACT test preparation
- AIMS/PARCC test preparation
- Education in Anti-Bullying, Cyber Safety, Study Habits, Organization, etc.
- Response To Intervention for Behavior (RTI-B)

As a Title I school, the importance for students to foster a caring and supportive relationship with an adult at the school is critical. Providing students with an adult advisor to meet with on a regular basis is an effective way to help develop these connections. The district's new Strategic Plan also calls for schools to focus on the social and emotional growth of students as well as deploy programs and services that develop and nurture every student.

RESEARCH TO SUPPORT ADVISORY PERIODS
There is quite a bit of research to support the idea of advisory periods that strive to help students feel more connected to school. When students are more connected to school they generally perform better academically and show positive results in attendance, behavior, on-time graduation, and social development. Some excerpts from studies and reports are listed below:

Published in the September 2004 Journal of School Health, the Wingspread findings contribute substantially to the array of research that demonstrates that students who feel connected to school are less inclined to participate in risky behaviors and more apt to do well academically. Among the Wingspread Group’s specific recommendations is the call to “ensure that every student feels close to at least one supportive adult at school.”
Journal of School Health. Vol 74, No. 7 is accessible online at:
www.jhsph.edu/wingspread/Septemberissue.pdf
One systematic way of personalizing a large, comprehensive high school is to implement an advisory program. It is important for students to feel recognized by teachers because there is direct correlation between student connectedness, school climate, and student achievement (Sherblom et al., 2006).


"When data were examined it appeared that TAP [Teacher Advisor Program] had a positive impact on students. Credit was given in evaluation reports for improved academic achievement, a reduction in failing grades, and an increase in higher test scores. More students took college entrance exams...Student attendance in all participating schools improved...In terms of student attitudes, the fourth year project schools reported an 87 percent improvement." (Myrick, 1990, p. 91-92)

"In general, students who do not feel an attachment to school personnel tend to have poorer attendance and to drop out more than student who perceive that they are part of a supportive, caring school environment." (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989)

"Moreover, a positive psychosocial climate between teachers and students appears to improve academic achievement (Flanders, 1965; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Oustson, & Smith, 1979), and AA [Advisor-Advisee] programs are intended to enhance this ethos of caring by helping students and teachers see themselves as part of a common team pursuing common objectives." (Galassi et al., 1997a, p. 302-303)

FLEX SCHEDULE COMMITTEE
The committee charged with developing the Advisory Period format at BGHS is named The Flex Schedule Committee. The committee was comprised of general education and special education teachers, administrators, counselors, DVEA reps, and classified staff. Additionally, surveys were conducted with students, staff, and parents for additional input. The committee met each month during the school year to develop the format of the Advisory Periods and scheduled summer meetings to create the curriculum for the sessions. Committee progress was communicated to staff, CIT, department coordinators, and the administrative team regularly. All agendas and minutes were posted on the school's Blackboard site.
TIME
In order to gain time, the passing period between classes was reduced by one minute, from 6 minutes to 5 minutes, thus gaining approximately 6 minutes per day or 30 minutes per week to use for a flex advisory period. Currently in a given 10 day period students meet in each class 54 minutes resulting in 540 minutes of instructional time. With the new arrangement of time, students would attend classes for 55 minutes for 9 days and on the Advisory Period day meet in classes for 45 minutes, resulting in 540 minutes of instructional time. In other words, instructional time stays the same, yet 45 minutes of Advisory Time is created.

The team researched studies on the most effective length and frequency of advisory periods. The conclusion drawn from the research indicated the length or frequency of periods did not influence the effectiveness of the advisory period as much as the quality of the content during the period. The team determined that to produce quality sessions, fewer session would be advantageous. Yet, in order to build advisor-advisee relationships more frequent sessions are needed. Input into session length and frequency was gathered from a survey given to staff, students, and parents. Results from all groups indicated a preference for meeting for an hour every other week. The team felt that meeting every other week would strike a fair balance in offering fewer sessions in order to create quality lessons and offering more sessions to build relationships.

SCHEDULE
The team felt that a predictable pattern for holding the Advisory Period would be appreciated by students and staff, so the pattern of holding Advisory Periods during the first and third weeks of each month was selected. Because of holidays and early release professional development days, the team felt that Mondays and Fridays were not optimal for holding Advisory Periods. Results from a staff survey indicated that Thursdays were the preferred day of the week for the Advisory Periods. So, every 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month, excluding testing weeks, early release days, and holidays, was chosen. No sessions will be scheduled for August (due to the shortened month, schedule changes, and time needed to prepare students for the new schedule) or in May (due to final exams, IB exams, and AP exams).

PERIOD
The Advisory Period will need to be connected to another period of the day for attendance tracking purposes. The largest volume of students are on campus during periods 2 and 3. To hold the advisory period during 3rd hour, students would need to go to their advisory session during the beginning of the hour so that advisory period would not back up against first lunch (enticing students to skip advisory period to extend their lunch hour). This means, students would need to report to 3rd hour for attendance, transition to their advisor, then return to 3rd hour for instruction. When looking at the logistics of attendance taking, period 2 was determined to be simpler since students would report to 2nd hour for instruction and then go to advisory without returning to 2nd hour.
Bell schedules were re-worked to reflect the reduced passing times and the Advisory Period addition. The bell schedules were looked at and approved by the school's Food Service Manager. The previous bell schedule only allowed 3 minutes for announcements. The new schedules allow 5 or more minutes which will better allow for video announcements.

