IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS:
AN EXPLORATION OF A HIGH SCHOOL ADVISORY PROGRAM

by

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DEDICATION

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”
Philippians, 4:13 (KJV)

“And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”
John 1:5 (KJV)

“Invictus”
By William Earnest Henley

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

A special dedication to the late Dr. Anne H. Hathaway, thank you for your interest in my academic goals! May you continue to rest in peace forever.
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First, giving honor to my heavenly Father. Thank you for your unwavering guiding light that shone through darkness.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF APPENDICES</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Impact</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory: A Community of Practice</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Relationship to Research Interest</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions and Limitations</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Important Terms</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducting the Literature Review</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The History of the Homeroom</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Origin of the Homeroom</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The American Adoption of the Homeroom</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization of the Homeroom</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Purpose of Homeroom</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeroom Materials</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges of the Homeroom</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Homeroom to Advisory</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Origin of Advisory - A Call for Middle School Reform</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory Defined</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Brief Overview of the Middle School Advisory Program</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The High School Advisory Advisory Programs</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Stakeholders</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Advisor</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Student</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Administration</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Parents</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities of Practice Theory (CoP)</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities of Practice: A Definition</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The History of CoP</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Situated Learning Theory</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone of Proximal Development</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Learning Theory</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CoP Framework</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoP and Education</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse and CoP</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 METHODOLOGY ................................................................. 68

| Structure of the Study | 68 |
| Research Questions | 69 |
| Research Design | 70 |
| Paradigmatic Viewpoint: Interpretivism | 70 |
| Historical Context | 70 |
| Major Theorists | 71 |
| Paradigm Alignment with Study | 73 |
| Paradigmatic Implication for the Study | 74 |
| Program Evaluation | 75 |
| Qualitative Methodology and Rationale | 80 |
| Criticisms of Qualitative Research | 82 |
| The Case Study Method | 84 |
TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

CHAPTER 4  RESULTS ................................................................. 111

Presentation of Findings ............................................................ 111
  The Purpose and Design of Advisory ........................................ 111
  Expected Implementation of the Advisory Program at the Site of
  Study ...................................................................................... 113
Conceptual Model Guiding the Program Evaluation ......................... 116
  The Logic Model ...................................................................... 116
  The Intended Logic Model for the Advisory Program............... 118
    Purpose ............................................................................... 120
    Context ............................................................................... 120
    Inputs .................................................................................. 120
    Activities and Causal Effects ............................................. 124
    Outputs ............................................................................... 128
Program Results ........................................................................ 129
  The Observed Logic Model for the Advisory Program ............... 129
  Purpose ............................................................................... 132
  Relationships: The Advisee Perspective .................................. 133
  Relationships: The Advisor Perspective .................................. 137
  Relationships: The Synthesis ................................................ 145
  Support .................................................................................. 157
  Context ............................................................................... 165
  Inputs .................................................................................... 169
  Activities and Causal Effects ............................................. 175
  Outputs ............................................................................... 181
Summary .................................................................................. 182

Site Selection, Study Population, and Participants ........................................ 86
  Site and Study Population .................................................... 87
  Participants .......................................................................... 89
    Students .............................................................................. 89
    Teachers ............................................................................ 90
Role of the Researcher .................................................................. 92
Data Collection Methods ................................................................ 97
Dependability and Credibility ....................................................... 102
Data Analysis ............................................................................ 105
  Analysis of Research Questions ............................................. 108
Summary .................................................................................. 110

Page Dimensions: 612.0x792.0

Page Numbers:
- 86
- 87
- 89
- 89
- 90
- 92
- 97
- 102
- 105
- 108
- 110
- 111
- 111
- 113
- 116
- 116
- 118
- 120
- 120
- 120
- 124
- 128
- 129
- 129
- 132
- 133
- 137
- 145
- 157
- 165
- 169
- 175
- 181
- 182
# TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Intended Versus Observed: Themes Revealed Through the

| Differences | 183 |
| Context | 184 |
| Inputs | 187 |
| Activities and Casual Effects | 190 |
| Outputs | 193 |

Feedback and Recommendations | 196 |

The Perspectives of the Participants | 196 |
Positives About the Advisory Program | 196 |
Suggestions for Improvement | 197 |
Redesign the Model | 197 |
Professional Development | 202 |

The Ideal Logic Model for an Advisory Program | 204 |
Purpose | 207 |
Context | 208 |
Inputs | 210 |
Activities and Casual Effects | 213 |
Outputs | 217 |
Student Achievement | 218 |

Future Research | 219 |
Student Impact | 219 |
Teacher Impact | 220 |
Programmatic Impact | 221 |
Beyond High School | 224 |

Conclusions | 226 |
Advisory: A Community of Practice? | 226 |
It’s All About Relationships | 229 |
Final Discussion | 232 |

REFERENCES | 238 |

APPENDICES | 248 |
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Advisory Programs at High Schools in New York, California, and Georgia</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Advisee Interviewee and Focus Group Demographics</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Advisor Interviewee and Focus Group Demographics</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Data Collection Details</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Initial codes from data</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: CoP Indicators of the Advisory Program at the Site of Study</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:</td>
<td>Core SEL Competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:</td>
<td>Components of a Social Theory of Learning: An Initial Inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:</td>
<td>Literature Review Synthesis Diagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:</td>
<td>Intended Logic Model for the Advisory Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:</td>
<td>The Observed Logic Model of the Advisory Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:</td>
<td>Responses from Question 1 from the Online Survey for Advisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:</td>
<td>“My Reality Check”-Student Friendly Form Used to Conduct Check-ins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:</td>
<td>Responses to Question 4a from the Online Survey for Advisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:</td>
<td>Responses to Question 2 from the Online Survey for Advisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:</td>
<td>Responses to Question 3 from the Online Survey for Advisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:</td>
<td>Direct Comparison of the Intended and Observed Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:</td>
<td>Direct Comparison of the Intended and Observed Inputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:</td>
<td>Direct Comparison of the Intended and Observed Activities and Casual Effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:</td>
<td>Direct Comparison of the Intended and Observed Outputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:</td>
<td>The Ideal Logic Model for an Advisory Program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A:</td>
<td>Uncommon Collegiate Charter High School-Family Accountability Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B:</td>
<td>“Metro College Prep” Parent Commitment to Excellence 2016-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C:</td>
<td>Focus Group Questions -Advisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D:</td>
<td>Focus Group Questions - Advisees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E:</td>
<td>Your Perspective of Relationships with Advisees (Students) - Interview Questions for Advisors (Teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F:</td>
<td>Your Perspective of Relationships with Your Advisor (Teacher) - Interview Questions for Advisees (Students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G:</td>
<td>Survey Questions (Teachers) via Google Forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H:</td>
<td>Mercer IRB Approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>Permission to reprint <em>Figure 1</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J:</td>
<td>Permission to reprint <em>Figure 2</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K:</td>
<td>Permission to reprint Table 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L:</td>
<td>Permission to reprint Interview Questions for Advisors and Interview Questions for Advisees (Appendix E and F)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

KYRA MONÉT CALDWELL TEMPLETON

IT’S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS: AN EXPLORATION OF A HIGH SCHOOL ADVISORY PROGRAM
Under the direction of SHERAH B. CARR, PH.D

High school is a pivotal time in the development of an adolescent (Anfara & Caskey, 2014; Browne, 2014). Because of the varied experiences that high school students endure, in and outside of school, the development of a stable school community is important. Healthy student/adult relationships can be fostered through an effective advisory program; thus cultivating a community of support and mentorship.

This qualitative case study explored the inception and evolution of the advisory program at a Metro Atlanta charter high school. As the foundation for the school, the advisory program has been perceived to be critical to its success. Furthermore, it is embedded in the school’s genetic makeup.

The study explored the history and transformation of homeroom and advisory programs in education. Throughout the investigation, past and current programs were assessed. The site of study was examined, using a logic model program evaluation strategy, in order to provide a basis for the implementation of the program and its impact on students, teachers, and administrators. The state of
the program was reviewed; the perspectives and experiences of participants were
explored in order to reveal if lasting relationships were developed through the
advisory program. Further, through the lens of the Communities of Practice Theory,
the study explored if true community was established as a result of the advisory
program.

In order to assist in the examination of the development and impact of
student-teacher relationships, a high school advisory program was investigated.
Perspectives and overall feedback regarding the development and maintenance of
an advisory community from teachers and students was collected through
interviews, focus groups, observations, and a survey for data triangulation. Using an
interpretive lens, this qualitative case study revealed that if strong relationships
exist as a result of the effective execution of an advisory program, alignment with
intent and practice must occur. Through the development of an ideal logic model,
the advisory program could be replicated and implemented in all high schools with
the goal of offering adult support to adolescents during the critical period of social
and emotional development that occurs throughout one's matriculation in high
school.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Impact

High school, fear. New people, fear. Unknown territory, fear. As a freshman, Alexis is introduced to new teachers and peers. Fear turns into understanding, support, advocacy, strong relationships, and an everlasting bond. Introductions are made, nerves are still high, however; Alexis is calmed after a few “getting to know you” activities. Students share personal goals and aspirations for the immediate and distant future; “My aspiration is to attend the University of Georgia and major in sports medicine...My goal is to simply stay out of trouble, 8th grade was not the best for me!” This exchange of goals as well as personal experiences helps the advisory group to develop a sense of camaraderie and community.

Throughout her sophomore year, Alexis has developed strong relationships with not only her peers, but also one specific teacher, Ms. Cee. Her parents expect the school to become an extension of home life. Junior and senior year vastly approaches and Alexis begins to focus on her college choices. Her relationship with Ms. Cee has become more collaborative and insightful. Recommendations are written, scholarships are awarded, and college acceptances are received. Alexis shares her scholarship news as well as her acceptance into the University of Georgia with Ms. Cee and her peers. As
the transition to a new experience occurs, nerves arise again, but support is immediate from her school family. Fear transforms into faith based on the sense of community that exists amongst all stakeholders.

High school graduation occurs and Alexis is awarded her diploma adorned with honors. Beaming with joy, Alexis embraces Ms. Cee. The high school journey has concluded, but another chapter and layer of her established relationships flourish. Corresponding emails are sent, visits occur, and care packages are received, Alexis is now in her junior year of college, boasting a high grade point average. She is well on her way to a lifetime of success because of the continual support she has received from her advisor during and after her high school years. Alexis indeed recognizes the lifelong impact of her relationships throughout her high school experience.

Statement of the Problem

Transition from middle school to high school and from high school to college are major events that occur during adolescence. In this life development stage, individuals endure tremendous brain development (Jensen & Nutt, 2015; Osofsky et al., 2003). In order for students to navigate, learn, and develop through these “rites of passage,” they must be equipped with not only academic ability, but also social and emotional skills to handle the many challenges that they may endure (Ayers, 1994). Through established relationships with adults and peers, students have the potential of being successful and well prepared for adulthood as a result of the acquisition of social and emotional knowledge in a supportive environment.
Through this qualitative case study, I explored the role that relationship building between students and teachers plays in the development of a community through the implementation of an advisory program at a high school. My assertion is that if strong relationships are established and maintained as a result of a well-designed community of practice in the form of an advisory program, students and teachers could feel supported. In order to effectively determine if an advisory model is apt to address this pondering, I conducted an exploration of the advisory program at the site of study. I identified the intended model for execution and exposed the observed model of execution in an effort to reveal elements of the initiative that aligned with the purpose of the advisory program in regards to student-teacher interactions: To build relationships that offer consistent academic, social, and emotional support.

The perspectives of the participants in the advisory program was heavily explored in order to illustrate a clear picture of how the intentions of the program were being implemented. As a result of a comparative analysis of the intended and observed models, themes were revealed to inform the creation of an ideal model of the implementation of a high school advisory program for the purpose of enhancing the prevalence of adult support of adolescence during their most formative years of development.
Purpose of the Study

Previous studies have simply reviewed the purposes and goals of advisory programs, examined the history, explored advisory design, and compared advisory programs at the middle and high school levels (Allen & Steinberg, 2002, 2004; Long et al., 1927; Muir, 2000; Rabourn, 1926; Schaefer et al., 2016; Tocci et al., 2005;). On the contrary, one quantitative study (Kapucu, 2012), explored the classroom as community of practice and examined how activities promotes and enhances collaborative learning in a college setting.

The purpose of this study was to examine the existence of student-teacher relationships and the development of community through the implementation of a high school advisory program. Furthermore, evidence of the formation of a community will be examined through the framework of the Communities of Practice Theory. Elements discovered through the data will be aligned with specific indicators from the theory to determine if a community of practice has evolved as result of the advisory program.

An effective advisory program has the ability to develop a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between people and the social systems in which they participate. As a result of an advisory program, “participants are involved in a community (belonging) to engage in certain activities (doing), thus establishing their identity (becoming) to interpret the world around themselves (experience). In a sense, the theory [CoP] emphasizes a subconscious process of learning through
participation...” (Kapucu, 2012, p. 589). Ultimately, communities of practice can be created, maintained, and sustained through the implementation of an advisory program.

Research Questions

My research focused on determining how strong relationships are established and maintained as a result of a well-designed community of practice in the form of an advisory program. The following research questions will further guide the study:

How do students and teachers perceive the impact of relationships and community through a high school advisory program?

1. What are the programmatic elements (physical, human, and organizational) of the advisory program at the site of study?
   a. How are teachers implementing the various elements of the advisory program?
   b. How is it being received by the students?

2. What are the differences between the intentions and expectations of the advisory program versus its observed implementation?

3. How do the perspectives of students impact the facilitation of the advisory program at the site of study?

4. How do the perspectives of teachers impact the facilitation of the advisory program at the site of study?
5. How do the relationships between teachers and students develop a community of practice through the advisory program?

Theoretical Framework

Advisory: A Community of Practice

A theory offers a lens in which to view knowledge and reveals understanding, it also has the capability to conceal understanding because of the clear focus that exists when utilizing a specific theoretical framework (Anfara, 2008). Even through this narrow lens, theories employ the researcher with strategies in which to explore specific phenomena and make meaning of them. With the goal of narrowing the focus for the study, the Communities of Practice Theory (CoP) was employed. As the investigator, I explored how advisory groups functioned as communities of practice for the seamless facilitation of student-teacher relationships.

The Relationship to Research Interest

CoP exists in three dimensions in which “practice is the source of coherence of a community... 1) mutual engagement, 2) a joint enterprise, [and] 3) a shared repertoire” are elements that relate to the study (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). The intent of the research is to identify advisory groups as communities of practice created through student-teacher relationships. Through “mutual engagement”, an examination of student to student and student to teacher relations and interactions can be clarified and refined. To construct mutual engagement, practice has to be structured and purposefully manufactured initially in order for shared experiences
to occur. Learning will emerge authentically as a result of a shared commonality that occurs within the community.

Maintenance of the community's practice is critical to progressing to the next dimension of “joint enterprise” which is attained through the context of a concept and level that is beyond the community itself. The collective goal of the advisory group can be potentially defined through the established relationship between the advisor and the advisee based on the shared historical, cultural, and institutional experience of the advisory group. In the case of this study, the broader system is the school and advisory overall as a programmatic element of the school. The identity of the advisory group is created and negotiated internally and exists within the larger enterprise and attempt to define themselves individually and collectively.

In the case of an advisory group in an educational setting, the relationships that exists in the participatory culture of the community create an identity within the larger community, the school. The community’s participants create the “shared repertoire.” In a cohesive advisory group, words, gestures, actions, and concepts are adopted and executed which represent the spirit and identity of the group as a whole. The presence of this repertoire is fundamental to how the group identifies themselves to the larger school community. Various representations of beliefs and practices are displayed consequently reflecting a “history of mutual engagement” (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). This mutual engagement initiates and maintains teacher and student investment in the advisory experience.
Advisors have the potential of experiencing an exchange of investment between themselves and the students by providing a supportive environment and creating a nucleus that embodies the relationship develop between the advisor and the advisee. The development of an effective and purposeful advisory group supports the goal the CoP theory. Hoadley (2012) recognizes that;

a community of practice is an important theoretical construct that underlies a particular model of learning, namely, learning in which people, through a process of legitimate peripheral participation, take up membership in and identity with a community which serves as the home of these shared practices. (p. 299)

The shared practices provide stability and construct an environment that experiences learning as social participation.

Overall, the framework of CoP aligns with the research because the established student-teacher relationships is the foundation that unites all three components of the framework. It creates a shared experience to elicit mutual engagement amongst communities that exist in schools, it negotiates a joint enterprise amongst the communities, and it creates a shared repertoire within the community. The CoP theory has the potential of developing a space in which all participants; students and teachers, maintain a cohesive and cooperative existence. The collaboration of the components of the framework constructs a supportive and sustained core that leads to investment in the educational experience.
As a result of this study, I will determine if the programmatic elements and the holistic design of advisory program at the site align with at least 9 out of the 14 indicators identifying if a community of practice has formed, as outlined by Wenger (1998):

1. sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual
2. Shared ways of engaging in doing things together
3. the rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
4. absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
5. very quick setup of a problem to be discussed
6. substantial overlap in participants’ descriptions of who belongs
7. knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise
8. mutually defining identities
9. the ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
10. specific tools, representations, and other artifacts
11. local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
12. jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones
13. certain styles recognized as displaying membership
14. a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world. (p.125)
Quantifying aspects of the advisory program to determine if a CoP exists is the core purpose of this study. Through an extensive evaluation of the programmatic elements and the perspectives of the participants, the goal is to explore how best to conceptualize a program that develops communities of students and teachers who learn from and support one another; thus building relationships that offer consistent academic, social, and emotional support in a school setting.

**Significance of the Study**

Representing one of the most critical transitions in a lifespan, adolescence is a period after childhood and before adulthood, between the ages of 10 – 19 (World Health Organization, 2016). The majority of an adolescent’s development ensues during high school. According to the World Health Organization (2016), this period prepares teenagers for adulthood in which several significant developmental experiences occur that include social and economic independence, development of identity, and the acquisition of skills needed to cultivate and maintain relationships. As Osofsky, D. Sinner, G., & Wolk, D. (2003) argues, much eagerness to solve problems and to improve education exists; however, sometimes the most viable concept for helping young people: the developmental approach, is at times ignored in the attempt to appeal to adolescents. Recognizing that each individual is unique but progresses through common growth stages is critical when considering the developmental approach. Attitudes, habits and skill development are related to stages in development and, if they are acknowledged and attended to in a positive way, can provide the foundation for future success (Osofsky et al., 2003).
In order to honor the fact that high school students need additional support in the adolescent stage of development, the perception of genuine care and interest in them must exist. For this to occur, relationships have to be developed and the school must explicitly design systems that initiate the existence of a supportive school community. In the case of this study, the advisory program was the tool to create the aforementioned environment needed to engage students and help to facilitate the critical transition endured by developing adolescents.

High school advisory programs appear in various forms. Referenced as “homeroom” or “advisory” across different high school environments, they exist in the form of a teacher being assigned a group of students throughout the high school experience and maintaining social and academic support until graduation (Long, Griggs, and Douglass, 1927; Rabourn, 1926). The population represented in this study is important to note because of the demographics represented. Although not the main focus, the term “at risk” surfaced and must be recognized as a point of reference instead of the main emphasis. In regards to this study, “at risk” is an important term to identify because few studies have explored the “...impact of the student-teacher relationship for students who are considered to be “at risk” for negative outcomes” (Decker, Dona, & Christenson, 2007, p. 85). Additionally, existing research about the concept of advisory and in an effort to personalize the high school experience, states that “small high schools generally have higher achievement levels, higher graduation rates, and lower dropout rates...finding that small school make the most difference for low-income and minority youth” (Allen &
Steinberg, 2002, p. 9). In the context of this study, the advisory program could be the semblance of a “small high school.” Regardless, the concept of an advisory program at a high school created a dynamic of community and continual support for students and families that has not been widely seen in schools with similar populations (Decker et al., 2007). The implementation of an effective advisory program has the potential of positively affecting student and teacher relationship building.

Functioning as a community of practice, students and teachers in the group develop strong bonds and work towards a common goal. Additionally, they engage in diverse ways creating the potential of character and academic achievement not otherwise accomplished without deliberate and robust adult support which can be explained through concept of Zone Proximal Development (ZPD) this concept is explicated further in the Theoretical Framework.

My vision and motivation inspiration for this study can be linked to my familiarity as an advisor. I also acknowledge the impact that it had on not only the students, but also on me as the advisor. Through my experience, I have realized that learning and development can coincide resulting in strong relationships and investment in the advisory experience. I strongly believe that clear expectations and effective implementation with the goal of developing genuine relationships can assist in propelling the creation of a supportive advisory community which can help guide all students and teachers towards a path of relationship and community building.
Assumptions and Limitations

My assumptions are based on the research questions and the overall intent of the study. There is an assumption that if strong relationships are established and maintained through the proper execution of an advisory program, social, emotional, and academic prowess can be improved and supportive relationships can be fostered between students and teachers; thus maximizing the high school experience. Although research does suggest that relationships are important to student engagement, school personalization, acceptance, and belonging, in the case of this study, my assumptions may not be affirmed based on the self-reported perspectives of the participants or the intended format of executing the advisory program at the research site (Klem & Connell 2004; McClure, Yonezawa, & Jones, 2010). Additionally, I functioned under the assumption that there were differences between the intended and observed model of the advisory program.

The limitations of the study included not considering gender when evaluating the perspectives of advisors and advisees in their advisory settings. During the time of research, gender was not a focal point nor did I provide much follow up regarding the gender dynamics that were revealed within the data analysis. A closer exploration of the context of the advisory program that included gender could have occurred offering a varied perspective and possible insight into the perspectives revealed by the participants. Lastly, although ethnicity was mentioned in the presentation of findings, it was not an explicit inquiry of the study. I reported variations in ethnicity based solely on observations, it was not reported
by the participants. The demographics of the site were identified as a point of reference. Additional limitations were explicated further in the discussion of researcher positionality and the role of the researcher in Chapter 3.

**Definition of Important Terms**

*Advisory* is a non-credit class in which a teacher (the advisor) is assigned a group of students (advisees) (Rabourn, 1926; Long et al., 1927; McClure, Yonezawa, & Jones, 2010). The advisory group is of the same grade level and can be single or mixed gendered. In the case of this study, the advisory groups examined were single gendered. Advisory occurs at a regularly scheduled period of time during the school day. Each advisory has an assigned location in which they meet daily. The purpose of advisory is to provide academic and non-academic guidance and support (Rabourn, 1926; McClure et al., 2010, “Metro College Prep”, 2017).

The term, “at risk” was identified based on the demographics of the site of study. When considering the socioeconomic status (SES) of the students at the site and the participants, an average of 97% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch status and 98% identify African-American. As indicated by the U.S. Department of Education (1992), SES is important when determining “at risk” status. Although the definition of the term has evolved beyond race and class— to include a variety of limitations in learning— in this study, the demographic background factors—SES and race-ethnicity relates to “at-risk” status (U.S. Department of Education, 1992; Bulger & Watson, 2006).
A circle is a Restorative Practice strategy that can be used to develop relationships, promote a sense of family, build community, or respond to conflicts in various settings (Smith, Fisher, & Frey, 2015; Wachtel, 2016). As further defined by Wachtel (2016) “circles give people an opportunity to speak and listen to one another in an atmosphere of safety, decorum and equality” which is critical in regards to relationship building (p. 7). The circle format can be used for many purposes that include but are not limited to: “conflict resolution, healing, support, decision making, information exchange, and relationship development” (Wachtel, 2016, p. 8). In the case of this study, circles are used in the advisory program to build relationships and to offer resolutions to conflicts.

Community is defined as a group of individuals who collaborate, share experiences, and make personal connections; thus creating and maintaining a unified identity or community of practice. Community is the method in which social relationships are configured (Wenger, 1998).

As a conceptual perspective, the Communities of Practice Theory (CoP) provides a framework that explores how groups function and coexist in a shared environment through social participation (Wenger, 1998). Furthermore, CoP is a practice that consists of active participants in social communities who construct identities in relation to their communities (Wenger, 1998). The interconnectedness amongst the components defines the essence of CoP (Wenger, 1998). How advisory groups function as communities of practice for the seamless facilitation of student-teacher relationships is the focus of this study. The CoP theory will guide the
evolution of the program to determine if communities of practice are accomplished at the site.

*Programmatic Elements* are the aspects, details, and organizational structure that define an explicit functionality of a program. In the case of this study, it is the aforementioned as well as the historical pathology of the advisory program at the site. Programmatic elements include the physical (location) and organizational (systems, procedures, and expectations) facets regarding the execution of the program. Additionally, it also refers to the individuals that participate in and possible benefit from the program, to include, but not limited to the following: advisors, advisees, administration, and parents.

A program evaluation is a systematic method of assessing the effectiveness of a system, program, or project. Program evaluations assist the researcher in comparing the intended outcomes to the observed outcomes in order to determine if goal and objectives are being met and by what means (Gajda & Jewiss, 2004). Overall, program evaluations provide a clear method to assess the quality of a program's achievements in order to make suggestions for improvement or to confirm and celebrate its successes. In this study, the program, evaluation will be used as a method to conduct an assessment of a case (an advisory program) that has a clear framework for execution and compare it to its implementation based on observations and perspectives of participants (students-advisees and teachers-advisors).
A relationship is a strong interpersonal connection between individuals for the purpose of guidance and support.

Originating in the 1970s, Restorative Practices (RP) was a method used to assist with mediation or reconciliation between victims and offenders (Wachtel, 2016). Rooted in the criminal justice system, RP has acquired many names such as victim-offender mediation and victim-offender dialogue, it spread in the United States and in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s (Wachtel, 2016). Integrated in the school system, RP proactively builds healthy relationships and a sense of community; additionally it works to prevent and address conflict and repair damaged relationships (Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2014; Opportunity to Learn Campaign, Advancement Project, American Federation of Teachers, & National Education Association, 2014; Wachtel, 2016). RP has been applied in schools to address behavior differently in an effort move away from a punitive discipline system. RP is “predicated on positive relationships that students and adults have with one another” (Smith et al., 2015, p. 4). Connected to SEL, the site of study employed RP during the 2016-2017 school year for the purpose of transforming the school culture from punitive to restorative when dealing with student discipline.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2017),

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills
necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. (CASEL, 2017, para. 1)

*Figure 1* clearly displays the competencies that are critical to the SEL framework. In the case of this study, SEL skills are embedded in the prescribed advisory curriculum was adopted by the school to serve as an additional resource to facilitate advisory sessions.
Evidence of the impact of relationships on adolescent learning and development through an effective advisory program is lacking in educational research (Shulkind & Foote, 2009; Galassi, Gulledge, & Cox, 1997; Anfara, 2006). Anfara (2006) concludes that, “few researchers have systematically probed the
subjective experiences of participants in advisory programs as disclosed by both students and teachers” (p.57). This study will contribute to the existing research because it will provide a close look at the implementation of an advisory program with explicit programmatic elements. Although differences may exist between the expectations and the observed implementation of the program, overall, established guidelines could potentially assist in forming a community of practice for the purpose of student support.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

My research has been grounded in the history of homeroom and its transition to an advisory program, the emphasis on the roles of all stakeholders (teacher, parents, administrators, and students), and curriculum initiatives; thus leading to a discussion of the development of student-teacher relationships and how the advisory group forms a community of practice. Through an evaluation of an existing high school advisory program, I affirmed the perspectives of the students and teachers and recommended best practices. Overall, I revealed that an advisory program is one strategy that could consistently offer extended support to a student which could potentially shape their overall perception of the high school experience.

Conducting the Literature Review

The literature review provides a comprehensive overview of existing research offering a solid foundation to one’s study. Additionally, it allows one to situate one's inquiry in research. I approached my literature review in a linear fashion. Since “advisory” is considered a modern term in education, I started my search identifying the original form of advisory based on the intentions of the program, to create a community of support and mentorship for a small group of students. The homeroom initiative was revealed and its origin was traced back to
the English public school system in the late 1800s. Using a combination of *homeroom, origin of homeroom, homeroom and public education*, I was able to find several secondary sources.

Due to the antiquity of some of the references, it was challenging to identify primary sources that explored the history of the homeroom. Many secondary sources surfaced; however, one particular source provided me the historical references needed to conduct a substantial overview of the evolution of the homeroom initiative. The source by McCorkle (1953) was a thesis statement submitted in partial fulfillment for a doctoral degree of education. This study provided me with access to seminal pieces that explored the existence of the homeroom program in the United States. Additionally, this study presents a holistic assessment of the purpose of homeroom, the practices carried out in homeroom, and the use of homeroom in the educational system. This study stood out to me because it was similar to how I planned to approach my research. After reviewing the source, I attempted to acquire the primary sources referenced. Presenting itself to be a very challenging feat, with the help of my committee chair and experts at the Mercer University library, I was able to gain access to three primary sources referenced in McCorkle’s text. This helped to center my research through historical references.

I then traced the homeroom program to the origin of advisory as introduced during the middle school reform that was a response to National Governors’ Association Task Force in 1989. The goal was to provide support to students and
families by creating small units through an advisory program. Terms and phrases that revealed references that related to middle school reform and advisory included: *advisory, middle school, from homeroom to advisory, school reform*. To expand my search, I was able to identify resources that aligned with the following: *the guidance counselor* and *school guidance*. Throughout the literature, I hoped to create a clear path from homeroom to advisory, creating a baseline when referencing the advisory program in my study.

The evolution of the advisory program was traced from middle school to high school; therefore, my next topic of research was high school and advisory programs. Words and phrases to identify literature to provide evidence regarding advisory program moving to the high school level included: *from homeroom to advisory, high school advisory, the purpose of advisory at the high school level*. Additionally, because I desired to highlight student-teacher relationships as facilitated through an advisory program, my search also included: *student-teacher relationships, advisory and school support, advisory and school guidance, belonging, school and belonging, school connectedness, building relationships with peers and adults in school*, and *relationships with at-risk students in public schools*.

In a more extensive and personal investigation of existing advisory programs, further research was conducted. In search of similar initiatives that occurred in high schools that related to my site of study, from March 2016 to April 2016, I visited schools with advisory programs in New York, California, and Georgia. The goal was to determine how programs were idealized and executed in high
Conducting this first-hand research allowed to have an idea of how the concept of advisory has evolved from coast to coast, in public and charter school settings.

As I continued my literature search and review, the goal of my additional searches required more recent literature. I utilized Google Scholar, direct referrals from peers and university staff, and Mercer University's library databases to identify current research that expanded my inquiry of relationship building to tools used to facilitate and maintain relationships in schools. I conducted searches that included discussions of Restorative Practices and Social and Emotional Learning.

This linear approach produced an overabundance of resources that informed my research and situated my study in the literature.

The History of Homeroom

The Origin of the Homeroom

The concept of “homeroom” can be defined as an extension of school administration in which it is under the supervision of a teacher and serves as the “school home” of students assigned to it for the purpose of administering routines and activities not associated with subject matter (Kefauver & Scott, 1930; McCorkle, 1953). It is a means in which student-teacher contacts are facilitated. The origin of homeroom can be traced back to the late 1800s, stemming from the “house system” used in the English public school system, “the house”, in which from forty to sixty boys live, a natural unit of organization of social life forms (Johnson, 1909). The student is placed in a certain house and remains for the duration of their time at the
school. The method of organizing students in a house is to create a small environment in which they learn how to be effective leaders, build and maintain strong traditions, and provide guidance and support for the younger students (Johnson, 1909).

In the English school tradition, the teachers felt a sense of obligation to be involved in the social affairs of their students just as they are concerned with the academic affairs of the students. It was the goal of the English teacher to recognize their value and involvement with the social upbringing of their students. The development of character and leadership skills was implemented through the house system as well as through athletic competition. The ultimate goal of the school was to impart moral and social training, and develop school loyalty. Overall, maintaining a clear vision regarding high standards.

The American Adoption of the Homeroom

The first homeroom was organized in the late 1800s. Functioning as an opening exercise at the beginning of the school day, homeroom assisted schools with disseminating announcements as well as performing other administrative tasks. The house method from the English public school system, with modifications was adopted by American boarding schools and eventually some public schools. As indicated by Johnson (1909), in his explication of a study on homeroom programs, two schools initiated a homeroom program; by the mid-1900s, the number expanded to over thirty-three. Firmly established in the American educational
philosophy, the homeroom was designed to contribute to the growth and development of the student and became an educational opportunity (Draayer, 1961).

Viewed as a system to improve the secondary educational experience, the homeroom became more prevalent and refined. Growth in the existence of homerooms can be credited to the increased size of high schools (Johnson, 1909). The proliferation of students became a concern because it was a possibility for students to not have direct contact with teachers who could support them beyond the classroom. Additionally, the advancement of the school curriculum provided another explanation for the rise of homerooms during this time. Ultimately, students were not able to receive the necessary instruction or guidance regarding school orientation, vocational aspirations, personality development; there was a need for a less formal, non-academic setting for individual and group guidance. As further argued by McKown (1940) the homeroom

...is a plan in which can put an end to the “lost student-teacher relationship”—a situation that came with a large and complex high school...a device which will bring back the setting of an earlier day when teachers and students were closely associated and learned to know each other intimately—a setting which is essential to the effective all-around guidance...a technique which will help us to emphasize the slogan, “The student is more important than the subject.” And so the homeroom appeared in school schedules... (p. 213)
Homeroom functioned as a way to organize students socially as well as to provide general information regarding school occurrences. Also used to create a sense of intimacy in growing schools, homeroom served as a unification method in a large school setting.

In the early development of the homeroom, teachers and students mostly disliked the structure; however, the lack of preparation and education regarding its purpose was ignored. After understanding the use of the homeroom system as a place of guidance for students, the effective utilization of this infrastructure began to improve. Initially used as an administrative versus an educational device, homeroom became a setting in which students and teachers were acquainted and reviewed material that offered educational, moral, personal, social, and vocational guidance. The homeroom was an educative opportunity and became a space to capitalize on guidance objectives for the student (McKown, 1940 & McCorkle, 1953). As a result of research and through the concerted interest of some teachers, the need for homeroom materials became evident. Materials included workbooks, formal and informal lessons, listings of discussion topics to be used by teachers and students.

The Organization of the Homeroom

The homeroom is typically organized by class, alphabetically or by a specified selective method that includes but is not limited to, sex, intellectual quotients, vocational interests, or curriculum track. However, as argued by McKown (1940), students should be assigned on the basis of a natural cross-section of a particular
grade level in which the teacher progresses with them as they matriculate. The number of students in the homeroom roster is dependent upon its purpose. If the purpose is solely administrative, larger numbers are appropriate. However, a small homeroom enrollment number is more conducive to the development of individualized relationships between the student and the teacher as well as between the student and their peers. Based on the literature the average enrollment is from fifteen to sixty-two students (McCorkle, 1953). A large homeroom could be deemed problematic if the objective is to develop strong student-teacher relationships.

The overall program is led by the school principal which is ideal because the goal and purposes of the homeroom should be embedded in the overall school philosophy, usually developed by the leader of the school. Serving as a guide to the fidelity of the program, the principal in conjunction with a larger entity such as a homeroom committee or council, sets the parameters of how homeroom is executed. However, as argued by Draayer (1961), the homeroom teacher is the most critical person in the implementation and execution of the program.

