INTRODUCTION

In 1983 President Reagan issued “A Nation at Risk.” This report on the effectiveness of public education sparked a national discussion on the state of American schools. Report after report discussed how American students were falling behind the rest of the developed world. The dire warnings of the failings of education sparked many districts and schools to look at the effectiveness of public education. At the same time, public schools were feeling societal changes as well: increasing numbers of single parents, rising teen pregnancies, fear of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, and an influx of drug and alcohol consumption by underage drinkers. These societal pressures continue through today but are compounded by new issues, including: increasing violence, gender relations, school shootings, student apathy, and an increase of non-English speakers and special education students. Since public schools do not exist in a vacuum, schools have been asked to take on more and more responsibilities. Out of the 1980’s push for reform, and an increase of societal pressures faced by school-aged children, has come twenty years of educational change. These reforms have drastically changed the way traditional public schools look. An example of this has been the transformation of the junior high concept into the middle school model.

Reformers were trying to address two issues simultaneously. First, education professionals wanted to improve the quality of education, and secondly, they needed to address the societal pressures faced by students. The middle school concept is what has evolved. This concept called for smaller learning communities, personalized instruction, and increased teacher-student connectedness. As middle schools across the country adopted this model, three constants appeared: the creation of houses, or smaller schools
within the larger school; teaming of teachers into core subject blocks; and the establishment of teacher advisor programs. As middle schools adopted these changes they noticed that the quality of education improved, school was becoming more personalized, and at the same time they could address the societal pressures that their students felt (Zeigler, 1993). While all three facets of the reform movement have changed how schools are structured, the teacher advisory program has been one reform that has changed how schools work with students. A teacher advisory program is defined as “an organizational structure in which one small group of students identifies with and belongs to one educator, who nurtures, advocates for, and shepherds through school the individuals in that group” (Cole, 1992, p. 5).

The job description of the teacher changed with the implementation of the teacher advisory program. This theoretical change in the definition of the responsibility of the school and teacher has spawned numerous studies on the advantages, disadvantages and issues of implementing teacher advisory programs for both the students and the school (Galassie, Gulledge, & Cox, 1997; George & Alexander, 1993; Keefe 1986; Petersen & Skiba, 2001; Zeigler, 1993).

Statement of the Problem

The teacher advisory model has become a mainstay in most American middle schools, but it is not as common in high schools. There are several reasons for this. The structure of American high schools has traditionally been to focus on teaching the curriculum and preparing students for life after high school. Secondary schools have not traditionally placed an emphasis on the affective domain of learning. At the same time as
schools have continued to focus on content, they have been faced with many societal and educational pressures. These pressures have included making major shifts in their course offerings, implementing non-traditional instructional schedules, incorporating an influx of special education and English as second language learners into the learning environment, and moving toward standardized instruction directed by benchmarks.

These issues are mirrored by the educational guidelines of Pacific West School District, a large suburban school district in the Pacific Northwest. Pacific West School District adopted the following guidelines in 2002:

- To assure that all students achieve the state academic and career related learning standards, the essential learning skills, and the PASS proficiencies.
- To build an instructional culture in which all adults recognize that what they do affects student learning, and accept responsibility for their part in student achievement and advocacy for all students.
- To identify and implement methods and processes for personalizing learning.
- To address and eliminate practices that result in inequalities for students (PWSD, p. 2-4)

The guidelines were created by the district administration to give guidance to the individual high schools on how they could address the needs of all students. Within the framework of these guidelines the high schools within this large district of 35,000 students defined their specific, individualized initiatives. These initiatives included: creating study halls, forming advisory programs, breaking down the large high schools into “smaller learning units” and providing multiple opportunities for all students to succeed in the classroom.

These factors, issues and mandates just listed prompt an examination of the question: would it be beneficial for high schools to adopt some of the strategies that
middle schools have been employing in the teacher advisory program in order to help meet the needs of today's high school students.

Significance of Study

This study is significant because as American high schools continue to improve their quality of instruction and reform their practices, they also need to focus on the affective domain of the learning process in public education. It is important to look at how personalized a school setting is, or how connected the student body feels to the curriculum, staff, and activities of the building. If students believe they have the empowerment to make choices in the educational setting then they will take more ownership in the educational process. As William Glasser refers to in his idea of “Choice Theory,” if a student meets the five basic needs for survival, love, belonging, freedom, and fun, then the student will feel empowered to succeed (Glasser, 1999).

In any high school setting it is advantageous for the school to look at how it can foster, maintain, and promote healthy community relationships within its learning environment. Instituting a teacher advisory program is one avenue through which these positive relationships can be established.

Personally, this study is significant because I am employed in a building that has begun an advisory program. Therefore, I am interested in how effective this program will be in a large high school.
Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to understand how a teacher advisory program could successfully be implemented in a traditional high school setting. Interviews, reflective journaling, and questionnaires were used to determine the results in a qualitative model. In this research, advisory programs are defined as a structured adult-student advocacy periods meeting biweekly and composed of one certified adult and approximately twenty students.

The Grand Tour and Sub Questions

The central research question to be answered during this study is: How can an advisory program be successfully implemented in a traditional high school setting?

In addressing this larger guiding question I will also be using the following sub questions to focus my study:

β How can a middle school concept be adapted to fit a high school need?
β What needs do high school students have that advisories can address?
β How can advisories help create a more personal high school climate?
β What roles do certified staff (adults) play in the success rate of advisory programs?
β What logistical issues affect the implementation and continuation of advisory programs?
β What activities will be conducted in advisories to meet the stated goals?

Definitions

1. Teacher Advisory Program: Various called expanded homeroom, advisory period, home base, advisory base, student assistance, teacher advisor, or adviser-advisee (Keefe, 1986.) Structured adult-student units that address both affective and cognitive concerns in a caring, safe environment.
2. **Latch Key Kids**: Young children who self-babysit after school while the adult is not at home.

3. **Special Education**: Support system for students who are eligible under the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (I.D.E.A.). Serves a variety of students with a variety of disabilities on an individual basis.

4. **504**: The Section 504 Protection from Discrimination Act that prohibits discrimination against persons with a disability in any program receiving federal financial assistance.

5. **Qualitative Study**: An inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words; reporting detailed views of informants; and conducted in a natural setting (Creswell, 1994, p. 1-2).

6. **Self-Esteem**: A feeling of self-respect and a sense of well being.

7. **School Climate**: A reflection of the positive or negative feelings regarding the school environment, which may directly or indirectly affect a variety of learning outcomes (Peterson & Skiba, 2001).


9. **Personalization**: Making individual connections to the educational setting and content.

10. **PASS**: Proficiency Assessment Standard System. Benchmarks established by the Oregon University System to ensure that all high school graduates in the state of Oregon are able and ready to attend an institution of higher learning.
Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

This study was conducted during the 2002-03 school year at Pacific High School, a large suburban high school in the Pacific Northwest. Pacific High School and Pacific West School District are pseudonyms for the location where this study took place. This study was precipitated by a proposal made to the faculty in the spring of 2001 by a Programs of Study Action Team composed of staff, students, and parents. The action team proposed the creation of a teacher advisory program that focused on “…positive active student empowerment” (Folgate, 2001). The staff approved the proposal and a planning team was established during the summer between the 2001-02 and 2002-03 school years to create an advisory program that embodied this directive. This planning team also worked under the direction of another committee that addressed implementing small learning communities in the building. The research was guided by the predetermined goals of the planning team, the small learning communities committee, and the school’s site council.

In this qualitative study, data were collected by interviewing staff and students, analyzing questionnaire responses, and looking at reflective journal entries during the 2002-03 school year.

Limitations

Two external issues also affected the school as this study took place: first, the implementation of a block schedule; and second, the ongoing budget crisis facing Pacific Northwest public schools. Internally, the researcher is well known in the building as a
teacher, Activities Director, member of the planning team, and facilitator of the action
team that led to the adoption of a block schedule also implemented during the 2002-03
school year. In addition, as Creswell (1994) explains, in qualitative studies the findings
could be subject to other interpretations, and the information gained in this study is
specific to the circumstances of the building it was gathered in. Thus, this research study
cannot be generalized to another high school setting, but it can be used to help explain
how to successfully implement a teacher advisory program into a traditional high school
setting.
LITERATURE REVIEW

As an experienced teacher of ten years, I have taught every grade level from sixth through twelfth in four different states. As I have moved around the United States, I have worked in many different educational settings. When I taught middle school in Texas, a teacher advisory program that was in place in the school intrigued me. When I left that school and moved to a secondary school in Iowa, I was a member of a committee that planned an advisory program for the large suburban high school where I was teaching. Interestingly enough, when I moved to the Pacific Northwest I began working in a high school that was looking at restructuring its schedule and program of instruction, one key component of the restructuring plan was to implement a teacher advisory program. The purpose of the advisory program was to “…achieve and maintain school connectedness” (Future, 2001). My professional journey has led me to this point of reviewing research literature on teacher advisory programs. This literature review addresses several facets of advisory programs. The first section focuses on what teacher advisory programs are and how effective they are in secondary schools, the second section looks at the factors that must be addressed when implementing an advisory program in a high school setting and the third section focuses on how advisor/advisee programs can address the needs of high school students.

What are Teacher Advisory Programs and are they Effective?

In the 1980’s, junior high schools went through a reform movement that drastically changed how mid-level schools were structured. The move was to look at improving not only the quality of instruction but also the school environment as a whole.
A study conducted by George and Oldaker in 1985 showed that in 160 exemplary middle schools, over ninety percent had each of the following; interdisciplinary teams, flexible scheduling of classes and/or block scheduling, a focus on students’ personal development and home-base or advisor/advisee programs (in Galassi & Gulledge, 1997). In response to the non-cognitive requirements of the reform movement, programs have been implemented that focus on the affective development of students. A common guidepost of middle school reform movements was that “every student should have an ongoing significant relationship with at least one adult in the school which is characterized by warmth, concern, openness and understanding” (George & Alexander, 1993, p. 201). To meet this need, teachers have been asked to step beyond usual academic roles and become student advisors. The role of advisors was to develop “relationships characterized by caring, trust, and honesty advisors can help students feel secure within the school environment, speak to their questions, fears, and concerns, and prepare students to succeed while at the same time building adolescents’ self-esteem” (Whitney & Hoffman, 1998, p. 233).