**BELL SCHEDULE FOR REGULAR DAYS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Lunch Schedule</th>
<th>Second Lunch Schedule</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period 1</strong></td>
<td>7:45-8:40 (55 min.)</td>
<td>7:45-8:40 (55 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Period 2</strong></td>
<td>8:45-9:40 (55 min.)</td>
<td>8:45-9:40 (55 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Period 3</strong></td>
<td>9:45-10:45 (55 min. + 5 min for announcements)</td>
<td>9:45-10:45 (55 min. + 5 min for announcements)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LUNCH</strong></td>
<td>10:45-11:15 (30 min.)</td>
<td>10:50-11:45 (55 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Period 4</strong></td>
<td>10:50-11:45 (55 min.)</td>
<td>11:45-12:15 (30 min.)</td>
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<td><strong>Period 5</strong></td>
<td>11:20-12:15 (55 min.)</td>
<td>12:00-12:15 (55 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Period 6</strong></td>
<td>12:20-1:15 (55 min.)</td>
<td>12:20-1:15 (55 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Period 7</strong></td>
<td>1:20-2:15 (55 min.)</td>
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**BELL SCHEDULE FOR ADVISORY DAYS**

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<tr>
<td><strong>Period 2</strong></td>
<td>8:35-9:20 (45 min)</td>
<td>8:35-9:20 (45 min)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ADVISORY PD</strong></td>
<td>9:20-10:20 (50 min +10 min for transition &amp; attendance)</td>
<td>9:25-10:20 (50 min +10 min for transition &amp; attendance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period 3</strong></td>
<td>10:25-11:15 (45 min. + 5 min for announcements)</td>
<td>10:25-11:15 (45 min. + 5 min for announcements)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LUNCH</strong></td>
<td>11:15-11:45 (30 min.)</td>
<td>11:20-12:05 (45 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Period 4</strong></td>
<td>11:20-12:05 (45 min.)</td>
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ADVISOR ASSIGNMENTS
The committee contemplated whether advisors should advise the same students for all four years of the students' enrollment in high school ("loop" with students) or advise a new group of students each year (advise same grade level each year). Staff, students, and parents were surveyed and the results for all groups revealed a preference for having students stay with the same advisor all four years. Research supports this model of advising.

In many advisory models, the advisor works with the same groups over the course of their high school career. For this reason, Wasley and Lear (2001) argue the advisory program is “the single most important design element for making possible a high level of personalization...” The teacher can “confront and challenge students about their performance in ways not typical in large high schools” (p. 23).


Next, the committee needed to determine if the advisor would be responsible for grading their advisees' Personal Projects during the students' sophomore year and their Senior Institute Projects during their senior year, thus grading projects every other year. Or, should the advisor grade some seniors and some sophomores (not necessarily their advisees) every year. The staff was surveyed and overwhelmingly selected to grade their own advisee's projects every other year.

The committee decided that the students with severe and profound disabilities would be advised by their special education teachers. They also advised that some teachers/counselors would be "floaters" (faculty without an assigned group of advisory students) to cover advisory groups when the advisor needed to lead a special session. The "floaters" would also assist advisors in grading projects.

LOGISTICS
Attendance: Attendance for the advisory period will be taken by a hard copy roster and collected the following hour by Office T.A.'s and/or Security.
Tardies/Ditching: Students who are tardy or ditching Advisory Period will be subject to the same discipline processes as other classes.
Power Schools: Registrar will enter student's advisory teacher in Power Schools. Registrar will assign new students to teachers, keeping advisor loads as equitable as possible.
Club Meetings, Special Requests: Curriculum will be developed by faculty teams. Requests for club meetings and other special meetings will be considered on an individual basis to determine if the meeting/session meets the intended purposes of Advisory Period and supports the school's continuous improvement efforts.
Substitutes: Teachers will leave the Advisory Period lessons for substitute teachers when they are out. "Floaters" may be used to implement the lesson if it is felt the lesson may be difficult for the sub to present. Basic information regarding Advisory Period will be included in the Sub Folders.
COMMUNICATION PLAN

- May 2013 – send plan to district level for approval
- Summer 2013 – include information in summer parent meetings
- Summer 2013 – include letter with report cards
- Post letter on web site
- Overview session for teachers during pre-service
- Distribute letter to students with pink sheets during first week of school
- Distribute letter to parents during the 2nd hour session of Meet-The-Teacher Night
- Have Media or IT kids create a commercial to be shown during 2nd hour in August

MEASUREMENT PLAN

There are two aspects of the Advisory Period program that we will need to gather data on; processes and outcomes. In the area of processes, we will survey staff and students to determine how well the program is working logistically and how well (fidelity) it is being implemented. The team will create a QFIC and a survey instrument to gather this feedback. In order to evaluate student outcomes affected by the program, we will gather data from a variety of sources that will include student achievement data as well as demographic data which can affect student achievement. The projected outcomes are:

1) Increased student connectivity with school (better attendance, less discipline, adult advocate to motivate and guide student, positive feeling toward school)
2) Because of increased connectivity, student achievement will increase (grades, test scores)
3) Through continued and structured guidance, student college and career preparedness will increase (ECAP, participation in college entrance exams, increased college enrollment)

Data from the four major data categories will be collected.

PROGRAM DATA

- Develop a QFIC
- Teacher self evaluation against QFIC Fidelity Indicators (1st and 3rd quarters)
- Student online survey (given during Lexile testing in January and April)

PERCEPTUAL DATA

- Staff survey (1st and 3rd quarters)
- Student survey (January and April)

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

- Attendance Data
- Discipline Data
- ECAP completion, PSAT/ACT/SAT participation rates, college enrollment

OUTCOME DATA

- Student D/F reports
- AIMS, District Common Assessments, Lexile reports
- School Label