One teacher is assigned to a group of students and it becomes an extension of the teacher's role in the school. However, based on the literature, it has been argued that the failure of the homeroom depends on the teacher (McKown, 1950; Novak, 1951; McCorkle, 1953). One of the major causes of the failure of a homeroom program is the requirement that every teacher must have a homeroom, this expectation is seen as impracticable because it assumes that every teacher possesses the skills or has the desire to facilitate homeroom effectively (McKown,
While there is limited literature on the internal organization of the homeroom, studies indicated that student committees were elected and the teachers helped to facilitate during the period (McCorkle, 1953; Sipes, 1952). Teachers assisted students in documenting questions and suggestions for the overall improvement of the school.

Historically, the length of the homeroom varies; however, it is dependent upon the overall purposes. Shorter periods are typically used for administrative tasks such as attendance tracking and elements of the daily routine outlined by the school. McCorkle (1953), highlights studies in which the length of the homeroom varied based on purpose. The average length of a homeroom period ranged from twenty-two to eighty minutes. Overall, it was founded that the length of the homeroom period should align with the instructional periods in order for the homeroom to have “status” with students and teachers (McCorkle, 1953). As suggested by McKown (1940), homeroom should be recognized as a guidance setting, not for mere administrative purposes. Ultimately, the purpose of the homeroom should be determined by the school's administration, which in turn will define the length of time needed for the homeroom period (McKown, 1940).

The Purpose of Homeroom

The purpose of the homeroom is to give guidance and to help students socially adapt to the complicated society in which they live (Sipes, 1952 & Draayer, 1961). In conjunction with how the homeroom is organized, the purpose should lend itself to the needs of the students as well as the development of the students.
The main objective of the homeroom was student-centeredness. Whether informal or formal, students should be empowered to assume the responsibility of initiating the programs and activities in the homeroom (Sipes, 1952 & Draayer, 1961).

Based on the literature, some homerooms functioned as a subsidiary to student government (Sipes, 1952). As revealed in the review of the execution of homeroom programs and the roles of teachers and students; teachers occasionally preside over homeroom meetings with student input; homeroom officers preside intermittently; or the teacher never presides, but participates as a member of the community, additionally, some activities of homeroom included school (Novak, 1951; McCorkle, 1953). Through open discussion, the homeroom functioned as a community that sought to facilitate the daily routines of the school and provided an opportunity for student voice to be present throughout the school.

Although the functions of the homeroom varied throughout the literature, the major purpose was to provide continual guidance throughout the high school experience, maintain student-teacher relations, cultivate student leadership, develop desirable behaviors, and cultivate habits of citizenship (Draayer, 1961). Examples of guidance activities included educational and vocational guidance, individual counseling, and overall orientation. Additionally, homeroom assisted with the facilitation of administrative tasks which included school announcements, attendance tracking, maintenance of student information regarding registration and enrollment, and whole school events such as celebrations and student recognition ceremonies (Kefauver & Scott, 1930).
Homeroom Materials

Materials to facilitate the effective execution of the homeroom are important to consider. Through the review of multiple homeroom programs, McCorkle (1953) conducted a survey of teachers to identify the core materials used that were helpful to them in the homeroom. The books included a wide variety of topics that included information regarding adolescent development, counseling, school guidance techniques, school administration and organization, and educational methods. Teachers also listed several pamphlets and magazines that were instrumental to them in the facilitation of the homeroom. Much of the literature utilized pertained to student development versus how to effectively conduct a homeroom.

A large number of the publications stemmed from literature created by The National Forum Guidance series, released from 1946 through 1965. Titles from this series ranged starting with Discovering Myself published in 1946. This text discussed topics such as being independent, managing emotions, and vocational experiences. Being Teen-Agers published in 1950, reviewed topics regarding how to be a well-rounded student, how to work with others, and how to exist in one’s community.

In an effort to create resources, individuals began to develop their own programs and materials that included informal lessons and pertinent books for students (McKown, 1940). The materials were organized and included details about the overall purpose of homeroom and informal lessons. More emphasis was on
young manhood and womanhood which was instrumental in guiding developing teenagers. In the evaluation of homeroom programs at Wilson Junior High School in Tampa, Florida; Sipes (1952) explicated several programs and topics to assist with the facilitation of homeroom. They included school procedures, parliamentary procedures for the homeroom council, character traits, patriotism, and religion, to name a few. The focus was on developing a well-rounded and informed student.

Challenges of the Homeroom

The challenges of the homeroom can be traced back to the understanding of the purposes of the program. The school administration was not decisive about the implementation of the homeroom program in order for it to be successful. Programs failed due to the lack of interest from all stakeholders. Some of the challenge regarding investment related to interest and morale. Many times being a homeroom teacher was a requirement regardless of interest in the purposes of homeroom. Without consult, teachers were assigned a homeroom and were expected to execute its purposes without much training. Also known as the homeroom sponsor, the teacher assigned had to be the leader of the group, Novak (1951) highlights other characteristics of the homeroom sponsor, the expectation was that the teacher understood children and their growth, they must be enthusiastic and understand the purpose of and desire to be engaged in the homeroom program. The homeroom sponsor was expected to be equipped with the skill to provide adequate support to students, it was not seen as just another
assigned task, but it required a qualified individual. The goal was for the members of the homeroom to feel “at home” and based on the literature, this was lacking (Novak, 1951). Teacher rotation offered a solution; however, professional development was a glaring need that was lacking in the implementation of the homeroom program.

Teacher development and training was another important challenge illustrated in the execution of effective homerooms. Teachers needed to be adequately trained and invested in the program’s intent so as to carry out the intentions of homeroom to guide students throughout their matriculation in school. As argued by McKown (1940),

...school administrators are recognizing the stupidity of assuming that every teacher represents the combination of interests, ideals, background, knowledge, ability, and personality essential to competency in home-room sponsorship...This is a tacit recognition that the lovely theoretical ideal, “all teachers should be guidance counselors,” is impracticable. (p. 216)

The lack of preparation and the unclear expectations for homeroom teachers is a common pitfall for such programs (Kefauver & Scott, 1930; Novak, 1951). The teacher has no objectives to assist with understanding and evaluating the purposes and the impact of the homeroom initiative. Deficient preparation of teachers also led to the lack of investment and eventually poor execution; thus deviating from the overall purposes of the homeroom program.
As contended by McKown (1940), homeroom was slow to develop and became largely administrative because there was a lack of materials. The limited availability of materials and “lack of professional foresight was inevitably disastrous in many a school” (McKown, 1940, p. 214). Without clear guidelines, definite objectives, and pedagogical practices outlined, the essence of homeroom was not fully realized.

The homeroom program needed to be planned with student growth in mind. According to the literature, the increased role of the homeroom in secondary education needed to be redefined in order to fully service the needs of the student as well as the teacher (Kefauver & Scott, 1930; Novak, 1951). More direction needed to be given regarding the guidance and empowerment of the student. As the purpose of homeroom expanded, the need for reform became more evident.

Ultimately, the value of homeroom in the secondary school should have been considered in school reform initiatives. Administrators should have considered the purposes, developed teachers to fulfill the purposes, and included students in the embodiment of the purpose in order to facilitate change. In response to the challenges of the homeroom, the advisory initiative arose through the middle school reform movement.

From Homeroom to Advisory

The Origin of Advisory – A Call for Middle School Reform

As indicated on a list of materials utilized in the homeroom program as examined by McCorkle (1953), The Advisory, unofficially published as a product of
Bronxville Senior High School in Bronxville, New York, was an early reference to the concept of advisory. No additional literature referenced the term of “advisory.” A call for middle school reform was released in the mid-1970s as a response to the need to create a developmentally, socially, and emotionally appropriate learning environment for students (Anafara & Brown, 1998 & Schaefer, Malu, & Yoon, 2016). As one of the responses to the appeal, the middle school practice of advisory was introduced in the early 1990s. Designed to develop and maintain student-teacher relationships and to assist with the transition to middle school, the value of advisory was integrated in the middle school culture.

Prior to the 1990s the school guidance counselor performed the majority of formal academic and personal advising. Their primary function focused on six major services that they offered for students: orientation, assessment, information, counseling, placement and follow-up (Schimmel, 2008). The model that included guidance counselors emerged as part of the fabric of public education. As a result, guidance counselors became responsible for not only the administrative tasks of student placement, scheduling and tracking students, but also developing guidance activities as well as personal, social, educational, and career skills needed to function as productive citizens (Schimmel, 2008). This expansive range of responsibilities became overwhelming, especially with the rise of student enrollment. This evolution of the role of the guidance counselor was detrimental to the position causing the profession to become eliminated and re-conceptualized. In response to such a lack of regular personalized contact with the school counselor,
schools began to consider structures that would increase personalized student-adult interactions for the purpose of advising (Brodie, 2014). *Turning Points*, the report of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989), noted that "every student needs at least one thoughtful adult who has the time and takes the trouble to talk with the student about academic matters, personal problems, and the importance of performing well in middle grade school" (p. 38). The structure that was implemented to improve the individualized student-adult contact was the advisory program.

Touted as an innovative guidance approach, advisory activates the potential of students and teachers (Myrick et al., 1990). Based on the increased student-counselor ratios, many students were “falling through the cracks” unable to receive the devoted help and support required. To eradicate the feeling of alienation and anonymity, the advisory program was designed to ensure that students have a direct link to a caring adult (Galassi, Gulledge, & Cox, 1997). The formal school guidance program needed to be broadened, a program that provided mutual benefits for students and teachers, an adult guide and advocate for students during an important developmental period was needed (Galassi et al., 1997). As a response to the call for middle school reform, many conferences were held that placed emphasis on crisis management and prevention for young children and budding teenagers. The National Governors’ Association Task Force in 1989 recommended the following essentials in the contemplation of middle school reform: the development of a tracking system for high risk students, creating small manageable
units in large schools, developing youth-service programs, and providing support for families (Myrick et al., 1990). In order to appeal to the aforementioned recommendations, the Teacher Advisor Program (TAP) offered a solution. This program designated teachers as advisors to a group of eighteen to twenty-five students in which they were expected to meet with the students individually and collectively with the goal of ensuring that they had access to adults who knew them personally (Myrick et al., 1990). It was during this phase that the term “homeroom” morphed into “advisory.”

According to Galassi et al. (1997), “the relationships between middle school teachers and middle school students that emerged when they participated in an advisory group were characterized as potentially rewarding for both the teacher and the student” (p. 306). The middle school advisory program provided guidance on a daily basis and broadened, supplemented, and expanded the scope of the formal school guidance program.

Advisory Defined

Evidenced to be school reform, the initial intent of the high school advisory program was to make large high school seem small (Allen & Steinberg, 2002, 2004; Tocci, Hochman, & Allen, 2005). The literature has revealed that creating a structured and welcoming environment, in which relationships are developed and maintained, has the potential to improve education for all students (Osofsky, Sinner, & Wolk, 200; Muir, 2000). Furthermore, advisory can be defined as:

...an affective educational program designed to focus on the social,
emotional, physical, intellectual, psychological, and ethical development of students; a program providing a structured time during which special activities are designed and implemented to help adolescents find ways to fulfill their identified needs; intended to provide consistent, caring, and continuous adult guidance at school through the organization of a supportive and stable peer group that meets regularly under the guidance of a teacher serving as advisor. (Forte & Schurr, 1993, p.117)

Ultimately, advisory provides the structure needed in order to facilitate student-teacher relationships and impacts investment in the overall educational experience.

Advisory is a non-credit class in which a teacher (the advisor) is assigned a group of students (advisees). The advisory group is typically of the same grade level and can be heterogeneous or homogeneous. Advisory occurs at a regularly scheduled period of time during the school day. Advisories may meet daily, weekly, or monthly and are typically shorter than an academic class, ranging from 15 – 50 minutes. They are the alternative to traditional homeroom periods (“Hidden Curriculum,” 2014). Some advisories are structured to pair students with teachers for a single school year or for multiple years until graduation.

The purpose of advisory is to provide academic and non-academic guidance and support in an intimate setting. Advisory focuses on specific objectives, assists with high school guidance as well as direction for college and career goals upon graduation (“Hidden Curriculum,” 2014). Usually, the advisory group ranges from 15 – 20 students. As argued by Brodie (2014), implementing an advisory program
does not diminish the size of a school, it creates a small school environment within a larger school. Advisory programs personalize the educational experience and assist with fostering positive relationships between students and teachers. The belief exists that children can succeed in school if the idea is reinforced that teachers and other school staff serve as advocates for children, committed to the proposition that all children can learn (Brodie, 2014).

Stevenson (2002) describes advisory as a caring and supportive environment for teachers and students characterized by unconditional love and high, but achievable, academic and citizenship expectations. The type of student-to-student and student-to-teacher relationships that are promoted through advisory can develop student voice in a school system.

According to literature, advisory should be a place where all students are known by at least one adult in a school and that positive relationships exists between them (Sizer, 1992; Sizer & Sizer, 1999). Overall, advisory should be a personalized experience designed to establish a close and mutual relationship between students and adults (Schurr, 1992). As exclaimed by Sizer (1992),

... everyone at the school should be accorded the respect of being known well, that the particular strengths and weaknesses, worries and hopes, of each young person should be understood and accommodated. Personalization is not just courtesy; it is the necessary condition for efficient and effective teaching of each student. (p. 143)
Based on the aforementioned and unmentioned literature, students need to have an adult counterpart who offers unwavering support and guidance through one’s educational matriculation. Accessibility and accountability are additional key points to focus on because students need to be secure in the fact that they are heard, seen, and valued no matter what. Strong relationships can be fostered as a result of an effective advisory program which is critical in the gradual development of a young adolescent.

A Brief Overview of the Middle School Advisory Program

Advisory programs in middle schools are completely different from typical advising in schools. Traditionally, advisement is prevalent in high schools and is done by certified counselors, not certified teachers. The role of the traditional counselor is to meet with students individually and assist them in the scheduling of their classes, transition from high school to college or the workforce, and provide intervention and guidance. Counselors typically have a hundred or more students in their caseload, assigned randomly, or alphabetically (Tocci et al., 2005; Woods & Domina, 2014). Traditionally, high school students meet with their counselor periodically, perhaps once a semester, unless they have additional need.

Conscientious about the need to allow students to begin to experience and experiment with some independence of thought and behavior, the middle school advisory program provides nurturing guidance. As stated by Stawick (2011),

...guidance occurs in advisory programs where small groups of students are cared for by advisors – teachers, not counselors, who are trained in early
adolescent characteristics, educating the middle-level student, and advising. The advisor acts as the student’s advocate and knows more than any other adult in the school about the student’s academic standing, intellectual and social strengths and weaknesses, home life, relationships, etc. ... The advisor can also most effectively refer the student to whatever interventions are most appropriate, as well as determine if the student would benefit from social work, contact with an administrator, etc. (p. 19)

As the point person, the advisor develops relationships with the students as well as with the home. In partnership with the parents, the advisor can act as the liaison between school and home and support the family in making educational recommendations for the student’s ultimate academic and social success.

The High School Advisory

Advisory and high school reform. As indicated by Myrick et al. (1990), “developmental guidance and the need for students to have an adult advisor appealed to some high school faculties” (p. 9). Because students deal with a plethora of development challenges, literature reveals that the call to action was the development of school-based programs that address the “whole child.” In the effort to restructure high schools, the concept of “distributed counseling” surfaced. As explored by Tocci, Hochman, and Allen (2005) the “principle of distributed counseling is based on the belief that it is the responsibility of all the adults in the school to provide a caring, safe, and supportive environment for students” (p. 2). One component of distributed counseling is the advisory in which the teacher serves
as the advisor to students in a small setting. The implementation of the advisory program helped to foster an environment in which distributed counseling could take place.

An additional purpose of advisory, specifically at the high school level, is to also increase academic achievement. The cognitive component of advisory programs can be considered as questionable simply because not much research has been completed to confirm if schools with advisories have higher academic achievement. However, research does exist that attempts to correlate small communities within large schools and advisory settings to academic achievement, but the quantitative data is lacking (Allen & Steinberg, 2002; McClure et al., 2010; Hughes, Wu, Kwok, Villarreal, & Johnson, 2012). While the perception of improved academic achievement is present and expected, most of the literature discusses aspects of the program in which caring environments are fostered as a result of strong bonds between students and teachers (Allen & Steinberg, 2002 & 2004; Decker et al., 2007).

Advisory programs. There has been limited research on the implementation of advisory at the high school level, its cognitive benefits, and an evaluation of its effectiveness; however, the literature does explore inaugural advisory programs that existed at high schools across the United States as a part of a reform strategy (McClure et al., 2010; Myrick et al., 1990; Tocci, Hochman, & Allen, 2005). Wilde Lake High School in Maryland maintained the philosophy that guidance was the responsibility of all. Teachers were assigned 20 – 25 students and were charged to
develop close bonds with students with the support of school counselors. Similar initiatives were started at other schools in which they strove to ensure that the educational, personal, and social needs of students were met through their advisor-advisee programs. As highlighted in research, Myrick et al. (1990) reviews several high school advisory plans that were successful, they include programs implemented in Wisconsin, New York, and California. Although the structures differed, the concept and objectives of advisory were similar.

Avalon school district (a pseudonym), one of the largest in California attempted to renew three of the poorest performing high schools in 2004 (McClure et al., 2010). The idea was to make a large school seem small through the creation of more personalized learning environments. As defined by the Avalon district administrators, personalization produces strong, personal support in an educational climate in which adults believe that students can succeed. In this case, the advisory program was the attempt to provide this support. The advisory groups met regularly with their advisor and participated in a “...combination structured and unstructured activities/time in their advisory programming” (McClure et al., 2010). Advisory was seen as a key component to the implementation of a personalized learning environment. McClure et al., (2010) conducted a three-year study in which students attending the small schools in the Avalon school district participated in a survey about “...their academic experiences and perceptions of adult support” (p. 5). The study explored student attitude measures and academic outcomes. The survey revealed that students’ attitudes about the personalization at their school through
the advisory program made them feel a stronger connection with adults at their school and a sense that they were supported as individuals. Additionally, students believed that the advisory period was useful and helped them to “navigate both academic and personal issues” (McClure et al., 2010, p. 6). Although this study was instrumental in the exploration of personalization and advisory programs, it lacked the teacher observation and perspective regarding the implementation of the program.

Additionally, Tocci, Hochman, and Allen (2005) conducted a longitudinal study from 2002 to 2005 with The Institute for Student Achievement school district in which the benefits as well as challenges of advisory at the high school level were explored. Ten schools were surveyed, the goals of advisory and the design dimensions were identified. This study cements the elements of a high school advisory program that must be considered upon implementation and execution: “…the scheduling, scope and content, advisor roles, advisory grouping, and support systems” (Tocci et al., 2005, p. 27). Programmatic elements that clearly outline intent, purpose, and execution are required for seamless application.

In a more extensive and personal investigation of existing advisory programs, further research was conducted. In search of similar initiatives in high schools, from March 2016 to April 2016, I explored advisory programs in New York, California, and Georgia. My in-person visits to each school assisted me in determining how programs were idealized and executed in various high schools.
Table 1 highlights basic elements of the advisory programs investigated. The following elements were addressed during the school visits:

A. Name of the school, city, and state.
B. Does your school have an advisory program?
C. What is the advisory program called?
D. What is the total student body count?
E. What is the teacher-student ratio per advisory group? Are the groups co-ed or single gendered?
F. What is the frequency of advisory?
G. Is there a prescribed curriculum? If so, briefly describe.
H. Any additional information about the program?

Table 1

Advisory Programs at High Schools in New York, California, and Georgia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Name, City, State</th>
<th>B. Advisory Program?</th>
<th>C. Title of the Program</th>
<th>D. Student Body Count</th>
<th>E. Ratio &amp; Co-ed or Single Gendered</th>
<th>F. Frequency</th>
<th>G. Curriculum?</th>
<th>H. Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uncommon Collegiate, Brooklyn, NY</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Advisory</td>
<td>About 380</td>
<td>Co-ed group with 8-12 students per teacher, some deans have advisory groups as well</td>
<td>Daily check-ins, Thursdays, 44 minute meetings for academic, behavior, and additional needs</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>The teacher remains with the advisory group for 4 years, hosts &quot;The Quarter Games&quot; for friendly advisory competitions to enhance camaraderie and teamwork</td>
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Table 1 – continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Name, City, State</th>
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<th>F. Frequency</th>
<th>G. Curriculum?</th>
<th>H. Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KIPP NYC College Prep, Bronx, NY</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Advisory</td>
<td>About 900</td>
<td>Co-ed group with about 15 students per teacher</td>
<td>Once per week</td>
<td>The grade level chair runs advisory and plans the curriculum</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIPP King Collegiate, San Lorenzo, CA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pride</td>
<td>About 560</td>
<td>Co-ed group with about 15-20 students per teacher</td>
<td>4 times per week for 27 minutes each session</td>
<td>The dean of culture creates the curriculum and sends to teachers weekly for execution</td>
<td>Weekly grade level meetings are held on Tuesdays and Fridays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Metro College Prep&quot;, Atlanta, GA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Advisory</td>
<td>About 690</td>
<td>Single-gendered with about 12-18 students per teacher</td>
<td>4 times/week, twice per day, once in the morning for 15 minutes and once in the afternoon for 45 minutes</td>
<td>2 advisory liaisons send weekly advisory emails to teachers with topics of interest, and a SEL curriculum (select teachers) and Grade level chairs to function as additional resources</td>
<td>The teacher remains with the advisory group for 4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronxdale High School, Bronx, NY</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Advisory</td>
<td>About 440</td>
<td>Co-ed group with 8-12 students per teacher</td>
<td>Twice per week for 55 minutes each session</td>
<td>The advisory committee creates lessons. Seniors create their own lessons and facilitates advisory with adult support</td>
<td>The teacher remains with the advisory group for 4 years Every adult (principal, teachers, assistant principals, and counselors) function as advisor</td>
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Table 1 - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Name, City, State</th>
<th>B. Advisory Program?</th>
<th>C. Title of the Program</th>
<th>D. Student Body Count</th>
<th>E. Ratio &amp; Co-ed or Single Gendered</th>
<th>F. Frequency</th>
<th>G. Curriculum?</th>
<th>H. Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Brooklyn Latin School, Brooklyn, NY</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Advisory</td>
<td>About 600</td>
<td>Co-ed group with 8-12 students per teacher</td>
<td>Every Tuesday for 40 minutes</td>
<td>Yes, the curriculum is created by advisory committee at the beginning of each year</td>
<td>Yes, the curriculum remains with the advisory group for 4 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Homeroom</td>
<td>About 1400</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Once per week on Wednesdays for 25 minutes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 revealed that there was a wide range of advisory programs that are organized in a variety of ways. The outlier, Balboa High School in San Francisco, California, still hosts and traditional homeroom. Nonetheless, the common theme was providing students with a small community of adults and peers to engage with weekly for the duration of their high school career. In alignment with my personal research of various advisory programs, the goal of advisory programs is to ensure that students are known intimately with at least one adult, one to who they can
consult with for support and encouragement; thus personalizing the high school experience and creating a supportive school climate (Allen & Steinberg, 2002; McClure et al., 2010).

Roles of Stakeholders

Role of advisor. The advisor is typically a teacher in the school who supports and monitors the educational and developmental experiences as they progress throughout school designed to provide continuous adult guidance (Myrick et al., 1990). It is the expectation that the advisor is with their assigned group of students for the duration of their high school career, which boasts continuity and intense familiarity between the student and their advisor (Tocci et al., 2005).

Additionally, the advisor functions as a mentor-coach and the teacher-counselor who knows them well and serves as an advocate throughout their high school years (Brodie, 2014 & Draayer, 1961). The advisor guides and develops students individually and collectively. The quality of the adult-student relationships likely has a positive effect on communication with all stakeholders in the school. The advisor should strive to develop and maintain strong bonds with advisees and serve as the advocate and lays the foundation for guidance.

The advisory program creates a dynamic in which students have at least one adult that is interested in them. The teacher knows the student more intimately than others. Regardless of the size of the school, advisory provides a smaller network of support for all students and an immediate point of contact for parents. (Stawick, 2011). In addition to developing lasting relationships with students, the
connection to families is key to the success of an advisory program. Communication with families is critical to advocacy for the student. The partnership that is culminated amongst the advisor, the student, and the family is required in order to create a cohesive school climate.

Role of student. Although much of the literature speaks to the implementation, structure, and execution of the advisory program, it is important to define the role of the student as an advisee, especially at the high school level (Tocci et al., 2005; McClure et al., 2010). Students should function as self-advocates and become active participants in the advisory program (Lee & Reeve, 2012). Students are encouraged to use their advisor as a liaison between them and their academic teachers. As masters of their own academic fate, students are stimulated to take responsibility for their academic success through a keen partnership with their advisor. The personalized environment created as a result of an advisory program encourages students to engage emotionally and cognitively in their education (McClure et al., 2010).

Role of administration. It is the role of the administration to have clear goals as to the purposes of the advisory program and a plan to execute these purposes (Tocci et al., 2005). They are to create an explicit structure that is easy to navigate and maintain for the ultimate success of the program. Administration should also provide advisors with adequate professional development in order to ensure that the advisory program is executed with fidelity (Tocci et al., 2005). In the literature review and personal school visits, it was noted that administration had the vision to
initiate the program; however, not much was exposed regarding the development of teachers to effectively facilitate a robust advisory program. As previously mentioned, the school administration must be decisive about the implementation advisory in order for it to be successful. Advisors must be adequately trained and invested in order to carry out the intentions of objectives, to develop relationships and guide students throughout their high school career (Tocci et al., 2005).

Role of parents. While not directly involved in the daily implementation of the advisory program, parents are indeed critical to the success of the program. Through communication, parents are participants of what occurs at school. Parents are partners in the effective execution of the purpose of advisory because they can work with teachers and administrators to ensure that students are constantly supported academically, socially, and emotionally. As further explicated by Ornum (2014), parents are an extension of the school community, they can assist in motivating their child to participate in advisory. In an effort to provide a true school community, all stakeholders must work in conjunction for a common goal.

Parents should not only serve as partners, but also as advocates. Similar to the role of the advisor, parents should work in conjunction with the school to hold the student accountable to high expectations. Additionally, as an advocate, the parent is expected to hold the school responsible for upholding the purposes of advisory which should be explicitly outlined through school literature, parent/teacher conferences, and other school meetings and events.
Based on the research, not much is stated about how instrumental parent involvement is in the realization of an advisory program; yet, through an investigation of existing advisory groups, it was revealed that parent contracts or commitments were utilized. At Uncommon Collegiate high school in Brooklyn, New York, parents, students, and teachers are required to review and sign the “Family Accountability Contract” (Appendix A). The contract includes aspects of daily school life (attendance, homework expectations, and dress code), the code of conduct, and other school wide policies. The most impactful element of the contact is the outline of how families can support students as well as the school. Similar to the parent contract, “The Parent Commitment to Excellence” (Appendix B) at “Metro College Prep” high school in Atlanta, Georgia promotes parent involvement in the overall success of the school culture. This document is typically reviewed with parents at the beginning of their freshman year through school orientations and face to face meetings with parents and teachers.

Theoretical Framework

Communities of Practice Theory (CoP)

Education is an active process. Learning should not be “passive absorption”; it should be a constructive and intentional practice with associations and experiences. In conjunction with the social occupation of knowledge construction, education is a connection of shared activities, which shapes and molds its participants. Because of this collaborative and operative experience, the learning experience can be viewed as a “social phenomenon” (Wenger, 1998, p. 3). In order
to learn, connections with the environment have to be made, relating past experiences with new experiences through interaction and discourse.

Learning interactions must occur not only in conjunction with the teacher, but also in collaboration amongst peers; “when learners work together in such a manner, they are, in essence, engaging is distributed cognition: They spread the learning task across many minds...” (Ormrod, 2008, p. 429). This concept should be integrated in all learning settings to initiate collaborative learning and thinking. Students can respectfully share opinions and personal connections and ultimately apply their knowledge to their overall personal and educational development. The educational experience should provide social interaction, which is the foundation for cognitive development. Social interactions embed cooperative learning in the educational curriculum; thus creating an engaging environment.

Communities of Practice: A Definition

Communities of Practice Theory (CoP) is a practice that consists of active participants in social communities who construct identities in relation to their communities (Wenger, 1998). As Wenger (1998) posits in his description of CoP, “such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do...the primary focus of this theory is on learning as social participation” (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). Human interactions create experiences and can be interpreted in a meaningful way; thus knowledge is produced as a result of human exchanges. Wenger (1998) grounds the CoP theory in the following premises:
1. We are social beings...

2. Knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to values enterprises...

3. Knowing is a matter of participating in the pursuit of such enterprises, that is active engagement in the world.

4. Meaning – our ability to experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful... (p. 4)

CoP can be further explicated based on how the theory views learning. Learning must integrate the components of social participation and the process of knowing (Figure 2). Meaning, practice, community, and identity are all components of the learning experience and interact through the process. Meaning relates to learning through experience in the exchange of ideas individually and collectively through discourse. Practice encourages the act of engaging discourse sustained through shared historical and social perspectives. Community is the method in which social relationships are configured. Identity represents how learning affects who one becomes in the context of the community. The interconnectedness amongst the components defines the essence of CoP (Wenger, 1998).
The History of CoP

The Situated Learning Theory. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that learning is situated in a process of participation in communities of practice, and learning occurs through immersion in a new community. Ultimately, learning occurs in a social way rather than in an individualized format for the purpose of acquiring knowledge (Smith, 1999). Because learning is a social process, a community is required in order for it to occur. Furthermore, learning is a result of relationships between people, points of contact and various conversations that they participate in (Smith, 1999). As a premise of constructivism, situated learning suggests that learning is unintentional and is situated within a specific context and culture (Schunk, 2004). In order for learning to occur, social interaction and collaboration must exist in authentic contexts. Stemming from social cognitive theories, learners
construct knowledge and as active participants, they ultimately become members of a community of practice.

The history of this mode of thought can be traced back to Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, which is a “constructivist perspective that emphasizes the social environment as a facilitator of development and learning,” (Schunk, 2004, p. 291). This perspective forces the researcher to focus on the aspects and participants in the environment to provide revelations regarding the topic of interest. Overall, the situated learning theory relates to CoP because of the emphasis on interaction and the creation and maintenance of a community resulting in meaning making.

Zone of Proximal Development. Providing a relationship between instruction and development is an innovative element of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Karpov, 2014). ZPD can be defined as the difference one can accomplish individually and what one can accomplish with assistance. As specifically defined by Vygotsky (1978), ZPD “is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p.86). Related to the process of learning, Vygotsky (1978) also asserts that “learning awakens a variety of internal development processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers” (p. 90). ZPD delineates a child’s developmental state and potentialities with support from adults and peers.
The key elements of ZPD include the consciousness of engaged dialogue amongst participants, the active role of the participants, and organized interaction amongst the participants; thus providing a model for growth (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006). Situated in “the context of social and cultural environments,” social interactions and relations are promoted “so learning in the ZPD leads not only to development of concepts and knowledge but also to the development of culturally appropriate practices” (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006, p. 197). Schunk (2004) further explores the ZPD by highlighting the importance of the teacher and the learner working together to achieve a task. The individual and the social are essential in this model.

ZPD's connection to CoP is very evident. In a community that has students and teachers as participants, the collective interaction is a catalyst for development and growth. Independently, members of the community are not as effective as they are when they collaborate. More specifically, in a school setting, the teacher typically serves as the authority and the capable guide; however, expertise is interchangeable amongst the participants and is demonstrated through collaboration.

Social Learning Theory. CoP can also be traced back to the social learning theory as exemplified by Bandura. Social learning theory emphasizes the roles in psychological functioning as well as social experiences (Bandura, 1977). The theory not only focuses on the interactions amongst humans, but it also considers the interactions that humans have with the environment. It is important to note the
correlation of this theory to CoP. As further acknowledged by Schunk (2004), “Knowledge is formed as people interact in situations” (p. 289). A critical element of the social learning theory is that it accentuates interaction with the environment and its reciprocal effects on cognition and behavior.

The CoP Framework

Communities of practice exist everywhere (Wenger, 1998). From families, professional settings, to churches and schools, CoP are practical and intuitive. More specifically, in a school setting, the implications of CoP are expansive. Due to the nature of the institution of school, communities of practice have the potential to sprout everywhere (Wenger, 1998). Environments that encourage participatory interaction are imperative to this framework. As Wenger (1998) states, “the learning that is most personally transformative turns out to be the learning that involves membership in these communities of practice” (p. 6). Learners should have access and view themselves as true members of a segmented community within a larger community. CoP must be established in a strong foundation in order for them to be impactful and in order for students to adapt and become full participants.

Because knowledge exists in stored segments, it is important to package information in units in order to convey the information to recipients in a social situation. It is important to create an environment in which meaningful practices are demonstrated; thus enhancing interactions to make a difference in the communities in which the participants belong. In the extended description of communities of
practice, Wenger (1998) explicates the theory through the association of practice and community. Viewed as a unit, CoP exists in three dimensions in which “practice is the source of coherence of a community... 1) mutual engagement, 2) a joint enterprise, [and] 3) a shared repertoire” are elements that relate to the intent of the study (Wenger, 1998, p. 73).

Mutual engagement includes a coherent community of participants. “Practice...exists because people are engaged in actions whose meanings they negotiate with one another...Practice resides in a community of people and the relations of mutual engagement by which they can do whatever they do” (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). The community can be defined through the identity that is created through the interactions of its participants. A community is not solely defined as a group of people; they exist because a shared experience is created and maintained through discourse, common belief systems, and a collaborative effort towards a communal goal. Nonetheless, homogeneity is not essential to the success of mutual engagement. The contributions and knowledge of others connects individuals to the whole in a CoP, which is evident through the varied roles that exist in a community. Mutual engagement does not always reflect harmony; conflict and challenges are forms of participation and can also enhance the shared experience amongst the community; thus connecting “participants to each other in ways that are diverse and complex” (Wenger, 1998, p. 77).

Joint enterprise refers to a “negotiated response” to a situation. “The enterprise is joint not in that everybody believes the same thing or agrees with...
everything, but in that it is communally negotiated” (Wenger, 1998, p. 78). The response of the community is interconnected because of their mutual engagement to complete a task or achieve a goal together through the development of larger historical, cultural and institutional contexts (Wenger, 1998).

The third dimension of CoP is the development of a shared repertoire that includes routines, methods of doing things, gestures, symbols, or ideals produced by the community over the course of time. As further stated by Wenger (1998), “the repertoire combines both reificative and participative aspects. It includes the discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world, as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as members” (p. 83). This element is important to consider because it provides a sense of intimacy that could occur in the community.

In order to determine if a community of practice has been formed, sustained mutual relationships (harmonious or conflictual), shared methods of engagement, a flow of information, problems are discussed quickly, defining identities, share stories, shortcuts to communication, and a shared discourse must exist (Wenger, 1998). The aforementioned are all components that could potentially occur in an advisory setting, hence, the group being defined as a community of practice can be considered.
CoP and Education

Placing the CoP Theory in an educational setting “presents an opportunity to discuss and internalize public service values through various tools presented and supervised by the instructors [in the case of this study, the advisors]” (Kapucu, 2012, p. 591). In the context of the study, the expected role of the advisor is to support students throughout their high school experience or as best stated by Kapucu (2012), “to consciously mobilize participants’ [in the case of this study, the advisees] subconscious attitudes toward dealing with and brainstorming on the societal issues they are expected to tackle in the future” (p. 591). As previously mentioned, learning is an active process and requires interactions with the environment and its participants. As declared by Kapucu (2012), “forming communities of practice provides participants with an environment that combines knowledge and practice and the opportunity to learn through relationships with their peers and practitioners in the community” (p. 585). Overall, learning occurs best in a setting that has engaged networks and strong relationships.