Traditionally, guidance counselors were the students’ sole advisors, but often teachers have more contact with students than guidance counselors do. Thus the role of advising can easily fall to the teacher. The role of advisor is different from the role of counselor. Both are crucial in a school, but each serves a separate purpose. “Guidance customarily is viewed as the broader activity, as the process of helping students understand themselves and their school. Counseling usually describes specific one-on-one guidance contacts. Advisement is the ‘helping link’ between the professional guidance function and the day to day school life of students” (Keefe, 1986, p. 86).
In schools with functioning teacher advisory programs, the entire school acts as a guidance team. Useful ideas are communicated more readily and implemented more willingly, because the student is the focus of the collaborative activity. With this in mind, schools established programs that linked teachers with students. These “helping links”, or advisory groups, as Ziegler (1993) states, “Are organizations of teachers and students into small groups, which permit instruction and advisory to be personalized. Their function is to promote students’ educational, personal, and social development” (p. 3). This accurate definition is also echoed by Anderson & Blackwood (2000), “…they [teacher advisory programs] promote a more caring, nurturing student relationship” (p. 47).

Teacher advisory programs are effective in many schools that have adopted them. Ziegler (1993) states, “Program participants and evaluators in six American middle schools point to higher school retention rates, a better school climate, increased staff-student contact, and better student behavior” (p. 3). Any secondary school would love to receive results like this. In another study, three different pieces of information were presented. At Fern School outside of Toronto, Ontario, after the first year of a teacher advisory program in 1991 absences decreased fifteen percent. Two years later the absence rate decreased seventy-eight percent. In 1991, sixty-nine percent of the teachers reported that they liked working with their advisees, and in 1993 that number jumped to ninety percent. The last question was a bit more ambiguous. It asked teachers how they thought students felt about the advisory program. In 1991, teachers thought that forty six percent of the students liked the program, and in 1993 the number jumped to one hundred percent (Ziegler, 1993). At Arkadelphia High School in Arkansas the results are not as
tremendous as at Fern School, but they are substantial. After the first year, fifty-seven percent of the students thought the program was positive, fifty-one percent wanted to continue the program for a second year, while twenty-one percent said maybe, and sixteen percent said the program should be discontinued. Sixty-two percent of the faculty thought the program was positive, and fifty-eight percent thought that the program should continue (Anderson & Blackwood, 2000). These responses signal that faculty and students generally see advisory programs as effective, in both middle schools and high schools. It is shown through this research that a traditional middle school concept can be effective in the ninth through twelfth grades. But all the literature points to the fact that a well-planned program is what makes Teacher Advisories successful.

Factors of Implementing a Teacher Advisory Program

Most of the literature I studied on advisory programs was focused on addressing implementation issues. These issues include: the advisory group structure, characteristics of the program, establishment of goals, scope and sequence, the role of the adult, staff development, and communication between all stakeholders. When beginning the process of implementing an advisory program, it is important to incorporate the following points:

ß Provide sufficient planning time so that site-based management can occur effectively;
ß Include teachers from a broad array of academic areas, guidance counselors, administrators, and whenever possible, students and parents;
ß Develop a detailed scope and sequence, remembering that such a document needs to evolve as students’ concerns and needs change;
ß Provide opportunities for students and educators to get to know one another on a personal adult-student basis;
ß Schedule the advisory program at a specified day and time so students will see it as an integral part of the school day rather than just an extra activity;
ß Notify parents about the advisory program and conduct an orientation session that explain its goals and limitations;
β Ensure that all advisors have sufficient training so that they will feel competent to intervene in affective areas;
β Ensure that the restructuring team works with all educators in the school to clarify communication, seek input and opinions, and train reluctant faculty members;
β Decide a means of evaluating students’, teachers’ and administrators perceptions of the advisory effort;
β Base the advisory program on research and scholarly writings that offer clear definitions, allow for the development of relevant objectives, and meet the needs of students in a particular high school (Manning & Saddlemire, 1998).

If schools do not fully consider all the implications, issues, and concerns about adopting an advisory period into the schedule, then it is much easier for opponents of the program to defeat the restructuring effort (Galassi, Gulledge & Cox, 1997). To further this point Keefe (1986) goes on to include the following points to include if a school wants to begin a successful teacher advisory program:

β Space must be provided for private student conferences;
β Students stay with the same advisor until they graduate;
β Advisement teams work under the leadership of professional counselors;
β Clear procedures are established;
β A teacher advisor handbook is prepared and kept current (p. 89).

With these characteristics in mind, an effective teacher advisory program can successfully be launched in a high school setting. The next crucial step in launching an advisory program is to look at what goals the individual school wants to accomplish. At Arkadelphia High School the advisory program focused on thirteen objectives. The objectives ranged from the affective domain of emphasizing self-worth and directing students to their potential, to the educational domain of helping each student with their career goals, facilitating academic registration and programming, and providing a channel for communication about student activities. The overall intent of the program was to provide personal support services for all students and allow students to get to know their
mentors outside an academic classroom environment (Anderson & Blackwood, 2000).

At Pacific High School the planning team established a thematic approach. The first year focused on “Building Relationships” with the three main goals being:

1. To provide a place where every student has a feeling of belonging, ownership and value;
2. To establish relationships and community focusing on cooperation and working together;
3. To provide an arena to improve communication and practice communication skills (Skone, 2002, p.1).

As seen in both situations the goals of the program were established to fit the specific needs of the school.

One of the biggest tasks for a planning team is to identify the appropriate needs of the school (Galassi, Gulledge, & Cox, 1997). Through collaboration, discussion, and analysis of data the needs of a school can be delineated and defined. Once this is done the topics that can be addressed within the curriculum of the advisory program are numerous. One approach in organizing a teacher advisory program is that “The educational agenda of the advisory program emphasizes program planning (secondary and post-secondary) and the social agenda emphasizes strengthening self-concept and peer-group relationships, and offering ‘survival assistance’”(Ziegler, 1993, p. 3). To be more specific, Manning & Saddlemire (1998) mention that an advisory program could cover affective issues or topics that high school students consider relevant. For example, adolescents almost daily experience instances of peer pressure, opportunities that call for conflict resolution, situations that threaten self-esteem, and events resulting in stress or anger. Contemporary topics include delayed gratification, community service, date rape, and sexual harassment (p. 240). On the other end of the spectrum at an Arkansas high
school, “…monthly meetings included a session on introductory activities and a program overview, the educational reform process, tutoring and extended time learning, grade point averages, preparation for the American College Test (ACT), and registering for the next semester” (Anderson & Blackwood, 2000, p. 47). No matter what the topics may cover, it is crucial that thought and discussion go into the decision making process, and then the information is communicated effectively to the staff as a whole (Galassi, Gulledge, & Cox, 1997).

The topics discussed and sequencing of lessons is directly tied to how often the school decides the teacher advisory program will meet. One concern that all research commented on was the need for a consistent meeting pattern within the master schedule. This could be daily, weekly, biweekly, or monthly, but the one common denominator is that the advisory time has to be placed on the calendar. Advisories cannot be tossed in whenever it was thought to be important or convenient.

One of the major concerns of implementing a teacher advisory program is the role of the adult. The adult is very important in making sure that the advisory program is successful. As Zeigler (1993) pointed out “This is most true at the secondary level, where although advisory groups may be particularly important, in order to overcome the more complex and impersonal structure of the school, they are often most resisted by staff, who not infrequently view the advisory role as subject experts” (p. 6). It is difficult for many high school staff to assume the role of an advisor for they have to leave the cognitive domain behind and move to the affective domain and this is often seen as too “touch-feely.” Ziegler also mentions “…most detailed accounts of implementation of advisory programs indicate considerable teacher hesitancy and doubt about the value of
the innovation. Studies done early on in the implementation of advisory programs rarely find anything like universal acceptance” (p. 4). So, what role does the adult play? It is a crucial piece to the adoption of advisory programs. The responsibilities of teachers in advisory programs could include some or all of the following:

- Establish a caring relationship with individual advisees;
- Provide availability to students to discuss concerns and interests;
- Confer with students and parents (communication link between school, home, and community);
- Assist students in obtaining information about school activities;
- Serve as a first line source of referral for counselors, nurses, or specialists;
- Serve as an academic expert and student advocate for each advisee;
- Provide social and emotional education to advisees;
- Act as “sounding board” (assist students in working out their problems);
- Conduct group guidance activities (Shockley, Schumacher, & Smith, 1984, p. 73-74).

As this list is constituted it places more job responsibilities on the teacher. High school teachers already feel as if their workload keeps increasing. As schools reform, and more and more responsibility is placed on the teacher, the issue of workload is one that must be addressed. To help with teacher buy-in when establishing an advisory program it is crucial to look at teacher workload issues. According to Galassi, Gulledge, & Cox, (1997) “The following issues should be addressed at an advisory program’s inception: (a) how much time the program will add to the teacher’s workload, (b) whether other responsibilities can be dropped or scaled back to compensate, and (c) whether, in teachers’ opinions, the potential gains from the program appear to justify the required efforts” (p. 315). To help address these concerns a more affective role for the teacher may facilitate acceptance from the staff of a school. Ziegler (1993) suggests that the teacher in advisories could possibly do the following:

- Respond to student feelings
- See the students point of view
Another way that workload issues can be addressed is to look at the composition of each advisory group. A large group of advisees will add more work for each advisor. If the number can be maintained at a manageable level, then teachers may be more willing to participate in the advisor program. “Virtually all certified personnel are responsible for a group of 15 to 30 students. Each group is small enough for advisors to work personally with advisees” (Keefe, 1986 p. 88).