As posited by Wenger (1998), there is a malpractice and assumption that learning is an individual process and that it is best separated from other activities resulting in classrooms are designed to be free from distractions from the external world and knowledge is mostly demonstrated out of context. In order to correct this misconception, Wenger (1998) proposes a different perspective that places “...learning in the context of our lived experiences of participation...” (p. 3). Additionally, Wenger (1998) emphasizes the important of forming identities of
participation by offering students opportunities to interact more with adults. “An important function of educational design is thus to maximize, rather than avoid, interactions among generations...the organization of schooling tends to offer students very limited contacts with adulthood as a lived identity” (Wenger, 1998, p. 276). As a result of the constant intermingling of generations in a school setting, learning can occur through “membership in relevant communities of practice” (p 276). Teachers as true participants in the advisory community reveals “their most powerful teaching asset,” allowing students to see who they are as adults, functioning as “doorways into the adult world [versus] being defined by an institutional role” (Wenger, 1996, p. 296). In regards to the role of the advisor in this case study, it is important to consider how they perceive themselves in relation to the student and how the student perceives them as the facilitator and participant of the advisory community. Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development can be applied to this concept, the idea of an advisory program positions adults to catapult students to an advanced way of being through consistent support and guidance.

A community of practice can occur in any setting; however, this study seeks to explore how communities are formed as a result of an advisory program. The development of the advisory community develops over time which solidifies the purpose of advisory groups being maintained through the duration of one’s high school experience as is with the site of the study. As outlined by Smith (2003, 2009), members are connected through participating in common activities that activate mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire as evidenced
through interactions and discourse; thus defining a distinct difference between a
community of practice and an interest group.

The characteristics of communities of practice include the domain, the
community, and the practice. Smith (2003, 2009) highlights the aforementioned
elements which strengthens its place in this study. The domain emphasizes an
identity that goes beyond a shared interest, it implies a commitment from the
members in the specified community, in the case of this study, the advisees and the
advisors. The characteristic of the community is engaging in activities and
discussions in order to learn from one another. Communities of practice in
educational settings

...should aim to prepare community individuals for realities of the social
world. In a sense, they should be a bridge between formal learning and
informational practice, thus creating more prepared and sophisticated
citizens equipped with innovative and dynamic tools for problem solving
(Kapucu, 2012, p. 592).

The aforementioned encourages participants to take part in active discourse in to
help one another and share information. Also, the practitioners in the community
(advisors and advisees) developed a share repertoire of tools, norms, and
experiences, however this higher level characteristic requires sustained interaction
(Smith, 2003, 2009; Wenger, 2007) through constant interaction and discourse.
Discourse and CoP

In a community of practice, discourse is the gateway to the development of a sustainable relationship (Johns, 2011; Wenger, 1998). When one considers how relationships are formulated, constant discourse and interactions are required in order for trust and familiarity to be constructed. Because communities of practice share language, values, and “ways of knowing” as a result of their connections and sense of familiarity, discourse becomes critical in order to understand how relationships are developed. Ultimately, constant dialogue within a community promotes growth and evolution.

Coupling the discourse with the CoP Theory can be best conceptualized through the use of the term, “discourse community.” Discourse communities have an idea of language as a basis for sharing, additionally, they have shared expectations, shared participation, shared linguistic forms, shared regulative rules, and common ways of expressing (Johns, 2011; Swales, 1988). Ultimately, a discourse community operates within a convention as defined by that specific community (Swales, 1988). As further researched by Swales (1988), defining characteristics of discourse communities are as follows:

1. Members share common public goals.
2. The community has mechanisms for intercommunication.
3. The community survives by providing feedback.
4. The community has expectations regarding discourse (i.e. appropriate topics and the format of discussions).
5. Members possess a discourse dynamic (i.e. shared terminology).

6. Membership in the community changes, people enter and exit periodically. These defining characteristics are important to note in connection to the creation and facilitation of an advisory community. Through a close examination of the programmatic elements and perspectives of the members (advisees and advisors) the characteristics of discourse communities was revisited in Chapter 4.

Although individuals may belong to many discourse communities at any given time in any given environment based on interest or placement, in the case of this study, the advisory group is the only discourse community I am referencing. Functioning as a community of practice that engages in discourse for the purpose of building relationships, this study presents the idea that communities “...are useful to study not only because they can share conventions, values, and histories but because they are evolving: through affiliation of new, different members; through changes in authority; through anticonventionalism, dialogue, and critique” (Johns, 2011, p. 516). Furthermore, members have the ability to provide genuine insight into their own communities; from their accounts, knowledge can be gleaned from personal experiences and direct observations in order to learn how to understand, evaluate, and adjust the unfamiliar academic community that exists in an advisory program.

Summary

The literature review provided an overview of existing research that allowed me to solidify my purpose in conducting this study. Based on my review, the
homeroom was the origin of the advisory program and it was transformed during the time of middle school reform in the late 1980s and eventually made its way into the high school setting as an alternative to guidance counseling. The literature helped to create a clear path from homeroom to advisory, establishing a point of reference for my study, *Figure 3* illustrates the connections revealed through the literature. Throughout the literature, the intentions to create a community of support and mentorship for a small group of students was made evident (Allen & Steinberg, 2002 & 2004; Tocci et al., 2005). In order for a network of support to be created, one must consider the means, this study attempted to examine the development of relationships and community facilitated by an advisory program to provide the support and mentorship intended as shown through the literature (Allen & Steinberg, 2002 & 2004; Tocci et al., 2005).

In order to personalize the research, an investigation of existing advisory programs at various schools across the country was conducted. This first-hand research allowed me to idealize the concept of advisory in various school settings.

My research satisfied a void in the literature because it evaluated an established advisory program at a high school, reviewed its intent and compared it to its actual implementation through the perspectives of students (advisees) and teachers (advisors). The void in the literature is outlined in *Figure 3*. As a result of this case study, the programmatic elements of the advisory program were explored with the hope of improving implementation at the site based on observations and direct perspectives of participants in the advisory community. An additional goal of
the research is for the program to be replicated at other high schools for the purpose of building community as facilitated through student and teacher relationships.
Figure 3. Literature Review Synthesis Diagram
CHAPTER 3

METHODODOLOGY

Structure of the Study

This qualitative study reviews the case of an advisory program at a high school. The intended execution of the program was explored and compared to its actual implementation through the perspectives of its participants: advisors and advisees. As a result of the direct comparison of the intended model to the observed model, themes were revealed through the differences which exposed inconsistencies in the implementation of the advisory program. As a result of the themes, inconsistencies, and perspectives of the participants; an ideal model of a high school advisory program was developed with the goal of being implemented at the site of study and replicated at other high schools.

The purpose of the study was to reveal how relationships function as the essence of community in a high school advisory program. The implementation of an advisory program was explored. Through a review of the major goals of the program as outlined by the site of study: graduation/college readiness, relationships, high expectations/achievement, character development, stakeholder communication, I was able to determine if a community was built through the advisory program.
Through observations, interviews, focus groups, and review of artifacts, themes were created to determine how advisory groups functioned as communities of practice to fulfill the ultimate purpose of advisory as determined by the administration at the site of the study. Current implementation was compared to intent of the program, suggestions for changes to the program were explored, and an ideal model was developed. Overall, the hope was to identify how to best develop an encouraging environment in which adults can be positioned to support students in a community setting.

Research Questions

The following research questions will further guide the study:

How do students and teachers perceive the impact of relationships and community through a high school advisory program?

1. What are the programmatic elements (physical, human, and organizational) of the advisory program at the site of study?
   a. How are teachers implementing the various elements of the advisory program?
   b. How is it being received by the students?

2. What are the differences between the intentions and expectations of the advisory program versus its observed implementation?

3. How do the perspectives of students impact the facilitation of the advisory program at the site of study?
4. How do the perspectives of teachers impact the facilitation of the advisory program at the site of study?

5. How do the relationships between teachers and students develop a community of practice through the advisory program?

Research Design

Paradigmatic Viewpoint: Interpretivism

In order to conduct thorough and reflective research, it was essential for me to identify a clear way of viewing the world. As argued by Mackenzie and Knipe (2006), “it is the choice of paradigm that sets down the intent, motivation and expectations for the research. Without nominating a paradigm as the first step, there is no basis for subsequent choices regarding methodology, methods, literature or research design” (p. 193). Ultimately, a paradigm influences how knowledge is studied and interpreted. This established framework served as the foundation of this research and its design.

Historical Context

What is interpretivism? Interpretivism believes that knowledge is produced by exploring and understanding the social world of the people being studied, focusing on meanings and interpretations (Ritchie et al., 2013). As deliberated by Snape and Spencer (2003), interpretivism stresses the importance of analysis and observation in understanding the world. To understand, one must interpret, overall, reality is constructed through the meanings and understandings that are developed, it is socially constructed and fluid (Schwandt, 1994).
The epistemological assumptions of interpretivism are that knowledge is gained inductively, it is not reducible to simplistic interpretation, and it is gained through personal experience (Mack, 2010). Additionally, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) focus on the research process when discussing the epistemology of interpretivism, they state that the researcher and the social world interact; findings are influenced by the researcher’s perspective, and that the researcher seeks to better understand the world through the participant’s vantage point as well as through the researcher's understanding.

From the investigator perspective, interpretivism allows for a construction of meanings and interpretations based on the participants, it is largely inductive (Ritchie et al., 2013). The emphasis of interpretivism is that research can never be observed superficially, it must be observed through the experience of the people. As the researcher, my role is to understand and explain reality through the eyes of participants. Gathering knowledge by observing in natural settings, the goal of interpretivism is to understand the subjective essence of individual experiences (Cohen et al., 2007).

Major Theorists

Stemming from philosophy and human sciences, interpretivism focuses on how human beings make sense of their reality and associate meaning to that reality. An understanding of the human experience is required in order to situate this theory in research. This theory was developed through Kant’s initial epistemological influences (Ritchie et al., 2013), Weber’s influence within sociology
(Platt, 1985), Dilthey's connection to the qualitative tradition, and Husserl's phenomenological inquiry (Ritchie et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2009).

As stated by Ritchie et al. (2013), Kant argued that there are ways of knowing about the world other than direct observation. He proposed that perception relates not only to the senses but also to human interpretations. Ritchie et al. (2013) further discusses that “knowledge of the world is based on ‘understanding’ which arises from reflecting on what happens, not just from having had particular experiences....the significance of both the participants' and the investigator's interpretations and understanding of the phenomenon being studied” (Ritchie et al., 2013). Through his work, Kant was able to create a space to situate the reality of experience in a research realm that was limited to systematic, scientific theory.

The interpretivist viewpoint can be directly linked to Weber because he firmly reconciled the concept that action is a method of analysis and understanding in context or Verstehen (Eldridge, 1971). The means in which the inquirer arrives at interpretation as well as the aim of the process is called Verstehen or understanding. Termed by Weber, Verstehen, is a sociological interpretation related to the “context of discovery” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 120). This term refers to how knowledge is formed, where knowledge originates within a person, and how it is interpreted (Schwandt, 1994). The researcher must understand the meaning of social interactions within the context of the material conditions in which people live. (Platt, 1985). According to Snape and Spencer (2003), Weber tried to bridge the thought modalities of positivism and interpretivism, while he functioned within the
belief that the analysis of conditions was important, it was not adequate in order to better understand the lives of people. Ultimately, meaning stems from context.

Another key contributor to the development of interpretivism and the tradition of qualitative research was Dilthey (Snape & Spencer, 2003). He emphasized the importance of understanding and studying the lived experiences of people and that research should explore lived experiences in order to reveal connections between social, cultural, and historical aspects of people’s lives. Dilthey was a proponent of Verstehen, as termed by Weber, and of the examination of the lived experiences of people.

As the founding principle of phenomenological inquiry, “experience should be examined in the way that it occurs, and in its own terms” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 12). Husserl’s philosophy requires removing oneself for familiar everyday experiences in order to truly reflect upon the experience. Furthermore, Husserl’s inquiry focuses on the experienced consciousness of the individual, the process in which intentionality transpires, this space describes the relationship between existing in consciousness and the attention for that process (Smith et al., 2009). Husserl mainly influenced interpretivism because of his determination to focus on the experience itself.

Paradigm Alignment with Study

So why interpretivism? Education is a participatory experience (Wenger, 1998; Quay, 2003). There should be a common interest and active involvement in order to promote reflection and growth. Ultimately, knowledge should be
constructed through social interaction (Wenger, 1998; Quay, 2003). The paradigm, asserts the salient ideals of knowledge acquisition as a social activity, guided by an active process, and developed into a continuous experience in a prescribed context. This concept promotes the incessant construction of knowledge and understanding. Overall, the interpretivist focuses on individuals gaining knowledge through social interactions and transforming that knowledge through constant exchanges. The continuum of knowledge cultivates an ongoing experience. Interpretivist researchers create and modify meaning through interaction. Meanings for the interpretivists are not static they arise from specific situations. In the case of this study, interpretivism aligns with the goal of the research, to examine the development relationships, social learning experiences, and an eventual development of a community which can be facilitated through an advisory program.

Paradigmatic Implications for the Study

As the researcher, I utilized the interpretivist approach because it focuses “on the meanings attributed to events, places, behaviors, and interactions, people, and artifacts” (Schensul, 2008, p. 517). This approach also depends on the interaction of the researcher and the participant to draw meaning. “In interpretive research, meaning is disclosed, discovered, and experienced. The emphasis is on sensemaking, description, and detail” (Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 465). Overall, meaning making is the main focus of the interpretivist paradigm.

Wahyuni’s (2012) description of interpretivist researchers, states that “...reality is constructed by social actors and people's perception of
it...interpretivists favour [sic] to interact and to have dialogue with the studied participants” (p. 71). This element of interpretivism is critical to the research because the teachers and students could potentially create a differing reality based on the advisory group in which they belong. Also, their established beliefs regarding the overall perspective of the effectiveness of the advisory program could enhance or deflate their investment in implementing the program with fidelity.

Through the exploration of advisory as community crafted through relationships, in this qualitative case study a clear connection was made between the core relationship between and advisor and advisee as the guiding force of the cultural design of a school. The interpretivist approach supported inquiry because it required me to understand through the participants’ experiences and perspectives in the context of the study.

Program Evaluation

In order to effectively assess the existence and implementation of the advisory program, I utilized an altered version of Fishman and Neigher’s (2003, 2004) guidelines for publishing systematic case studies in program evaluation. As argued by Fishman and Neigher (2003) program planning an evaluation requires a case example. Furthermore, the “practitioner...works with a particular program and deals with it holistically, looking in context at the problems, goals, situations, events, procedures, interactions, processes, and outcome associated with that particular case” (Fishman & Neigher, 2003, p. 421). According to the research conducted by Fishman and Neigher (2003), a majority of case evaluations in the scholarly field are
“...focused on selected features of practice that are taken out of the context...articles on evaluation models, methods, theories, procedures, and measures that address dimensions abstracted from many cases... [thus lacking] contextual embeddedness as a guide for practice” (p. 421). Although it is argued that program evaluation case studies lack “external validity,” it does have the ability to be “extrapolated across settings” (Fishman & Neigher, 2003, p. 422-423). In essence, the goal of case evaluations is to “...create or identify program that work (or fail), document them, and compare them with others in a systematic way” (Fishman & Neigher, 2003, p. 423). In this study, the objective was to conduct an evaluation of a case (an advisory program) that has a clear framework for execution and compare it to its implementation based on observations and perspectives of participants (students-advisors and teachers-advisors).

In order to present the case in an organized manner; I used the logic model method for the purpose of capturing, documenting, and disseminating the results of the program of study (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). According to research, “The logic model approach helps create shared understanding of and focus on program goals and methodology, relating activities to projected outcomes” (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p. 5). Additionally, because logic models are pictorial, “they require systematic thinking and planning to better describe programs... [allowing researchers] to strategically monitor, manage, and report program outcomes throughout development and implementation” (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p.
The logic model method provided me with a clear blueprint that presented the case in an explicit and succinct way.

There are three basic approaches for program evaluations: theory based, outcome based, and activity based (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). The theory approach model emphasizes the theory of change that has influenced the design and presents a plan. Furthermore, “they are built from the “big picture” kinds of thoughts and ideas” (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p. 9). This approach provides a rich explanation and illustrates how and why you think your program will work.

Outcome approach logic models show “the interrelationships between specific program activities and their outcomes” (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p. 10). The interrelationships are illustrated through the use of arrows. The outcome approach displays causal links or effects that exist as a result of the program’s activities.

Activities approach model focus on the implementation of the program. This type of model “links the various planned activities together in a manner that maps the process of program implementation. These models describe what a program intends to do and as such are most useful for the purposes of program monitoring and management” (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p. 10). Additionally, the activities approach provides a clear overview of what would be needed to effectively implement a program. In the case of this study, I will be using a variation of all three models in order to present a holistic perspective of the advisory program. Three models were presented as a result of the program evaluation conducted at the site of study: intended logic model, observed logic model, and ideal logic model.
The intended logic model illustrated the expected vision of the advisory program. Elements in the intended model were gleaned from interviews, insider-researcher knowledge, and artifacts. The observed logic model exhibited the current state of the program and its execution. Based on participant perspectives, observations, and a survey, I was able to depict the program’s actual implementation. Lastly, borrowing from the activities model previously described, the ideal logic model in this study demonstrated required elements needed to effectively implement a program based on recommendations from participants and perceived best practices grounded in the themes that were revealed in the indented and observed logic model comparison.

To present the case, in Chapter 4, I presented the organizational site and context of the case. In this subcategory, I provided a comprehensive overview of the advisory program at the site of study through an exploration of its overall purpose and design. Additionally, I outlined the expected implementation of the advisory program narratively as well as visually. The visual depiction of the program’s expectations provided a logic model that was referenced throughout the data reporting with the goal of displaying the differences between what is expected and what was observed. After the initial intentions and goals of the program were outlined, I compared and contrasted the expectations of the program implementation to what was observed. At the conclusion of this exploration, I denoted lessons learned and planned for next steps in order to improve the implementation of the advisory program through the creation of an ideal logic
model for the advisory program (Randolph & Eronen, 2007). The outline below highlights how the program was reviewed as case in this specific study.

- **Program (or Case) Evaluated**
  - Described the advisory program at site of study.
  - Identified the programmatic elements of the advisory program.

- **Conceptual Model Guiding the Program Evaluation**
  - Created an intended logic model of the program.

- **Identified the purpose, context, inputs, activities, casual steps and outputs that represented the intended purpose of the program.**

- **Observed results of the program**
  - Explicated what was revealed about the advisory program through data collection.
  - Illustrated how the advisory program was actually carried out through an observed logic model.
    - What were the perceptions of the students? What was revealed about the programmatic elements?
    - What were the perceptions of the teachers? What was revealed about the programmatic elements?

- **Discussion, Lessons Learned, Conclusions**
  - Compared and contrasted the program's intent to what was observed.
  - Suggested changes to the program based on the recommendations from the participants.
Created an ideal logic model for a high school advisory program.

Connected Wenger's Communities of Practice theory (CoP) to the vision and execution of the advisory program at the site of study.

- Explored how the CoP theoretical model connects to the vision of the program and how it relates to the results.

Suggested next steps for future research.

Qualitative Methodology and Rationale

Research methodology can be defined as the blueprint for how a study is conducted and organized. Throughout the methodology discussion, I employed the following methodological decisions as outlined by Schensul (2008):

Decisions about qualitative research methodology include (a) selection of guiding paradigm; (b) identification of research questions; (c) development of a formative conceptual model; (d) site selection, study population, and study sample; (e) topics, procedures, and tools for data collection... (f) and procedures for data analysis and interpretation. (2008, p. 517)

The qualitative case study utilized an interpretive paradigm to best explore the research questions through the data collection methods of interviews, observations, and artifacts.

As a field of inquiry, qualitative research reveals the world to the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As argued by Conlon (2009), "A key component of qualitative research is that the reality is defined by the interpretations of individuals
based on their experiences of interaction with their social worlds” (p. 41).

Ultimately, reality is defined by the interpretation of the researcher. As further argued by Denzin and Lincoln (2011),

*Qualitative research* is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible...qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

The aforementioned is important to the rationale of the methodology chosen because the researcher, desires to explore elements in a “natural setting” to “interpret phenomena” and bring meaning to it.

As Creswell (2013) postulates, “qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 44). The assumption for this study was that if strong relationships are established and maintained as a result of a well-designed community of practice in the form of an advisory program, students and teachers could feel supported. Through the examination of an advisory program the theoretical framework, Communities of Practice Theory (CoP) provided the lens needed to critically assess how relationships are established and maintained. The examination of advisory program and student-teacher relationships presented itself as more of a phenomenon as opposed to a problem; nonetheless, I argue that if
strong student-teacher relationships are non-existent in education, in the case of this study, in high school, a problem has potential to exist.

It has been stated that, “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Additionally, qualitative researchers enter a study with no prior expectations with the goal of allowing open-ended questions to reveal a pattern and guide the direction of the results. As stated in the introduction, researcher positionality was made explicit throughout the study. The product of the research methods enabled me to draw inferences and provide a rich description of the data that is discovered through the experiences of the participants, as well as my past experiences, when appropriate.

Criticisms of Qualitative Research

The qualitative methodology has been criticized because many argue that it lacks generalizability; nonetheless, goal of qualitative research is to “produce credible knowledge of interpretations” (Wahyuni, 2012, p.77). In this methodology, the determination of the quality and trustworthiness of an inquiry is the concern that lingers. As addressed by Guba and Lincoln (1994), credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability must be employed in qualitative research to eradicate this concern. Credibility refers to the accuracy of data and transferability signifies the level of applicability in various contexts. Dependability parallels transferability because it promotes the ability of the findings to be replicated, and
confirmability ensures that the data is shaped by the participants’ experiences rather than by researcher bias (Wahyuni, 2012 & Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Credibility and dependability was addressed in this study.

Another criticism of qualitative research is that it embraces broad and critical interpretations and has the tendency to focus more narrowly on conceptions of the human experience and its analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This method appears to be a contradiction; however, aspects of this type of research can be used interchangeably. The multi-method approach in qualitative research is important to the implementation of triangulation, which ensures a detailed analysis, adding richness and depth to inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Similar to the complexity of qualitative research as a methodology, the profile of a qualitative researcher is multitudinous and vast. The objective of a qualitative researcher is to integrate various practices in order to get an in-depth understanding of the research topic. Each choice made by the researcher informs practice and reveals information in an explicit way.

Overall, this method of inquiry equipped me with the tools needed to conduct thorough research and write rich commentary. This study revealed the perspectives, interpretations and experiences of the students and teachers regarding how they foster relationships through the facilitation of an advisory program.
The Case Study Method

The case study method was employed because it provides clear boundaries and enables the researcher to use a variety of data in order provide a detailed account about the “case” being studied. Creswell (2013) describes the case study researcher as one who establishes patterns. Furthermore, the case study is imperative when the goal of the research is to explain or describe, broach causal relationships, and make direct observations in its natural setting (Yin, 2004). Case studies are intensive and “comprise more detail, richness, completeness, and variance” with the goal of producing concrete unbiased knowledge that can be generalized and applied to other cases so as to construct theories (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 301). Cases expose the researcher to varied perspectives and experiences that have the potential of expanding the learning process. Case studies and theory development are linked because of generalizability. Researchers who use the case study design often find that the research can be generalized and that others can use the ideas presented in order to gain a new perspective (Suter, 2006).

Case studies begin with the identification of a specific case or related cases that have clear boundaries in order to provide thorough understanding. Collecting varied data for a case is imperative because multiple perspectives and experiences can be captured and analyzed and themes or patterns can be identified and applied resulting in assertions and interpretations.
The case study approach encouraged an investigation of the implementation of an advisory program at the high school level to examine the prevalence of the relationship development and its impact on community. This allowed me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the process of the development of the advisory program, explore the intent of the program, evaluate its implementation, and compare it to the intent through the perspective the participants, teachers, and students. The written commentary of a case study should be sufficiently clear and explicative. As emphasized by Creswell (2013), case studies are initiated by an identification of the issue, purpose, and method of study; followed by an extensive description of the case and its context. Issues are examined, conclusions and assertions are presented based on the participants’ and researcher’s experiences. Throughout the report, I was cognizant of description, analysis, and interpretation, based on the fact that the proposed researcher positionality is participant/observer. The site selection was my site of employment (3 months removed) in which I served as an administrator. Subsequently, I was involved in the development of the school's advisory programming and its implementation at the high school level; this positionality was explored in the discussion of site selection and data collection methods.

While conducting a case study has advantages and has the potential to produce rich data, the overabundance of data could also present itself as a disadvantage to the researcher. According to Creswell (2013), the researcher must clearly determine the case and the boundaries to maintain throughout the study. A
rationale for selecting the case, the sampling strategy, and the information gathered is required for a purposeful case study. In my study, I was cognizant of this challenge. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, data was interpreted as it related to the research questions and thematic focus of identifying how relationships are established and maintained as a result of a well-designed community of practice in the form of an advisory program.

Site Selection, Study Population, and Participants

In order to appropriately address the research questions, an advisory program at a single site was evaluated to determine its effectiveness and to explicate the perspectives of students as participants in the program and teachers as facilitators of the program. This allowed a more in-depth exploration with the purpose of identifying cross-case themes internally and making assertions based on the data collected to test my theoretical perspective and for generalizability.

I conducted research at a public charter school in a Metro Atlanta school district, “Metro College Prep” high school. Participants included staff (teachers and administrators) and students from one school site. Participants (advisors and advisees) were not strategically selected, they volunteered participate individually. Participant names were altered for confidentiality. The site was selected as a matter of convenience because the researcher was employed at the site to be studied. Explored further through a discussion of my role as an “insider-researcher,” the site was also selected because there existed a common language, a familiarity with the interworking of the advisory program, an understanding of the organizational
structure of the program, and the ability to gain access to documents to facilitate the research process (Unluer, 2012, p. 5).

Site and Study Population

The site of study is situated in urban neighborhood in Metro Atlanta in which 15% of adults in the age range of 18-24 do not have high school diplomas and 9% in the age range of 24-34 do not have high school diplomas (Public Broadcasting Atlanta, 2015). Additionally, the dropout rate for the city of Atlanta public schools is 5.6% compared to the state of Georgia rate of 3.4%. Overall, based on the demographics and geographical location of the site of study, the term, “at risk” can be applied. “At risk” can be defined as:

...students or groups of students who are considered to have a higher probability of failing academically or dropping out of school. The term may be applied to students who face circumstances that could jeopardize their ability to complete school, such as homelessness, incarceration, teenage pregnancy, serious health issues, domestic violence, transiency ..., or other conditions, or it may refer to learning disabilities, low test scores, disciplinary problems, grade retentions, or other learning-related factors that could adversely affect the educational performance and attainment of some students. While educators often use the term at-risk to refer to general populations or categories of students, they may also apply the term to individual students who have raised concerns—based on specific behaviors
observed over time—that indicate they are more likely to fail or drop out.

(“Hidden Curriculum,” 2014, para. 1)

Additionally, “at risk” has been traditionally defined through an examination of high school dropouts, their families, and their school histories (U.S. Department of Education, 1992). “At risk” can be further delineated referencing “students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, from minority groups, or whose parents are not directly involved in their education...Over the last decade there has been a growing realization that students from minority backgrounds, low-income families, or both... [are] most likely to be “at risk”” (U.S. Department of Education, 1992, p. 1). In regards to this study, “at risk” is an important term to identify because few studies have explored the “...impact of the student-teacher relationship for students who are considered to be “at risk” for negative outcomes” (Decker et al., 2007, p. 85). Very little research has examined how student-teacher relationships are associated with student outcomes; but, some evidence suggests that close student-teacher relationships can be critical in the improvement of social and academic outcomes (Decker et al., 2007). This important to note because it further positions this study in current research, this study not only evaluated an advisory program to determine its effectiveness as a result of relationships and community building, but it also offered brief discourse, based on revelations from the data, on its effectiveness with “at risk” students which can offer new perspectives from the perceptions of students and teachers.
Participants

In the study, multiple advisory groups, students, and teachers were represented. Themes across teacher and student categories were explored and assertions were made based on the data collected to test my theoretical perspective and for generalizability. The sample size ranged from 8 students and 12 teacher interviewees. A total of 14 teachers completed the online survey that explored perspectives of their overall experience and opinions about the advisory program.

Students. The students were very forthcoming about their experiences in the advisory program. Based on my observation of their responses and overall demeanor during sessions of inquiry, they did not appear to be uncomfortable or intimidated by my position as an administrator. Their responses were very thorough and authentic. Additionally, based on my role, I felt that it served as an advantage because the students have known me since their 9th grade year and many participants were seniors. I think this allowed for comfortability and relatability.

Based on the school’s demographics, “98% of students who identify as African American, 1% of students who identify as Hispanic, and 1% of students who identify as multi-racial or other” (Howland & Caldwell, 2016, p. 10). However, all student participants in my study were African American. Students ranged from grades 9 – 12. There were 5 male participants and 2 female participants. Table 2 outlines the students who participated in the study.
**Table 2.**

**Advisee Interviewee and Focus Group Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant's Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Observed Ethnicity (Not directly reported by the participant)</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Gender of Advisory Group</th>
<th>Advisor(s) Who Participated in Study A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bruce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josephine</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Ethel &amp; Lauren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bruce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bruce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Identifying if the advisor participated in the study is important to note because the data reveals references between the advisor and the advisee that provides insight into the information or perspective reported.

Teachers. At this point in the study, it is best to delineate the term “teacher.”

Throughout this study “teacher” is used to reference advisors who function as the adult leader of the advisory group, all advisors are not necessarily academic teachers. Interestingly, 8 out of 12 teacher interviewees were non-teachers. Table 3 outlines their roles, gender, and the gender makeup of their advisory group.
### Table 3.

**Advisor Interviewee and Focus Group Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Observed Ethnicity (Not directly reported by the participant)</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Grade Level of Advisory Group</th>
<th>Years of Experience at Site of Study</th>
<th>Gender of Advisory Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan <strong>a</strong></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Non-Teacher</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Non-Teacher</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Non-Teacher</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethel <strong>a</strong></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Non-Teacher</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Non-Teacher</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison <strong>a</strong></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Non-Teacher</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren <strong>a</strong></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Non-Teacher</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monique</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Non-Teacher</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chyna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**a**Denotes co-advisors.

The overall experience in the field of education ranged, but in this case, it was important to identify their experience at the site of study because later in the study, the evolution of the advisory program, suggestions for improvement, and the range of their experiences with students in an advisory setting was discussed. The observed ethnicity of the teacher participants was four Caucasian and six African-Americans. Although the teachers were not asked to identify their ethnicity, I think it is important to note based on the ethnic makeup of student body, more specifically, the student participants. Additionally, it is important to note that I am an African-American female, this will play a role in the established rapport I had with the student participants during data collection. In the data, a few students and teachers mention relatability and comfortability, additionally, race was specifically mentioned in an interview with a teacher which
impacted discourse and personal dynamics within the advisory group; these elements were discussed further in the research.

Role of the Researcher

As Unluer (2012) poignantly argues, “It is crucial for social researchers to clarify their researchers’ roles especially for those utilizing qualitative methodology to make their research credible” (p. 1). The roles of a researcher may vary throughout the research and it is critical for the role of the researcher to be expressly stated to all participants in an effort to reduce concerns of being compromised or impacted negatively especially if the role of the researcher is one of authority at the site of study. From an insider to an outsider throughout the study, the role of the researcher is fluid and should be addressed. In this case of this inquiry, I served as an insider-researcher because I choose to study a group to which I belonged, “Metro College Prep” high school (Unluer, 2012). This type of researcher positionality does occur in qualitative research, but it is required to explicate the dynamics of the role of the researcher and identify methods that allows for validity and credibility.

A possible limitation to the research was the selection of a site in which the researcher was intimately familiar with based on employment. Referred to as “backyard research,” this choice was made based on accessibility, established rapport, and usefulness (Glense, 2016, p. 48). Glense (2016) argues against this choice because of the challenges that can occur. As stated by Unluer (2012), when researchers are insiders, greater familiarity with the site can lead to short sided
perspectives, a loss of objectivity, and unconscious biases regarding data interpretation and presentation may be exposed. “However, educational research is concerned with human beings and their behavior [sic], involving a great number of players, each of whom brings to the research process a wide range of perspectives, including the researcher’s own perspective” (p. 2). Although some disadvantages exist when the researcher is the insider, in this qualitative study, based on the pathological exploration of the case, I believe that the advantages were paramount and offered a perspective that an outsider-researcher would not be able to expose.

The advantages of functioning as an insider-researcher include the following: there exists a greater understanding of the environment being studied, there is a natural flow of social interactions between participants and the researcher, and an established intimacy with the culture of the site and its participants promotes truth telling and investment in the success of the project (Unluer, 2012). Furthermore, Unluer (2012) asserts, “insider-researchers generally know the politics of the institution, not only the formal hierarchy but also how it “really works”. They know how to best approach people” (p. 1). In regards to this study, “backyard research” was instrumental, relevant, and had the potential of affecting positive change at the site of study. Data was extremely accessible and when follow up was needed, I was able to ask clarifying questions to develop a holistic perspective of the participants’ viewpoints.

Additional limitations in conducting this study was a result of my position and my established rapport at the site of the study. As a former administrator at the
site, I served as the gatekeeper and facilitator of the advisory program being examined. Additionally, 3 out of the 9 participants, in the role of an advisor, were directly managed by me prior to conducting the study. I attempted to combat this dynamic by ensuring that data collection occurred outside my work hours and occurred in their work space instead of mine. This allowed for both parties to separate my interactions during data collection from my professional obligations at the site of study. Additionally, conducting the interviews, focus groups, and observations in their “space” eliminated the dichotomy of them “reporting to my office,” meeting on their terms and on their turf created a sense of comfortability as observed throughout the process of data collection. Moreover, as a former member of the administrative staff at the site of study, I maintained an established rapport with the participants which is critical in qualitative research.

Prior to conducting this study, I was a teacher and served as an advisor for the first graduating class. Because of my prior experience as an advisor, bias existed based my success as an advisor. Although I am in favor of the existence of an advisory program at a high school, I firmly believe that my high investment and “insider” knowledge of the implementation and execution of an advisory program is a strength in this research. As a participant in the creation of the program at the site of the study, I was able to offer first-hand accounts of its inception and evolution. Functioning as an instrumental contributor to the genesis and evolution of the advisory program at the site, I had to be hyper aware of generating authentic questions that did not overexpose my institutional knowledge of the program. If my
inquiries revealed my existing knowledge, I had to expand my approach to reach beyond the skeleton of the program in order to tap into the perspectives of the participants as current active members of the advisory communities in which I investigated.

To assist with dispelling my researcher positionality at the site, participants (advisors and advisees) were not strategically selected, they volunteered to participate individually. This is important to note because of the administrative role I held at the site. As volunteers, participants were able to pre-establish that they contributed to the study because of their sole interest and comfort level. Additionally, to combat the disadvantages of my position, as a preventative measure, I was self-aware and reflected upon the following questions as data was collected:

1. What role did my positionality as a school administrator play in studying the implementation of an advisory program?
2. How does my previous experience as a successful advisor affect how the teacher participants respond to aspects of data collection (i.e. Observations or interviews)?
3. Did my positionality as a school administrator influence the interactions that I had with student participants?