Another concern that advisors face is the lack of staff development. In order for an advisory program to be effective, staff pre-service and in-service trainings must occur (Anderson & Blackwood, 2000; Galassi, Gulledge, & Cox, 1997; Keefe, 1986). A 1993 study at Fern School in Ontario, Canada showed, “…two-thirds of the teacher advisors said they felt the groups were successful or very successful more than a quarter were not please with the results. They pointed out that more professional development was necessary for staff advisors” (Ziegler, 1993, p. 4). The role of the adult is important in making sure advisory programs work; and at the same time other issues such as, scope and sequence, planning time, activities and goals of the program also effect the successful implementation of teacher advisory programs.

How Teacher Advisory Programs can Address the Needs of High School Students

Within the last five years there has been a nationwide movement to personalize large high schools by creating a feeling of a “small-school” environment. The major
ideas of the small school concept parallel the middle school reform movement in the 1980’s. Both movements include interdisciplinary teaming, block and/or flexible scheduling and teacher advisory programs. An advisory program can help create a small school feeling within a large school.

The advisory group may help to create for secondary students something like a face to face community of learners—something which the size and structure of secondary schools as presently constituted makes very difficult, and something without which many students will never connect to school or to any learning environment. How teachers interact with students can make a difference in how well students perceive that teachers care about and are interested in them personally, they are more likely to try hard, to be inspired, and to enjoy school (Ziegler, 1993, p. 6).

The goal of improving school climate is a subjective one, but by “…making a big school seem smaller reverses this sense of alienation. The commitment, reciprocity, and social bonding that develop among adults and students increases everyone’s personal investment in the school” (Schoenlin, 2001, p. 30). An investment in schools will hopefully curb an apparent rise in violence, a feeling of alienation and disconnectedness by students, and a sense of not being empowered over their own education. The social and educational needs of high school students are not any different than those of middle school students. Both middle school and high school students need a safe learning environment, a face-to-face personalized, learning and sharing community, a caring and communicative staff, and a feeling of empowerment. Teacher advisories can focus on safety, personalized learning environments, the role of the guidance counselor, and student empowerment because they are able to address concerns that high school students feel. For example, at Pacific High School students grading the school commented on the following in 2002:
68% gave the school an ‘A’ or ‘B’ in addressing safety concerns
45% gave the school an ‘A’ or ‘B’ in addressing the successes of all students
54% gave the school an ‘A’ or ‘B’ in preparing students for future work and/or study
58% gave the school an ‘A’ or ‘B’ as an overall grade (PWSD).

These results are interesting and lend themselves to analysis by the school. The statistics also show that a lot of work can be done to improve the overall environment at Pacific High School.

Safety

Teacher advisory programs can easily address one of the issues affecting high school students today, the feeling of insecurity. Curriculum can be created for advisories to discuss safety issues. In Pacific West School District all stakeholders in school safety see this an important issue. A researcher for the district stated, “In the past, we have relied on policies, codes of conduct, and supervision to maintain safe hallways and campus grounds. Recent incidents in Littleton, Colorado and Springfield, Oregon prove that this is not enough to ensure safety in large schools” (Fiecke, 2002, p. 5). When students have an outlet to discuss safety related issues and a caring adult to talk to about their feelings, their sense of security will increase. As Peterson and Skiba (2001) report, “… existence of these curricula would be likely to positively affect school climate and also reduce the likelihood of school violence (p. 173).
**Personalized Learning Environment**

Teacher advisory programs can assist in personalizing a school. When schools are personalized “…the relationship between teachers and students becomes a highly supportive and mutually satisfying one. School climate improves and student and teacher performance is enhanced” (Keefe, 1986, p. 90). Keefe defines personalized education as “A systematic effort to take into account individual student characteristics and effective instructional practices in organizing the learning environment” (p. 85). This is not necessarily a new reform movement, for high school teachers have always attempted to address individual student needs, personalize their classrooms, and at the same time teach content. A teacher advisory program can only enhance and personalize education. As Keefe points out, teacher advisory programs are beneficial because “…each student needs the continuing and caring advice that only an experienced teacher can give—someone who has already walked the same road” (p. 90).

**The Role of the Guidance Counselor**

Traditionally, if students had personal issues outside the content area, they went to their assigned guidance counselor. But as counselors have become busier, it is difficult to accomplish all that needs to be done in their overloaded schedules. If students had an avenue to discuss personal issues in a safe environment other than with their guidance counselor, then the guidance counselor’s pressures of assisting all students could be lessoned. A trained adult advocate could assist counselors in addressing student’s needs. “It should be pointed out the advisory program neither negates or underestimates the work of counseling professionals. Instead, educators and counselors work collaboratively
to improve the educational experiences and overall well-being of the students” (Manning & Saddlemire, 1998, p. 240). An advisory program will only benefit the overworked high school counselor. In many schools with advisory programs, counselors and teachers become teammates in working with students to address pressures placed on them (Galassi & Gulledge, 1997).

**Self-Esteem and Empowerment**

One of the central issues of why teacher advisory programs are necessary in high schools is centered on the self-esteem of the student. Schools that focus on helping students understand the importance of a positive self-esteem will only benefit both the school and the individual student. If one were to look at a hierarchy of human needs, as defined by Maslow for example, one would see a direct correlation to the purpose of advisories. “At the core of Maslow’s theory is a description of basic human needs, which he saw as influencing every aspect of our behavior” (Glassman, 2000, p. 269). At the most basic level of Maslow’s hierarchy is the physiological level. At this level individual’s needs are focused around obtaining water, food, lodging: basic needs for survival. Maslow states, “It is quite true that man lives by bread alone-when there is no bread” (Maslow, 1970, p. 38). At the next level, mankind’s needs are based on safety. People need to feel both physically and psychologically safe. If people do not feel secure, they cannot fully function beyond this point. The next level of Maslow’s Hierarchy focuses on people’s need for love and belongingness. Individuals need to give and receive acceptance, love and affection in a positive environment. Once all of these have been met, individuals can focus on self-esteem. Self-esteem can be defined as a
feeling of self-respect and the sense of being competent at what one does, as well as receiving regard from others. At the top of Maslow’s hierarchy is the growth category of self-actualization. The goal of all individuals is to reach this level, to be at the point of using one’s capacities to the fullest (Maslow, 1970). If schools, and more specifically advisories, can focus on meeting the physiological needs of students, then they can more easily focus on self-esteem and self-actualization issues. Myers (1998) reported on studies done by Brockner & Hulton (1978) and Brown (1991) that show, high self-esteem, a feeling of self-worth, pays dividends. People who feel good about themselves (who strongly agree with self-affirming questionnaire statements) have fewer sleepless nights, succumb less easily to pressures to conform, are less likely to use drugs are more persistent at difficult tasks, and are just plain happier (p. 438). Teacher advisory programs can help students focus on improving their self-esteem. “Maslow saw understanding the nature of our needs as an important part of self-development, since the various need can affect all aspects of our lives” (Glassman, 2000, p. 272). If students have meet their physiological needs, feel safe, have a personalized learning environment, and have a caring adult to contact if they have concerns, issues, or questions, then “people will strive to actualize their highest potential” (Myers, 1998, p. 444). Once students are able to strive to improve themselves and their surroundings, they have the potential to feel empowered. Glasser (1998) believes individuals have five needs: survival, love, belonging, freedom, and fun. Fulfillment of these needs brings satisfaction, a sense of belonging, and empowerment. Coupling this idea with Maslow’s Hierarchy, successful connections can be made to the needs of students. In this time of additional stresses placed on high school students, one of the best attributes that schools
can enhance for our students is empowerment. One way to reach this end is by creating an environment that focuses on the needs of the students.

Summary of the Literature Review

The essential question that high schools are addressing is one of effectiveness. How can schools provide a sound, quality curriculum, while also meeting the affective needs of its students? I have explained only one small piece of the puzzle. This literature review was organized to help understand the purpose of teacher advisory programs and some issues of implementing them. I also chose the topic because it is of high interest to me. I am teaching in a school that is facing multiple new situations: a new instructional schedule, ongoing construction, and an advisory program. In order for my school to implement an effective teacher advisory program, it is important to look at best practices, to research the successes and failures of other programs and to adapt the teacher advisory model to our own needs. Teacher advisory programs come in many different forms; but hopefully this research has addressed some of these differences. What are teacher advisory programs? Are teacher advisory programs effective? What are some factors that must be addressed when implementing advisory programs? Can advisory programs effectively address the needs of high school students? The literature review is the initial step in answering these questions. The second step began when we as a school sit down and implemented a teacher advisory program during the 2002-03 school year.
METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Qualitative Design

Qualitative research is “…an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in a natural setting” (Creswell, p. 2). With this in mind, it made sense to use this model as I looked at the process of implementing a teacher advisory program at Pacific High School.

This qualitative study took on the feel of an ethnographic study. As I conducted the research my intent was to gain an in-depth understanding of a teacher advisory program during its first year of implementation. This would provide me with rich, thick data to analyze in my narrative. To accomplish the research, I worked within a specific setting for one school year. The teacher advisory program was implemented the first week of school and was concluded at the end of the school year. Since this was a specific locational study, it is too limited to make any widespread generalizations.

I employed traditional ethnographic data collection techniques. This included conducting fieldwork and taking field notes in a naturalistic setting. Questionnaires were also used to collect data on the implementation process. I interpreted the collected data to analyze the teacher advisory program. This process of constructing meaning to a set of data is another characteristic of qualitative research (Creswell, 1994).