Ultimately, these questions were addressed in the study through a discussion of the data collection process and methods as well as in the final discussion, reflecting on the experience with the research process and interaction with the participants. This “self-conscious awareness” must be acknowledged and addressed in the
composition of the study (Bourke, 2014, p. 2). Reflection allowed the research to evolve in order for me and the participants to interact and for findings to be revealed.

During the coding process, when I believed that researcher positionality was evident, I notated it and revisited the aforementioned questions in order to assess if my insertions during interviews, focus groups, and observations impacted the data in any way. In many of the data collection sessions, I introduced myself as the researcher solely, reducing my professional role. I opened and closed each session with extreme gratitude and always allowed for additional discourse that encouraged participants to engage in “informal talk”, offering suggestions or additional feedback related to the advisory program (Glense, 2016, p. 135). For example, when “informal talk” was allowed at the conclusion of a focus group session, I found myself expounding on the history of the school and the programming in response to a direct inquiry. Although my researcher positionality and prior institutional knowledge was extremely evident, addressing the question comprehensively created additional buy-in because I took the time to address the concern and follow up questions of the participant.

Finally, confidentiality was maintained throughout the study, this was made explicit in the consent and asset forms submitted the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Mercer University (Appendix H). Participants were not made aware of the data collected from others nor were they provided with the focus questions in advance, which allowed for authentic conversations and reactions to the questions.
Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods are dependent upon what the researcher wants to learn; the research questions guide this process (Glense, 2016). The data collection tools aligned with the research questions in an effort to answer them. Conducting observations, interviews, and collect artifacts assisted in triangulating data. As further supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2011), “the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (p. 5).

As one of the key tools to collect qualitative data, observations were conducted. Throughout the observation, I functioned as the participant-observer, this method assisted me in gaining direct insight; additionally, it aligned with the interpretivist paradigm since researchers take the stance of the emic or insider perspective (Wahyuni, 2012). Functioning as the participant-observer also allowed for a synthesis of data in order to develop a perspective on the question for an overall interpretation. As the participant-observer, the aim was to constantly analyze observations and experiences in order to broaden the scope of the study and produce bold analysis of the data collected.

Although there are advantages to posing as the participant(observer, disadvantages do exist. There are potential biases that can occur. Additionally, “the participant role may simply require too much attention relative to the observer role. Thus, the participant-observer may not have sufficient time to take notes or to raise questions about events from different perspectives, as a good observer might” (Yin,
2003, p. 96). As the participant-observer, one must be cautious of preconceived beliefs and understandings of the site and the topic being studied. I overcame the disadvantages by using video recordings for each session. This ensured that all aspects of the environment; setting, body-language, etc. are fully considered in the evaluation of the data.

I observed and participated in brainstorming sessions in order to gain insight on the purpose of advisory and how school leaders envision its effective execution at the school. I also participated in professional development opportunities as a participant and facilitator in order to learn and disseminate the effective integration of the advisory best practices. Additionally, I had access to how the concept of the advisory program was conceptualized, developed, and revised from year to year. Advisory groups were observed to witness how elements of the advisory program are executed and received by the advisor and the advisees.

As previously mentioned, as a member of the administration at the high school level, I functioned as the participant in this study. This granted insight into how the advisory program is developed, implemented, and assessed. It also allowed for the flexibility needed to visit the multiple groups and function as an authority because of my previous, current, and future involvement in the advisory program and cultural design of the school.

In an effort to gain direct staff and student feedback, one-on-one semi-structured interviews as well as focus groups were conducted. Because of my position at the site of study, an outside party assisted in facilitating the focus groups.
This allowed for candid and genuine discussion without the concern of administrative impact if responses about the advisory program are unfavorable. The purpose of interviews was to identify the perspectives of stakeholders that would not have been noticed through observations. The questions were open-ended, offering inquiry about one’s experience in their respective advisory group and the impact. Semi-structured interviews assisted in creating questions to guide the process as well as provide predetermined themes to investigate (Wahyuni, 2012). Additionally, this interview protocol facilitated dialog while concurrently encouraging an expanded discussion to aid in an in-depth analysis.

In the data collection process, student and teacher focus groups were used. The purpose of this technique is to provide laser-focused insight into the perspectives of all stakeholders as a group. For teachers, the concern was with participation in the process of implementing an advisory program and the perception of the relationships built with students as a result. For students, participation in the advisory community was explored.

Lastly, institutional artifacts applicable to the topic of study were consulted. The artifacts included, but were not limited to, vision, and value statements, past and present advisory materials (i.e. activities, created norms, etc.) and school handbooks. In order to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the advisory program and to understand the integration of the advisory component in the school design, I gained insight through concrete materials regarding school culture, norms,
adult and student management, and overall expectations set by school administration.

Ultimately, a case study is not limited to one mode of data collection, multiple sources of evidence are important to the concept of triangulation. The corroborating evidence revealed through multiple sources of data aid in identifying common themes. The strength of a study relied on the various sources of evidence because it presented breadth and depth with the goal of addressing the research question. Triangulation also assures “credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability” (Glense, 2016, p. 152). Table 4 clearly explicates how data was collected and documented.
Table 4.

Data Collection Details

Step 1
Participants were notified of the intent of the study. Volunteers were identified and consent and assent forms were distributed and returned. Interviews, observations, and focus groups were scheduled based on the availability of the participants. Artifacts were collected which provided in order to understand the integration of the advisory component in the school design. The following outlines the details of each collection method:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection Method</th>
<th>Participant Type or Materials Used</th>
<th>Technique &amp; Documentation Method</th>
<th>Role of the Researcher</th>
<th>Objective(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-on-one semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Advisors &amp; advisees</td>
<td>Open-ended questions with impromptu follow-up questions if clarity was required; Digital recorder; Written notes; Interview was transcribed</td>
<td>Insider-researcher</td>
<td>To gain the perspective of the participants about the advisory program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Advisors &amp; advisees - advisory sessions; Advisors – professional development session</td>
<td>Written notes; Video recordings</td>
<td>Participant-observer</td>
<td>To see the advisory session in action, noting the interactions between advisor and advisees and advisees with their peers. Also, to see how advisory activities are executed and received by participants. To experience how best practices regarding the execution of the advisory program are shared and reviewed. Also, to see how the expectations are received by the advisors who are expected to implement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td>Advisors &amp; advisees</td>
<td>Open-ended questions with impromptu follow-up questions if clarity was required; Digital recorder; Written notes; Interview was transcribed</td>
<td>For advisors: outside researcher; For advisees: insider-researcher</td>
<td>To gain the perspective of the participants about the advisory program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>School handbook; Advisory materials (i.e. activities, created norms, etc.)</td>
<td>If needed, follow-up with administrators helped to gain clarity of intent</td>
<td>Insider-researcher</td>
<td>To gain an understanding of the intended expectations for the implementation of the advisory program. To explore the history of the advisory program at the site of study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 2
All data collected was coded line by line, themes were identified and cross-referenced across collection methods for the purpose of triangulation. Common themes were color coded manually and sorted by collection method.

Step 3
Once the program evaluation method was identified, exemplar data was retrieved to align with the elements of the program evaluation logic model: context, outputs, activities, causal effects, and outputs. Select exemplars were selected that best exemplified the elements of the logic model and were made evident through the illustration of the intended and observed logic models of the advisory program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logic models</th>
<th>Data Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intended Logic Model</td>
<td>Artifacts (School handbook &amp; informal feedback documentation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed Logic Model</td>
<td>Literature (Goodenow, 1993; Klem &amp; Connell, 2004; McClure et al., 2010; etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal Logic Model</td>
<td>Interviews (Advisors &amp; advisees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus Groups (Advisors &amp; advisees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observations (Advisory sessions &amp; professional development sessions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literature (Klem &amp; Connell, 2004; Johns, 2011; Decker et al., 2007; Wenger, 1998; etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logic models</th>
<th>Data Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intended Logic Model</td>
<td>Artifacts (School handbook &amp; advisory materials)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed Logic Model</td>
<td>Literature (Klem &amp; Connell, 2004; Smith et al., 2015; Vygotsky, 1978; Schunk, 2014; Tocci et al., 2005; etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dependability and Credibility

Yin (2016) declares, “a credible study is one that provides assurance that you have properly collected and interpreted the data, so that the findings and conclusions accurately reflect and represent the world that was studied” (p. 85). Credibility is best determined during all aspects of the research process. Data is generated for the sole purpose providing evidence that addresses the research problem and questions. Through a clear analysis of the data collected, meaningful and trustworthy interpretations are revealed. In order to ensure credibility and dependability various methods can be employed. In the case of this study, data was coded and organized by data collection type and participant, a peer-review was conducted, triangulation amongst data sources occurred, and research positionality was explored to expose if biases or personal perspectives surfaced.

Initially, themes were identified holistically across data collection methods and participant groups. Table 5 is a representation of the original codes.
This overabundance of codes was a result of approaches to coding as highlighted by Glense (2016); read quickly, code line by line, note topics, jot possible codes, and generalize what is observed in the data to create codes and eventual categories. The identified codes in Table 5 were condensed and organized by participant perspective as well programmatic elements of advisory at the site of study. Additionally, the codes assisted in the
development of the intended and observed logic model of the advisory program. A peer review was conducted to affirm initial codes. This process assisted in the acknowledgement of existing codes and resulted in the development of additional codes to enhance the triangulation of data across themes and data collection methods.

In order to develop an in-depth analysis of a case in its original context it was important to glean information from its natural setting with its typical inhabitants. Conducting interviews, observations, and focus groups allowed me to gather information through multiple means, from participants bounded by time and place (Creswell, 2013). All data collection methods were cross-referenced in order to generate themes across all of the data. Additionally in an effort to triangulate the data further, an online survey (Appendix G) option was provided when did not require participants align their identity with their responses.

I tried at all times during the process to collect data without bias. I strived to not insert my opinions or display reactions when participants revealed information that was against the intended purpose of the advisory program or the school in general. For example, during an interview, an advisor revealed that she did not fulfill an expectation outlined by the school because she believed that she was working in the best interest of the student. I did not share the participant’s report, additionally, I was very overt in my data collection sessions assuring that participants (advisors and advisees) that they would not “get in trouble” for sharing
their honesty during the interview, focus groups, or observations as long as the information shared did not require me to uphold the oath of a mandated reporter.

Data Analysis

The case, the advisory community, was evaluated through identifying the programmatic elements and the perspectives of its participants, students (advisees) and teachers (advisors). The analysis of data is finding meaning through an interconnection of collection methods, participants, and information as a result of the research. Interviews were conducted individually with students and teachers. Focus groups occurred with one group for students and teachers. The teacher focus group was held on multiple occasions with a facilitator, due to my researcher positionality, I functioned as an observer/participant. This allowed me to participant as an employee versus functioning strictly as a researcher. I believe that I was able to gather genuine data that provided insight into the perspectives advisors. Observations were conducted in advisory rooms, additionally, I observed a few professional development sessions that focused on advisory facilitation and best practices. The professional development sessions were very insightful and allowed me as a researcher to see adults leading their own learning (Drago-Severson, 2009).

In order to analyze my data, there were references to key assumptions of the study. The assumption was that student-teacher relationships were important to the foundation of a school and were meant to inform practice and influence
investment, which was identified through an examination of an advisory program. In order to address this postulation, a holistic analysis of the entire case was conducted by delineating the various cases in my study. Through review of the data collected, I was able to identify patterns and themes in order to provide a detailed description (Creswell, 2013 & Yin, 2004).

The aforementioned artifacts, observation, and interview data was collected and coded in order to identify common themes and threads throughout the advisory program. Overall, codes serve as a framework for the creation of themes and making new connections to answer the research questions. Throughout my review of the data, code words and phrases were classified line by line in order to identify commonalities. The codes were grouped and themes were extrapolated. The data collection and its analysis revealed patterns or themes that were synthesized across cases to build theoretical explanations (Glense, 2016 & Yin, 2004). This practice was made evident through the illustration of the intended and observed logic models of the advisory program. As a result of this direct comparison, the differences between each model yielded themes outlined in Chapter 5. Based on the themes, I created an ideal logic model for the implementation of an effective high school advisory program the resembled elements from the intended model and observed model. Additionally, the ideal model included best practices that were gleaned from the suggestions for change made by the participants and other assumptions made as a result of the data collected with the intent of improving the program.
Based on the proposed use of the case study approach, in which the “typical format is to provide first a detailed description of each case and themes within the case, called a within-case analysis, followed by a thematic analysis across the cases, called a cross-case analysis” assumptions could be possibly solidified (Creswell, 2013, p. 101). As a result of data triangulation, the researcher hopes to reveal that student-teacher relationships are influential and provide a foundation to impact investment through the effective implementation of an advisory program.

Relationships between students and teachers are critical aspects in the genetics of a school environment that should be examined throughout the educational milieu. Additionally, relationships assisted in determining a sense of school belonging and community and outcomes for students and teachers (Mason, et al, 2017). As a result of my case study, I presented findings related to how relationships established between students and teachers through an advisory program helps to facilitate a sense of community. These results are derived through an analysis of data gleaned from interviews, focus groups, observations, artifacts, and a survey. I examined each aspect of the data individually and through a constant comparative analysis in order to identify core themes that reveal themselves through the data. As a result of this close examination, codes were created in order to identify common themes that were revealed. This method of analysis granted the opportunity to compare and contrast the perception of relationship development, the maintenance of that relationship, and its
impact on a student’s connection to the advisory group as a supportive community.

As data was analyzed by collection method (interviews, focus groups, observations, a survey, and artifacts) participant groups (students and teachers), categories were created which assisted in conceptualizing the information. Student perspectives, teacher perspectives, and programmatic elements were the categories that provided a concise way to organize the data. In each category, themes were derived and exemplars were retrieved.

Analysis of Research Questions

As I approached the research and collected data, the initial assumption was that student and teacher relationships facilitated through an advisory group would strengthen a student's connection to the school, on the contrary, the results revealed that the relationship that existed between the student (advisee) and the teacher (advisor) impacted their overall connectedness to the advisory community, not necessarily one's connection to the school itself. The research questions were revised to best align with the information revealed from the research and they were coded to ensure that all categories were covered in the inquiry. The overarching question focused on all categories and was the guide to all subsequent queries. The sub-questions focused mainly on one or two categories. Overall, perceptions and programmatic elements explored through further questioning.
1. How do students and teachers perceive the impact of relationships and community through a high school advisory program? What are the programmatic elements (physical, human, and organizational) of the advisory program at the site of study?
   a. How are teachers implementing the various elements of the advisory program?
   b. How is it being received by the students?
2. What are the differences between the intentions and expectations of the advisory program versus its observed implementation?
3. How do the perspectives of students impact the facilitation of the advisory program at the site of study?
4. How do the perspectives of teachers impact the facilitation of the advisory program at the site of study?
5. How do the relationships between teachers and students develop a community of practice through the advisory program?

In the proceeding sections, I organized my research by exploring the logic model of the advisory program, focusing on the intended implementation of the program at the site of study. Based on what was revealed through the codification of interviews, focus groups, observations, and artifact analysis, the results of the program was illustrated through an observed logic model. Both models were compared to determine if the advisory program was carried out as expected. Regardless if the observed
implementation of the advisory program was not intended, revealing the existence of relationships between the advisor and advisee and the creation of the advisory group as a community of practice is paramount.

Summary

In exploring the execution of an advisory program in a high school, the goal was to expose how impactful the relationships are to the foundation of the school. Through a qualitative collective case study, a clear connection could be made between the student-teacher relationships as the core of developing and maintaining an advisory community. The interpretivist approach supported this inquiry because it requires the researcher to understand through the participants’ experiences and perspectives in the context of the study. In the case of the study, the data was heavily grounded in the participants’ accounts as well as my experience as the participant/observer. Once the data was collected, findings were presented through a holistic analysis to recognize themes and apply them to the evaluation of the advisory program which is grounded in the foundational structure at the site of study.

To enhance the presentation of data in this study, the figures presented in Chapters 4 and 5 are presented in color. Each figure is accompanied with a key in order for the reader to view the figure appropriately. All duplicate copies also should be in color. Figures should be reproduced for all copies; photo copies are not acceptable.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Presentation of Findings

In order to establish a clear baseline of the advisory program at the site of study, the purpose and design was explored. Furthermore, the expected implementation of the advisory program was reviewed to provide a better understanding of the structure and the roles of the participants. The intended logic model illustrates the expected implementation of the program and the observed logic model illustrates how the program was actually executed at the site. The intended and observed models provided a point of comparison. The differences between the models were instrumental in determining best practices and assisted in the creation of the ideal logic model that could be implemented program at the site of study and beyond.

The Purpose and Design of Advisory

The purpose of the advisory program at the site of study was to give teachers the opportunity to build strong relationships with a small cohort of scholars over the course of four years. During the four-year period, advisors guided and instructed their advisees academically, socially and emotionally so that they have the best chance to become successful in getting to and through college.
Scholars are matched up with a faculty member in a gender-based advisory of 12-16 students. Advisors met with their advisories twice a week for 30-55 minutes. As scholars matriculated through the advisory program, it was the goal of the school to continue to provide support and a small-school atmosphere to students and families.

The intent was that the advisory will stay together from freshman to senior year. Advisors will develop strong relationships with their advisees and will also serve as the first point of contact for nearly every aspect of school life with scholars and families. As outlined in the site’s 2017-18 School Culture and Classroom Management handbook (“Metro College Prep” 2017), four areas of focus are academic success, college readiness, service learning, and self-awareness. The areas are described in more detail in the following outline:

Academic Success

- Study Skills: exposure to strategies to increase achievement
- Guidance: academic progress monitoring, review of report cards, and tracking progress towards graduation requirements after each quarter

College Readiness

- Early college knowledge during freshmen and sophomore years
- College placement support in conjunction with the student’s college counselor during junior and senior years.
Professional/Career development and enrichment opportunities such as summer internships and travel opportunities

Service Learning
- Guidance in selection of community service learning projects
- Reflection and study of personal impact on the community

Self-Awareness
- Opportunity for goal setting and self-reflection
- Encouraging character development and teamwork through summer programming, extracurricular activities and wellness activities/sports
- When appropriate, support with academic, personal, social, and discipline issues in conjunction with the Dean of Students or Student Counselor

("Metro College Prep", 2017, p. 14)

Expected Implementation of the Advisory Program at Site of Study.

The 2017-18 School Culture and Classroom Management handbook further explained the expectations and non-negotiables regarding the implementation of the advisory program. This is important to understanding how explicit the expectations are for advisors in order to compare its implementation and identify areas that may need to be altered based on current and best practice.

The advisory period has to be a structured and safe environment. Scholars should be able to be themselves and express their ideas while still adhering to the rules of the school, and not feel like they will be bullied or judged in any way. Team
building activities and events should be scheduled with the advisory to help promote unity within the advisory. Those activities and events can take place both in and outside of school. Additionally, all advisors are expected to adhere to the weekly schedule as determined by the Grade Level Chairperson(s) or Advisory Coordinators which allows for consistency and clarity.

Advisors have to be advocates for their advisees. When advisees are having problems with other students or even teachers, it is the advisor’s job to help that student navigate those situations to get the most positive outcome possible. As an advisor, the commitment is to assist advisees with having conversations with your colleagues about issues that your advisee has brought to your attention, even if those conversations are difficult to have. An effective advisor not only encourages these conversations, but teaches skills for productive and efficient conversations.

Advisors must track their advisees’ academic and behavioral progress. A tracking system and tool is provided to all advisors. Using the system and tracking tool, all advisors are expected to monitor and review their advisees’ grades and behavior. Advisors are expected to review grades and behavior weekly.

The advisory period should be a time to celebrate individual and collective student success but also time to give students who are not doing well the tools to improve their standing. If there are any discrepancies with grades the advisor must help the student have that conversation with the teacher involved, or participate in a meeting with the staff member and the student if the student does not feel comfortable meeting with the staff member alone.
The advisor must be in constant communication with their advisees' household. Advisors must communicate with their advisees' parents at least once per quarter in person or over the phone. While more frequent communication may be warranted based on the student, every parent should get feedback at the end of each quarter about their student's "good standing" status as well as any necessary resources if their students are struggling with academics, behavior or attendance. “Good standing” was explicated in the narrative of the intended logic model for the advisory program in a proceeding section. Ultimately, it is the advisor's job to communicate with their advisees’ parent/guardian in regards to how their child is doing academically, behaviorally and socially. If the scholar is making progress or doing well the advisor should let the parents know. Similarly, if the scholar is struggling then the parents should be contacted as soon as the issue is noticed. A detailed log of communication with the household should be maintained.

The advisor should find ways to keep the scholars motivated toward achieving their goals. The advisor should set weekly goals with his/her advisory around their GPA, behavior, and attendance to keep them motivated and focused around the targets for the advisory. Advisors should celebrate both publicly and privately the accomplishments of the advisory community.

The advisory period should be a time to discuss issues relevant to the students' lives and culture. There should be weekly discussions around issues that are happening in the students' lives, whether they are at the school level or in the external community at large. The advisor should engage the students in meaningful
discussion, actually listen to their points of view, and not just “talk at” the students.
Ultimately, advisory should function as a safe, structured community in which
advocacy and accountability exist as a result of consistent communication and direct
motivation.

Conceptual Model Guiding the Program Evaluation

The Logic Model

A logic model is a visual representation of how a program should function
and operate as it was designed; thus leading to desired outcomes (Randolph &
Eronen, 2007; Milstein & Chapel, 2017). Depicting the initiative in this manner
allows for a concise and explicit analysis creating clear links and illustrating
pathways for the comprehension of the functionality of an initiative or program.
Logic models allow for the creator and the audience to understand the logical and
sequential implementation, evolutionary paths, and how the inner workings and
expectations of a program interact (Fishman & Neigher, 2004).

In the case of this study, the logic model of the advisory program outlined the
expected implementation steps and the expected results of the program. As a result
of a high-level visual depiction and a detailed discussion revealing the barriers,
means, and impacts of each step (each when most appropriate), the intended logic
model of the advisory program provides a clear understanding of the program,
expresses the thinking behind the program, provides a point of reference, and
allows for the observed implementation to be explicitly compared.
A logic model is read from left to right describing the basics of the program over time in a linear format producing a relationship between each element in the model. The typical elements of a logic model include the following: purpose or mission, context, inputs (resources and infrastructure), inputs, activities, outputs, and effects (Milstein & Chapel, 2017). In the case of this study, the following elements are identified in the logic models:

- **Purpose** – An identification of the main vision and objective of a program. What is the goal?
- **Context** – An identification of the setting and design of the program. Where will this take place? What will it look like?
- **Inputs** – An identification of the resources and infrastructure available for the execution of the program. What is available to the participants to effectively implement?
- **Activities** – An identification of what the program does with the inputs to align with the purpose. What is being done to assist with achieving the goal?
- **Casual Steps** – An identification of the long and/or short term consequences (positive or negative) as a result of the activities. What are the impacts of the activities?
- **Outputs** – An identification of tools and products to inform and to ensure that activities have been performed to satisfy the overall purpose of the program. What evidence is provided to determine if activities are performed?
All aforementioned elements are included in the logic model for the advisory program at the site of study; however, the commentary explicating the specifics of each element in relation to this study provides more insight into the causal effects of the implementation of the model as intended. Furthermore, as a result of the data collected, the observed implementation of the program was depicted through a logic model and explained comparatively. The purpose of the advisory program was reexamined and conclusions were drawn in Chapter 5 offering suggestions for alterations to the logic model with the goal of strengthening how the program is implemented to best facilitate relationships between advisors and advisees within an advisory community.

The Intended Logic Model for the Advisory Program

The logic model for how the advisory program was expected to be carried out is presented in Figure 4. This visual depiction presents a blueprint that brief outlines the intents of the program’s expected execution.
Figure 4. Intended Logic Model for the Advisory Program
Purpose. The purpose of the high school advisory program at the site of study is to create an opportunity for students and teachers to build strong and sustainable relationships with students through an advisory program which offers consistent academic, social, and emotional support in a small cohort setting.

Context. Advisory meetings occurred twice per week for 30-55 minutes, at the time of study, the differing times is dependent upon the need to shorten advisory due to early release days or any other versions of a condensed schedule. Advisory groups met in a predetermined location, decided prior to the start of each school year, with the expectation of one advisory group meeting per location. The intended dynamics of each advisory group was one advisor assigned to 10-15 advisees, additionally, each group was single gendered.

The context of the program connected to the inputs because they provided the infrastructure used to execute the program. Its solid and forward moving linkage is represented by a solid arrow in the model.

Inputs. The cohort model was also an intended design of the advisory program. Students were assigned an advisory group during their freshman and the group was banded together through their senior year. This input functioned as the core of the advisory model because it directly aligned with the purpose; to build sustained relationships between advisor and advisee; creating a sense of belonging, advocacy, support, genuine interest, value, authentic engagement, and personalization (Goodenow, 1993; Klem & Connell, 2004; McClure et al., 2010). In an effort to provide advisors with resources to assist with executing the program,
advisors had access to “advisory coordinators,” veteran advisors who were positioned to support and promote advisory best practices. These coordinators did not have an advisory group to maintain which granted them the time required to observe during the advisory period, create tools and strategies for best practices, develop and facilitate professional development sessions with the goal of offering “peer to peer” professional support to current advisors.

Another input of the advisory logic model included a resource that provided access to a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum to assist with the creation and execution of advisory activities. As defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2017),

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. (CASEL, 2017, para. 1)

Due to evidence of students leaving secondary education lacking the social and emotional ability to be successful adults and to the existence of violence, bullying, and other forms of harassment; as a potential remedy to these quandaries, SEL programs in schools have increased over the past few years (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Seeley, Tombari, Bennett, & Dunkle, 2011). As argued by Jones and Bouffard
(2012), “children who have strong social and emotional skills perform better in school [and] have more positive relationships with peers and adults...Development of these skills [are] influenced by relationships and social environments, including informal interactions as well as structured programs” (p. 3). SEL skills flourish when a relationship exists, furthermore, “positive teacher-child relationships characterized by warmth, trust, and low degrees of conflict have been associated with social competence and positive school adjustment” (Jones & Bouffard, 2012, p. 8). These assertions support the existence of the advisory program as well as the choice to provide the SEL curriculum as a resource for the advisory program.

At the site of study, a SEL curriculum, *School-Connect*, was procured for the purpose of implementing it through the advisory program. This teacher facilitated curriculum was “designed to improve the social, emotional, and academic skills of high school students and create supportive relationships among students and between students and their teachers” (Beland, Douglass, & Matheny, 2015, p. 1). This interactive, multimedia curriculum is in its third edition. Promoting elements of social and emotional learning, *School-Connect* assists teachers with supporting students and providing them the guidance needed to “manage emotions, form positive relationships...resolve conflicts [and] make responsible decisions....School-Connect applies the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1976, 1985) in helping students develop the SEL competencies” (Beland, Douglass, & Matheny, 2015, p. 4). The curriculum is built upon five social and emotional competencies: social awareness, self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and decision-
making (Beland, Douglass, & Matheny, 2015). Designed for high school students, the curriculum is distributed over three modules: “1) Creating a Supportive Learning Community, 2) Developing Self-Awareness and Self-Management, and 3) Building Relationships and Resolving Conflicts” (Beland, Douglass, & Matheny, 2015, p. 1). This SEL curriculum was not fully implemented across all advisory groups because it was the pilot year. All advisors were not required to implement this curriculum because the school did not invest in the program for all advisors to access the web-based curriculum as individual users.

The final observed input in the intended logic model of the advisory program was the school handbook that outlines the expectations for the execution of advisory. The following non-negotiable expectations were explicated: Advisory has to be a safe and structured environment (Tool: Norm development and Restorative Practice circles), advisors are advocates for advisees, advisors must track their advisees’ grades and behavior (Tool: Behavior and academic tracker and check-ins), the advisor must be in constant communication with their advisees’ household (Tool: Infinite Campus – Student Information System for the district, teachers retrieve contact information and document), and the advisor must find ways to keep the advisee motivated towards their goal (Tool: Aligned with check-ins and document using various formats of goal sheets). The handbook explicitly identified the purpose of the advisory program and set guidelines for its expected implementation and execution.
The inputs of the program linked to the activities because they provided the initiatives and means to assist in achieving the purpose of the program. Its solid and forward moving connection is represented by a solid arrow in the model.

Activities and Causal Effects. All new advisors during the time of the study were expected to conduct home visits to the homes of their advisees. During the home visit, advisors were expected to complete a general introduction of themselves, share the purpose of the advisory program, and discuss the educational goals of the advisee. For each visit; schedules were created, new advisors were partnered with veteran advisors, deadlines were provided, and scripts were created to assist with facilitating the conversation. Home visits occurred in various forms (i.e. some visits took place in a local coffee shop, restaurant, or at the school for the sake of comfortability for either party). Overall, the goal of this activity was to maintain close contact with parents to develop relationships. Additionally, it allowed the advisor to be poised to serve as a liaison between home and school. The causal effect of intimate contact with families was to develop lasting bonds with the advisee and family which is represented by a solid forward moving arrow in the model.

“Getting to know you” activities and restorative circles further assisted in developing relationships and building community. From introductory team-building games and “icebreakers” from self-found resources to informal dialogue amongst the advisory group, the impact of these activities helps to build and sustain relationships between the advisor and advisee. At times, “Getting to know you”
activities were carried out through restorative circles. Circles can be used in various ways that promote social skills and problem solving. Forming a physically constructed circle, students and teachers participate in active discourse, through this shared experience, the advisory group becomes a discourse community (Johns, 2011; Swales, 1988). Furthermore, the practice of circles occurring in advisory group emphasizes the CoP dimension, shared repertoire, which develops social relationships and the group’s identity over time. As indicated by Wachtel (2016), “a circle is a versatile restorative practice that can be used proactively, to develop relationships and build community or reactively, to respond to wrongdoing, conflicts and problems” (p.7). Circles give students the opportunity to speak and listen in a safe community-like setting which further supports one of the tenants of the advisory program; to create a safe and structured environment. The impact of the aforementioned activities could potentially strengthen bonds within the advisory community. The constant exchange of discourse within the advisory community facilitated through restorative circles and explorative activities is represented by a double-headed solid arrow in the model.

The creation of advisory norms was a collaborative effort between advisors and advisees. Initial norms were created at the start of the year, they were used to set expectations for the functionality of the advisory group. This list of rules helps advisory groups to effectively function as a community through established boundaries and expectations. Norms instituted trust amongst the advisory group. Trust is critical in the development and maintenance of relationships. Additionally,
it allowed for candid dialog and accountability, reemphasizing the creation of a discourse community. Norms created a basis for sharing and common ways of expressing (Johns, 2011; Swales, 1988). In order for authenticity and comfortability amongst the advisory group to occur, norms provided guidelines for interaction and coexistence. Norms were created as guidelines and points of reference, the goal was for the norms to establish initial trust; therefore, the connection to this causal effect is represented by a solid, forward moving arrow in the model.

A final activity of the advisory logic model was weekly behavior and academic check-ins in which advisors help students track their progress to ensure that they stay “in good standing” academically and behaviorally. If a student was in “good standing” they are eligible to participate in extracurricular activities, celebrations, and events. The “good standing” criteria, termed as “Warrior In Good Standing” (WIGS) at the site of study, is important to note because it connected to how advisors held students accountable for academics and behavior, additionally, as revealed in the data collected, the “good standing” or WIGS check-ins functioned as a tool to facilitate conversations between advisors and advisees; thus developing relationships through advocacy, accountability, and discourse. The aforementioned causal effect is illustrated on the model with a solid, double-headed arrow, symbolizing the constant interaction between student, parent, and advisor.

As explicated in the site’s 2017-18 School Culture and Classroom Management handbook, WIGS is described as the core of the behavior management system.
“Warrior in Good Standing,” [is] continuum that is built to support our student progression on the path to college-readiness. The goal of the continuum is to set clear metrics around behavior, attendance and GPA that help define for our students where they are on the continuum. At the end of each three week WIGS cycle a student was designated as either:

- **“College Ready”** - exceeding the expectations of a...High School Scholar and demonstrating the capacity for greater independence and privileges
- **“In Good Standing”** - meeting the baseline expectations of a...High School Scholar
- **“On-Probation”** - not meeting one or more of the expectations of a...High School Scholar in need of additional support/consequences to get them back on track


This explicit system executed through the advisory program provides students with a community that provides structure and support from the adults that they interact with in school. Klem and Connell (2004) exclaim that “young people need to know what adults expect regarding conduct, that consistent and predictable consequences result from not meeting those expectations, and that the expectations are fair” (p. 262). In addition to advisors reviewing WIGS status with students, parents are also provided with written documentation that indicates the status of their child. The WIGS reporting tool is an interactive spreadsheet that pulls data (# of detentions, #
of suspension days, # of suspension instances, # of failing grades, GPA, # of tardies, and # of absences) from a student information system, all of which determine if a student is WIGS eligible, or in “good standing.” Teachers, students, and parents are presented with this information and if a student is not in “good standing,” they have restrictions regarding extracurricular activities and other school privileges such as attendance on field trips. Advisors are expected to review this data their advisees weekly. Parents are provided this information in letter form via email and with report cards. This tool creates a true discourse community that extends beyond the advisory setting. As a result of this explicit structure of expectations and accountability, constant discourse occurs amongst all stakeholders: advisors, advisees, teachers, coaches, and administrators.

Overall, the activities had a direct link to the causal effects which were impacts that came as a direct or indirect result of the activities. Identified as a cyclical connection, it was represented by solid arrows positioned as a circle symbolizing continuing correlations; day to day, week to week, year to year.

Outputs. The programmatic element of outputs must be considered because it provides evidence that expected activities are performed. Informal observations completed by administration and the advisory coordinators was a practice that assessed if intended initiatives were facilitated with fidelity. Also, these observations gave administrators and coordinators insight into the topics that needed to be reviewed in professional development sessions. During an observation, the observer would identify the following: “glows” - sharing evidence of
what the advisor or group has done well, “grows” - highlighting areas of improvement in to align with expectations, “questions” - requesting clarity about what was observed, and “suggestions” - offering possible resources or activities that could be used during the advisory period. Feedback occurred face to face or via email with an invitation for direct follow-up. The intended causal effect of the informal observations was to ensure that the expectations are carried out and that the vision for advisory was consistent from group to group.

Lastly, as previously explicated, the discourse and accountability system facilitated through the behavior and academic check-ins was executed through the use of an interactive spreadsheet tool, known as the WIGS tracker, that documented behavior and grades to determine “eligibility.” This output provided advisors with a visible point of reference to conduct accountability conversations with advisees. The tracker also provided an accountability system that all stakeholders understood and was able to access consistently. The solid, double-headed arrow symbolizes the flow of dialogue produced as a result of the tracking system in the model.

Program Results

The Observed Logic Model for the Advisory Program

The logic model for how the advisory program was expected to be carried out is presented in Figure 4. Based on data collection, I was exposed to how the programmatic elements of the advisory program was actually executed. Figure 5 depicts the observed logic model of the program’s current execution. Observations, artifacts, advisor and advisee perspectives were considered, offering a clear and
well-rounded viewpoint of the current state of the advisory program. Lastly, as discussed in Chapter 2, the indicators that assist in identifying evidence of the formation of a community of practice were listed and aligned with information that was revealed in the data. Ultimately, an assessment occurred regarding the existence of a true community of practice as a result of the relationships developed as a result of the advisory program regardless if intention implementation coincided with what was observed.
Figure 5. The Observed Logic Model of the Advisory Program
Purpose. As the foundation of the advisory program, the intended purpose did not waver; however, based on the data collected, the programmatic elements did not always create a solid connection to the purpose of the advisory program at the site of study. *Figure 5* demonstrates evidence of disconnection and inconsistency through the broken lines illustrated in the observed logic model. The opportunity to build relationships with students through and advisory program remained stagnant; however, offering consistent academic, social, and emotional support in a small cohort setting was not fully accomplished across advisory groups. With relationships serving as the core of the program’s intent and reported success, some connections between advisors and advisees were broken resulting in an overall unstable advisory experience for some advisors and advisees based on their reports. The major terms that could be delineated from the purpose of the advisory program is “relationships” and “support.” Based on the research, the aforementioned terms surfaced as themes revealed through the data. Advisees and advisors provided evidence regarding the purpose of the current advisory program being performed. In order to present the differing viewpoints of advisees and advisors regarding the purpose of the program, the data was presented separately and then a synthesis of the information was offered; thus providing an overarching perspective of the observed aspects of the purpose of the program.
Relationships: The Advisee Perspective. Different relationship dynamics were revealed in the data. When students were asked to describe the relationship with their advisor the responses had stark contrasts. Carmen, a graduating senior, who belonged to a female advisory group with two advisors stated in an interview, “I have a good relationship with my advisors...They just listen...I am graduating. I could not have done that without them.” She went on to describe that nature of their relationship and how it developed, “I can talk to them about stuff when I have a bad day...When they see me slacking off they are really quick to get me back on track...” Carmen asserts that her relationship with her co-advisors is strong and she gives much credit to her success as a student to her relationship with them. Oliver, a graduating senior, described his advisor as “a brother type figure...he plays around all of the time...he is honest with us and anytime we needed him, he was there...” The comradery that existed between Oliver and his advisor was familial, similar to Daniel’s postulation about his advisor,

...he’s like a mentor to me, like a big brother. He really helped me throughout high school, really a lot now that I think about it. Even during the summer, he was texting me to see how I was doing...he really helped me think about what I want to do in life because I see how happy he is. He’s always smiling...I want to help the community in some type of way because he really helped is throughout high school. Even though we don’t think about it, he really did. Without him, we’d probably be struggling...
Daniel really shared how his advisor not only impacted him as a student, but made a lasting impression on him as he considered his future career choices. It appeared as though Carmen, Oliver, John, and Daniel valued the relationships that they built with their advisor and had a sense of pride when asked to describe their bond.

Conversely, some student participants reported not having a strong connection with their advisor for reasons that included inability to relate or a feeling of being treated like a child instead of a maturing teenager, in a focus group setting, Dante exclaimed, “…we can’t really relate to him…we can’t really talk about the stuff that we really want to talk about... so it’s just like we got to have some type of freedom...” The groups further explained that they feel like they are treated like children, they did not feel as though their advisory respected them, Dante continued,

It's like, we have the same advisor that we had in the ninth grade, and we're being treated the same as a ninth grader... we're seniors this year and it's just like he's not seeing it, so it was just like we're not getting the type of leeway that we want.

This revelation in the data was particularly concerning with considering the purpose as well as an input of the program regarding the cohort model. Students and advisors are expected to maintain the advisory cohort from freshman to senior year, yet the existence of a dysfunctional relationship between an advisor and advisee was not considered in the maintenance of the cohort. If the relationship is challenging or non-existent is the benefit of maintaining the cohort appears to be
counter-productive. When advisees were asked, in a focus group setting, if they could describe their advisor in one word they stated, “Poor, extremely poor.” “Inconsistent.” “Nothing...we don't do nothing...” Engagement and genuine investment must be considered when evaluating aspects of student-teacher relationships, in this case, advisees-advisor relationships. In regards to engagement, the “students who perceive teachers as creating a caring, well-structured learning environment...are more likely to report engagement in school” (Klem & Connell, 2014, p. 270). Overall, caring matters and as revealed in the data, some students reported that they lack a true connection with their advisor and longed for another model or different advisor.

When asked about the ideal advisor, or what they wanted to see most in an advisor, Dante referred to another advisory group, and discussed his admiration for the relationships that he observed, “Mr.... (non-participant) really has like that type of bond with his advisory [he treats them like] family... [other advisory groups] have their own bonds with everybody but like we don’t have that bond with our advisory.” The follow up question focused on if his advisory mates felt similarly about their advisor, he replied “[my advisory mates] just go to another advisor because it’s like they just can’t stand to be in our advisory...” As evidenced in the data, relationships have been broken and there lacks an interest in salvaging the relationship which is in direct opposition to the intended purpose of the advisory program.
John interjected by adding a gender based dynamic, comparing male and female groups, “It’s like more girls like the advisor than boys...Because girls can’t get along with each other, but boys, they try to be friends with each other more than girls.” John’s statement was interesting and intimated that girls were able to form stronger bonds with their advisor because they could not get along with one another. John forced me consider the gender aspect of the advisory program. Are females able to develop stronger bonds than males? Gender also reappeared in the data through the perspective of an advisor, which is best mentioned when considering possible recommendations for the advisory program at the site of study and beyond.

In various settings, individual interviews or focus groups, the relationships that existed amongst the students in the advisory group was important to note. The response was overwhelming resulting in the overarching conclusion indicating that the relationships the advisees had with their peers were supportive. Oliver noted, “We are actually pretty close...I just think that we have a good relationship...it’s good for everybody because they know that you have their back whenever they need it.” Josephine, at 9th grade student, stated, “…we all connect...Everyone listens and they like respect your opinions in advisory.” Lastly, Dante emphasized the relationships he shared with his advisory mates and equated it to a familial-like bond, “Advisory, that’s where I met most of my friends...long-term friends that I have now... Everybody is close in my advisory...It’s really like a brotherhood.” One variance existed in the thematic element of peer relationships based on the
information John shared about the lack of connection he has with his peers, “...everybody doesn’t like, communicate with each other, so...you’re really not building a brotherhood like we’re supposed to.” Although this study focuses on student-teacher relationships, peer relationships are important to consider when idealizing the concept of a community of practice.

*Relationships: The Advisor Perspective.* The response from the advisors yielded a range of perspectives based on their personal experiences with the group of students they were assigned to mentor through the advisory program. When advisors were asked to discuss the relationship with their advisees, responses varied and were dependent on the individual student. Many advisors reported varied levels of how they related to their advisees. Through a synthesis of the interview and focus group data, major themes emerged: developing trust, promoting self-confidence, experiencing disappointment, and overcoming the barriers of relationship development. These overarching themes provided clear insight into the successes and areas of growth regarding the development of relationships between advisors and advisees.

Monique, a 10th grade advisor for 2 years, immediately referred to trust as the core of her relationships, “I feel like they trust me. They are able to come to me with their issues, whether they are personal, academic, or anywhere in the middle.” Her assertion demonstrated that students are willing to share aspects of their life, academic or personal, as long as trust exists. Allison noted,
I think that once we got through that initial period, which probably took about three months, then we just – I think things really started to click. So, like more individual relationships with the girls. Really just more authentic interactions with the girls and being able to be different things for different girls was really key.

Although trust was not explicit in Allison’s response, one can infer that when “things really started to click,” the young ladies began to trust more and understand that their advisor was genuinely invested in them. Allison further reflected, “I really feel like our relationships are genuine and authentic...And I feel like that’s really important for all of us because we’ve really worked so hard to make to make that community.”

Lauren and Ethel functioned as a unit, they were co-advisors and their group consisted of about 22 seniors. Their description of the relationships with their advisees focused on trust, but also growth. In an interview, Lauren candidly shared her perspective,

At times, it can be a love/hate relationship. They do come to me when they have problems, they do come to me just to hang out... [but] when it comes to me having to enforce rules or get on them about their academics then that relationship changes.

In her response, Lauren present the dichotomy of her relationships when she has to execute programmatic elements as outlined in the logic model. Clear expectations have been set based on the inputs and the activities of the program that include
behavior and academic accountability measures and when Lauren upholds them, the relationships are altered. Ethel affirmed her co-advisor’s sentiments, but alluded more to the concept of growth and evolution, “I would say that my relationship with them has been a work in progress. They feel comfortable with coming to me with any of their issues.” Although Lauren and Ethel identified the challenges and “growing pains” of relationship development, their reflections revealed that even though relationships are hard and requires time and patience, relationships still existed.

An interesting perspective regarding advisee-advisor relationships was exposed in an interview with Winnie, a 12th grade advisor who has maintained her cohort of students for 4 years. She alludes to the concept that the relationships she developed with her advisees as a result of her having a consistent advisory group has kept her at the school, maybe longer than she intended. Winnie postulated,

...my relationship with them has kept me here probably more than anything else. I had a group of girls who really relied on me...but I relied on them too. Yeah, I mean—it's hard to explain the connection...having a good relationship with them made working here worthwhile.

Winnie’s statement was powerful and spoke to the significance of the relationships that are formulated in an advisory community; it is not only beneficial to the advisees, but the advisors as well.

Promoting self-confidence was most evident in the female advisory groups. As observed at the site of study, female students needed extra support regarding
how they view themselves and how other view them. Ann, a first year teacher at the site and a 10th grade advisor offered much insight when describing her mission as an advisor,

So each advisee, I try to give all of them confidence. I think as females sometimes as this age, we lack confidence. We’re trying to be everything and trying to be liked by everybody. So I try to give every one of them confidence. I try to get every single one of them to identify with who they are and be okay with that...I want them to accept themselves, to just be okay with who you are...everything just head to toe.

Ann’s tone when discussing her advisees was very warm and exuded a sense of authenticity, yet grave concern regarding self-esteem and worth. In the conversation, she shared an anecdote that exposed a negative experience that she encountered with her advisory group that included inflammatory language and bullying. Her immediate reason displayed her desire to inspire and mentor her advisees,

One time I literally let them see the tears fall from my eyes because I wanted them to see that. That’s how upset I was with them because I’m like trying to show you how to be ladies and the behavior that I had saw, it grieved me and that’s what I explained to them.

This feeling of disappointment would not have existed if established relationships did not exist. Ann elaborates and explains that she had to help her advisees understand how to respect and honor one another, she quickly works to repair the
broken relationship, as a result of the negative interaction, through the use of Restorative Practice circles that are designed to address, repair, and build relationships. "It went straight to circle mode because for me, that connects to self-confidence...That connects to that self-esteem."

Disappointment also reappeared in David’s interview. Known as the school disciplinarian by students and parents, David was an 11th grade advisor, his group consisted of about 12 males. He was extremely candid about how he interacts with “his boys” and offers personal and direct advice. David stated, “...because of my role in the building, they know how I am...there are no blurred lines because you are my advisee... [when they mess up] I tell them straight up... I’m not mad at you I’m just disappointed.” When an individual realizes that they have disappointed someone, the impact is stronger, it connects to a strong relationship that has been altered in some way through intentional or unintentional actions. Research suggests that close relationships with students demonstrate democratic interactions with students; thus providing nurturance through the preservation of higher expectations, at the juncture of not meeting the expectations, disappointment takes form; nonetheless, relationships are maintained if intent is present (Decker et al., 2007).

Barriers to relationship development was a shared response from advisors, many described the struggles with initiating relationships without trust upon the introduction of a scenario of newness (new school year) and unfamiliarity (new
Allison identified struggles that included a new school year and the fact that she was a new advisor to an established student cohort,

...at the beginning of the year I think there was a lot of resistance and just uncertainty about a new advisor ... the girls were really nervous. I think they were taking like a wait and see approach to see what happens...there was some pushing and pulling in the beginning to figure out who I was all about. And the same with them. And then I knew the ones who wanted to come tardy and wanted to go skip and so I would go find them. And I’d just walk in wherever they were and say, “Come on, let’s go, we’ve got things to do today”.

Allison had to be very purposeful when considering how best to engage her advisees and build trust. Her co-advisor, Jan elaborates further and offers her perspective of building trust with a group who has had an advisor who left mid-year, “...they have real abandonment issues...they were very unsure about me at first.” Through observations of Allison and Jan’s advisory group, it was very evident that they were able to break to the barriers of doubt and trepidation regarding the development of a strong bonds between advisor and advisee. On the day of the observation, I functioned strictly as an observer, noting the activity and the interactions that took place between advisor and advisee as well as how they functioned as a unit. The young ladies were creating cards for a local convalescent home, they appeared engaged and all were on task, one student arrived late, but she partnered with a peer and immediately started crafting. A warm demeanor and cooperative spirit
witnessed throughout the observation provided evidence that they were comfortable in the community that they created together.

Similar to Allison and Jan, Ethel shared her experience of joining an established advisory group as a co-advisor,

I would say that my relationship with them has been a work in progress...It was a struggle because they had been moved around so much and then I joined them along with other students. So, it was a struggle to get them to mesh and gel...

Ethel’s acknowledgement of understanding the reason why a struggle existed is very poignant, in some cases, adults would not consider comfortability or feelings of distrust when developing a relationship with students. Defiance and disrespect may be the immediate attitude towards the students; nevertheless, Ethel recognizes that there existed a level of instability, causing the advisees to struggle initially, but with understanding and patience, she was able to breakthrough and relationships formed, not only between her and the advisees, but also the advisees with each other.

A strong outlier was revealed in the interview with Bruce, a 12th grade advisor. He has remained with the same cohort; however, relationships did evolve with time and he eventually had a negative experience the last two years of his “advisorship.” He reported,

I just don’t see—like I care about my advisees and I like some of them to be honest, I don’t like all of them, but I wouldn’t tell them that—But I just don’t
see the value of relationships that I've built. I don’t see the value, based on the time invested and the false promise we make, that your advisor will somehow be the same for all four years.

Through the interview he expressed grave discontentment with the advisory program and extreme disappointment with some of the interactions he experienced with his group. The advisor of Mike, John, and Dante (student participants in the study), his frustrations indeed penetrated to his advisory group. Interviewed independently and as part of a focus group, the young men shared extreme displeasure with the absent relationship they had with their advisor. Comments like, “We can’t really relate to him,” “[Our relationship] is extremely poor,” or “I can’t be myself” demonstrated that the bond did not exist and both parties (advisor and advisees) did not have an interest in healing the broken relationship. A feeling of exasperation became very evident, there was not an intention to salvage the relationship especially since the advisory group was a few months from graduation. In this situation, the community was weak and devoid of genuine relationships and authentic interest which seriously inhibited participation (Smith, 2003, 2009).

Although it was disheartening to hear, the sentiments of the students and the advisor aligned and revealed a missing component to the advisory program, a consistent assessment of the program capturing the experiences and opinions of the participants by the school.
**Relationships: The Synthesis.** The perspectives of the participants were enlightening and offered deep insight into how they viewed the program. Additionally, the reported experiences of the advisees and the advisors the purpose was not fully realized. The overarching perspective was that the advisory facilitates critical relationships that carry students from freshman year until graduation. My close examination of the positive relationships that existed emphasizes a notion suggested by McClure et al. (2010), caring matters when it appears in an informal, improvised, and authentic way. Encounters between advisees and students develop naturally over time and although challenges were presented to the participants, holistically, it can be affirmed that relationships did exist and the advisory group did function as a relevant community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Advisors and advisees were full participants in the community. As argued by Wenger (1998), “being an active practitioner with an authentic form of participation might be one of the most deeply essential requirements” in a school, in this case, the advisory program provided intimate interaction (p. 277). Advisors and advisees engaged in activities and through their social interactions and they were able to form engage in a process of collective engagement, respect, and support.

As some of the interviews concluded, advisors were asked if they had final thoughts about their experiences, and they began expressing their thoughts through self-reflection. Some expressed that they were not granted the opportunity to develop close bonds with adults who functioned as a mentor, genuinely and
consistently interested in their social, emotional, and academic development when they were students. Katie reflected,

I'm transparent with [my group] because I wish I had that. I wish I had someone who could lead me through by example how to deal with some challenging situations as a teenager and so I try to provide that to them when I think it would be useful.

Katie shared what was missing from her educational experience, but she is not resentful. She was willing to provide her advisees the support that she was not offered as an adolescent.

On the other hand, some perspectives from participants suggested that relationships are not likely to exist if the desire is not present or if the relationship does not evolve. Research suggests that the perceptions that students have about student-teacher relationships are linked to outcomes such as academic performance and engagement (Decker et al., 2007). The quality of student-teacher relationships is important to consider and when there is a void, there is an inability to form a true community.

As indicated by Johns (2011), in order to introduce students to a vision of community, it is useful to take them outside the academic realm to something more familiar, in the text, the discussion of non-academic communities is initiated. The concept of “non-academic communities” is interesting and aligns with this research because one programmatic element of advisory is that it is a non-academic requirement for all students at the site of study. In the case of the aforementioned
article, Johns (2011), communities are chosen voluntarily based on interest. Individuals participate in social and interest groups with which they have chosen to affiliate and the commitment varies in regards to depth and terms. Additionally, individual involvement may become stronger or weaker over time as circumstances and interests change. In the case of the advisory community, although it is considered non-academic, groups are not chosen (advisees do not choose advisors, nor can advisors choose advisees). However, ideally, interest and commitment are gradually developed through sustained interactions and discourse between advisors and advisees; thus providing a starting point for relationship maturation.

The starting point for relationship development in most advisory groups ranged from various “getting to know you” activities and forming various advisory identities through a common language or code that was germane to the group. For example, it was observed that a male advisory group, (non-participants in the study), created a group identity. They were known as “The B.A.D Boys – Brothers Achieving Daily.” As an indicator in the CoP framework, this advisory group had shared ways of existing through a mutually defined identity (members of the same advisory group), used communication shortcuts (special handshake greeting), and had certain styles to display membership (t-shirts and jackets with group name displayed).

Participants in the study also witnessed this outward display of comradery by the other advisory groups and based on Dante’s response, he admired the connection and longed for membership in the aforementioned advisory community
described that resembled his initial starting point as an advisee, “They have their own bonds with everybody, but like we don’t have that bond with our advisory...We just never has it period since ninth grade.” John also agreed, “It’s just like, it wasn’t like that a couple of years ago...Like everybody would sit there and we’d be cool, just chillin’ and talking.” As indicated by Dante and John, advisees in Bruce’s group, the starting point was initiated during their freshman year together. Aligning with Dante and John’s sentiment when discussing his first year as an advisor, Bruce reported, “…I drove (student’s name – non-participant) to every soccer game because his mom said that he couldn’t play soccer if he couldn’t get a ride... I used to drive them home much more often when they were younger.” It is very apparent that the relationship between Bruce and his advisees did not evolve. As a researcher, I speculated on the cause for the inability to advance the relationship beyond freshman year. Is there a way that the relationship could have evolved? What was missing from the relationship that caused it to taper as the years progressed? One would assume that a relationship would enhance over time, but in the case of Bruce and his advisees, it dissolved.

In the context of voluntary participation in a community, Johns (2011) exclaims that “…community membership requires a long initiatory process, and even then there is no guarantee of success” (p. 511). This idea is appropriate when considering how relationships between advisors and students are attempted over time and after much effort, does not flourish and becomes more combative and purposeless vs. supportive and meaningful. As made evident in the description of
the advisor, Bruce, and several of his advisees in a focus group and individual interviews as explicated previously, the bond that the group had during their freshman year diminished. The attitudes of not having strong bonds were synonymous between advisor and advisee. Frustration was evident and although Bruce worked to uphold his obligation of being an advisor; completing academic and behavior check-ins, maintaining contact with parents regarding progress, and offering additional academic support by contacting teachers about failing grades or missing work, it was more like a task for him, meaning expectations as outlined by the school. It appeared as though it did not come from a place of shared experience, he did not see the value in the relationships and lacked invested interest in the overall program.

Many of Bruce’s responses were cynical in nature, “It felt like whenever people couldn’t figure out an organized was to contact home...they just relied on the advisors...I didn’t think it was a very smart choice but it was what it was.” Bruce provided much detail about what was not successful instead of what was successful, he offered insight into his disagreement with the advisory program instead of sharing insight into how the program could benefit students. Although this was a variance in the data, it holds heavy weight simply because of the alignment of perspective and experience between and advisor and his advisees that participated in the study.
When considering the formation of a community through the advisory program at the site of study, many factors should be considered regarding how relationships are built and maintained over time. As articulated by Johns (2011),

Even after individuals are fully initiated, many factors can separate them. Members of communities rebel, opposing community leaders or attempting to change the rules of the game and, by extension, the content and argumentation in the texts from shared genres. If the rebellion is successful, the rules may be changed or a new group may be formed with a different set of values and aims. (p. 511)

The formation of a new group as Johns (2011) describes definitely occurred at the site as a result of fractured relationships and absent trust. In a focus group, Dante, a member in Bruce’s advisory, exclaimed, “Like nowadays, we don’t even have an advisory group.” I inquired further for him to explain what he was referring to, I assumed that he was alluding to the fact that his advisory peers no longer attended advisory sessions, he explained further, “They got friends in other advisors, that’s where they go now...they just go to other advisors because it’s like they just can’t stand to be in our advisory sometimes...” Dante’s response solidified the issue of dissatisfaction with his advisory experience that was lacking based on the poor connection he felt he and his peers had with their advisor.

As explained by Johns (2011), “In any thriving academic community, there is constant dialogue; disagreements among members...” (p. 516). Lauren and Ethel shared their experience with handling conflict within their advisory group,
They are all girls so there are times when they have disagreements or conflicts with one another...we would pull those girls that were involved and kind of have impromptu or informal circles with them in our offices...we’re open and honest with conflicts that we’re having and don’t allow them to fester...there is never not drama within our advisory, we’ve been using circles a lot...two to three weeks ago, we had a situation with one of our advisees that was putting a lot of her personal business out there and we had a circle and our advisees pretty much said how people were viewing [her]...then afterwards [Ethel] and I coached her. She was kind of tearful after the fact, but she appreciated what [we] had to say...

The exchange of discourse that occurred amongst the advisory group members was insightful and displayed their ability to support one another even though it may have been uncomfortable for the giver or recipient of the support. When considering the concept discourse communities and communities of practice, engaging in accountability discussions or “hot topics,” most professional academics know the rules for dialogue and how to discuss these topics in ways appropriate for the audience in which they serve (Johns, 2011). Lauren and Ethel knew how far they could push the conversation in order for their advisee to change the concerning behavior and understand that they really wanted to see her succeed not only in school but in life.

Similarly, Allison shared an experience in which she was forced to address a “hot topic” with her group that in her opinion, exposed her relatability to her
advisees and dispelled the assumptions that they had about her due to her race. She recalled,

    The presidential election was I think probably one of the...first time I shared my feelings...it actually came out of an accusation that was made in our group that I voted for Trump because I was white...And so, I just addressed it head on...They were shocked...I was just very matter of fact, but merged it in obviously with my opinions and shared a little about who I am and where I come from...Some of the girls felt really awkward and some of the girls wanted to hear [more about me]—so it was really an interesting conversation.

This exchange broke down the hidden barriers that existed between advisor and advisee that catapulted the development of their relationship. Allison believed that it was a springboard into the development of genuine and authentic relationships with her advisory community.

    Conversely, some advisees shared the need for interactive discourse that transferred to the lane of “hot topics;” however, their advisor expressed concern and lack of comfortability engaging in that type of discourse. Dante stated, “We can’t talk about stuff that we want to talk about. I mean I understand this is school and you’ve got to keep stuff censored...but to me, no conversation is too inappropriate especially when you keep it real...” I requested examples of time in which the group wanted to discuss a topic that was ignored and, John interjected, “[If we wanted to talk about] drugs or something, he’s like we shouldn’t be talking about drugs...like
we are just kids or something...” Dante agreed and showed frustration, “Things that
are just negative, he doesn’t want us to mention...” Through his response, Bruce
admitted to not feeling comfortable discussing certain topics, “I’m not super
comfortable addressing certain things...” Generally, throughout the interview,
Bruce’s responses were eerily aligned with the response of his advisees throughout
the study. Unbeknownst to me at the time of inquiry, Bruce was able to confirm the
feelings expressed by his advisees and vice versa. This advisory groups’ shared
opinions of their experience was indeed an outstanding variance in the pieces of
data that focused on relationships from the perspectives of advisors and advisees.

Throughout the study, it was made clear that comfortability and the belief
that relationships are critical to maintain in educational settings are important to
student engagement (Klem & Connell, 2004). In order to be an advisor that relates
to advisees, one has to truly invest in the purpose of advisory: to build relationships
that offer consistent academic, social, and emotional support. If the skill of
relationship building is not innate, is there another route? At the site of study, the
advisory program functioned as the foundational belief system of the school.
Advisory was a part of the school culture and advisors either had to possesses the
ability to connect with students by way of relationship building or quickly learn. As
indicated by Katie,

I feel like in a lot of ways I’m naturally equipped with those skills. It lends
well to my personality type to kind of be able to provide that support to
them. However, it’s, not to speak on behalf of other people, but it’s easy for
me to see how someone who might not naturally have that skill set feel that way or overwhelmed by the level of personal involvement that it does take to be able to execute dealing with some of these really tricky situations...I think that you either have to be born with it and be okay with using it and kind of have a natural sense of where those boundaries fall or you have to be willing to develop it.

Winnie also supported Katie’s perspective, “I think some people have more natural skills...” Understanding the ideas expressed, Jan takes the concept a little further, she discussed an ideal of one’s self-awareness as an advisor in order to confidentially relate to adolescences,

I think you have to be very self-aware to be an advisor because there is nothing like a group of teenagers to expose anything that you’re not aware about. If you’re not in a good place with yourself, then you can’t be in a good place to lead other people that are emotionally unstable.

In a focus group, Liz, a 9th grade advisor, also confirms that she was comfortable with addressing challenging topics in advisory, “I’m comfortable with it. I’m not really sure why...Because they are in my advisory, I see them like my children.” In the focus group, it was discovered that some conversations in advisory that focused on sexuality, in the case of this situation, Chyna, another 9th grade advisor, admitted that she was comfortable with discussing controversial topics with her advisees, but in regards that topic, it posed challenging because of her personal beliefs, she stated, “I’m comfortable with it. I just think my delivery method could be polished a little
bit...I don’t think I’m very understanding.” Furthermore, Chyna and Liz agreed that additional support is needed in order for advisors to be equipped with the skills required to handle controversial issues objectively. But what if they do not have the natural ability? What if some adults are not comfortable with relating to students in that manner, especially when the relationship is not voluntary? How can advisors be required to tap into aspects of their personality that does not exist? What if male advisors feel as though they could relate more to female advisees or females to males? An advisor participant candidly shared authentic feelings about relationship development within his advisory group,

It's challenging being white and gay and it’s like—I think that’s probably why I think about the gender thing. Because like I would say it’s probably a little easier, or at least it used to be a little easier for me to build relationship in my classes with female students first.

This data revealed that there is not a “one size fits all” when considering the advisory model as intended. This perspective was explored further when considering recommendations in Chapter 5.

Ultimately, “positive relationships with teachers help to promote positive outcomes for students” (Decker et al., 2007, p. 86). The positive relationships that were developed as a result of their coexistence in an advisory setting were instrumental in the maturation of the student participants as long as there was respect, care, authenticity, and unconditional love. With a feeling of pride, Katie described her ability to be an authoritative figure as well as a mentor to her “girls,”
as she endearing termed them, “Sometimes I can even act as a role of like a personal mentor, or a big sister type figure. Sometimes they call me mom...they see me as a nurturer and someone that they love.” Ann reflected, “...I think about them all of the time, all of the time...it’s probably just that mother in me. It’s probably partly that, but I think it’s from them connecting to me.” Monique emphasized the existence of a familial bond when describing the relationship that she has with her group, “It’s like an auntie/mother type relationship, very close.” Winnie simply shared, “I love them all.” Figure 6 offers a strong visual summary that addressed if a strong relationships existed with advisees. Simplistically, advisors were asked to respond to the following statement: I have strong relationships with all of my advisees.

Figure 6. Responses from Question 1 from the Online Survey for Advisors. See Appendix G.
As illustrated in Figure 6, 81.8% of the advisors who completed the survey strongly agree or agree they have strong relationships with their advisees. It must be noted that the statement includes a strong operative word, “all;” nonetheless, it can be argued that advisors believe that strong bonds are present; thus providing evidence that supported the purpose of the advisory program, to build relationships.

Support. In the relationships that formed, support manifested itself in various ways that aligned to the purpose of the advisory program. Structural support, peer support (advisees to advisees and advisors to advisors), and advocacy were all forms that existed as revealed in the interview, observation, and focus group data. Katie asserted that her support came in the form of maintaining structure within her advisory community, “So sometimes I’m very much an authoritative figure for them and providing them with structural support in the context of the school community.” Allison also stated,

I provided like structure for the whole group. So, I was very strategic in providing structure because I felt like they had a concern about that whole abandonment issue. So, I would see them every day. I would see them in other parts of the building. I would remind them that we’re having advisory, I couldn’t wait to see them. And making those little connections.

Providing that consistency was the way that Katie and Allison supported their advisees. Creating a sense of normalcy was critical and created a well-structured environment with high expectations.
Peer to peer support was present as revealed in interview and observation data. Advisors specifically highlighted how the advisees would support one another. Katie speculated that the support expressed amongst her advisees stemmed from conflict within the group, beaming with pride she stated,

The one thing that I’ve seen happen a lot recently that makes me really proud in terms of conflict is when one of my advisees might be having a conflict with someone outside of our advisory group... watching her advisory sisters rally around her to help in that conflict was great... a student would kind of take on ownership of the mediator role or provide some contacts or additional support... they are really invested in the familial relationship that they have as an advisory from advisee to advisee.

Katie used the term “sisters” which is critical to emphasize because it was observed to be a reoccurring reference throughout the data. Used by the male advisor groups as well, “brother” and “sister” illustrated an unwavering bond, a relationship that is developed involuntarily, but is maintained and nurtured regardless of circumstance. Ethel further supported the notion of functioning like a family, “…we set norms and just how we’re going to gel as unit because we’re together so we’ve created that sisterhood. So that’s what they call each other, my advisory sister.”

Allison also discussed how the young ladies worked together to deal with an issue that occurred within her group that impacted the functionality of the advisory community,
We have a really challenging advisee in our group. I think she's been for lack of a better word ostracized. And so, we have used circles to talk about what’s going on...sometimes Jan [co-advisor] will take the group while I go work with that advisee. And then we bring her back into the group and we usually circle and talk about it. So, she’s made tremendous progress. And even when she got her...[behavior report] the other day, we were talking about her discipline and she had no infractions for the 3rd quarter which is unheard of...And she comes to me now and she’ll say, you told me to do such and such and I did it and it worked!

Both accounts exude a sense of pride and accomplishment. The community practices of supportive circles spoke to the existence of established relationships between the advisor and advisee, but also amongst their “advisory mates.” Advisees also shared their experience and respect for the circle format as being a tool they used to solve problems, Carmen stated, “We have a circle and we talk about stuff that is going on. But we can’t talk about it outside the circle because that’s a code.” As identified as an indicator of a community of practice, this type of support provides a shared way of engagement and a quick way to set up a problem to be discussed and resolved for the greater benefit of the community as a whole (Wenger, 1998).

Advisors also exhibited peer support in the form of professional development and informal “share-outs” of best practices regarding the facilitation of advisory sessions. Throughout the data collection period, I was able to observe a
few professional development sessions geared toward the topic of advisory. These sessions were facilitated by advisors; thus offering peer support in a professional setting. The focus of the presentation was encouraging advisors to reflect on how they can build relationships that will ultimately strengthen their advisory as a group. The facilitator (also a participant in the study) indicated that while the activities they did were fun and engaging, “...it was less about what we did, it was more about the time that we spent together; they appreciate the depth of the relationships that developed over time.” Throughout the presentation, best practices were shared that ranged from personal story telling to maintaining a positive attitude when interacting with the advisory group. It was also emphasized that relationships would continue to flourish if the advisor remained steady from year to year, “If you come back, it builds relationships.”

Another advisory focused professional development session was observed. The facilitators (a participant and a non-participant in the study) presented on academic check-ins and circles, both intended activities in the advisory program. Strategies to conduct effective and succinct behavior and academic check-ins were shared. The facilitators displayed how they conducted the check-in sessions through the use of the tracker provided by the school in conjunction with a document they created to organize the data for their advisees based on the eligibility requirements. Their goal was to make the information “student friendly” and easy to navigate. *Figure 7* is the template that was used and shared with other advisors.
Figure 7. "My Reality Check" – Student Friendly Form Used to Conduct Check-ins. Created by author.
The template (*Figure 7*) provided the advisor with a clear outline of academic, character, and attendance data that students were able to understand. This tangible artifact allowed for an interactive discourse that encouraged students to take ownership of their daily actions that impacted their school eligibility. Advisors used the form as documentation that they completed the check-in for that week. Most retained the forms in their advisory binder or they used whatever organizational system worked best for them.

Next, conducting impactful circles was discussed. As indicated on the visual they presented to advisors,

Circles are based from restorative practice which build a framework around building a community. For our advisory, the BUILDING has been the key element...Our advisory circle time has many facets. Sometimes the circle is exploding in laughter and talking, at other times, rivers of tears and sometimes, just silence.

The range of circle scenarios allowed other advisors to see that all circles look different and that is acceptable. They continue the session with the different types of circles and encourage their peer advisors to not be afraid of the social and emotional element because the school provides additional supports through the counseling department. The facilitators continued to discuss the physical arrangement of the circle and the tools the use to ensure that the circle is executed in an organized and respectful way. Lastly, the facilitators reminded fellow advisor
that the circle should be organic and encouraged them to use circle to continue
relationship building because it is an ongoing process.

Advocacy also was another intended purpose of the advisory model. Appearing in various forms, advocacy specifically referred to how advisors were expected to be advocates for their advisees as outlined in the school handbook as a non-negotiable. In the form of model conversations with advisees for self-advocacy or contacting teachers on behalf of their advisees, support expanded beyond the advisory setting. As Katie shared, “Oftentimes, I’ll coach them through a difficult conversation that they need to have with a teacher about an assignment or a concern that they’re having...we might do some role playing in regards to how they should approach the situation.” Advocacy could also appear in the form of providing resources or referring them to additional support networks if the advisor did not possess the skill or expertise required to solve the problem presented,

...there have been a couple of situations this year where we will get to a point and I’ll say you know what, I’m not a counselor but I do know a friend who is. And I’ll go ahead and connect them to another resource. Then I will follow-up.

Understanding the needs of an individual and having the skillset to provide them support from afar based on comfortability is also acceptable and demonstrates that support can come from multiple people at different times or simultaneously. Katie emphatically stated, “I’ve made myself available...They have my cell phone number in case they need to get in touch with me...” Further, in an anecdote about a specific
situation about an advisee who struggled academically, Katie shared, “I check in with her often about her progress. I’ve held teacher meetings, conferences. ... I’ll support her through it, but at the end of the day she has to do the work.” The tone of Katie towards the specific situation demonstrated that while offering unwavering support, advisees must be aware that self-advocacy is still critical and will be very useful in their future as maturing young adults.