I am the researcher who conducted the data collection and the analysis of the data. The qualitative research model allowed for observations to be made by the researcher, and the data are primarily in narrative form.
The Role of the Researcher

I have been a teacher at the school where this research was conducted for four of my ten years of teaching. While at this school I have facilitated an action team of staff, students, and parents that led our staff into a block schedule. My facilitation of this action team led me onto another committee of teachers and administrators planning a teacher advisory period for the school. As a researcher, I studied a program that I helped create. I have an investment in this program, and at the same time I have an objective interest in seeing if the teacher advisory program will be successful in a high school setting that has not traditionally had an advisory program. Since I sat on the committee that created the program from the grassroots level, I was constantly aware of researcher bias. I completed the research in all objectivity; but at the same time, I was aware of the influences, values, judgments, and biases I brought into the research arena. As Fetterman said, “The ethnographer enters the field with an open mind, not an empty head” (Creswell, 1994, p. 44).

Site Selection

My research took place in the Pacific West School District at Pacific High School. Pacific High School is one of five traditional high schools, one magnet school, and one alternative school in the district. The student population at Pacific High School during the 2001-2002 school year was 1740 students.
The 2000-01 breakdown of student ethnicity is graphed below (Skone, 2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>School District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>77.4 percent</td>
<td>77.0 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>9.4 percent</td>
<td>7.8 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>10.6 percent</td>
<td>12.3 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>.6 percent</td>
<td>.7 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total enrollment</td>
<td>1740</td>
<td>9825</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following statistics for the 2000-01 school year additionally help define the school setting (Skone, 2002):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of students enrolled in advanced classes</td>
<td>29.0 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of students with limited English Proficiency</td>
<td>11.6 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of students who were on fee/reduced lunch</td>
<td>14.5 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of students identified as Talented and Gifted</td>
<td>23.6 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of students who are identified as Special Education</td>
<td>16.7 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data collection in qualitative research considers four parameters: 1) where the research will take place; 2) who will be observed or interviewed; 3) what the participants will be observed doing or interviewed about; 4) and the process or evolving nature of the behaviors of the participants being studied (Creswell, 1994). I used triangulation to ensure the validity of my qualitative research. “Triangulation was [is] based on the assumption that any bias inherent in particular data sources, investigator, and method would be neutralized” (p. 174). Data in this study were from three different methods. First, questionnaires were used at the beginning during the study. Both staff and students were surveyed. Second, interviews were conducted with students and staff. Third, I used reflective journals completed by students from two different advisory groups.
Questionnaires were given at a general staff meeting after I introduced my action research project during the first week of school (Appendix A and B). The questions were focused to allow the staff to respond to the specific issues being studied in this action research project. Purposive sampling was used to select students to complete a questionnaire at the beginning of the school year. I used purposive sampling to choose individuals to complete the questionnaire. I chose students from different backgrounds, different grade levels, and different advisories. Once again, the questions were limited to the areas being studied. After seven months into the school year, the same students and all of the staff received a questionnaire asking the same focused questions as the questions asked at the beginning of the year.

I chose to conduct interviews with members of the staff who represented differing viewpoints on the teacher advisory program. Due to the knowledge I had of the staff, I was able to select three teachers, one who supported the idea of advisories, another who was neutral about the program, and a third who disliked the idea at the beginning of the school year. I interviewed these same individuals at the beginning of the school year and then again in March (Appendix C). When approaching the interview process with students, I chose students to complete the same process (Appendix D). Once again, these students represented different backgrounds, grade levels and advisories.

For the reflective journaling data collection I used student samples from my own advisory and one of my peer’s advisory group. The journal questions used were open-ended responses on the implementation of advisory into the school. I wanted to obtain more objective, open-ended student feedback as the year progressed.
As part of the qualitative research format I analyzed the data at the same time as I collected the data. I analyzed the questionnaires, interviews and student journals in relation to my specific question of implementation of the teacher advisory program. This process of triangulation, data collection, and data analysis led me to a synthesis of all information in order to analyze my research question, and it allowed me to make suggestions for improving the program in the future.

Ethical Considerations

Before starting my research project I approved my research problem with my university advisor, district, and building principal. I sent consent forms home to the parents of the students I interviewed and for all those in my advisory group (Appendix E). I also forwarded a copy of the consent form to the principal and district office. I interviewed students after I received confirmation of parental consent. When reporting quotes and gathered information from students, I avoided the use of names. All efforts have been taken to protect confidentially.
NARRATIVE

Setting

This project was conducted at Pacific High School. The school is located in a large district with roughly 35,000 students, and it is the oldest secondary school in the district. The school has a long tradition of academic and athletic excellence, but over the last decade the school (and district as a whole) has gone through drastic changes: the socio-economic status of the school has declined in recent years, the percentage of English as second language learners (ESOL) has increased, and the pressures for all students to reach state mandated benchmarks has been placed on the staff and students. These changes have forced Pacific High School to constantly evolve in the educational process. The instructional schedule has changed to provide for more opportunities and longer periods of instruction, and most of the staff has recently been trained in ESOL instruction. There are approximately 1800 students in the building, with a staff of seventy-nine teachers. The average class size is twenty-eight students, with the average teacher teaching six out of eight sections.

The school is a maze of hallways and wings built around the original building, which was constructed in the 1920s. This maze can easily be learned as the different “sections” generally house the various departments. In addition to the main building, there are also two outer buildings, with a third being built. When the current construction is completed, the school complex will look more like a college campus than a traditional school building. When implementing the teacher advisory program and evaluating the data, the physical structure of the building is important, because the actual meeting location of the different advisory groups was crucial to their success.
At the beginning of the 2000-01 school year the staff at Pacific High School sat down and looked at what they wanted the school to focus on in its school improvement plan. After two days of discussion, three action teams were formed. One action team focused on the instructional schedule, another on attendance, and the third action team focused on programs of instruction. One outcome that the program of instruction action team said was important in successfully implementing the school improvement plan was that the school needed to establish an advisor/advisee program. At the same time Pacific High School was looking at restructuring itself by creating smaller learning communities. One important piece of the smaller learning communities ideology is the need for schools to create a more personalized educational experience for all students. The push for the formation of an advisory program came from the program of instruction action team and the committee looking at creating smaller learning communities, but the need for change was defined by the data that were being collected on the school. The staff felt that there were too many students “falling through the cracks.” There were a large percentage of students who had attendance problems, roughly thirty percent of the freshman class in 2001-02 was failing at least one class, and in addition, a large percentage of students voiced the concern that they did not feel a connection to the school. These three issues along with some collected data on language proficiency, social-economic status, and at-risk factors prompted the discussion to take place on adopting a teacher advisory program. Some of the information collected that strongly supported the creation of advisories included:
• An increase in percent of students with limited English proficiency:
  β 2000-01:  161 students, 9.3%
  β 2001-02:  205 students, 11.6%

• An increase in percent of students that come from low income families (based on free/reduced lunch data):
  β 2000-01:  11%
  β 2001-02:  14.5%

• A large percentage of ninth graders (20.2 percent, or 257 out of 475) were identified as associated with 3 or more risk factors:
  β More than ten absences
  β GPA less than 2.0%
  β More than one discipline referral
  β At least one current “F”
  β Not meeting standards in reading and math
  β Special education or ESL
  β Free/reduced lunch (Skone, 2002).

Along with these telling numbers Pacific High School also wanted to address issues such as safety, empowerment, career education, community building, and diversity in an advisory group setting with an advisor working with a small number of students. After sifting though all this information the staff voted to form a committee to work on creating a teacher advisor program.

At the same time as these school based reforms to personalize the educational process were taking place, the Pacific West School District presented the five comprehensive high schools in the district with their blue print of what was expected of the schools. Within this document it stated, “Personalized education leads to student success. Genuine success comes from students achieving significant challenges with appropriate support from teachers and other students” (PWSD, p. 4). Both the district’s goals and the school’s goals were aligned, for both parties wanted to personalize the educational process and “…provide more time focused on learning community activities and less on traditional in-service and class time” (p. 4).
The Structure and Scope of the Teacher Advisory Program

A committee of seven people was formed to create the teacher advisory program. After several weeks of discussion, research, and finalizing the scope and sequence the committee created an outline of what the teacher advisor program would look like. The infrastructure was defined early in the process. The committee laid out the following framework for the advisor/advisee program:

**Mission Statement:**

To provide a forum to build positive relationships between students, peers, and teachers

**Purpose and Focus:**

- Improve school climate: act as a clearing-house to transmit school values
- Establish a school-wide mentor-mentee program
- Develop a sense of community
- Time to develop one on one relationships
- Build a support system for students
- Reduce drop-outs
- Create a model for student advocacy
- Breakdown barriers
- Provide kids a “safe” adult
- Deliver special lessons

**When:**

- Advisory groups will meet every other week for 35-40 minutes.

**Individual Advisory Group Structure:**

- All certified staff in the building including teachers, counselors, librarian, and administration will advise a group.
- Classified staff can team with certified staff members to help co-facilitate advisories.
- Students will be randomly selected into advisory groups, and each group will be composed of students in all grade levels.
- Ratio of 16-20 students per mentor.
Role of Mentor:

- Maintain advisee’s working folders
- Provide guidance and advocacy for students
- Create a comfortable, responsible, and safe harbor for kids
- Monitor student academic progress and well-being
- Share resources with students
- Provide timely information if needed, and deal with crisis management
- Celebrations
- Direct instruction of designed curriculum

Role of Student:

- Attend and participate

Goals and Curriculum

Once this was done the committee focused on the goals and specific curriculum for the program. The goals of the program for the first year were:

- To provide a place where every student has a feeling of belonging, ownership, and value.
- Establish relationships and community focusing on cooperation and working together.
- Provide an arena to improve communication and practice communication skills.

Meeting schedule and Activities

The year was broken down into two-week blocks, and nineteen sessions were created that focused on building community relationships. Some of the activities included communication activities, forecasting for the 2002-03 school year, grade-checks and review of grades around reporting periods, and community building exercises. For the full year’s schedule see Appendix F.
Introduction of Research Project to the School Staff and the Students

Before the school year began I collected all my thoughts, created my questionnaires, and interview questions, and submitted my research proposal to the district. Before I could begin my research project I received approval from my building principal and the district office (Appendix G).