Cross-referencing the perspective advisors had in regards to the support they gave their advisees, with the perspectives of how the advisees felt about that support is critical to consider. When asked to describe the support given to him from his advisor, Oliver stated, “He tells us what we should be doing in class and that the decisions we make will impact us later on in our life...” Daniel also shared his experience regarding the support he received from his advisor, “He's always been there. Anytime I need help with something in school like with a teacher, he'll come with me and talk to them...Anytime I have a problem with a teacher, we'll have a meeting with them.” Throughout the discussion, Daniel expressed extreme gratitude as a graduating senior because his advisor supported him by writing college and scholarship recommendations.

Non-academic support was also prevalent as expressed by students. With a smile, Josephine shared “…she comes to my track meets...” Additionally, in a focus group setting, Kyle detailed an anecdote about his fellow advisee,

I won’t say any names, but one of the kids ran away from their house and he called Mr. ... (former advisor, non-participant) and he went and picked him
up on a weekend and now he’s saying with another kid that goes to this school and he’s been homeless for 2 years.

The longitudinal relationships are important to note and provide evidence that relationships develop over time and from year to year, if nurtured, can lead to a place of admiration and eternal support. Advisory creates a personalized environment in which the community takes collective responsibility for successes; the caring environment provides the student and their family with an advocate in the school (Klem & Connell, 2004). In the case of this study, advisors became true advocates, even in challenging times, for a small number of students and based on the data, they did what it took to help students succeed academically and personally.

Context. Advisory meetings took place twice per week for 30-55 minutes; however, during the spring semester (January-May) at the time of study, advisory was condensed to once per week due to feedback, not yielded as a result of the study, from advisors at the mid-point of the school year. In some cases, 1-2 advisory groups met per location. Due to the size of the building and growing number of faculty and students, advisory meeting locations were challenging and inconsistent. Some advisory groups were forced to meet in conference rooms, the teacher’s lounge, the cafeteria, the auditorium, and the lobby of the auditorium. If conference rooms were reserved for school meetings, advisory groups were forced to relocate or co-exist with another group. Also, if an advisor was absent, groups were expected to report to another location or combine in a room where 2 advisory groups were already located. The instability of room locations and overall
movement was revealed through the perspectives of advisors and advisees. Dante stated, “The structure, it changes every year.” Dante’s advisory experience ranged from functioning as a single advisory group to a co-advisory model, back to a single model. They met in different locations every year causing angst and at times confusion. There were additional reports of inconsistency and uncertainty of room locations from time to time. As an advisor trying to function within the constant change, with slight frustration, Allison shared, “Sometimes I can hear other advisory groups around us and they get a little noisy, a little chaotic and that’s not the environment that we have.” Maintaining an advisory location that was completely private was impossible at the site of study; this was a concern especially when considering the personal nature of the discourse that occurs in advisory from time to time. In some situations, advisory groups had to cohabitate, which posed some challenges regarding accountability and ownership of the group, Winnie stated, “…there were some struggles last year because there were two advisories that were combined and when that happened the other advisor stop attending.” The behavior of the other co-advisor created uncertainty and displayed a lack of investment for the students. In order for a group to function as a true community, as affirmed by Wenger (1998), “When we are with a community of practice of which we are a full member, we are in familiar territory” (p. 152). In the case of the observed model, the physical territory was not familiar. From the viewpoint of an advisor, David revealed,
Like freshman year it was just us. Then sophomore year we move in with this person, then junior year now we’re moved in with this person. So, it was like a lot of the things that we did get “lost in the shuffle” because you’re blending us with other people that don’t necessarily run their advisory the same way.

The constant displacement of advisory groups from year to year was indeed an ongoing frustration in the context of the observed model.

The size of the advisory group also increased compared to the intended model. A setting intended for an advisor and 10-15 advisees, gradually became an advisory group that consisted of an advisor and a possible co-advisor with 15-30 advisees. Additionally, a single gender cohort model was created; however, one male student, as reported by an advisor who was a participant in the study, was allowed to report to a female advisory. It was identified that the student was bullied and did not receive support from his advisory peers, “…he has a lot of female friends at the school in general and seems to kind of just be happier in a co-ed space.” The context of the single gender advisory model was explored further based on recommendations from participants and when considering the ideal model for the program.

In the history of advisory program at the site, an existing issue with staff retention was a concern. This is important to note because in situations when staff transitioned out (by choice or force) in the middle of the semester, a group of advisees are left deserted and may be assigned a new advisor, forced to combine
with an existing advisory group, or risk being separated and reassigned to multiple
groups. Additionally, in an effort to combat the various staff transitions; after
reviewing the pathology of the advisory program, a co-advisor model was
implemented. Advisors were required to partner and co-exist so that in the case
that one advisor leaves, there is a remaining advisor and the student cohort remains
intact. This change was not maintained; during the school year in which the study
took place, advisors were given options to remain with their co-advisor or return
back to the original state. Advisors were asked to complete a survey (not for the
purpose of this study), the survey asked their preference and additionally it asked
them to identify the students they wanted to keep in their group. After much
shuffling, about half of the advisors maintained the co-advisor model and the other
half maintained the original model of an advisor and 10-15 advisees. Staff members
who became first time advisors that year were not provided an option, they
followed the intended model. Regardless of choice, every advisory group still had an
“advisory partner,” which addressed staff absenteeism or emergencies advisors
needed coverage for their group.

This shift in context and infrastructure resulted in some contentions between
the co-advisors and the advisees depending on individual relationships or lack
thereof, group dynamics, and the expectations determined by each group prior to
being united. Issues with having inconsistent advisors and expectations during
advisory time was revealed, in some situations, the change was seamless, in others,
the group dynamics were impacted and at times, relationships were severed. In
other cases, the advisees were able to relate to one co-advisor over the other. This occurred in a male co-advisory setting, John shared, “I remember when we had a joint advisory group...everybody was actually kind of bonding because you know with Mr.... (non-participant)…” In the cases when advisories were combined, some issues with advisors were reported based on established relationships or the development of new relationships.

Inputs. Students are assigned and advisory group for their freshman through senior year the intent is to remain with the advisor for 4 years. As identified in the preceding subsection, staff transitions presented a barrier to the execution of the cohort model, while in most cases the students were able to maintain their cohort, other cases required advisory groups to blend and function as one. Additionally, it was revealed that student and staff transitions posed an issue in the maintenance of the cohort model, in the survey, an advisor shared,

My relationship with my girls has been wonderful, but my roster kept changing because advisors left. The most difficult was when advisories were combined and my co-advisor through that meant she did not have to attend. I had a new group of girls who felt abandoned.

The various alterations of the intended advisory model impacted not only the students, but also the teachers and their overall perspectives of the purpose of the program. Consistency was indeed absent and caused feelings of instability for advisors and advisees. The multiple transitions also curtailed an element of the
purpose of the advisory program, to build relationships and provide consistent support.

As outlined in the intended model of the advisory program, coordinators were positioned to support and promote advisory best practices. As veteran advisors, the coordinators did not have an advisory group to maintain, which granted them the time required to observe during the advisory period, create tools and strategies for best practices, develop and facilitate professional development sessions with the goal of offering “peer to peer” professional support to current advisors. This initiative was short lived due to the lack of investment of the coordinators and the inability to streamline the purpose of the position for compensation.

In the past, at the site of study, it was observed and reported that the selected advisory coordinators were not invested in the initiative, they rarely fulfilled the expectations of the role, nor were they held accountable through evaluative or fiduciary methods. The position was a consolation offered to them since they completed their 4-year commitment to an advisory group. Typically, when an advisor is assigned an advisory group during their freshman year, the “commitment” was for them to be the advisor of this group until they graduate. This commitment, although not contractual, was the vision of the school and was best practice; thus providing a long-term investment for students throughout their matriculation in high school. Additionally, this concept supported the notion of creating an environment and a program in which sustained relationships and
“ongoing engagement” was promoted and developed longitudinally (Klem and Connell, 2004, p. 262). These established relationships also extended beyond the advisor-advisee relationship to the home. Functioning as the liaison between school and home, the long term connections built with parents also provided a 3-tier support system: advisor - school support and advocate, parent/guardian - home support and advocate, and school infrastructure - systems and tools for behavior and academic accountability.

During the time of the study, two administrators, who had a strong interest in the success of the advisory program, served as “advisory coordinators.” The administrators were not compensated for this additional responsibility, however it was observed and reported that they completed several activities with advisors that included the following: weekly advisory emails sent with possible activities and resources, the development of optional SEL lesson plans, facilitation and organization of professional development sessions that presented best practices to advisors. Subsequently, observations and feedback sessions were conducted in order to support advisors and honor the ultimate purpose and expected execution of the advisory program. The support from the administrators, who functioned as advisory coordinators, tapered and stopped prior to the completion of data collection for this study due to the role functioning as an addition to the overwhelming responsibilities of their positions as school administrators.

In an effort to build the skillset of advisors in regards to the consistent social and emotional support, the site invested in a SEL curriculum that packaged the
facilitation of those skills into a curriculum format. At the time of study, the curriculum was in its pilot year, select advisors volunteered to execute the curriculum. The select advisors that attempted to take advantage of this resource volunteered; therefore, only a limited amount of advisory groups were exposed to the content. As revealed in the interview and observation data, the curriculum was not executed with fidelity, many advisors were not invested in implementing the curriculum and this resource was abandoned. This practice was problematic because SEL skills are sequential and develop continuously. Additionally, this resource was not designed to be fleeting, the SEL lessons were relational and needed to be executed explicitly and consistently.

In addition, the implementation of the SEL curriculum required some preparation. In order to execute with fidelity, advisors had to preview the lesson plan for familiarity and prepare photocopies of activities. As noted by Liz, “I don’t know how I felt about the SEL [program]... I think it was a good program...Like even though the lessons were provided, you still have to prepare. You just can’t open it and read it...it was more, it wasn’t authentic.” Overall, the SEL curriculum was not well received or implemented effectively. Many assumptions were made regarding its purpose and potential impact; however, it was not made evident that this resource could have contributed to the successful execution of the advisory program.

The final input into the advisory program were the guidelines that were identified in the school handbook. Although the handbook explicitly identified the
purpose of the advisory program and set expectations for its expected implementation and execution, methods to assess execution and maintain accountability was lacking. Although administrators conducted informal observations and provided feedback, a clear measurable and actionable system was not utilized to ensure that expectations were adhered to. As exposed and affirmed in the survey data, “Accountability is still unclear. Not all advisors follow directions.” Additionally, as revealed in the data, based on observation and feedback from advisors, professional development was limited and only occurred a few times at beginning of year and at the start of the second semester. Based on the research, an advisor noted, “Much of my success has come because of my own initiative; my experience could be improved with additional resources and PD from the school.” Figure 8 illustrates the responses to the question from the online survey: How prepared did you feel to effectively implement the advisory program?

Figure 8. Responses to Question 4a from the Online Survey for Advisors. See Appendix G.
Based on the data displayed, 45.5% of the survey participants indicated that they were not and fairly prepared to effectively implement the advisory program. Based on the qualitative data from the survey, advisors noted the following: “I needed professional development, shadowing and effective an effective advisor, and ways to earn buying from students did not exist... [I needed] a formal list of responsibilities, PD on SEL, and [tools] to invest students in advisory.” During the time of the study, only two professional development sessions were focused on the topic of advisory, additionally, the modeling of an effective advisory group, not did shadowing occur to provide advisors with knowledge that could have been imparted to them from experienced and successful advisors.

The implementation of additional resources was a need that was discovered, many advisors created their own materials that helped them address and support the needs of their advisory groups, Ann shared, “...we’ve been doing a series on respect...My resources I normally look online sometimes...” Some advisors felt very comfortable and felt constricted, one advisor stated, “The approach felt prescribed and I felt like there was a script or program I could not waver from. I had to learn to trust my instincts because advisory is relationship based, there is no universal approach.” Advisors should be equipped with the tools to support their advisees in a differentiated way; in order for this to occur, advisors must feel comfortable addressing specific needs and be willing to go beyond the community for additional support if required.
Activities and Causal Effects. Identified as an intended activity of the advisory program, home visits were expected to occur within all advisory groups. While this was an expectation, its completion was intermittent causing inconsistency in the overall model. In the history of the advisory program at the site, home visits were not consistent, nor were they enforced. However, for the visits that did take place; home visit schedules were created, new advisors were partnered with veteran advisors, deadlines were provided, and scripts were created to assist with facilitating the conversation. During time of study, home visits were not enforced, however contact with parents was expected on a quarterly basis. This could be completed by conducting home visits, attending parent/teacher meetings or school events, participating in school conferences, corresponding via email, and conducting phone calls. Because the causal effect of home visits was connected to the development of bonds with advisees and their families, some advisors developed relationships with the household in other ways.

Advisors reacted to the following statement in the online survey: I have a strong relationship with the parents/guardian for your advisees. As exemplified in Figure 9, advisors felt that even though home visits were not carried out as expected, close interactions with families occurred and were still strong.
Over 90% of the advisors who completed the survey proclaimed to have had strong relationships with the parents or guardians of their advisees. The parental presence of Ann’s advisory group was evident. She described a circle that she hosted with her advisees and their parents. Ann noticed that her advisees were struggling with arriving to tardy to class on a daily basis. Because the issue was egregious, she felt it was critical to involve parents when she addressed her group. Ann shared,

They sat in the circle...We brought food...it was extremely organic. Parents very much participated. We talked a lot about why they had to take certain classes. We talked about certain perspectives...So it was very good for the parents to hear and then they shared their personal stories or outlooks...A parent shared how she had to catch three buses and two trains to get to college and be on time.

Figure 9. Responses to Question 2 from the Online Survey for Advisors. See Appendix G.
This anecdote provides clear evidence that parents were welcomed as active participants in the advisory community. They were able to participate in interactive discourse for the purpose of increasing support, building relationships, and developing community. Other advisors reported that they maintain constant communication with families through email or phone communication if necessary. Lauren shared an experience with a parent, in her opinion, the relationship was established; however, she felt as though some parents took advantage of her desire to support her advisees. “I have parents that have tried to take advantage and asked for money to assist with cell phone bills and things like that...I think some parents get comfortable...” Relationships with families were indeed forged through the creative efforts of the advisors. Although relationships with parents or guardians was not solely developed as a result of the intended home visit activity, it was important to note because the causal effects aligned with the supporting the students in the advisory community.

Functioning as another expected activity, the construction of advisory norms was imperative to the organized method of facilitating advisory sessions. Norms also played a role in establishing boundaries for the participants in the advisory community. How norms were created was not explicitly revealed in the data; however, the impact of crossed boundaries and broken trust surfaced. Based on the intended activities outlined, initial norms are created at the start of the year. Ethel indicated that her advisory group has established norms that they created in advisory, she stated, “we set norms and just discuss how we are going to gel as a
unit because we’re together.” The data exposed the assumption that although norms were set they were not consistently reviewed; therefore boundaries were crossed at times between advisors and advisees and amongst advisees and their peers. Lauren shared,

I actually had a situation with two advisees that took some information and ran with it. And these two advisees that I had at my house one time...so we’re kind of building that relationship back...So yeah, I’m very careful now about what I share.

To probe more in the activity of norm setting, advisors were asked if they shared personal information with their advisees, the response varied. Some advisors stated that they share minimal information, another advisor admitted to sharing false stories for the purpose of relating to her advisory group. Jan disclosed,

I make up stuff all of the time...like if they’re going through something and I can’t relate, I make up something...They are more willing to share if you say, “Oh I skipped a class once...I failed a class...but you can still live with a little bit of failure”...they don’t even think we failed or we’ve ever done anything wrong.

Based on the data, it can be summarized that sometimes boundaries are crossed and trust broken, but if the effort still remains to develop relationships, everyone can learn from the experience.

A final activity of the model is behavior and academic check-ins. This cyclical process occurred weekly, however in the case of a co-advisor setting or reassigned
groups that went beyond the threshold of 10-15 students per group, check-ins occurred bi-weekly. Nonetheless, the WIGS tracker created an interactive discourse between advisor, advisee, and family. Also, it provided an accountability system that all stakeholders can understand and have access to. Advisors used the system in different ways to support their advisory community. Lauren reported, “I make it know to some of my advisees when they mess up academically.” Bruce admitted to going beyond the tracker to support his advisees weekly, “I follow up on behavior....I was able to peek my head into their classes every once in a while...I do most of my advisory supporting via email follow-up and grade check-ins.” I was able to triangulate Bruce’s report through email artifacts that he shared illustrating his constant communication with teachers. His correspondence included specific questions about assignments and outlined requirements for next steps in order for him to provide that information to his advisees as a method of support. Katie shared how she conduced academic check-ins,

I check-in with them regularly. We’ve created a check-in sheet that last year I filled out for them and gave to them so they could review their progress.

This year, they take ownership by completing the form based on the information from the other information systems we use.

Katie went the next step by creating a system in which her advisees took ownership of their academic success. Using the check-in sheet as a model, Katie initiated interactive discourse for the purpose of teaching self-advocacy. Figure 10 illustrates
the viewpoint of advisors regarding their thoughts about the impact their relationships with their advisees have regarding academic success.

From the student perspective, the behavior and academic check-ins were helpful, and they were fully aware of the school’s focus, to prepare students for college success, John shared, “I feel like advisory at [site] is college geared…but another goal could be making sure that my advisory group is strong together or that we have tight bonds...” For John, it appeared as though relationship building was dominant to weekly academic touchpoints. Carmen stated that her advisors conduct academic check-ins and encourage her to improve her grades by completing assignments or requesting extra help from her teachers, “They’ll tell me I need to go talk to the teacher...If I need to make up something they make sure I get it done.”

Academic achievement can be considered to have a direct correlation to the relationships students have with advisors as a result of the advisory program.
Moreover, research suggests that educators and policy makers have been considering how contextual factors such as classroom size or personalization initiatives like advisory can impact academic success and school engagement (Allen & Steinberg, 2002; Klem & Connell, 2004; McClure et al., 2010). Determining academic achievement was not the focus of this study; therefore the data produced limited perspectives regarding how relationships effected academics, however it should be considered in future research. Overall, the data showed that while students recognized the support they received from their advisors regarding academics, they were more compelled to elaborate on the nature of their relationships regardless if they had negative or positive perceptions.

Outputs. Informal observations of advisory sessions were conducted periodically during the time of study. The observations were conducted by administrators. The purpose of this output was to ensure that the expectations of the advisory program was carried out consistently from advisor to advisor. When observations would happen, the feedback was provided via email, but an explicit tool was not deployed nor was there a set schedule indicating frequency with clear owners. As previously mentioned, due to the lack of investment, time, and the overwhelming responsibilities of administration, the informal observations did not happen consistently. However, based on the responses from the advisors who were observed, advisors found the feedback to be helpful and employed some of the suggested strategies shared with them as a result of the observations. Additional follow up was needed in order to formulate a perspective on the true impact of the
observations. An inquiry with the administrative team would have been helpful to examine the why there was a lack of consistency and to determine an effective system to conduct effective observations for the purpose of supplementary professional development since that was identified as a need.

The final output was the interactive spreadsheet tool that documented behavior and grades to determine “eligibility.” Termed as the WIGS Tracker, it created an interactive discourse between advisor, advisee, and family. Its requirements were made clear and it was easily accessible to all stakeholders.

Summary

My findings were presented based on a visual and narrative of the intended logic model and the observed logic model of the advisory program at the site of study. With the purpose of the program as the origin of the models, each analysis provided insight into the how the advisory program was expected to be executed and how it actually was implemented. Programmatic elements along with the perspectives of the participants and a clear depiction of the overall program was displayed.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusions of this inquiry and considers themes that differentiate the intended model from the observed model. Through a consideration of recommendations from the participants and with the goal of eliminating the inconsistencies exposed when the intended and observed logic models were compared, an ideal model was created for the purpose of replicating the advisory program at other high schools. Additionally, next steps for research were explored.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The focus of this study was to explore if an established advisory program helped to develop communities of practice as a result of student-teacher relationships rooted in support. Conclusions were made regarding how relationships were developed and maintained through communities of practice as exemplified through the advisory program.

Positives about the program were revealed and recommendations from participants (advisors and advisees) were considered. Ultimately, an ideal logic model was created and explicated providing the site of study with a clear model in order to demonstrate how relationships can be facilitated and maintained through an advisory model; thus creating a true community of practice. The examination of the program results connected with specific indicators of the CoP framework to determine if a community of practice was indeed formed as a result of the program regardless of the inconsistencies that existed.

Intended Versus Observed: Themes Revealed Through the Differences

Through this exploration of the advisory program at the site of study, I maintained focus on the ultimate purpose of the program: to build relationships that offer consistent academic, social, and emotional support for students. In an effort to
determine if the purpose has been achieved and has the potential of remaining attainable, I focused on the core of that statement; relationships. As I examined the intentions of the program, consistency was key and it was evident that it was not maintained as illustrated in the observed model.

As displayed in the observed logic model (Figure 5), many connections linking the elements of the model: purpose, context, inputs, activities, causal effects, and outputs were represented by dotted lines indicating inconsistencies that existed in the observed state of the program. Through my explication of the theme of inconsistency revealed through the differences, the purpose of the advisory program will be used as a guide and point of reference.

Context

The design of a program is the basis of its execution. Because the context presents how a program should work, if there are any variances, it could lead to imbalance and inconsistency throughout the model. In the case of this study, every aspect of the intended context was misaligned with the exception of the high school as the setting. As revealed in the data, advisory time was reduced at the start of the spring semester. Although the change was a result of a mid-year teacher survey administered by the school, it was a difference from the intended design. Inadvertently, based on my assumptions, the reduction of the advisory sessions (as a result of the mid-year teacher survey), communicated that the program was deprioritized for reasons that evaded the purpose: to build relationships that offer consistent support to students.
The environment of the advisory community was important to consider, especially due to the potential nature of confidential issues and personal issues that may have been discussed during relationship building initiatives. In the observed model, many advisory groups had to co-exist or experienced inconsistency regarding room locations due to staff departures, school events, and overall building usage. Additionally, as a result of the varied alterations to the advisory model historically at the site, there was a mixture of advisory group types; some had one advisor, others had co-advisors. This inconsistency caused confusion and uncertainty for the students and the adults. It also impacted the inclusion and execution of activities; thus limiting the ability for groups to develop sustained bonds.

Lastly, the unexpected modification to the single gender context was revealed. Although there was only one occurrence in which a student of an opposite gender reported to another advisory group, it was important to note and consider when thinking of the limitations of the intended model and when developing the ideal model for program. *Figure 11* provides a visual in order to directly compare the context of the intended and observed logic model.
Figure 11. Direct Comparison of the Intended and Observed Context
Inputs

The inputs highlight the resources and infrastructures used to execute the program. In my analysis of the data, I pondered upon the following question: What are the constraints of the inputs that may have caused barriers to the realization of the purpose? Similar to the context, inputs should remain consistent in order to create a sense of normalcy for the participants in the program. In the case of the study, there were major inconsistencies in the cohort model due to staff and student movement.

Although staff remained consistent during the time of data collection, the advisory groups that existed was a result of a pathology of changes in staffing. Also, student movement was revealed in the data. Student enrollment was the main culprit of the fluctuations in the number of advisees assigned to a group. At times, it was reported that advisees were added to groups with established norms and relationships; thus causing a potential break in the flow of the advisory community; however, the interruption was temporary. As Smith (2003, 2009) argues, “as they become more content they become more involved in the main process of the particular community. The move from legitimate peripheral participation into full participation” (p. 8). This was made evident in the study as revealed through an anecdote shared during an interview. The advisor admitted the challenges she was having with acclimating a new student that was added to her advisory group. The success of the advisor’s efforts was not shown in the data; however, based on her
genuine interest in reaching that student, it was assumed that she was eventually successful.

*Figure 12* provides a visual in order to directly compare the context of the intended and observed logic model. Differences in the remaining inputs, SEL curriculum and school handbook were not observed; however, it must be noted that these inputs lacked some elements. The SEL curriculum was not well received according to the data. Feedback was given from the advisors that attempted to implement the curriculum indicating the challenge in preparing for the lessons and accessing the materials. In regards to the school handbook, even though it was a solid document that outlined the expectations of the program’s execution, accountability was not explicit. A clear measurable and actionable system was not utilized to ensure that expectations were fulfilled.
Figure 12. Direct Comparison of the Intended and Observed Inputs
Activities and Casual Effects

Activities were the initiatives that are carried out in order to assist with achieving the vision of the program. To determine if the activities were purposeful, the causal effects explored the possible impacts, positive or negative, that occurred as a direct result of the initiatives. Functioning as one of the initial touchpoints with families, home visits played a large role in the history at the site of study. Because of the impact of developing bonds beyond the classroom, home visits created a support system amongst the advisor, the advisee, the family, and the school. According to the data, home visits occurred rarely and did not solely determine the level of involvement an advisor had with the home. Advisors admitted various other forms of support and parental contact throughout the study. Most of the relationships built with parents or guardians stemmed from the comfort level of the advisor. In some cases, contact with the home was a simple phone call or email. In one case, an advisor invited parents to participate in a restorative circle. Her report indicated that the activity was successful and it strengthened her bonds with the home. Although the perspectives of parents were not solicited in this study, based on the data, relationships with advisors did exist if contact was consistent.

Restorative circles and other “getting to know you” activities were very helpful in the attempt to understand the experiences of individuals in the advisory community. As a distinctive element of restorative practice, circles were used consistently in specific advisory groups (Smith et al., 2015). Many advisors and
students reported various experiences with hosting circles in their advisory community. From building relationships to solving problems, the purposes of restorative circles varied because professional development and overall interest were lacking; nevertheless, they were beneficial when implemented consistently. For groups that did not utilize circles, based on the relationships between advisor and advisee that were weak or non-existent, it can be assumed that restorative circles was not an activity executed regularly.

The creation of advisory norms was an activity that occurred throughout, however they were not revisited or revised as time propelled forward. Norms set the tone for the advisory group and established clear boundaries. In some cases, the boundaries were crossed and trust was damaged, causing resentment or conflict with the advisors and the advisees. It can be surmised that the trust was broken because the norms were not reviewed periodically as reminders or revised as the dynamics of the advisory changed due to the change of an advisor, joining with another advisory group, or the addition of new student members in the community.

Lastly, behavior and academic check-ins were consistently implemented; however, the only aspect of the activity that wavered from the intended model was the frequency in which the check-ins were conducted. The discourse amongst the student, advisor, and parent or guardian existed and the tracking system was used faithfully because if offered a common language that all students were held accountable to. Additionally, it was very impactful that all stakeholders understood the language and it was made readily available for review.
Figure 13 presents a direct comparison of the intended and observed model. The activities and causal effects remained directly connected; however, if the activities were inconsistently implemented, the effects were minimal and unstable.
Figure 13. Direct Comparison of the Intended and Observed Activities and Casual Effects
Outputs

The outputs provided evidence that the activities were performed to achieve the purpose of the program. In order to determine if expectations are being carried out, the intended design relied on informal observations and feedback. Nonetheless, although observations and feedback occurred, they were inconsistent and were conducted by multiple school leaders without much calibration. A clear and common system was needed in order to ensure that the advisory program was executed with fidelity to fulfill the vision of the program.

The tracking system was the most consistent element throughout the entire program. The interactive spreadsheet was a tool used to document behavior and grades to determine “eligibility.” The tracker created an interactive discourse between advisor, advisee, and family. Additionally, it provided an accountability system that all stakeholders understood and had access to. The only inconsistency that existed compared to the intended model was the frequency in which the check-ins took place. Overall, the tracking system was widely used and was implemented appropriately. Based on this consistency, I am led to consider the implications of the discourse community developed as a result of the advisory program and its potential impact on academic achievement. Can this level of personalization in school lead to higher levels of academic achievement because there exists a consistent method of accountability and discourse regarding tracking academic success? There is a strong possibility.
Figure 14 presents a direct comparison of the intended and observed model. The outputs were the same; however, the observations and feedback were inconsistently implemented because there was not a clear system in order to execute.
Figure 14. Direct Comparison of the Intended and Observed Outputs
Feedback and Recommendations

The Perspective of the Participants

Positives about the advisory program. As the core of the advisory model, relationships was considered the most valuable aspect of the program. Advisors and advisees spoke highly of the relationships that were developed as a result of the community that was formed in the advisory group. Winnie candidly shared,

...it was really good for me to have those relationships in the building. I think having an advisory can be incredibly beneficial for a teacher and maybe just in the future, highlighting that piece of it. Because I think teachers get really nervous about doing it right but they don’t see the benefit for themselves.

Having an advisory is actually a great thing.

Winnie’s perspective demonstrated that she valued the relationships she built with students and considered the program to be helpful for teachers because it can reveal aspects of students that are not typically exposed in an academic setting. Ann’s sentiments also showed that affinity for the program was gradual, yet valuable, “…I really have come to be a fan of advisory. I see the necessity of it.” Through her interview, Ann spoke passionately about the need for young people, specifically young ladies; to have confidence and self-acceptance. In her opinion, the advisory program arranged a mentor/mentee relationship that she did not expect, but learned to accept and embrace.
Suggestions for improvement. Students and advisors had deep insight into how the advisory program could be improved at “Metro College Prep” high school. The major themes that surfaced as a result of their open feedback were for the model to be redesigned and for advisors to be professionally developed consistently.

Redesign the model. The advisory program definitely yielded positive sentiments and beliefs regarding the impact of the relationships developed as a result of the program. However, the context of the model was a concern and attention is need to tweak it so it can appeal to all participants favorably. The advisor David shared,

I think advisory is great. When it’s done right and done effectively. I think it should be something that is voluntary because I don’t think that – just like everyone is not meant to be a parent, everyone is not meant to be an advisor.

When asked specifically if everyone should be an advisor, Bruce stated that they should not, but elaborated further,

I think we are entrusting a lot of formidable experience to people that may or may not know how to treat mental health...Like some of the topics that may come up in advisory, like I don’t trust everyone in this building to handle appropriately.

This perspective was wide across the interview, focus group, and survey data. Allowing staff to volunteer to function as an advisor may improve overall investment in the program. If an advisor approaches this initiative with eagerness, they may be more apt to implement the program with fidelity and fully support
students in ways that would not occur if they end up with an apathetic advisor.

Since the purpose of the program requires active participation, in situation where the community is weak due to failed interest, relationship development would be stunted and entry and participation in the community would be inhibited (Smith, 2003, 2009). Also, the perspective of the relationship between advisor and advisee could impact the outlook participants have on school.

Students also shared their perspective of advisors not being invested in the advisory program, Oliver indicated that students choose not go to their advisory because “they really don’t know their advisory or they don’t like their advisor.” His statement leads me to believe that advisees can sense when their advisor is not genuinely interested in the process of relationship building or the program itself. The quality of advisee-advisor relationships need to be examined closely to prevent the exposure to resentment and apathy towards participating in the program, specifically from the perspective of the advisor because they are the adult leaders in the community.

In order to combat the lack of interest from advisors, Bruce recommended that the school should find “two or three professionals...that love SEL, like lives and breathes it – it’s like their favorite thing to do” because it provides that a consistent experience to all which could have more impact than sporadic interest and poorly planned advisory sessions. Furthermore in regards to the SEL initiative, as revealed in the qualitative data of the survey, “Mandating or prescribing a structure for advisory takes away from the organic nature of the advisory dynamic. Suggesting
ideas is great, but the oversight of administration does make the program taxing.”

The survey data also suggested that the SEL initiative should be embedded in the general curriculum of the 9th grade instead of through the advisory program,

I don’t believe in advisory as a system, but I would love to have a structured SEL/Health/Test Prep/College program of study. 9th – SEL and study skills, 10th – Health/Sex Ed., 11th – College Choice/ACT Prep, 12th – College Persistence/Scholarships and Financials Literacy. This method would allow professionals focused on those areas to work with kids on a specific topic and provide structure in a classroom setting.

This approach is interesting because it removes the onus of support students socially and emotionally from the responsibility of the advisor, which was noted as a point of contention and discomfort for some advisors. However, in the outline above, the SEL component disappears after 9th grade. In revising the advisory program, it is critical that the SEL elements remain; but could possibly be scaled up to appeal to students as they mature and evolve as adolescents and students.

Advisors shared their belief that some people have the natural ability to relate to people, which others have to work at it. Winnie admitted, “I think some people have more natural skills...” Katie agreed and elaborated on the impression advisors leave on students if investment in the program is lacking;

...if you’re not in it for the right reasons, they’ll be able to pick up on that and it’s going to be really hard for you to build solid relationships... We said if
you're not genuinely invested in this process and in the lives of these young people on that level, it’s one thing to be invested as a teacher – it’s another thing to take on this type of responsibility – then, maybe it's not for you, but if you are and you want to, it will come with time. It will come with time and repeated investment and consistency in what you demonstrate to your group. They’ll...respect you for that... I think that you either have to be born with it and be okay with using it and kind of have a natural sense of where those boundaries fall or you have to be willing to develop it.

Katie’s perspective is critical to consider. Students are very impressionable and most are very aware when interactions not genuine. The viewpoint that everyone is not meant to be an advisor resonates and a process could be created that makes “advisorship” optional instead of a mandate. Even if becoming an advisor is desired, individuals must be willing develop and hone their skills to handle challenging situations that may be presented in their advisory community.

The context of the single-gendered advisory model was suggested as a change. Even though the feedback was an outlier, it was substantial and should be identified. The intended logic model indicated that advisory groups were to be single-gendered; however, during the study, one instance was discovered in which a male student reported to a female advisory group based on his comfortability. The observation was aligned with feedback provided in an interview by his advisor, Bruce. The student was not a participant in the study. Bruce noted his disagreement with the existing model, “...philosophically I think the gender advisories are kind of
silly...to me gender is a social construct and like we’re just reinforcing like the view that masculinity and femininity are somehow mutually exclusive...It’s not at all how my school life was.” Bruce exposed his personal feelings about gender being a social construct that is being patronized by the state of the program at the site. Furthermore, in my approach to his perspective through an interpretive lens, my assumption is that he was subconsciously situating his personal experience and upbringing as a Caucasian male working with “at risk” students. While this study did not take into account ethnic differences between advisors and advisees, it was observed and considered in my analysis of the perspectives revealed from the participants.

Other suggestions ranged from increasing the frequency of advisory weekly to changing the time of day advisory occurred. Some respondents felt as though students and advisors would be best served if advisory took place in the mornings, “I would go back to advisory morning check-ins. I think it sets the tone for the school day.” Because an activity of advisory includes behavior and academic check-ins, helping students prepare for the day and setting them up for success could have impacts on student conduct as well as performance in their classes. Aligned with research, Decker et al. (2007) asserts, “As students increased in their reporting of positive emotional quality in the student-teacher relationship, the amount of behavior referrals they received decreased and the amount of time they spent on-task increased” (pp. 103-104). This is very important to note, it directly correlates positive relationships with behavioral and academic outcomes.
**Professional development.** Throughout the data, there was overwhelming evidence that advisors felt unprepared and not fully developed in the competencies required to properly execute advisory. The feeling of not being prepared as an advisor was exposed through survey data (*Figure 8*). Additionally, as revealed in the data, based on observation and feedback from advisors, professional development was limited and only occurred a few times at the beginning of the year and at the start of the second semester. Based on the research, an advisor noted, “Much of my success has come because of my own initiative; my experience could be improved with additional resources and PD from the school.” The survey illustrated that much more was needed in order for them to feel adequately prepared to effectively implement the advisory program.

Based on the role of the advisor as indicated by the site of study, the advisor must function as the advocate for their advisees. They are to be in constant communication with parents or guardians and they are expected to build strong, positive relationships for the purpose of consistent support of students. As previously indicated, a specialized skillset is required to execute advisory effectively; therefore, professional development is needed to introduce new approaches and emphasize expectations to ensure appropriate implementation. From a professional perspective, Winnie frankly shared,

I think some people have more priorities towards it. I do think that when you have first year teachers or overworked teachers, stressed out teachers, when you have people who are not planning for advisory, it can be hard...But
I think it’s definitely not something you get in teacher training. And a lot of our teachers aren’t even traditionally trained teachers. I just think it’s a skill that needs to be developed seriously as a teaching skill. Because it is teaching, it’s a different type of teaching but it is teaching.

Winnie mentions an essential perspective regarding the context of the site, as a charter school entity, “Metro College Prep” has different certification requirements as compared to regular public schools. While the teachers have to be highly qualified to teach at the school, some have received alternative certification or are functioning under provisional teaching certificates due to career switches. When considering the issue of staff retention, this may be something to consider in further research. Are teachers transitioning from “Metro College Prep” because they lack formal training? Regardless of their teaching experience, advisors must be developed professionally in order to fully understand the purpose and function of the program. Additionally, they need to be provided with specialized techniques in order to appropriately handle the challenges that come with adolescent development adolescent (Osofsky et al., 2003; Anfara & Caskey, 2014; Browne, 2014; Jensen & Nutt, 2015). Being an advisor is a different type of “teaching.”

Advisors also share the perspective that the skills required to be an advisor is not a skill that everyone possesses, it goes beyond the profession of teaching. Ann expressed, “As a teacher, I got to do something else, you know what I mean, and it’s so much deeper. It really, really is. It’s really an intimate relationship... [in] so many ways, it’s deeper.” Being an advisor is an added responsibility that must be
considered and preferred. In regards to reflecting on overall commitment as an advisor, Monique admits, “Unfortunately, due to the fact that I have so many hats in the building... I'm not able to extend myself as much as I would like to especially since this year...So it’s been actually pretty difficult to manage...” As previously mentioned, being an advisor does not equate to being a teacher, 8 out of the 12 adult participants were non-teachers, meaning that other responsibilities of various school roles must be considered.

The Ideal Logic Model for an Advisory Program

The purpose of the ideal logic model (Figure 15) is to present a representation of an advisory program that has the required elements to fulfill the ultimate goal: to build relationships that offer consistent academic, social, and emotional support for students. The elements inserted in the ideal model were based on an amalgamation of the intended and observed model, the perspectives of participants, assumptions of best practices as an insider-researcher, and aspects of the Communities of Practice (CoP) framework. I included my recommendations based on what I know to be true about the advisory program at the site of study and included what could be considered best practice when the data was reviewed and assessed.

The alterations made in the ideal logic model considered the advisory program at the site of study; however, the model also took in account the ability for the program to be replicated at any high school; therefore, adjustments were made to encompass the needs of a typical adolescent at a conventional high school. This
holistic approach was important to the finalization of this study because student-teacher relationships matter and could be linked to improved engagement and achievement (Klem & Connell, 2004). The advisory program represented in the ideal model can be replicated and implemented in all high schools with the goal of offering continuous adult support to students through strong relationships developed in a small community setting.
Figure 15. The Ideal Logic Model for an Advisory Program
Purpose. The advisory program provides an opportunity for adults (advisors) to build positive relationships with students (advisees) in a school environment. Through an advisory program, the purpose is to offer consistent academic, social, and emotional support in a small cohort setting to support students as they matriculate through high school. Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) provides a theoretical framework for the purpose. ZPD can be defined as the difference one can accomplish individually and what one can accomplish with assistance. The implementation of an advisory program at the high school level has the potential to provide the assistance needed for increased achievement as a result of extensive support and guidance. As specifically defined by Vygotsky (1978), ZPD “is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p.86). Increasing the time students consistently interact with a supportive environment impacts learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Through engaged dialogue, all participants (advisors and advisees) are situated in the social and cultural environment of the advisory community. In the case of the ideal logic model of the program ZPD plays a major role in the core of the purpose because the theory highlights the importance of the teacher, peers, and learner working together to achieve a task (Schunk, 2004). The individual, the social, and the culture of the advisory community created through consistent and positive relationships are essential to the purpose of the program in the ideal model.
Context. The ideal context of an advisory program in a high school includes consistent meetings within a dedicated environment. Advisory would take place three times per week for 45 minutes. This allows for predictability and sustainability. Regardless of schedule changes, advisory time should be viewed as sacred and should not be altered. In the case that an advisor is absent for personal or school related reasons, a substitute should be slated to monitor the group and a generic activity should be provided. This eliminates the need to combine advisory groups, doing so impacts the dynamics and culture of the advisory community, even if it is temporary. Ideally, advisory should be a priority and should never be removed from the daily schedule.

The physical environment must be dedicated to one advisory group solely. Specialized locations for each group promotes personalized interactions and collaboration. In order for a community of practice to develop and flourish, the “class environment...should be designed in a way that promotes learning through social interaction” (Kapucu, 2012, p. 604). Privacy is also needed based on the nature of the advisory community meetings (ACM). Personal experiences may be shared during advisory activities (discussed in a preceding section) and an intimate environment is required to ensure confidentiality and safety.

The ratio of advisor to advisees is critical when considering the design of the advisory community (Allen & Steinberg, 2002; Lampert, 2005; Tocci et al., 2005). As previously mentioned, an intimate setting is required in order to establish close bonds within a group. Based on the purpose of an advisory program and the
functionalities of advisors, ratio is important and must be considered. Based on existing literature regarding the development and implementation of advisory programs, an advisor serves a cohort of students that is small than a typical class. In the ideal model, an advisory community consists of 1 advisor and 15 students. Based on the data from the study, advisory group size was a point of contention. Advisors felt as though they could not devote as much individual attention to their advisees, specifically in regards to behavior and academic check-ins. The advisor/advisee ratio in the observed model caused an alteration of the intended model; check-ins were supposed to occur weekly; however, bi-weekly was more manageable because of the size of the group. The small community allows advisors to give their advisees the personal attention needed. It also allows them to fulfill their duty as an advisor with fidelity. The general duties of an advisor include being an advocate, communicating regularly with families, and various levels of support to include academic, social, and emotional components.

In addition to the advisor/advisee ratio, the ideal model transitions the gender make-up of the advisory group from single to mixed gender. Although the data revealed one variance regarding the alignment of gender, it is the belief that the single gender model was too restrictive, a mixed gender model could address comfortability for advisors and students, specifically when gender identity is considered. An exploration of gender is discussed further in the future research sub-section.
In the ideal logic model, the context of the program is connected to the inputs because they provide the infrastructure used to execute the program. Its solid and forward moving linkage is represented by a solid arrow in the model.

**Inputs.** In the ideal advisory model, an input that is critical to its implementation is that students are grouped in cohorts according to their grade level, allowing for personalization and laser focused support (Allen & Steinberg, 2002; Tocci et al., 2005; McClure, 2010). Ideally, the aim of this model is that “each grade level should have a distinct focus, and each group within that grade should have lessons adapted to their concerns” (Tocci et al., 2005, p. 22). The concept of lessons will be discussed in a later section which advisory activities are explicated. Students are assigned and advisory group for their freshman through senior year and they remain with advisor for 4 years. This allows students to “be accorded the respect of being known well” by an adult in the school, this is essential to creating a community with personalized support (Sizer, 1992, p. 143).

As another resource, the ideal model introduces advisory leaders per grade level. Functioning as a compensated role (existing staff member maintains their general role and is compensated via a yearly stipend). Advisory leaders would be selected through a performance based interview process. The pool of potential advisory leaders would be comprised of veteran advisors or experienced teachers. This model offers advisors with a mentor that is highly skilled in SEL positioned to support and promote advisory best practices. Advisory leaders would not have an advisory group to maintain granting them the ability to create activity resources,
observe advisory, and offer collegial support to advisors. Additionally, they can facilitate professional development as another form of professional development.

The creation of a catalogued lesson plan and activity database could be very instrumental to the facilitation of the advisory program. Additionally, as revealed in the data, advisors struggled with adequately preparing for advisory. A lesson plan and activity database can offer a solution to the concern of preparation; allowing advisors to spend time building and maintaining relationships. Developed by the advisory leaders, lessons and activities can be organized based on the developmental stages of the grade levels as well as in response to the needs of the grade level as determined by the advisory leader. Familiar with the developmental stages of adolescents, advisory leaders would create a database and catalogue lessons and activities that advisors could use in their advisory community meetings.

Theoretically, the development stages can be gleaned from Piaget’s (1932, 1952) developmental stages of adolescents. Their physical, mental, and moral development must be considered when conjuring potential topics to include in the database. Although this study focuses on the concept of learning through social interactions as explicated through the origins of Vygotsky (1978), Piaget’s (1932, 1952) theories should be considered when attempting to address and support the cognition of the students. Based on recommendations from participants and adapted from the School-Connect modules, an SEL curriculum, the following topics may be able to initiate the organization of a grade level specific database for advisory:
• 9th – Community Cooperation & Study Skills
• 10th – Self-Management & General Health/Sex Ed.
• 11th – College Readiness & Test Prep
• 12th – College Persistence & Financial Literacy

The intellectual development of adolescents must be considered when planning the learning experiences for all lessons, but in the case of this study, specifically advisory (Anfara & Cakey, 2014). Ultimately, the lessons and activities must be responsive to adolescent development.

As a school–based artifact, the handbook is a document that should be created by administrators in conjunction with the advisory leaders. The handbook would set the expectations for the execution of advisory.

The following non-negotiables would be explicated: Advisory has to be a safe and structured environment, advisors are advocates for advisees, advisors must be in constant communication with their advisees’ household, advisors must review behavior and academic progress weekly, and advisors must execute lessons from the advisory database. Other expectations germane to the school are permissible to be added in the handbook.

Lastly, in order to support the advisors, advisory leaders are to develop a professional learning calendar that is organized by grade level. As previously mentioned and revealed through the data, advisors have reported the desire to be supported professionally in order to become more effective advisors. The
professional development can range from sharing best practices to general (grade level specific) topics or issues. The development sessions would be facilitated by the advisory leader or the administrative team when appropriate.

The inputs of the program linked to the activities because they provided the initiatives and means to assist in achieving the purpose of the program. Its solid and forward moving connection is represented by a solid arrow in the model. Additionally, the role of the advisory leaders is connected to what they would be responsible for: grade level specific lessons or activities and facilitators of professional development sessions and of quarterly grade level parent meetings. The connection of these action items is represented by a solid gray arrow.

Activities and Causal Effects. The ideal model has the advisory group functioning a community of practice in order to cultivate and sustain a community, activities should be organized, interactive, and inclusive of all internal (advisor and advisees) and external (parents/guardians) members. The activities in the ideal model are specific and provide a foundation to the implementation of the advisory program.

The lesson plan and activity database is an essential tool that requires extensive research in order to ensure relevance and engagement. As mentioned previously, the database must consist of organized grade level activities that address the developmental stage of adolescents. Adapted from an established, research-based curriculum, like School-Connect, lessons can be adapted to fit the curriculum and lesson plan format deemed appropriate by the school. The creation
and application of this tool has lasting effects. Its initial construction would be time consuming; however, once developed, it can be adjusted and improved.

Activities such as ice-breakers could be included and can serve the purpose of initiating and developing intimate relationships between advisors and advisees and amongst advisees and their peers. As Kapucu states,

One of the most important factors to promote collaboration, and thus learning, within communities of practice is the all-inclusive ice-breaking activities that aim at establishing closer and denser relationships. Collaboration is generally impossible or unviable if community participants have distant relationships and know little about their peers [or their advisor]. Ice-breaking activities specifically create an environment of better understanding and greater awareness of others’ goals and motives for participation (Kapucu, 2012, p. 593).

Another possible activity that could be incorporated in the database is guest lectures. Inviting the external community into a school setting allows students to build relationships with other adults and make associations with relevant real-world experience. Additionally, it relates to ZPD because it expands the network of supportive adults. “Including guest lectures has been an effective way to promote nonconventional discussion in class supported by real-world examples...this approach presents an opportunity to substantiate or supplement in-class activities and propositions with outsider expertise” (Kapucu, 2012, pp. 594-595). Overall, engaging and reflective class activities can promote community.
In the intended logic model, parental involvement was lacking. While communication occurred, it was intermittent and sometimes it lacked intentionality. Quarterly grade level parent meetings led by advisory leaders would help bridge the gap between home and school. Advisors would be required to attend and students would be encouraged to attend so they can be exposed to the supportive adult network that is working towards their greater benefit.

As a method to build and sustain relationships, prevent damage to relationships, and repair broken relationships; restorative circles can be a powerful tool in an advisory program. In order to build relationships and prevent damage, various “getting to know you” activities can be facilitated. A discussion of cultural relevant topics and an exploration of ideals and perspectives of the world could be facilitated through a restorative circle. In an effort to repair relationships between advisor and advisee, between teacher/staff and advisees, and amongst advisees; circles can promote healthy dialogue for the purpose of understanding and making peace (Smith et al., 2015).

A critical activity to the organization and execution of advisory community meetings, norms builds boundaries, establishes trust, and sets expectations for all members of the community, including the advisor. Norms are not simply rules mandated by the adult, there is a collaborative effort in their creation. General norms would be required; however, additional norms can be created by the advisory community. Possible general norms could include the following:

- Mutual respect must be given to all members of the community.
• Always assume best intent when communicating with community members.
• Always maintain confidentiality within reason (the safety of all community members is most important).

The advisory group then creates norms that are specific to the community. Collaboration is impactful when considering how to hold members of the community accountable to a standard level of conduct. Collaboration also allows the group to create an identity, “young people are much more likely to become engaged...when they feel included in decisions...” (Allen & Steinberg, 2002, p. 22).

Furthermore,

To commit to a learning environment, young people need to feel a strong sense of contribution and connection...In addition, effective learning environments make young people feel like they are resources and potential leaders, rather than problems who need to be fixed. (Allen & Steinberg, 2002, p. 24)

All norms should be posted and revisited periodically as reminders and for reinforcement. Functioning a live document, norms can be altered if a community member feels that it should be.

According to research, student-teacher relationships can be associated with academic outcomes (Klem & Connell, 2004; Decker et al., 2007). The advisory program could function as a pathway by which positive relationships can help improve academic outcomes (Decker et al., 2007; Hughes, Wu, Kwok, Villarreal, & Johnson, 2012). Weekly behavior and academic check-ins develops an ongoing
interactive discourse between advisor, advisee, and family. Additionally, it provides an accessible accountability system that all stakeholders can understand. The cycle of discourse as a result of the check-ins is represented on the model by a circular solid arrows.

Overall, the activities have a direct link to the causal effects which are impacts that will come as a direct or indirect result of the activities. Identified as a cyclical connection in the ideal model, it is represented by solid arrows positioned as a circle symbolizing continuing correlations; day to day, week to week, year to year.

Outputs. In order to ensure that activities are performed, an evaluative component of the advisory program is needed. With the support and oversight of the advisory leaders, advisors would set goals for their advisory community. The goals would focus on behavior and academic goals as well as personal goals for their advisors as well as themselves. The goals would be set and reviewed quarterly. To assess the execution of the advisory program, formal observations would be conducted by the advisory leader and feedback would occur quarterly, if there is a dire circumstance, feedback could be provided more frequently. The impact of the evaluative component is to ensure that the expectations are being carried out with fidelity and that support is offered in a more proactively instead of reactively. Furthermore, regular feedback ensures that the vision for advisory is consistent and if not, feedback is provided for the purpose of improvement and alignment with expectations. Another instrumental output would be the distribution of feedback
surveys to be completed by participants. In order for the quality of advisee-advisor relationships to be examined closely, gaining the perspective of members of the advisory community is critical to the ongoing success of the program. There should be an established process for continual improvement (Allen & Steinberg, 2002). The school should think through reasonable benchmarks to assess the program’s success, determine if adjustments need to be made to improve practice, and consider the perspective of participants for advancement.

To support the behavior and academic check-in conversations, an interactive spreadsheet tool that documents behavior and grades to determine “eligibility” should be utilized. The tool creates an interactive discourse between advisor, advisee, and family. Also, it provides an accountability system that all stakeholders can understand and creates structure. The solid, double-headed arrow connecting the causal effects of check-ins symbolize the flow of dialogue produced as a result of the tracking system in the model.

Student Achievement. The element of Student achievement was not included in any of the previous logic models because it was not specifically tracked; however, the data revealed a possible connection that is worth exploring. Student achievement can be defined as when students “acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will prepare them to lead happy and successful lives” (Education Evolving, 2016, para. 5). Moreover, achievement refers to other factors that are determined by the entity that governs the school (districts or states). Some factors include standardized assessments and graduation rates. Research associates
student-teacher relationships with improved social and academic outcomes; because of this possible correlation, connecting the impact of the advisory program on student achievement is worth investigating (Decker et al., 2007). Positioned as a direct result of behavior and academic check-ins and the interactive discourse that occurs, student achievement is an element of the ideal model that needs further research in order to determine if a direct correlation exists. The ongoing support from the advisory community could be impactful and ideally, student achievement would be a direct product of the relationships built through the advisory program.

Future Research

The advisory program at the “Metro College Prep” has indeed laid the foundation for supporting students holistically. The program promotes advocacy and although the evidence is qualitative, it has the ability to impact student achievement. Due to the confines of this study, much research still needs to occur in order to continue to impact all students on various levels; academically, socially, and emotionally with the goal of them become caring contributing members of the larger community, society.

As a result of the data, several topics were discovered and need to be explored further. The topics can be organized in the following way: student impact, teacher impact, and programmatic impact.

Student Impact

Student achievement must be researched further in order to determine if the elements of the advisory program could improve student outcomes. A longitudinal
study at a site with a well-established and effective advisory program may address this inquiry best. Because behavior and academic check-ins were the most consistent programmatic element, the study could use the quantitative data yielded from the interactive tracking system. Achievement could be measured according to academic success per subject area or cumulatively by tracking grade point average. This may be best explored through a mixed-methods framework because I think anecdotal perspective provides a richness that quantitative data will not be able to produce.

Parent involvement could also be explored further in order to determine if the 3-tier support system (parent/guardian, advisor, and student) could positively impact students. If students see unwavering support from adults in their lives, the influence could not only effect achievement, but more importantly, self-confidence and motivation.

Teacher Impact

As displayed in the data, advisors reported that the advisory program at “Metro College Prep” influenced them and made the want to remain at the school longer than they intended because of the relationships they fostered with students. Therefore, the advisory program has the potential to improve staff retention. While peer-adult relationships matter, but most energy goes towards teaching and interacting with the students. This type of research could be a qualitative case study, auto-ethnography, or ethnography. Collecting first-hand experiences from advisors regarding their experiences a facilitator and member of an advisory
community would be insightful. In order to triangulate the data, observations could be conducted to understand the nature of individual relationships within the advisory group as well as how the group functions as a whole.

The scholarship on teacher retention is on the rise, especially in schools that serve “at risk” students (TNTP, 2012; Barnwell, 2015). Supports must be in place in order to prevent the teaching profession from becoming revolving door and a ground that breeds dissatisfaction and apathy. The advisory program could possibly be that support, not only for students, but also for teachers.

Improved professional development was a trend in the data revealed from the teacher perspective. Additionally, it was noted a key need in order to refine the advisory program at the site of study. It was acknowledged that a specialized skillset was required to execute advisory effectively; therefore, additional research could examine advisory programs that only use teachers who have received expert professional development in advisory competencies such as SEL and RP circles. The observed model of this study could then be compared to an advisory program that was implemented with fidelity as a result of the extensive training. This concept is broached in the ideal model presented in this study.

Programmatic Impact

There are many aspects to consider in the execution of an effective advisory program. In this study, many programmatic elements were explored (physical, human, and organizational). In regards to future research, the human
Programmatic elements were at the forefront. Issues of gender, race, and socio-economic status surfaced and deserves extensive research.

The intended logic model of the advisory program was single-gender. However, as result of the research, the ideal logic model proposes that the context of the program be shifted to a mixed-gender model. While some evidence indicates that male and female students react differently to the classroom context, in the wake of understanding and responding to gender identification scenarios in society, the viewpoint needs to evolve (Goodenow, 1993). Limited literature exists that specifically highlights the impacts of single-gendered advisory settings specifically; however, Goodenow (1993), alludes to evidence that indicates that “male and female students react differently to the classroom context. If, as has been suggested, girls have more emotional investment in relationships than do boys” (p. 26). On the other hand, research also discusses the influence peers have on gender identity development and gender socialization “between-gender dimensions” instead of “within-gender dimensions” (Kornienko, Santos, Martin, & Granger, 2016, p. 1580). Further research regarding the impact and context of gender in school settings, specifically in advisory communities is needed. Much more research on single-gendered advisory programs and its impact or lack of impact on community development should take place. Does gender matter? Do students respond differently in an intimate setting based on gender? Will a mixed gender environment alter behavior and perspective? These are all questions that could be addressed by a qualitative longitudinal case study or phenomenology.
Further research is needed in order to adequately address the dynamic of race and social-economic status in regards to student-teacher relationships in advisory settings. This study did not account for racial differences between students and the teacher; therefore, race could have been a factor that contributed to the interactions between advisors and advisees. Some studies have revealed that differences do exist between the student-teacher relationship and racial differences (Decker et al., 2007). Impact on student performance and achievement, specifically with “at risk” students (Hughes, Wu, Kwok, Villarreal, & Johnson, 2012).

Throughout the study, data revealed many familial references in the description of the advisor-advisees relationships. Although these references revealed genuine support and closeness, another aspect of race could be explored. The concept of the advisory group as family presents a theory that perpetuates assumptions that “at risk” students are devoid of a family and therefore need to be “adopted” or they are in need of “stand in” because they are lacking a necessary component in the eyes of their advisor. There is more of a focus on what students are lacking as opposed to the additional support needed for the challenges of a typical adolescent.

Lastly, tools to carry out the ideal model need to be developed. Many times one of the largest problems with program development and implementation is that too many goals are associated with the success of the program. In order for any program to be successful, there must be clear goals and indicators to determine the method of execution and a process for continual improvement (Allen & Steinberg, 2002). There should be a clear purpose, a context describing the conditions of the
program's implementation, inputs that provide resources to execute the program, activities aligned with casual effects that link back to the purpose, and outputs to provide evidence that the activities are performed to satisfy the overall vision of the program.

Beyond High School

Student-teacher relationships can be expanded beyond the secondary educational setting. Peer advising, adult mentoring, and informal learning environments are critical and beneficial beyond high school. Similar to the high school advisory, at the university level, an advisory program provides an opportunity for adults (advisors) to build positive relationships with students (advisees) in an academic environment. The purpose of an advisory program at the collegiate level is to connect students to the institution early in their academic career through support systems, programming, and academic advising, all of which are linked to student retention (Drake, 2011).

Many colleges and universities have incorporated the concept of advisement in their undergraduate and graduate curriculum that appears in the form of academic advisement (Drake, 2011; National Academic Advising Association, 2006). As indicated by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) (2006), academic advising is intentional interactions with students, faculty, and curriculum. Idealistically, the ideal model created as a result of this study could be transformed for the purpose of an advisory program at the collegiate level.
Mercer University in Georgia implements an ungraduated program that supports freshman undergraduates as they learn to effectively transition to college life. Entitled, UNV 101, this mandatory course requires freshman students to understand the demands of college and teaches them to understand the value of a college education and helps them to adapt to the many demands that a freshman undergraduate may encounter. Paired with faculty and upperclassman peer advisor, students are exposed to various elements that are relevant to their academic success as well as their personal development. Topics that align with handling diversity, financial management, career preparation, personal wellness, and relationship development, are aspects of the UNV 101 program (Office of Academic and Advising Services, 2017). Based on the implementation of the program, students are only assigned an academic advisor during their freshman year and as they declare a major, typically in their sophomore year, they are assigned an advisor in their major department.

In connecting this research with expanding the ideal model for an effective advisory program to higher education, a cohort model should be considered in order for student-teacher relationships to be initiated and nurtured for the purpose of intentional interactions. Intention could be initiated with advisors being assigned by major departments during freshman year instead of during sophomore year. In this case, students could possibly remain with the same advisor, claim their major as a freshman, lending itself to increased student retention and graduation timeliness. Based on my knowledge of the college experience, many students remain
“undecided” for a duration of time that prolongs their college completion which could result in apathy or lack of interest as years go by. Having an academic advisor that could help a student outline their 4-year course of study aligned with their major could greatly impact students positively. As argued by Drake (2011), advisors stand at the “nexus between the students who often arrive at the academy uninformed and undefined and those who leave with identities and life direction...marked by positive interactions with faculty members and professional advisors” (p. 11). The continued implementation of an advisory program in higher education has the potential to provide the assistance needed for increased achievement and persistence as a result of extensive support and guidance at the university level.

**Conclusions**

**Advisory: A Community of Practice?**

As a result of this study, I was able to closely examine the advisory program through the perspective of its participants, artifacts, and observations. Through the relationships that were developed between students and adults as a result of the advisory program, I aligned the programmatic elements and the holistic design of advisory program with the CoP indicators to qualify the formation of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Table 6 charts my assessment of the advisory program at the site of study forming a true community of practice based on revelations from the data collected.
Table 6

CoP Indicators of the Advisory Program at the Site of Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CoP Indicator</th>
<th>Observed?</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Relationships existed between advisor and advisee as well as amongst advisees. The purpose and activities of the advisory program facilitated the mutual relationships. Whether they were harmonious or conflictual, relationships existed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Shared ways of engaging in doing things together</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>The advisory groups engaged with each other through the activities. Restorative circles were catalysts to shared experiences within the advisory group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>The flow of information occurred as a result behavior and academic tracking system. Accessible to all stakeholders (student, advisor, parent/guardian), the tracker provided information in a condensed way. Stakeholders were able to determine “good standing” eligibility quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>During advisory sessions, advisory groups were observed functioning in a seamless way. Routines were established and not much direction was given in order for advisory to commence. Discourse was continual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Very quick setup of a problem to be discussed</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Some advisors and advisees reported that problems and concerns were addressed through restorative circles. This common practice was understood by all participants. Some issues were handled individually while others were addressed with the advisory group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Substantial overlap in participants’ descriptions of who belongs</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Based on the design of the advisory program, there was a clear understanding of who belonged. However, based on the various familial references (“My advisory brother...sister, ”My girls...boys”) it was observed that advisors and advisees took ownership and pride of their advisory groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Advisors and advisees were very aware of what each had to offer. Regardless if the offerings were in abundance or scarce, there was a clear understanding of what individuals knew and what they were able to bring to the group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6 – continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CoP Indicator</th>
<th>Observed?</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Mutually defining identities</strong></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Based on the various familial references (&quot;My advisory brother...sister, &quot;My girls...boys&quot;) it was observed that advisors and advisees identified themselves as a member of a specified advisory group. Some groups even adopted “advisory names” that further identified themselves as a group internally and externally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products</strong></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>The creation of advisory norms was a tool to determine appropriateness of actions. Norms also developed boundaries and established trust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. Specific tools, representations, and other artifacts</strong></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Some advisory groups had identifying artifacts such as garments that represented them as a group internally and externally. Also, some groups had visual representations posted in their advisory setting that represented themselves as individuals and as a group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11. Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter</strong></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>During advisory sessions, groups were observed participating in interactive discourse or completing activities as a group, in smaller sects, or individually. Various words and phrases were observed in the common discourse of the advisory groups. The following terms/phrases were observed: &quot;Circle up&quot; - To signal the arrangement of restorative circles, &quot;My advisory sister...brother&quot; – endearing term advisees used to reference one another, &quot;My girls...boys&quot; – endearing term advisors used to refer to their advisees, &quot;WIGS&quot; – Warrior In Good Standing, behavior and academic tracking system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12. Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones</strong></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>The shared discourse was observed during restorative circles. As a result of worldly events, &quot;hot topics&quot; were broached and discourse commenced amongst the advisory group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 provides evidence that the advisory program functioned as a community of practice at the site of study. 14 out of 14 of the indicators were aligned to what was revealed as a result of the study. Although all relationships were not strong or positive, relationships did exist and communities of practice were formed. Advisors and advisees functioned as full members of the advisory community in which they belonged. The familiar territory of the advisory group allowed them to engage in shared experiences and interact with one another. As Wenger (1998) indicates, in a community of practice members learn certain ways of engaging with one another, learning how to interact, how to treat one another, and how to work together. Additionally, communities of practice have a similar way of viewing the world outside of their group. By participating in certain activities as a community, a group identity manifests. Lastly, as a result of the established repertoire of an advisory group, history is created based on the common practice, actions, and language of the community; therefore, the community is a part of that history and identity is solidified (Wenger, 1998). This study offers another perspective regarding student-teacher interactions. The promotion of relationship building has the potential of developing a more intimate connection that will ultimately provide a level of support that otherwise would not have been facilitated if a relationship did not exist.

It’s All About Relationships.

The advisory model focuses on the importance of the relationships between the students, parents, advisors and community mentors. As exclaimed by Littky
(2013) learning cannot happen without established relationships. He emphasized the importance of the role the advisor plays in a student’s daily learning experiences. All stakeholders must work in unison in order to affect positive change. Relationships between students and adults are very impactful and have a great importance to academic success, belonging, intrinsic success, social and emotional development and self-regulation, (Ogelman & Seven, 2014; Goodenow, 1993). Research is lacking in evidence to support the notion that careful consideration exists regarding the social context in which students develop a sense of acceptance and a classroom community (Goodenow, 1993).

As one of the turning points on the path of human development, adolescents are in need of additional support and guidance in order to navigate through the many changes that they may experience not only in the academic context, but in life. As argued by Goodenow (1993), “belonging, relatedness, and similar social construct have been found to be associated with school adjustment...they might be especially important...during early adolescence” (p. 23). An established relationship between a student and teacher has the potential of eradicating anxiety, uncertainty, and a lack of motivation; thus increasing autonomy and engagement.

As argued by Creasey, Jarvis, and Knapcik (2009), “non-threatening relationships between students and instructors predict positive achievement orientations, academic progress and success” (p. 1). In order to facilitate trust in an educational setting, a strong relationship should be established in order for students to feel confident and self-directed. In literature, there lacks a clear connection and
assessment of how student and teacher affiliations can be considered as variables to success in high school, resulting in a need for more emphasis to be placed on understanding how student-teacher relationships are related to student outcomes (Creasey, Jarvis, & Knapcik, 2009; Eccles, 2004; Goodenow, 1993; Pianta, 1999).

Advisory can be a place in which students feel safe and connected to a supportive community which is critical in the developmental stage of adolescence as previously mentioned. As posited by Creasey et al. (2009), “when considering the establishment of relationships between students and instructors...it would be expected that students who feel highly connected to classes or instructors would report relatively low anxiety,” this concept rings true especially in the high school advisory program because the program is not have an assessment based platform (p. 2). It is a non-credit “class” that initially creates a “ready-made” opportunity for students to have an immediate advocate in the school.

The advisory program is one of many “that attempt to forge connection between students...in order to foster a sense of belongingness and ultimately influence student satisfaction, academic progress, and retention (Creasey et al, 2009, p. 5-6). Schools who provide a foundational systems and a personalized learning environment in the form of advisory are more likely to have students who are engaged and connect to the school (Klem & Connell, 2004; McClure et al., 2010). As a result of a personalized experience as promoted through an effective high school advisory program, caring relationships between students and teachers are developed and enhanced, resulting in fewer students being alienated or “getting
lost” in the larger school environment (McClure et al., 2010, p. 3). Ultimately, it is the responsibility of schools to construct a climate that breeds a general sense of trust and community in order for students to secure additional role models outside of the home for additional support; the advisory program provides such student support through adult advocacy.

Final Discussion

Throughout this study, I was able to explore the implementation an advisory program at a charter high school in Metro Atlanta. This study was designed to determine if student-teacher relationships were facilitated through an advisory program; thus cultivating a community of support and mentorship. In and outside of school, high school students endure a variety of positive and negative experiences and in order to be handle the challenges of an adolescent, the development of a stable school community is important. As the core of the study, the development of relationships between students and teachers was the catalyst to examining how the site initiated relationship development through the advisory program, resulting in the formation of a community.

In order to create a basis for the research, I explored the history and transformation of homeroom and advisory programs in education. Throughout the investigation, past and current programs were assessed. The study was grounded in the CoP Theory that asserts that active participants in social communities construct identities in relation to the community in which they belong (Wenger, 1998). This theory guided the overarching focus of the study as revealed through the central
research question: How do students and teachers perceive the impact of relationships and community through a high school advisory program? This central question generated the following sub questions in regards to the exploration and evaluation of the program:

1. What are the programmatic elements (physical, human, and organizational) of the advisory program at the site of study?
   a. How are teachers implementing the various elements of the advisory program?
   b. How is it being received by the students?

2. What are the differences between the intentions and expectations of the advisory program versus its observed implementation?

3. How do the perspectives of students impact the facilitation of the advisory program at the site of study?

4. How do the perspectives of teachers impact the facilitation of the advisory program at the site of study?

5. How do the relationships between teachers and students develop a community of practice through the advisory program?

To reveal if an authentic community was established in the advisory program through the development of relationships, the indicators of the CoP Theory were aligned with evidence from the data. Although there did not exist a quantifiable formula to effectively determine the validity of the development of a
community of practice, I declared that if at least 9 out of 14 of the indicators were met as outlined by Wenger (1998), I would conclude that a community of practice formed. Based on the indicators, 14 out of the 14 were aligned as revealed through the data. Overall, the advisory program facilitates the development of relationships between students and adults that have the potential of being supportive if they are positive and consistent interactions.

This qualitative case study explored the inception and evolution of the advisory program. As the foundation for the school, the advisory program was perceived to be critical to its success. Furthermore, it is embedded in the school’s core and is touted as an element that is missing from most high schools. In order to determine its impact, I conducted a program evaluation. Through an identification of the vision and purpose of the program; I was able to understand intended elements of the program. Subsequently, once the intended model was idealized, it was important to explore how the program was executed. To gain a clear perspective of the programmatic elements, I conducted interviews, focus groups, and observations. Additionally, I triangulated the data by administering an anonymous survey that included inquiry about the practices of the program soliciting thoughts about the program’s implementation and possible impact. Upon the conclusion of the intended and observed model comparative analysis, conclusions were drawn and themes were developed that summarized the differences. Lastly, based on recommendations from participants and my inclinations as an insider-researcher, an ideal model was developed with the goal of
supporting the overall purpose of the program's existence: to build positive relationships that offer consistent academic, social, and emotional support for students.

The data cemented my original inclination, that communities of practice were formed as a result of the relationships that existed between students and adults. These relationships were established as a result of an advisory program. The perceptions of the members of the advisory community (advisors and advisees) were critical to understanding the impact of the advisory program. How the program was executed was also considered for a clear analysis. The study made the following statement clear: student-teacher relationships only work when there is trust, authenticity, and purpose. If those elements are void from the relationship, the perceptions that community members have about each other and the advisory program can be altered and overall intent can be neglected.

Although a community of practice was formalized as a result of the observed execution of the program, inconsistencies and frustrations existed. The ideal model offers potential solutions to eliminate the inconsistencies revealed as a result of what was observed. If the variations were identified and addressed, the impact would have been more widespread. Although the participants reported strong relationships and the development of a community of practice was witnessed, the sample in this study was small and expansive insight of the program's impact from the perspectives of more advisees and advisors was lacking. Based on my position as an insider-researcher, I have an inkling that more students and advisors may
have felt like the advisory program needed to be revamped to focus more on the development and maintenance of relationships as opposed to how the program is implemented. If the model of the program was solid, its execution would potentially be more powerful and permeate throughout the greater school community.