On one of the staff development days at the beginning of the school year I was allowed to present my action research project to the staff. This opportunity fit in directly with my role as a member of the planning team of the teacher advisory program and as Activities Director. I presented my action research project after the planning team presented the mission, goals, scope, and sequence of the teacher advisory program. I first presented to the staff my introduction letter and explained why I was researching the advisory implementation process. There were a few questions they focused mostly on the implementation process rather than on my action research project. Once I had clarified what my intentions were, I handed out a survey addressing the implementation of the teacher advisory program. I collected the questionnaires during the meeting, so was able to gather an adequate sample of questionnaires. Once I tabulated my results I offered the results to the staff to look at the responses. I repeated the process of distributing the questionnaire at a staff meeting in March. At this time the staff completed the questionnaires, and I once again was able to obtain an adequate sample of questionnaires.

Several weeks after school started I presented my action research project to the students in my classes and to my advisory group. There were many questions about the purpose of advisories, the purpose of my research project, and the outcomes that were expected of both. They were more inquisitive than the staff. I presented each student
with a letter introducing the action research project and myself to his or her parents, and asked each of them to take two copies home. One copy was to be left at home and other signed and returned. I had no complaints or issues with the informed consent process.

After the students and the staff were comfortable with the advisory program I interviewed three staff members and a sampling of students to obtain their thoughts on the advisory program. The interview was structured with the same questions asked to all interviewees. Since I only focused on the implementation process of the teacher advisory program I did not venture to far from the focus questions. All the interviews were completed and the responses were recorded word for word. I repeated this process in March.

At the beginning of the school year after I met my advisory group and became familiar with each other, I explained how I wanted to periodically record their thoughts in a journal. Since I already had introduced my action research project to them and had asked for an informed consent this process was not difficult. The students readily agreed to allow me to proceed, and once again I received no negative feedback from parents.

Through interviews, questionnaires, and reflective journaling I was able to obtain data that I could use to analyze the effectiveness of the implementation process of our teacher advisory program.
Data

To focus the action research project I specifically chose to look only at the implementation of the advisory program. Therefore, all of the data collected focused only on several key facets of this program.

Within my data collection I was focusing on six critical pieces of the implementation process. Through in-depth research my literature review indicated that for advisory programs to be successful in secondary schools certain criteria had to be met. These included:

- Sufficient planning time
- Teacher support and buy-in
- Detailed scope and sequence evolving around students concerns and needs
- Provide opportunities to build relationships
- Schedule the advisory period on a certain day and time, and keep it consistent
- Provide sufficient staff development
- Have clear communication
- Provide for a means to evaluate the program
- Base the program on solid research.

First, in my research I felt that it was important that I investigated to see if the staff thought that an Advisory Program was necessary. Second, I asked the staff if they thought that the school could effectively implement an advisory program during the 2002-03 school year. Third, I was curious to see if the staff believed that the advisory program was organized to reach the stated goals of “building community relationships.” Fourth, I was curious to see if the bimonthly meeting schedule was adequate. Fifth, from my research I learned that staff development was an important key to successfully starting an advisory program, so I asked the staff if they felt staff development was important for them to successfully carry out the program. The last piece of information I
focused on was the notebook that was created to assist the staff in implementing the advisory program. I was curious to see if the staff felt that the scope and sequence of the program’s activities were useful in creating a solid advisory program.

To organize the presentation of data I have used the six guiding questions from the questionnaire and the interviews.

Is an Advisory Program necessary at our high school?

One of the key questions with the adoption of the advisory program at this school was teacher support. The research completed by the Small Learning Communities Task Force, the Programs of Instruction Action Team, and the data on the needs and performance of the school, showed that support of the staff would be beneficial to make an advisory program successful. If the program was to be successful, then both the staff and the students had to feel that the program was necessary.

Staff Results:

I wanted to know if the staff, as a whole, thought that an advisory program was necessary. This question, coupled with the research I completed for my Literature Review, prompted me to focus on this first question during my research. The staff questionnaire completed in August and March produced interesting results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Survey Completion</th>
<th>Agree Response</th>
<th>Disagree Response</th>
<th>Don’t Know Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is an Advisory Program necessary in our high school?</td>
<td>August 2002</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 2003</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>63.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the beginning of the school year most of the staff supported the idea that there was a need for the advisory program. By March of the same school year the number had dropped to 37% of respondents in support of the advisory program. During the initial interview one teacher responded in my initial interview, “I’m new here at [this school] but I believe they [advisory programs] are necessary in all schools.” This response came directly after the planning team introduced the program to the staff in August. One interview response that echoed many staff concerns was, “[I] don’t know how effective it will be.” This one phrase was the common thought as most staff members began the implementation process in the fall.

**Student Results:**

The same interview question was asked of the students in early October after three advisory meetings. The students were much harsher on the program than the staff. A sampling of the majority of the responses to the question “Is an Advisory Program necessary in our high school?” included: “Not really, it uses up my time, but we don’t get anything accomplished.” A freshman response was “I don’t believe advisory is very beneficial in the way it is set up. So no, it’s not necessary.” Another response was “I believe they are very good to have, but only if there’s reason for them, for voting and important things. There are too many of them and some have no purpose.” A senior response to the question was “Most definitely not, the idea of it is good, but for the most part the teacher or students are not willing to actually do what advisory was meant for.” Out of 105 students that were either interviewed or completed the interview questions less than ten thought that advisory was necessary in the school.
After several advisory meetings I had the students in my advisory, as well as one of my peer’s advisory group, complete a journal entry to see if they felt advisory was necessary at Pacific High School. Out of twenty-five students completing the journal entry some of the responses were “Advisory is a waste of time for the most part. It does help being able to talk to upperclassmen for help.” and “Advisory is a way to get the students together for important business.” Another response representing a minority of the entries was, “advisory is boring, a waste of time, lame, pointless…but it is a good break from class.” To further reinforce what the students felt I pulled the following quote “I think advisory is time to get to know the rest of your peers. I think that we should be having social time because that’s the reason why people mostly come to school.” The last example I will use from my October sampling comes from a freshmen who states, “Advisory is helpful. As a freshman I feel like I have something to guide me.” Interestingly though, I used almost the same prompt in April, and two responses that came back that were representative of the whole group who completed the prompt were: “I don’t think advisory is necessary next year because I am better off going to my classes and getting help from my teachers.” And “I think it is necessary to continue advisory next year because it helps if you have questions or if you just want some time out of classes.” As in October, the April responses were evenly split on whether or not the advisory program was necessary at Pacific High School.
I think an Advisory Program can effectively be implemented in 2002-03.

As the 2002-03 academic year began the school was also beginning a new instructional schedule. This, coupled with the start of an advisory program, was a lot to ask of a staff that already had to make instructional changes. I was curious to see if both the staff and the students thought that the teacher advisory program could be effectively implemented at Pacific High School.

Staff Results:

The questionnaire results were once again interesting because there was a true reversal of responses from August to March.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Survey Completion</th>
<th>Agree Response</th>
<th>Disagree Response</th>
<th>Don’t Know Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. I think an Advisory Program can effectively be implemented in 2002-03. (Is effectively being implemented.)</td>
<td>August 2002</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 2003</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the beginning of the year in both the questionnaire and the interviews the staff overwhelmingly supported the idea that the advisory program could effectively be implemented. During the interview process the teachers being questioned presented several common themes felt by the staff. One staff member responded, “Depends on the individual teacher.” Two other responses were, “Need to meet more often” and “20 minutes?! 11 x [times a] year?!” In August the teachers said that they could effectively implement the advisory program even though there were some drawbacks as shown by the interview responses mentioned above. As shown by the questionnaire by March 2003, the number of teachers who thought the program could effectively be implemented
had fallen to only 14.8%. The interview responses also showed that the teacher advisory program was not being effectively implemented. The exact reasons were echoed in March as they were stated in August. In March the comments were based on experience, not on assumptions about the program.

**Student Results:**

The students in their interviews in October were asked if the timing was right to begin advisories this year. I was unsure if they would understand all the nuances of effective implementation, and I did not want to have to elaborate on the issues. I was concerned that my explanation would bias their response, so I changed the prompt slightly. The student responses covered the whole spectrum from those who accepted and enjoyed advisories to those who thought they were unnecessary and a waste of time. One response that echoed the problems of effectively implementing advisories during the 2002-03 school year was, “A lot of change at once isn’t really a problem, in fact it can be good, but again because advisories were so poorly rolled-out they are ineffective.” Another response tying into this discussion was “I don’t see why not, other than not starting at all. Maybe it should have been postponed until all faculty could be trained so they’d all be doing the same thing.” A senior stated, “If you change more than one variable at a time, it is impossible to tell which change is the most effective.”

_I believe the Advisory Program is organized to reach the stated goals of building community relationships_

The advisory planning team spent one week defining the goals, scope and sequence, and mission statement for the first year of the advisory program. With this in
mind I was really interested to see if the staff and students thought the program was organized to accomplish the goals that were established. The goals were:

1. To provide a place where every student has a feeling of belonging, ownership and value
2. To establish relationships and community focusing on cooperation and working together.
3. To provide an arena to improve communication and practice communication skills (Skimas, 2002).

**Staff Results:**

In August after the orientation, the staff overwhelmingly thought the program was effectively organized. But, after six months into the program the results came back with the opposite result.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Survey Completion</th>
<th>Agree Response</th>
<th>Disagree Response</th>
<th>Don’t Know Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. I believe the Advisory Program is organized to reach the stated goals related to building community relationships.</td>
<td>August 2002</td>
<td>85.5%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Is reaching the stated goals of building community relationships.)</td>
<td>March 2003</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The staff interviews completed in the spring suggested that the program was not organized well, and the way that it was organized did not allow for the goals to be accomplished. The concerns included the way advisees and teachers were paired, the way advisories were formed, and the meeting times and locations. Several quotes from the interviews ranged from “Teachers not being advisory teachers for students that are normally in their classes creates a superficial sense of community because the kids don’t know each other, and the teachers don’t really know the students.” to “I see what we are trying to with advisory but I don’t know if it’s the best route to reach our goals. It would
be more worthwhile if I actually had some of my advisory students in actual classes so that I could connect with them more than one time a month.” Another response from an advisor was:

“My biggest issue is that I see kids I’m supposed to bond with once every other week. I finally have most of the names and faces matched! Also, (so much for anonymity) my designated space is the auditorium, which is not conducive to any group activities—it’s a barn and unless we sit on the stage there’s no face-to-face interaction as a group. It’s ‘foreign turf’ for me. If I were in my own space I’d have more creative ideas for them. I would prefer being an advisor to one of my class periods—I have more frequent contact and know those kids better. I have a really nice group of advisees. Some don’t feel it’s meaningful and have been verbal about that, but they’ve been good sports, too!”

**Student Results:**

I was interested to see if my own advisory class felt as if we were building relationships and in a larger sense, building community. The prompt “Are we building constructive relationships?” was asked in early December. From this prompt I learned that some of my students thought we were reaching our goals and some felt alienated within the group. One student responded, “Advisory is new faces to meet. It’s a new group of unfamiliarity, and a new family. I don’t know many of the people, but I do know the teacher, so I have that to look forward to.” Another response was, “…students do come together to talk, but none of the conversations are that meaningful to me. In December, and then March, the students for the most part did not think that the teacher advisory program was reaching its stated goal of building relationships.

When I interviewed the students in March I once again received the same negative response towards advisory being able to reach its stated goal of building community relationships. Three pertinent quotes I pulled from my interviews included the following from a junior:
“No, students are reluctant to do any of the activities because they are dumb and corny, i.e. making posters or picture biographies about ourselves. We aren’t in 2nd grade. In theory, the idea of advisory class is to build close relationships and have the ability to come to your advisor when you need help. In reality, I have yet to feel, see, or experience that kind of intimacy in my advisory class. Partly because we’ve just never gotten into it, but mostly because many students still are stuck to the state of mind that advisory is stupid, lame, dorky, a waste of time and are unwilling to try to get into it.”

A freshman stated “Not at all, it’s just awkward when you are expected to be a “family” with people you have nothing in common with besides the first letter of your last name.”

Finally, a senior’s response to my question was: “No, the things we “discuss” are not really important or helpful in any way. But I admit, it could be my teacher’s lack of enthusiasm that led to this opinion.”

_I think the Advisory meeting schedule is adequate._

Another important piece in the implementation process had to deal with the amount of time that was spent in advisory and how often the advisory would meet. Once again the data collected showed a wide range of opinions on this subject.

**Staff Results:**

During the staff interviews at the beginning of the year the responses I received ranged from “Meetings to infrequent. But I understand the various factors must be taken into account” to “Appreciate the effort not to take additional curriculum time.” Another staff member said, “I count less than seven hours of total non-assembly advisory time.” These responses are representative samples of the wide range of opinions on how much time should be allotted for the advisory to be successfully implemented. Six months into the advisory program the responses were similar. The responses still varied from, “When you see students sporadically for such a little amount of time, there is no connection
between student’s and teachers” and “Not enough time to really achieve a sense of community” to “Meets too often.” One interesting response stated, “Need to see groups on a regular basis—clear goals need to be set. I enjoy having a group of kids for four years. I think this will get better with time! Attitude of some teachers needs to change.” The interview responses were demonstrative of the staff as a whole.

Interestingly though, the questionnaire responses followed the same pattern as the interviews. In August a strong majority of staff thought the meeting schedule was adequate, and in March the majority thought the schedule was inadequate. The reasoning echoed those of the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Survey Completion</th>
<th>Agree Response</th>
<th>Disagree Response</th>
<th>Don’t Know Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. I think the Advisory meeting schedule is adequate.</td>
<td>August 2002</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 2003</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Results:

When interviewing students the exact same range of responses occurred in both the fall and the spring. Many of the student responses indicated that the number of meeting times was inadequate. Two representative responses were: “If the goal is to “build relationships and help personalize the educational process at…then seeing that group of people twice a month is not enough to really get to know anyone;” and “Not at all. In its current form, advisory is as sterile and unwelcoming environment as previous years! If advisory were weekly or more often, I might get to know some people in it. But as it stands no one in our advisory talks or helps foster community because we barely know each other’s names.” In addition, a sophomore responded, “For what we currently
do in advisory, yes. If we were to do something worthwhile, then more frequent meetings would be appropriate.” The students as a whole did not feel like the meeting schedule was adequate.

*I need staff development on how to facilitate advisories.*

**Staff Results:**

In my interviews and on the questionnaire in both the fall and spring, staff overwhelmingly thought that they did not need staff development to effectively carry out the teacher advisory program. After the brief initial orientation teachers said they felt comfortable being advisors. The only concern that was voiced by any teacher during my interview process was in March when one teacher responded, “I am not a certified counselor, nor am I trained as a therapy group leader.” The fear this teacher was responding to was dealing with issues traditionally dealt with by counselors.

The questionnaire responses once again were very telling:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Survey Completion</th>
<th>Agree Response</th>
<th>Disagree Response</th>
<th>Don’t Know Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I need staff development on how to facilitate advisories.</td>
<td>August 2002</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 2003</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overwhelmingly, in both the fall and spring a majority of the staff felt like additional staff development was not necessary.

**Student Results:**

On the other hand, the responses given by students in the interviews showed that most advisors did not have enough training to effectively carry out the advisory program.
In the spring interview one student responded, “No, for half of the year he didn’t even have a list of students in his advisory.” A sophomore said, “Our advisor is really boring. I’m really sorry to say this too since I can tell she’s very nice and tries hard, but I hate going to it since it’s so dull.” Another sophomore responded, “No, my advisory teacher does nothing, we sit around in the gym and do homework. We never talk as a group and she is never doing anything except for grading papers. I wish I was in a better group.” A senior said, “My advisor knows how to take attendance, and to talk to us about our grades. This seems to be the focus of our advisory group. But, if the goal is to build relationships, than the advisor is not prepared.” Another response, “No, it seems they are not given instructions.” The student responses were unanimous in the fact that the students thought their advisor needed more development.

The Advisory notebook contains useful ideas that I can use in my Advisory.

The teacher advisory planning team chose to create a notebook to assist the staff to help ease the transition into the Advisory Program. The notebook was also created to have one central location that housed the schedule and all the materials for the weekly lessons. To effectively assess the implementation of the advisory program it was necessary for me to look at how useful the notebook was.

Staff Results:

Most staff appreciated the idea of having an advisory notebook, but during the interviews a common theme emerged. Many teachers felt as if the activities in the notebook were too simplistic. Two different teachers commented on this. One saying in August, “I have questions on age-appropriateness (good for high school seniors, not just
middle schoolers). And the other in March, “…many of the ideas are too elementary and are greeted with scorn by about half of my advisory group.” The notebook was a good idea, but the responses from the teachers were centered around the contents of the notebook rather than on the need for a notebook itself. The activities within the notebook were met with scorn.

The questionnaire results parallel the interview responses in both August and March. In the fall the acceptance level was much higher than in the spring.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Survey Completion</th>
<th>Agree Response</th>
<th>Disagree Response</th>
<th>Don’t Know Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. The notebook contains useful ideas that I can use in my Advisory.</td>
<td>August 2002</td>
<td>89.9%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The notebook contains useful ideas that I can use in my Advisory.</td>
<td>March 2003</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of all the categories, this one had the highest agree response in the March questionnaire.

**Student Responses:**

All student responses on the subject of the activities within the notebook were negative. I could not have the students respond to the logistical use of having a notebook to keep all the information, so I could only focus on the activities within the notebook. Not one interviewee liked the planned activities. A junior response in the interview reveals a typical feeling that many students had, “Nothing we have done in advisory has benefited me except as a break from class, which is much needed especially this time of year.” A senior said, “No, no one in my advisory participates so nothing is accomplished.” Another response was, “No, the discussions aren’t really played out well. Due to lack of motivation, the games seem pointless.” A sophomore remarked, “Yeah, I get to watch “The Simpsons” when I don’t have to do class work.” And finally, “Nope,
what activities? We haven’t done one this whole year! I wish I had a better advisory
teacher, in a classroom!” Overwhelmingly the students did not see the planned activities
as useful.

Conclusion

Within the guiding question of looking at the implementation of a teacher
advisory program at Pacific High School the data collected from the six sub questions
will allow me to analyze the effectiveness of the program. More importantly, the data
collected will allow me to make sound suggestions in evaluating the advisory program
and planning for the future.
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

It will be easier to facilitate the analysis of the data by using the same prompts that I used in my collection of data. These prompts include:

ß Is an advisory program necessary at our high school?
ß I think an advisory program can effectively be implemented in 2002-03.
ß I believe the advisory program is organized to reach the stated goals of building community relationships.
ß I think the advisory meeting schedule is adequate.
ß I need staff development on how to facilitate advisories.
ß The advisory notebook contains useful ideas that I can use in my advisory.

These prompts originate from my research on effective implementation of advisories. Manning and Saddlemire’s research helped me create the six prompts I used to gather data on the implementation of the teacher advisory program at Pacific High School. In their research Manning and Saddlemire (1998) state:

ß Provide sufficient planning time so that site-based management can occur effectively;
ß Develop a detailed scope and sequence, remembering that such a document needs to evolve as students’ concerns and needs change;
ß Provide opportunities for students and educators to get to know one another on a personal adult-student basis;
ß Schedule the advisory program at a specified day and time so students will see it as an integral part of the school day rather than just an extra activity;
ß Ensure that all advisors have sufficient training so that they will feel competent to intervene in affective areas.
ß Ensure that the restructuring team works with all educators in the school to clarify communication, seek input and opinions, and train reluctant faculty members (p. 241).

To determine if my findings support their research and to assist in my analysis of the implementation process of the teacher advisory program at Pacific High School, I also looked at the importance of the advisory notebook. For Keefe (1986) mentions that it is
important to provide an up to date advisor notebook for each staff member. This allows each advisor to have a location where all vital information can be found and kept.