The ideal model was created as a result of this study. It addressed the concerns brought forth through the data such as the need for frequent advisory touchpoints, mixed-gendered advisory settings, increased adult support and mentorship for advisors facilitated through professional development, and a clear path for constant feedback for ongoing improvement.

Overall, the ideal model can realistically be implemented at any high school because it provides a clear skeleton of how an advisory program could be developed and executed in various educational settings with the potential of not only enhancing student-teacher relationships, but also improving academic outcomes. Aspects of the model offers guidance on programmatic, organizational, and human elements of an advisory program. More specifically, the context, inputs, and outputs of the ideal model guide the programmatic elements of the advisory program. The activities and causal effects appeal to the development of relationships and communities of practice as a result of the advisory program. Activities such as parent involvement, behavior and academic check-ins assist in forging strong relationships between the students and the advisor. The development of advisory norms and restorative circles aid in forming a community as a result of constant, interactive discourse. The ideal model presents an archetypal high school advisory
program that has the potential of affecting academic and cultural change in any high school setting because it cultivates a community of practice as a result of adults supporting adolescents during a critical period of social and emotional development.

Ultimately, this study indicated that teacher support is important and students who perceive teachers are creating a caring, well-structured learning environment in which expectations are high, clear, and fair have the potential of being high achievers academically and socially (Klem & Connell, 2004). Advisory creates a personalized environment in which the community takes collective responsibility for success (Klem & Connell, 2004). Also, the caring environment provides the student and their family with an advocate in the school. When adults invest in students, potential will not be able to be contained. The supportive community that is shaped as a result of small learning environments provides students with the skills they need to improve cognition and connection to the school, overall transforming the milieu of high school.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

UNCOMMON COLLEGIATE CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL -FAMILY ACCOUNTABILITY CONTRACT
ATTENDANCE

☐ I will ensure that my child comes to school every day on time to begin school at 7:45 AM.
☐ I understand that if my child is absent more than 10 days of the school year, he or she may have to repeat his or her current grade.
☐ I will make sure that my scholar alerts teachers of absences in advance when possible, and that my scholar promptly makes up missed work following absences.
☐ I understand that an absence is excused if I have contacted the school and included a doctor’s note regarding scholar illness, family emergency, or religious observance.
☐ I understand that my child will not earn credit for work missed after unexcused absences, including but not limited to: family vacations and attendance at entertainment events.
☐ I understand that my child is responsible for creating and following his/her own afternoon schedule and that it is our responsibility to communicate one another about when he/she will be dismissed from school each day.
☐ I understand that my child will not be permitted to enter the building before 7:15 AM and will report to an assigned “before-school” area before 7:45 AM.

HOMEWORK (also known as PREPWORK)

☐ I agree to check my child’s planner and prepwork daily to ensure that each assignment is completed thoughtfully and thoroughly.
☐ I understand that my child will receive 2-3 hours of prepwork every night and is expected to read independently for 20 minutes per evening.
☐ I understand that my child may receive failing grades for any missing prepwork assignment or complete prepwork that does not meet classroom standards.
☐ I understand that my child may be required to stay afterschool for Office Hours if he or she does not complete his/her prepwork.
☐ I will always help my child in the best way I know how. I will communicate frequently with my child about his/her academic progress, encourage my child to advocate for him/herself at school, and do whatever it takes for him/her to learn.

CODE OF CONDUCT

☐ I agree to promote and support the rules of behavior as outlined in the school’s Scholar Handbook, and accept responsibility as a partner in my child’s learning.
☐ I understand that my child will be required to sit in after-school or lunch detention if he or she commits detention level infractions.
☐ I understand that though I may receive a message, it is my child’s responsibility to notify me if he or she earns a daily or weekly detention.
☐ I understand that my child may earn out of school suspension or an extended detention if he or she misses Detention.
☐ I understand that while my child is in school, he/she is not permitted to use or have cell phones, iPads, music players, video game players, or other electronic devices.

PROMOTION POLICIES

☐ I understand that my child needs to pass all 5 core academic classes (a core class is any class that meets at least four times per week) in order to be promoted to the next grade.
☐ I understand that my child will be required to attend summer school if he or she fails 1 core academic class.
I understand that my child may be automatically retained if he or she fails 2 or more core academic classes and does not meet the school’s promotion requirements.
I will ensure that my child attends Saturday School if required by the school, if he or she is in danger of failing the Regents exam, or if he or she is failing one or more classes for the year on any subsequent progress report or report card.
I understand that my child may be required to stay for after-school extra help or office hours, and that he or she is urged to take advantage of extra help opportunities provided by teachers even when not required.

SCHOLAR DRESS POLICY

I will ensure that my child comes to school in the school uniform, according to the guidelines listed in the Scholar and Family Handbook and brings his/her gym uniform as needed.
I understand that if my child comes to school out of uniform, he or she may not be permitted to attend class, may need to wait for the appropriate dress to be brought in from home, and/or may receive an automatic detention.

FAMILY SUPPORT

I agree to support my child’s academic work by communicating regularly with my child’s teachers and advisor, by scheduling appointments to talk with them as needed, and by attending all Family-Teacher Conferences.
I agree to be available for meetings if my child exceeds three weeks of detention in one academic quarter or earns an out-of-school suspension.
I agree to be available to sit through a class to observe my child if s/he is not academically focused.
I agree to pick up my child’s report card at the Family-Teacher Conferences.
I agree to attend family meetings and other school-sponsored events on a regular basis in order to stay engaged in the school community and to keep abreast of ways I can support my child.
I agree not to send soda, candy or gum to school with my child because of its lack of nutritional value.
I agree to respond to phone calls from any school staff member promptly.

Parent/Guardian Signature  Date

Scholar Applicant Signature  Date

In exchange for what scholars and families do, we promise to provide scholars with a safe and orderly environment in which they’ll enjoy studying and learning and we promise to prepare each scholar for college.

Advisor Signature  Date

Principal Signature  Date

Director of Operations Signature  Date
APPENDIX B

“METRO COLLEGE PREP” PARENT COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE 2016-17
“Metro College Prep” Parent Commitment to Excellence 2016-17

Unity  Honor  Tenacity  Innovation  Humanity

I (We) fully commit to “Metro College Prep” by upholding the following agreements:

• I (We) will always help my/our child in the best way we know, and we will access whatever resources and make whatever sacrifices necessary for our child to learn.
• I (We) will always make ourselves available to my/our child and the school, and we will address any concerns either might have.
• I (We) will support the school’s policies, including discipline and dress code, as detailed in the “MCP” student handbook.
• I (We) will look for opportunities to work with other families or community partners to support the mission of the school.
• I (We) will actively communicate with our child and his/her teachers regarding my/our child’s progress, difficulties, and successes.
• I (We) will contact my/our child’s advisor or counselor if our child has a problem that may jeopardize his/her college preparation.
• I (We) understand that my/our child must follow the “MCP” rules so as to protect the safety, interests, and rights of all individuals in the “MCP” community.
• I (We) will always read and respond as requested to my/our child’s academic reports, parent surveys, or requests for pertinent information in less than 48 hours.
• I (We) will always listen to all “MCP” Team and Family members and give everyone the same respect that I/we expect from others.
• I (We) and my/our child—not the school—are responsible for our child’s behavior and actions and the associated consequences.
• I (We) will encourage my/our child to enroll in challenging courses that will prepare him/her for college entrance and graduation from “MCP”.
• I (We) will ensure that my/our student attends all required summer programming whether on or off campus.
● I (We) will commit to ensuring that my/our child will arrive at school every day during the regular school year by 8:35 am and will stay until 4:30 pm.
● If assigned, I (We) will ensure that my/our student stays for all mandatory tutorials, office hours or peer tutoring as required by an academic teacher or academic probation contract.
● I (We) will ensure that my/our student attends all required Saturday sessions to attend tutorial, attend during office hours or participate in peer tutoring.
● I (We) will monitor my/our student’s required homework nightly and if he or she fails to complete the assignment I support the school’s decision to hold him or her accountable.
● I (We) will allow my/our child to go on field lessons, participate in internships, and visit colleges.
APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS-ADVISORS
Advisory Focus Group – Advisors

Facilitator:

Participants:

1. How’s it going? How’s advisory going?
2. What do you see as the greatest benefits of the advisory program to your students?
3. How do you contribute to the success of the advisory program?
4. What’s different from last year’s advisory structure? (For returning staff only)
5. What support were you provided throughout the execution of the program? What additional support do you need?
6. What would make advisory better for you?
7. As a network, character is supposed to be just as important as academics. We used to really emphasize our core values and we are now looking at restorative practices and social emotional learning curriculum to hopefully empower scholars with the character tools they will need to be successful not just today, but long term as well. Scholars needs a safe place to grapple with some of those things that then spill out into the learning environment that prevent them from being successful and for some may lead them to negative consequences. Do you feel like advisory is an effective tool to get them there?
8. Provide a working definition of “relationship.”
9. How do you perceive the benefits of personal relationships in terms of academic, social, and emotional support?
11. How do you support your advisees? Provide examples.
12. How to you relate to each individual advisee? What about the group?
13. How do you create a sense of community in your advisory group? Provide concrete examples. What do you see as the impact on students as a result of this sense of community?
14. Do you feel that students have a greater since of pride or devotion to the school as a result of the advisory program?
15. What is a “winning or successful” advisory? What can we do to ensure that people feel more positive about advisory?

16. What do you want people to say about advisory?

17. Do you think everyone is meant to be an advisor? Why or why not?

18. Is there anything that you want to be able to share before we end? Any final thoughts?
APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS- ADVISEES
Advisory Focus Group – Advisees

Facilitator:

Participants:

1. How’s it going? How’s advisory going?
2. What do you see as the greatest benefits of the advisory program to you and your development?
3. What’s different from last year’s advisory structure? (For 10th – 12th graders only)
4. What would make advisory better for you?
5. Scholars needs a safe place to grapple with some of those things that then spill out into the learning environment that prevent them from being successful and for some may lead them to negative consequences. Do you feel like advisory is an effective tool to get you there?
6. What make you feel supported?
7. Provide a working definition of “relationship.”
8. What does it mean to have a relationship?
9. How do you build individual relationships with your advisor?
10. What is it that makes you feel like you have a relationship with your advisor?
11. How do you think participation in advisory will help you build relationships with your teachers and peers?
12. What does your advisor do to make you feel like you are part of a community? Provide examples.
13. Do you feel a greater since of pride or devotion to your school as a result of the advisory program?
14. Are there specific ways that the advisory program has helped you academically, socially, or emotionally?
15. Is there anything that you want to be able to share before we end? Any final thoughts?
APPENDIX E

YOUR PERSPECTIVE OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADVISEES (STUDENTS)

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ADVISORS (TEACHERS)
Your Perspective of Relationships with Advisees (Students)
Interview Questions for Advisors (Teachers)


**Please share your honest perspective of how much each of the questions below currently apply to your relationship with the students in your advisory group**

1. Describe your relationship with your advisees.
2. What support do you give to each advisee? Describe what that looks like.
3. In times of struggle or conflict, how do you and your advisees cope? Can you describe a situation?
4. Do you share personal information about yourself to your advisees? Do they share personal information about themselves to you?
5. Have your advisees ever disappointed you? If so, how did you handle the situation?
6. Describe discipline or consequences in your advisory group.
7. Do you feel comfortable sharing personal feelings in advisory? Do students openly share their feelings with you? Explain.
8. What else would you like to share regarding your relationship with your advisees?
APPENDIX F

YOUR PERSPECTIVE OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR ADVISOR (TEACHER)

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ADVISEES (STUDENTS)
Your Perspective of Relationships with Your Advisor (Teacher)

Interview Questions for Advisees (Students)


Please share your honest perspective of how much each of the questions below currently apply to your relationship with your advisor

1. Describe your relationship with your advisor.
2. What support have you received from your advisor? Describe what that looks like.
3. In times of struggle or conflict, how do you and your advisor cope? Can you describe a situation?
4. Do you share personal information about yourself to your advisor? Do they share personal information about themselves to you?
5. Has your advisor ever disappointed you? If so, how did you handle the situation?
6. Describe discipline or consequences in your advisory group.
7. Do you feel comfortable sharing personal feelings in advisory? Explain.
8. What else would you like to share regarding your relationship with your advisor?
APPENDIX G

SURVEY QUESTIONS (TEACHERS) VIA GOOGLE FORMS
Survey Questions (Teachers) via Google Forms

The purpose of this survey is to collect anonymous data regarding the advisory program at your high school. For the open-ended questions, please write in complete sentences. Please respond using your personal perspectives, ideas, and experiences. Your honesty and candidness will assist in strengthening the advisory program at your school.

1. I have strong relationships with all of my advisees.

   Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

2. I have a strong relationship with the parents/guardians for your advisees.

   Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

3. Do you believe that academic success is connected to the relationships you have with your advisees?

   Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

4. How prepared did you feel to effectively implement the advisory program?

   Very Prepared      Somewhat Prepared      Fairly Prepared      Not Prepared

   What was missing from your preparation?

5. How would you characterize your overall advisory experience?

   Excellent      Very Good      Good      Fair      Poor

   Please explain your choice.

6. Describe your advisory in one word. Why did you choose that word
7. Using a 4.0 scale what is the average grade point average of your advisory group?

8. In order for the school to make improvements on the implementation of the program and its integration in the school culture, what aspects of advisory would you change? What would you keep?

9. What advice would you give to a new advisor?

   Thank you for your time!
APPENDIX H

MERCER IRB APPROVAL
Monday, February 27, 2017

Ms. Kyra Caldwell
9190 Kenwood Rd S.E.
Tift College of Education - Atlanta
Smyrna, GA 30082

RE: It's all about relationships: making connections and facilitating community through an effective high school advisory program (H1701032)

Dear Ms. Caldwell:

On behalf of Mercer University’s Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, your application submitted on 31 Jan 2017 for the above referenced protocol was reviewed in accordance with Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46.110(b) and 45 CFR 46.110(b) (for expedited review) and was approved under category[es] 5, 6, 7 per 63 FR 60364.

Your application was approved for one year of study on 14-Feb-2017. The protocol expires on 13-Feb-2018. If the study continues beyond one year, it must be re-evaluated by the IRB Committee.

Item(s) Approved:

- to reveal that if strong relationships exist at the high school level, students and teachers can potentially demonstrate that a supportive community can be developed thus impacting investment in the overall learning and social experience.

NOTE: Please report to the committee when the protocol is initiated. Report to the Committee immediately any changes in the protocol or consent form and all accidents, injuries, and serious or unexpected adverse events that occur to your subjects as a result of this study.

We at the IRB and the Office of Research Compliance are dedicated to providing the best service to our research community. As one of our investigators, we value your feedback and ask that you please take a moment to complete our Satisfaction Survey and help us to improve the quality of our service.

It has been a pleasure working with you and we wish you much success with your project! If you need any further assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

Respectfully,

Ava Chambliss-Richardson, M.Ed., CIP, CIM
Associate Director of Human Research Protection Programs (HRPP)
Member
Institutional Review Board

"Mercer University has adopted and agrees to conduct its clinical research studies in accordance with the International Conference on Harmonization's (ICH) Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice."
Dissertation Research

Informed Assent for Participants Ages 14-21

IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS: MAKING CONNECTIONS AND FACILITATING COMMUNITY THROUGH AN EFFECTIVE HIGH SCHOOL ADVISORY PROGRAM.

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators at Mercer University are doing a research study where we are trying to learn about how the implementation of an effective advisory curriculum can assist in fostering strong relationships between teachers and students.

**Procedures**
You will be asked to participate in surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observations will be conducted in order to collect supplemental data for the purpose of deepening the research.

Your participation will take approximately 3-4 hours per week during the study period (February – April). Follow up interviews or focus groups may be conducted after the study period which may average 30 minutes – 4 hours per week if required.

You have the right to refuse to have your information included in the research. Refusing to include your information will not jeopardize you receiving any services related to your class work.

**Videotaping**
Class sessions and focus groups may be videotaped for accuracy in reporting and data gathering. They may be used in various formats such as presentations, educational in nature, at the conclusion of the study. The footage will be stored electronically by the researcher for the duration of the study and thereafter. Be advised that you can refuse to participate in the videotaping or refuse to have the information used in the research without penalty.

Any questions regarding the purpose and use of the videotape should be directed to Kyna M. Caldwell, 770 940 2739, 109505812@live.mercer.edu

**Interviews**
Interview sessions will last between 20 – 30 minutes. Experiences with your advisor, your opinions of
the overall advisory program, and critiques will be explored during the interviews.

**Potential Risk and Discomforts**
There are no foreseeable risks associated with the study. However, if, as a result of the study, negative relationships between the student and teacher or between students are revealed, provisions for managing these potential issues can be handled by the school counselor or social worker. Additionally, parents will be notified for further action externally if needed. If this occurs, you have the right to discontinue participation, either temporarily or permanently.

**Potential Benefits of the Research**
The benefits of participation in the research may not directly assist you, however, the benefits gained by the participants in this study can potentially be long term. Because the vision of the advisory program, potentially promotes aspects of self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills; students can implement in their daily lives until adulthood. They will be able to employ the skills learned and practiced throughout the program in order to build better relationships with others. Teacher and student participants can embed aspects of their experience to build strong and lasting relationships to increase educational outcomes such as investment.

Additionally, the site of study could potentially benefit because it could provide insight into the established program in order to make improvements or adjustments.

**Confidentiality and Data Storage**
All information obtained and/or medical records will be held in strict confidentiality and will only be released with your permission. The results of this study may be published but your information such as your name and other demographic information will not be revealed.

Your name will not be associated with your responses and will be identified only by an assigned coded number. At no time will your name be associated with the results of the research. However, any identifying information you provide while being videotaped will never be used as part of the research or associated with the results of the study.

Your responses will be stored in a locked location and will only be used for research purposes by Mercer University School. If you request to have your videotape destroyed before data can be collected from it, you may not be allowed to continue in the study. The footage will be stored electronically by the researcher for the duration of the study and thereafter.

By signing this document, you and your parent(s) have determined that it is okay for you to participate in this research study. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want. You can change your mind at any time by telling your mom, dad, or your therapist.
______ No, I do not want to be in this study. ______ Yes, I want to be in this study.

_________________________________________  
Signature of Participant

Date

_________________________________________  
Signature of Participant’s Parent

Date

_________________________________________  
Signature of Person Obtaining Assent

Date

Rev. 7/17/2009
Parental Consent for Participants Ages 14-21

IT’S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS: MAKING CONNECTIONS AND FACILITATING COMMUNITY THROUGH AN EFFECTIVE HIGH SCHOOL ADVISORY PROGRAM.

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent for your child to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what they will be asked to do.

Investigators at Mercer University are doing a research study where we are trying to learn about how the implementation of an effective advisory curriculum can assist in fostering strong relationships between teachers and students.

**Procedures**
Your child will be asked to participate in interviews and focus groups; additionally, observations will be conducted in order to collect supplemental data for the purpose of deepening the research.

Your child’s participation will take approximately 3-4 hours per week during the study period (February – April). Follow up interviews or focus groups may be conducted after the study period which may average 30 minutes – 4 hours per week if required.

You have the right to refuse to have your child’s information included in the research. Refusing to include your information will not jeopardize your child from receiving any services related to class work.

**Videotaping**
Class sessions and focus groups may be videotaped for accuracy in reporting and data gathering. They may be used in various formats such as presentations, educational in nature, at the conclusion of the study. The footage will be stored electronically by the researcher for the duration of the study and thereafter. Be advised that you can refuse to participate in the videotaping or refuse to have the information used in the research without penalty.

Any questions regarding the purpose and use of the videotape should be directed to Kyra M. Caldwell, 770 940 2739, kyrcaldwell@live.mercer.edu

**Interviews**
Interview sessions will last between 20 – 30 minutes. Experiences with your child’s advisor, your child’s opinions of the overall advisory program, and your child’s critiques of the advisory program will be explored during the interviews.
Potential Risk and Discomforts
There are no foreseeable risks associated with the study. However, if, as a result of the study, negative relationships between the student and teacher or between students are revealed, provisions for managing these potential issues can be handled by the school counselor or social worker. Additionally, you will be notified for further action externally if needed. If this occurs, you have the right to discontinue your child’s participation, either temporarily or permanently.

Potential Benefits of the Research
The benefits of participation in the research may not directly assist your child, however, the benefits gained by the participants in this study can potentially be long term. Because the vision of the advisory program, potentially promotes aspects of self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills, students can implement in their daily lives until adulthood. They will be able to employ the skills learned and practiced throughout the program in order to build better relationships with others. Teacher and student participants can embed aspects of their experience to build strong and lasting relationships to increase educational outcomes such as investment.

Additionally, the site of study could potentially benefit because it could provide insight into the established program in order to make improvements or adjustments.

Confidentiality and Data Storage
All information obtained and/or medical records will be held in strict confidentiality and will only be released with your permission. The results of this study may be published but your information such as your child’s name and other demographic information will not be revealed.

Your child’s name will not be associated with your responses and will be identified only by an assigned coded number. At no time will your child’s name be associated with the results of the research. However, any identifying information you provide while being videotaped will never be used as part of the research or associated with the results of the study.

Your child’s responses will be stored in a locked location and will only be used for research purposes by Mercer University School. If you request to have your child’s videotape destroyed before data can be collected from it, you may not be allowed to continue in the study. The footage will be stored electronically by the researcher for the duration of the study and thereafter.

By signing this document, you have determined that it is okay for your child to participate in this research study. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want. You can change your mind at any time by telling the researcher.

____ No, I do not want my child to be in this study.
______ Yes, I do want my child want to be in this study.

_________________________ ____________________
Signature of Parent        Date

_________________________ ____________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Parental Consent Date
Consent Form for Interviews

IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS: MAKING CONNECTIONS AND FACILITATING COMMUNITY THROUGH AN EFFECTIVE HIGH SCHOOL ADVISORY PROGRAM.

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators
Kyra M. Caldwell, Mercer University, Tift College of Education
Address: 1996 Kenwood Rd SE, Smyrna, Georgia, 30082
Phone: 770 940 2739
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Sherah B. Carr

Purpose of the Research
This research study is designed to explore if school connectedness can be promoted through the development and maintenance of student-teacher relationships. Connectedness can be defined as having a strong sense of pride, devotion, concern, satisfaction, and enthusiasm about the educational experience. In the case of this study, student-teacher relationships are facilitated through the advisory program.

Engaging and relating to students in diverse ways at the high school level has the potential of building character and academic abilities not otherwise gained without adult and peer support. The data from this research will be used to determine if the development of teacher and student relationships can result in an increased connection to the school.

The results will contribute to the researcher’s course of study because it will fulfill the requirements of a completed dissertation at the close of a doctoral program. Additionally, it will function as a starting point for future research and allow for possible implementation at the secondary level and beyond.

Procedures
You will be asked to participate in interviews in order to collect supplemental data for the purpose of deepening the research.

Your participation will take approximately 30 minutes per week for 6 weeks during the study period (February – April). Follow up interviews may be conducted after the study period which may average 30 minutes per week if required.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be selected from a Metro Atlanta charter school in which you work. You will be asked to participate in a series of interviews. Each session will be no more than 30 minutes. The interviews will include questions about your personal experience with the advisory...
program, more specifically your experience with your advisees and advisory group. Additionally, you will be asked to reflect on your experiences with the advisory program, your relationship with your advisees and advisory group, and provide feedback based on your experiences. Data will be collected throughout the duration of the study.

**Potential Risks or Discomforts**

There are no foreseeable risks associated with the study. However, if, as a result of the study, negative relationships between the student and teacher or between students are revealed, provisions for managing these potential issues can be handled by the school counselor or social worker. Additionally, parents will be notified for further action externally if needed. If this occurs, the participant has the right to discontinue participation, either temporarily or permanently.

Focus groups, lessons, and professional development sessions may be audio and video recorded for the purpose of research accuracy, by agreeing to participate in this study, you agree to permit taping, however, your identity will remain anonymous.

**Potential Benefits of the Research**

The benefits of participation in the research may not directly assist you, however, the benefits gained by the participants in this study can potentially be long term. Because the vision of the advisory program, potentially promotes aspects of self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills; students can implement in their daily lives until adulthood. They will be able to employ the skills learned and practiced throughout the program in order to build better relationships with others. Teacher and student participants can embed aspects of their experience to build strong and lasting relationships to increase educational outcomes such as school connectedness.

Additionally, the site of study could potentially benefit because it could provide insight into the established program in order to make improvements or adjustments.

**Confidentiality and Data Storage**

All information obtained and/or medical records will be held in strict confidentiality and will only be released with your permission. The results of this study may be published but your information such as your name and other demographic information will not be revealed. The results of this study will be kept in a locked file within Tift College of Education (Atlanta campus) for three years in Dr. Sherah Carr’s office, Room BF 3023 Business and Education building.

**Incentives to Participate**

No incentives will be offered as a result of participating in this study.

**Participation and Withdrawal**

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. As a research subject you may refuse to participate at any time. To withdraw from the study please contact Kyra M. Caldwell, 770 940 2739, 10930812@live.mercer.edu or Dr. Sherah B. Carr, 678 547 6064, carr sb@mercer.edu

**Questions about the Research**

If you have any questions about the research, please speak with Kyra M. Caldwell, 770 940 2739, 10930812@live.mercer.edu or Dr. Sherah B. Carr, 678 547 6064, carr sb@mercer.edu
This project has been reviewed and approved by Mercer University's IRB. If you believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Chair, at (478) 301-4101.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to my satisfaction.

Signature of Investigator ___________________________ Date _____________

Signature of Participant ___________________________ Date _____________

Rev. 03/19/2010
Title of Project: IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS: MAKING CONNECTIONS AND FACILITATING COMMUNITY THROUGH AN EFFECTIVE HIGH SCHOOL ADVISORY PROGRAM.

Investigator Name: Kyra M. Caldwell

E-Mail Contact Information: 10930812@live.mercer.edu

You are invited to participate in an online survey for a research project conducted through Mercer University. Mercer University’s IRB requires investigators to provide informed consent to the research participants.

This research study is designed to explore if school connectedness can be promoted through the development and maintenance of student-teacher relationships. Connectedness can be defined as having a strong sense of pride, devotion, concern, satisfaction and enthusiasm about the educational experience. In the case of this study, student-teacher relationships are facilitated through the advisory program.

Engaging and relating to students in diverse ways at the high school level has the potential of building character and academic abilities not otherwise gained without adult and peer support. The data from this research will be used to determine if the development of teacher and student relationships can result in an increased connection to the school.

Your participation in the study will contribute to the researcher’s course of study because it will fulfill the requirements of a completed dissertation at the close of a doctoral program. Additionally, it will function as a starting point for future research and allow for possible implementation at the secondary level and beyond.

You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

If you agree to participate
The survey will take approximately 20 minutes of your time. You will complete an activity about your personal perceptions, experiences, and ideas about the advisory program at your high school. You will not be compensated for the completion of this survey.

Risks/Benefits/Confidentiality of Data

There are no foreseeable risks associated with the study. However, if, as a result of the study, negative relationships between the student and teacher or between students are revealed, provisions for managing these potential issues can be handled by the school counselor or social worker. Additionally, parents will be notified for further action externally if needed. If this occurs, the participant has the right to discontinue participation, either temporarily or permanently.
There are not costs for participating.

The benefits of participation in the research may not directly assist you, however, the benefits gained by the participants in this study can potentially be long term. Because the vision of the advisory program, potentially promotes aspects of self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills; students can implement in their daily lives until adulthood. They will be able to employ the skills learned and practiced throughout the program in order to build better relationships with others. Teacher and student participants can embed aspects of their experience to build strong and lasting relationships to increase educational outcomes such as school connectedness.

Additionally, the site of study could potentially benefit because it could provide insight into the established program in order to make improvements or adjustments.

All information obtained and/or medical records will be held in strict confidentiality and will only be released with your permission. The results of this study may be published but your information such as your name and other demographic information will not be revealed. The results of this study will be kept in a locked file within Trift College of Education (Atlanta campus) for three years in Dr. Sherah Carr’s office, Room BE023 Business and Education building.

**Participation or Withdrawal**
Your decision to participate or decline participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question and you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal will not affect your relationship with Mercer University in anyway. If you do not want to participate, click on the “stop survey” arrow or close the browser window.

If you do not want to receive any more reminders, you may email us at 10930812@live.mercer.edu.

**Contacts**
If you have any questions about the study contact the investigator Kyra M. Caldwell, 770 940 2739 or send an email to 10930812@live.mercer.edu. Mercer University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed study #F1701032) and approved it on: 14-Feb-2017.

**Questions about your rights as a research participant**
If you have questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (478) 301-4101 or email at ORC_Research@Mercer.edu.

If you agree to participate in the research study, click on the following link:

https://goo.gl/forms/TGjsCzPSmeRZmG2

Thank you in advance for your time and participation!
Please do not forward this e-mail to others.

Please print a copy of this document for your records.
Focus Group Consent

IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS: MAKING CONNECTIONS AND FACILITATING COMMUNITY THROUGH AN EFFECTIVE HIGH SCHOOL ADVISORY PROGRAM.

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators
Kyra M. Caldwell, Mercer University, Tift College of Education
Address: 1996 Kenwood Rd SE, Smyrna, Georgia, 30082
Phone: 770 940 2739
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Sherah B. Carr

Purpose of the Research
This research study is designed to explore if school connectedness can be promoted through the development and maintenance of student-teacher relationships. Connectedness can be defined as having a strong sense of pride, devotion, concern, satisfaction and enthusiasm about the educational experience. In the case of this study, student-teacher relationships are facilitated through the advisory program.

Engaging and relating to students in diverse ways at the high school level has the potential of building character and academic abilities not otherwise gained without adult and peer support. The data from this research will be used to determine if the development of teacher and student relationships can result in an increased connection to the school.

The results will contribute to the researcher’s course of study because it will fulfill the requirements of a completed dissertation at the close of a doctoral program. Additionally, it will function as a starting point for future research and allow for possible implementation at the secondary level and beyond.

Procedures
You will be asked to participate in focus groups in order to collect supplemental data for the purpose of deepening the research.

Your participation will take approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour per week for 6 weeks during the study period (February – April). Follow up focus groups may be conducted after the study period which may average 30 minutes – 1 hour per week if required.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be selected from a Metro Atlanta charter school in which you work. You will be asked to participate in a series of focus groups. Each session will be no more than 1 hour. The focus group discussion will include questions about your experience with the
advisory program, more specifically your experience with your advisees and advisory group. Additionally, you will be asked to reflect on your experiences with the advisory program, your relationship with your advisees and advisory group, and provide feedback based on your experiences. Data will be collected throughout the duration of the study.

**Potential Risks or Discomforts**

There are no foreseeable risks associated with the study. However, if, as a result of the study, negative relationships between the student and teacher or between students are revealed, provisions for managing these potential issues can be handled by the school counselor or social worker. Additionally, parents will be notified for further action externally if needed. If this occurs, the participant has the right to discontinue participation, either temporarily or permanently.

Focus groups, lessons, and professional development sessions may be audio and video recorded for the purpose of research accuracy, by agreeing to participate in this study, you agree to permit taping, however, your identity will remain anonymous.

**Potential Benefits of the Research**

The benefits of participation in the research may not directly assist you; however, the benefits gained by the participants in this study can potentially be long term. Because the vision of the advisory program, potentially promotes aspects of self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills; students can implement in their daily lives until adulthood. They will be able to employ the skills learned and practiced throughout the program in order to build better relationships with others. Teacher and student participants can embed aspects of their experience to build strong and lasting relationships to increase educational outcomes such as school connectedness.

Additionally, the site of study could potentially benefit because it could provide insight into the established program in order to make improvements or adjustments.

**Confidentiality and Data Storage**

All information obtained and/or medical records will be held in strict confidentiality and will only be released with your permission. The results of this study may be published but your information such as your name and other demographic information will not be revealed. The results of this study will be kept in a locked file within Tift College of Education (Atlanta campus) for three years in Dr. Sherah Carr’s office, Room BE023 Business and Education building.

**Incentives to Participate**

No incentives will be offered as a result of participating in this study.

**Participation and Withdrawal**

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. As a research subject you may refuse to participate at any time. To withdraw from the study please contact Kyra M. Caldwell, 770 940 2739, 10930812@live.mercer.edu or Dr. Sherah B. Carr, 678 547 6064, carr_sb@mercer.edu

**Questions about the Research**

If you have any questions about the research, please speak with Kyra M. Caldwell, 770 940 2739, 10930812@live.mercer.edu or Dr. Sherah B. Carr, 678 547 6064, carr_sb@mercer.edu
This project has been reviewed and approved by Mercer University’s IRB. If you believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Chair, at (478) 301-4101.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to my satisfaction.

Signature of Investigator_________________________ Date___________

Signature of Participant_________________________ Date___________

Rev. 06/19/2010
APPENDIX I

PERMISSION TO REPRINT FIGURE 1.
We would love to hear from you. Please fill out the form below to send CASEL an email inquiry.

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<th>Affiliation (Organization, district, or school) *</th>
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CASEL frequently receives requests to use and reproduce resources and graphics. We are pleased so many find value in our work and seek to incorporate our learnings and research into their own efforts. Permission is not required to link to any graphic, handout, article, or page on our website. We just ask that you credit CASEL, include our copyright, and link to www.casel.org when appropriate. Permission must be requested to alter or translate any CASEL material. To request permission, please select the appropriate option below and send us a message with the specific request.
APPENDIX J

PERMISSION TO REPRINT FIGURE 2
Dear Kyra,

Cambridge University Press grants permission freely for the reproduction in another work of a single figure or a single table in which it holds rights. In such cases a request for permission need not be submitted, but the reproduced material must be accompanied by a full citation of the original source. Always check the caption or citation to ensure that Cambridge is the rights holder before proceeding.

Regards,

Adam

Adam Hirschberg
Senior Permissions Associate
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From: Etienne and Bev Wenger-Trayner <be@wenger-trayner.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 30, 2017 5:12 PM
To: Kyra M. Caldwell
Subject: Re: Request to use CoP Figure 0.1

Kyra,

You are welcome to use the figure.

All the best on your dissertation,

Etienne

On Apr 26, 2017, at 21:03, Kyra M. Caldwell <Kyra.M.Caldwell@live.mercer.edu> wrote:

Hello,

I am currently a doctoral candidate at Mercer University. I am working on my dissertation in which I plan to use your Communities of Practice theory. I am requesting permission to insert Figure 0.1 on page 5 of Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity (1998).

I look forward to your response.

Thank you!
Re: Request to use CoP Indicators
To: Kyra Monet Caldwell Templeton

Kyra,

Yes, you are very welcome to use these indicators. I am glad you found them useful.

Congratulations on your dissertation!

Etienne

On Oct 7, 2017, at 18:49, Kyra Monet Caldwell Templeton <Kyra.M.Caldwell@live.mercer.edu> wrote:

Hello,

I recently defended my dissertation at Mercer University and was successful! One of the corrections was for me to get permission to use the CoP Indicators on pages 125 - 126 in the Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity (1999).

I look forward to your response.

Thank you!

Dr. Kyra M. Caldwell Templeton
Mercer University

Sent from Mail for Windows 10
APPENDIX L

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