*Is an advisory program necessary at our high school?*

In August when I first gathered data after the advisory program was introduced to the staff, 85.7% of the staff thought that an advisory program was necessary. After all the information was presented on the need to assist students I guessed that the majority of staff would say that advisories were necessary. However, I was amazed to see such a high, positive response. Part of the reason the response was positive may have been because the day before the advisory program was introduced, the research department from the school district presented a snapshot of our student population. All the information presented pointed to the need for an advisory program. When the advisory program was presented, the general feeling was that we, as a school community, had to do something to address the educational and social issues faced by our students, and an advisory program seemed a good place to start. The driving need for an advisory program was present, but unfortunately the success of this new advisory program was directly related to the effective implementation of the program by the advisor. If the advisor in the classroom did not implement the program as conceived, the responses in the interviews and on the questionnaires were likely to be negative by the spring. Most staff members had not implemented a teacher advisory program so their responses in the interview and questionnaire were more definitive in March than in August. By March, when the second survey was tabulated, the “disagree response” to the need of an advisory program had increased from 10.0% to 63.0%. This was primarily associated with the
ineffective implementation of the program rather than the need for the program itself. This connection is reinforced through the data I collected during my second round of interviews. The staff members who were interviewed saw a need for the program, but a majority also thought that the program was poorly planned and executed by the administration in charge and the teacher in the classroom. As the year progressed the staff at Pacific High School never lost sight of the fact there was a need to assist the “at-risk” students and also to create a sense of smaller learning communities, but the advisory program as it was planned and implemented was not working.

The data collected from the student interviews in the fall of 2002 showed that most students did not see the need for advisories. The students learned about advisories from their advisor or from the friends in other advisory groups. Most advisors were not able to completely communicate the theory or structure of advisory to the students in their advisory groups. Even though the majority of the students did not see the need for advisory there were students in the school who felt advisory was necessary. I did not tabulate the student responses on a Likert scale because I was looking for qualitative data. Even though I did not use a Likert scale I was easily able to categorize the student responses. My own advisory group’s journal responses I read reinforced the feeling that there was a minority of students who felt that advisory was beneficial. At the beginning of the year, I openly explained the purpose and theory of advisory, and my students connected to the idea. Throughout the year I was able to openly communicate with them; thus their journal responses were generally optimistic. But my advisory group was a biased pool. The use of the journal entries from my students skews the information, because it was not the norm in most advisories. There were other advisories in the
building where this feeling of acceptance occurred, but they were few and far between. In general, by the time the second series of interviews and questionnaires occurred in March the majority of students had a negative impression of the advisory program. As the year progressed, the students saw less and less of a need for advisories. At the same time, the issues that were affecting the school before the implementation of advisories were still plaguing our school. The failure rate among freshman was still high, and the school still had a feeling of a large, disconnected community. Both staff and students agree through the journaling, questionnaires and interviews that the theory of advisories was solid, but the implementation of the teacher advisory program at Pacific High School was ineffective.

*I think an Advisory Program can effectively be implemented in 2002-03?*

Of all the pieces of data collected the results of this question were the most telling about the implementation of advisories at Pacific High School. In August, when I interviewed the staff, nearly seventy-five percent of the staff said that they thought an advisory program could effectively be implemented in 2002-03. But as the year progressed it became quite apparent that the teacher advisory program, as it was planned, was not being implemented effectively. By March only 14.8% of the respondents thought that the program was being implemented successfully. The data showed me that many staff members felt that the program could not be implemented effectively. The reasons for the ineffective implementation varied greatly. The interview responses that I received regarding this prompt pointed to two issues: one was that some staff thought the meeting times allotted were not enough to effectively develop relationships (thus not
creating a sense of community), and the second was that academic time was more important than the affective domain of the learning cycle. One of the key elements of any successful change of new ideas in an educational setting is staff support (Gallasi, Gulledge & Cox, 1997). The staff support at Pacific High School was at best seventy-five percent and then in March fell to fifteen percent. There was no way for the program to be effectively implemented when support for the program was decreasing over the course of the school year. By the end of the year the current structure of advisory had to be changed drastically.

Another issue raised by several advisors was their meeting location. Several advisories met in the auditorium or in one of the gymnasiums. The location or environment made it very difficult to implement effectively the program. The space was either too large or there were many distractions. With over 100 advisories it was very difficult to find meeting locations for all groups. Many teachers and students were concerned with their meeting environment. Many locations were not conducive to small group discussions, and this compounded the problem of building community relationships.

Galassi, Gulledge & Cox (1997) and Keefe (1986) state that having a consistent meeting time, clear and open communication, and teacher support of the program is crucial. Without these three key ingredients it is much more difficult for a teacher advisory program to succeed. The data collected supported this. At Pacific High School the staff reacted negatively to inconsistent meeting times and unclear communications, and thus they did not support the advisory program. All of these issues combined contributed to the teacher advisory program to be ineffectively implemented.
In looking at the responses and data gathered from students, it was easy to see that if the program was supported fully by the advisors, and then fully explained to the students, it could have helped build student support of the teacher advisory program. The students seemed to be adaptable to the new instructional schedule and the advisory format. Yes, there were some negative comments, but by and large the students seemed willing to try the teacher advisory program. The data showed that as the year progressed the students became more and more disillusioned with advisories. This was apparent when the responses to the March interviews were analyzed. Advisory groups did not seem to be effectively implemented at the beginning of the year, so as the year progressed a negative mood permeated the advisory program. The students were not able to define the purpose of advisories or explain why they were necessary. From the student’s point of view the advisory program was not effectively implemented.

_I believe the advisory program is organized to reach the stated goals of building community relationships_

Once again the data are telling in analyzing this prompt. At the beginning of the year the staff interviews and questionnaires overwhelmingly showed that the scope and sequence of the program was well thought out to meet the goal of building community relationships. As the interview process proceeded into October, the teachers began to comment that it took a longer period of time to get to know their students, and that the bonding that normally happened in the classroom environment was not taking place within advisory. The inability for the advisor and the advisee to bond quickly at the beginning of the year was a major deterrent to the successful implementation of the advisory program as well as to reach the goals of building relationships. By March the
The advisory program had done little in reaching the goals of building community. The teacher questionnaires and interviews showed that advisories did little to nothing to reach the goals of creating a sense of community and creating smaller learning communities.

The students did not see advisory as advantageous; in actuality they saw advisory as a deterrent to building relationships. The advisory program had supplanted several pep assemblies; and furthermore, the students were not willing to build relationships within advisory, because according to the student interviews many staff members did not foster an environment to build relationships. The journal entries I collected from my advisory group once again were an abnormality within the advisory program, because many of them commented on how well they connected to me as an advisor. To some degree my advisees reported feeling a bond with me, and me to them. By May we began to establish a small group feeling within a larger school setting, and by the end of the year some of my advisees reported feeling comfortable talking to me about their school issues. At the same time, it did take me much longer to create these relationships than it did in my regular academic classes. I was unable to use the journal entries in my analysis because I felt they were biased and abnormal compared to the interviews and questionnaire responses from students not in my advisory.

As the year progressed it was sad to watch the central core idea of building relationships erode away. As a school, we set out to foster relationships and build a sense of community. One of the pathways we created (the teacher advisory program) to build these relationships was seen as a failure. As Pacific High School moves into the second year of the advisory program during the 2003-04 school year it will be doubly difficult to reinforce that one of the main purposes of advisories is to build relationships. The data
collected showed that if relationships are to be created then advisories must take a different form.

_**I think the advisory meeting schedule is adequate**_

Of all the statements on the questionnaire and in the interview process this is the prompt that had the most diverse response. There were some concerns voiced by the staff about the amount of time that would be meeting and how the students would be placed in advisory, but as a whole the staff generally accepted the organization of the program. In my literature review it stated that staff would fall into two camps: one group wanting to meet often and the second wanting just the opposite. The most prominent group of teachers and students at Pacific High School both echoed the same concerns felt at Arkadelphia High School. At Arkadelphia High School “The most consistent [request] was the need for additional meeting time and frequency” (Anderson & Blackwood, 2000 p. 49). As the year progressed at Pacific High School both teachers and students were strongly set in their opinion. The results of the staff questionnaires showed a reversal of support. In August, 69.6% of the staff thought the meeting time was adequate, but in March the data showed that 70.4% of the staff thought the meeting frequency was inadequate. As the advisory program began to lose support, and the advisory meetings were either cancelled or changed, the staff began to lose faith in both the scope and sequence of the curriculum and of the amount of time the school was devoting to the advisory program. The meeting schedule was seen as not adequate by the staff. In Keefe’s article, “Advisement Programs—Improving Teacher Student Relations, School Climate” (1986) it stated that it is important that “Time for advisement is schedule on a
Even though the committee had done this, as the year progressed the advisory meetings times were often cancelled or changed. Both the staff and the students felt the inconsistent pattern of established advisory meeting times, thus the responses to the interview and questionnaire reflected this feeling of malcontent.

The data collected from the student interviews and questionnaires showed that the students were adaptable. If the original meeting schedule was maintained and promoted by the administration and the advisors, the students would have adapted to the advisory schedule. But as I listened to the comments from students, the most common response from them was that they had no idea when advisory was scheduled. There was little to no communication to the students; they had little to no idea when advisories fell in the schedule. This was supported by many responses that echoed this one “Since I’m a senior I have late start, and since I don’t know when advisory is scheduled I never attend.” The lack of consistency was one of the major downfalls of the advisory. In the future, the advisory program needs to have a set meeting time within the master schedule. This will take away much of the apprehension and confusion.

*I need staff development on how to facilitate advisories*

Almost in all of the readings that I read in my literature review it stated that a well-trained staff was necessary when implementing advisories (Cole, 1992; Galassie, Gulledge & Cox, 1997; Keefe, 1986; Manning & Saddlemire, 1998). In an article by Anderson & Blackwood (2000) it stated, “The lack of staff development time to adequately train mentors proved to be a weakness in the program. This led to confusion among the mentors regarding the purpose and the expectations of the program” (p. 49).
To either support or refute this oft stated comment I asked this prompt during my interview process and on the questionnaire because I was interested to see if the staff was comfortable with the concept of teacher advisory programs and how to facilitate a small group. What I learned was interesting. Less than fifty percent of the teachers who responded on the questionnaire felt like they needed training. Of the interviews I conducted, almost all of the advisors felt comfortable with the program, the concept, and how to facilitate their individual advisory. As I interviewed the students, I learned that over fifty percent of the students felt that their advisor was ill prepared. This difference of opinion between the two groups (the advisors and the advisees) is startling. This is a telling difference. As the year progressed the differences only increased. By March only 18.6% of the staff felt like they needed further staff development while the comments from the students only increased in that they thought their advisor needed training. I was startled by this response, because the students I interviewed were from different advisories. This across the board similarity in response from the students only reinforced the idea that maybe the responses I received from the staff were dramatically different from the students’ perceptions of advisory and small group facilitation. It would be informative to probe further why students reported that their advisors were ill prepared, or to see in what ways could advisors demonstrate a sense of preparedness to their students. I feel that the data I received from the staff in this category were not that beneficial when looked at by itself, but when coupled with responses from students it was very informative.
The advisory notebook contains useful ideas that I can use in my advisory program. By itself, the data collected from this prompt are not applicable to the advisory program, but since I am evaluating the implementation of the program, the information gathered from this question is invaluable. One of the concerns of the planning committee was teacher support of the teacher advisory program. The reasons it was speculated that teachers would not support the program was because they did not have planning time to create lessons, they did not know what lessons to facilitate, or they did not understand the scope and sequence of the advisory program. To alleviate all of these problems, the planning team thought that it was necessary to put together a notebook that contained the mission statement and purpose, the yearly meeting calendar, and lesson plans (along with all the supplies) for the advisory meeting periods. At the beginning of the year during the orientation, the presentation of the notebook was rushed, but the results that came back from my initial survey only reinforced our belief that the notebook was necessary. Almost ninety percent of the staff thought the notebook was important. During my interviews, all the staff questioned liked the idea that there was one place where all the information could be found. They did not necessarily like all the individual lessons, but as a whole it was comforting to have the notebook. Finally, the collected data supported one key piece of a successful implementation of an advisory program. The data supported that to implement successfully an advisory program some sort of support material had to be created. But once again, by the second time I interviewed and surveyed individuals, they were disillusioned compared to their initial acceptance of the notebook. The reasons for this varied. One, they thought the lessons were too “middle schoolish” or secondly, the activities did not work well within the environment that was
established within a particular advisory. In March, the acceptance level of the notebook was only fifty percent. The activities within the notebook were not well accepted by the staff. Overall, it was reported that the notebook was not useful.

I had to ask the students a slightly different question in my interviews and in my journal entries because they were unaware of the “teaching and planning” side of advisories. So I asked them if the planned activities were useful. The data supported that the students overwhelmingly thought the activities were not useful or applicable to their needs. The students responded with a resounding, “No, the activities serve little purpose.” Many of the students I interviewed thought that advisories were good for housekeeping activities like “voting for prom queen” and “reviewing grades,” but the activities created to build relationships did not accomplish the stated goals. I learned through my data that it was really hard to reach the goals of “building community relationships” when the community targeted does not support the activities planned. The notebook, with premade lessons, is a necessity, but much care and consideration needs to be put into the activities within the scope and sequence of the curriculum.

Concluding thoughts

When I sat down in the fall and went through all the data, I found it interesting that the school community was willing to support the idea of a teacher advisory program. The implementation process was rough at the beginning of the school year, and many staff were confused with the purpose of advisories or the process of implementation of them. For the most part, both the advisors and the advisees were working within the guiding principles of the advisory model to:
As the year progressed the data supported that the school was not reaching its stated goals and desired outcomes. Of the desired outcomes mentioned above, Pacific High School only accomplished a fraction of what it set out to do. I think both the teacher advisory planning team and the staff were overly optimistic. I can honestly say that the implementation process of advisories for the first year was not as successful as we would have liked. The process of building a community began in some advisories, and in some advisories a support system for students was created where they could develop one on one relationships. To reach the goal of creating a feeling of a tighter, smaller community much work has to be done.

It is true that the teacher advisor makes the difference. If the advisor is willing to interact with the student in the affective domain, then that advisory has a better chance of succeeding. The committee provided the materials, the ideas, the scope and sequence, the calendar, the roles for both the advisor and the advisee. Issues such as optimum places to meet, clear communication, set meeting times, and effective lessons hindered the success of the implementation process. In the end the success rate of the implementation of advisories fell upon the staff members.

I have tried not to be biased in interpreting my data. I have been involved with the implementation process since the conception of advisories in the building.
Unfortunately, as a member of the staff, and as an advisor, the data I received may have been biased to some degree. I had a very difficult time analyzing my data in an objective manner, because I kept wanting to pull additional, outside information in that was not presented in my data. I specifically focused my question on the implementation of the program, because I found that if I did not focus my research it would be unmanageable.

A new committee has been formed and is working on evaluating and improving the teacher advisory program for next year. The whole goal of this research project was to study advisories, collect data, and analyze the data so that we could implement an effective teacher advisory program. Hopefully the 2003-04 advisory planning team can take and use this information to improve the teacher advisory program.
SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This action research project has been an incredible journey. As I sit at the end of another school year, and as I reread the literature review and narrative, I am proud that I have taken the time to complete a project that will hopefully improve the educational environment I work within. I wanted to research a topic that would allow me to improve my own classroom and school. By completing my project on the teacher advisory program I was able to take the topic I researched, along with the data collected, and make solid recommendations to the administrative team. I am disappointed that the advisory program was not successful this year. A lot of time and energy was put into the creation and planning of the advisory program. Several committees of staff members and hours of research were put into our advisory program, but at the same time, I am able to present to the administrative team, the staff, and the 2003-04 facilitation committee some solid, valid recommendations.

From my research and data I can make the following recommendations:

1. Explain the purpose, goals, and scope and sequence to the advisories clearly and succinctly at the beginning of the year. Provide each advisory with a handout that could easily be read and explained to the student.

2. Clearly present the information of why advisories are necessary to the staff and to the students.

3. Open the process of evaluating and planning advisories to students. It would be beneficial to have students who have seen the successes and failures of advisory to be on the facilitation team.
4. Keep advisory meeting times consistent and on the same day of the week, and at the same time within the daily schedule.

5. It is imperative to communicate the meeting times and what will be discussed in advisories to the students before hand.

6. For effective implementation it is important to meet frequently at the beginning of the year. Possibly even three or four times the first couple weeks of school. This would allow for more time to build relationships, to introduce the school year, and to begin the process of creating a sense of community.

7. Allow time for staff and student input as the year progresses.

8. Create activities and lessons that are age appropriate and flexible. Allow for some creativity, but at the same time, make sure all parties are working towards the same goal.

9. Build in time for reflection. The ideas generated could possible be used to improve the program.

10. Build excitement for the program so there is more teacher and student support.

11. Provide staff development both on how to facilitate small groups and on the structure and purpose of teacher advisory programs.

12. Keep the notebook current, applicable, and flexible so that the advisor has one place to obtain and keep information.

13. Build an environment that is relaxing and rewarding for the student. The advisory meeting period must have a purpose, but at the same time the student has to feel the need to attend and participate in the discussion.
14. Evaluate where advisory meets. Large areas and non-conforming environments (i.e. gyms and auditoriums) seem overly large when small groups of students use them. If at all possible these locations should be avoided.

15. Randomly place students in advisories. Alphabetized groupings do not work.

16. Keep advisory group sizes below 20 students per group.

17. Create a consequence for not attending, a reward for attendance, or an exciting curriculum. There has to be motivation for the student to actively participate in advisory.

Finally, this study helped me understand that it is important to evaluate the success of new programs that are implemented at regular intervals to determine what adjustments can be made along the way in order to ensure meeting the stated goals of the program. After a program is launched in the fall, periodic feedback should be gathered from students and staff to continue the enthusiasm and commitment felt at the beginning. A strong and dedicated learning community wants success, and there are some measures I learned from this study that can help a program be more successful.
Appendix A
ADVISORY CALENDAR: 2002-03

8/26  Send Postcards to Advisory Students
      Ticket out the door from staff meeting

9/4   Registration Rooms in Advisory Groups
      What is Advisory? Definition of community 20 min

9/13  Get Acquainted Activity
      Advisory expectations, Student Council Interviews 30 min

9/27  Advisory Communications
      Respectful language, group communications 30 min

10/10 Attendance Activity
      Attendance check, problem-solving 30 min

10/31 Community Building Activity
      Elementary trick or treat 30 min

11/8  Check in-Fall Assembly
      Check in to see how doing at end of 1st quarter 40 min

11/18 Grade Check Conferences
      Career Interest Survey 30 min

12/6  Canned Food Drive Kick-Off
      Discussion of community needs 30 min

12/20 Check-in Holiday Assembly
      Canned Food Drive Winners 1 hour

1/10  Listening Skills Activity
      Welcome Back, ASB Elections 30 min

2/3   School Community Part I
      Who are we activity focus 1 hour

2/24  School Community Part II
      Finish Poster 30 min

3/3   Forecasting
      Help schedule classes for next year 1 hour

3/11  Forecasting
      Correct and collect forecasting sheets 30 min

4/7   Community Town Hall-Preparation
      Mayor’s Youth Advisory Board Activity 30 min

4/18  Grade Check
      Check 3rd quarter grades 30 min

4/30  Community choices
      School choices/DUI 30 min

5/9   Community to School: Town Hall
      Open forum in the gym 1 hour

5/30  Year End Activity
      Evaluations, Fall ASB elections 30 min
REFERENCES


