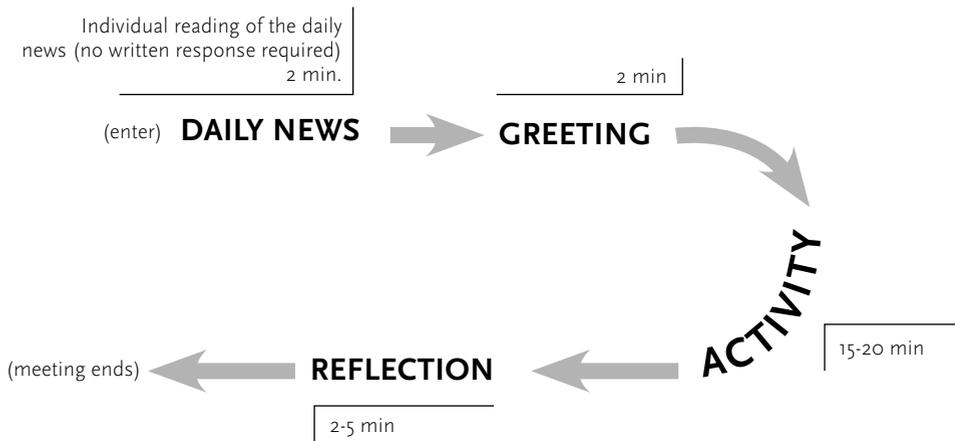


Activity Plus (A+) Advisories

Some days you want to use your advisory period to do an extended activity, and you don't have enough time in the CPR framework to do it. You need a structure that is consistent with CPR and continues to build your community. On these days, you can use the Activity Plus (A+) structure.

In A+, the advisory begins with daily news and a greeting, just as it does in CPR. These can be quick and still provide the comfort of familiarity and the rhythm of routine. Seeing the daily news message and beginning with a friendly greeting helps students transition into the school day and addresses their need for relationship, no matter what the main activity may be. Starting each day the same way heads off disruptions by providing a dependable structure which some students cannot do without. Routine is our friend, and routines that build community nourish all of us every day.

A+ Format



The advisory begins much the same as CPR, but most of the time is spent on the extended activity. The greeting, introduction of the activity, and final reflection are all well suited to the circle, the best way to gather for community-building. When you feel that the length of the activity doesn't allow time for a circle, make the necessary adaptations (see suggestions below).

Daily News

The news announces the activity for the day in advisory, and anything unusual about the schedule. It doesn't usually include an interactive piece, so it's a quick read. Starting the day with the news lets everyone know immediately upon entering the room what will be happening in advisory that day. It indicates with its announcement of an activity that something is different, while it reassures with the familiar routine. See Chapter Two for detailed information about writing the daily news.



Homework buddies
at work

Greeting

If you have minimal instructions to give and no time to circle up, consider doing a standing circle around the edge of the room for the greeting. Another possibility is to have students do a One-Minute Mingle Greeting around the room and then sit at desks or form into groups or move to the gym.

The greeting ensures that everyone is acknowledged by someone, and that everyone hears his name said in a friendly way every day. The greeting says, “Today, as always, we are a community.” See Chapter Two for detailed information about successful facilitation of the greeting.

Activity

The activity usually takes place away from the circle and uses most of the advisory time (15 - 20 minutes). It can be play (sometimes with other advisories), projects, art, writing, planning meetings—the list is long and interesting and can bring to advisory diverse activities that students may already enjoy. For detailed information about planning and orchestrating an activity, see Chapter Two and the suggestions below for implementing specific activities.

A word about timing

Timing is crucial in facilitating A+ advisories, because the extended activities could easily take up more time than you have available. You might want to plan to devote more than one advisory to the activity. Watch the time closely, and start bringing things to a conclusion a minute or so before you need to stop for the reflection. A timer helps, and sometimes a student can be the timekeeper. Even though you could let the activity keep going (especially when it’s really successful) right up to the bell, there will be much more satisfaction for everyone if you stop in time to reflect, even if very briefly. It takes self-discipline, but the reward is a feeling of completion and order.

Reflection

Students share about the process or the results of the activity. The reflection works best in the circle, but students can reflect and/or share their work with partners, small

groups, or individually, at their desks or tables, in which case perhaps only a couple of students share with the whole group. Another quick option is to have students write down an answer to a reflection question, signed if appropriate. This becomes their “Exit Card,” collected as they leave.

Sample reflection questions

Was the book you read at the right level for you?

For how much of the 15 minutes did your attention focus on your book?

What did you enjoy about making the banner?

On a scale of one to five with five being the strongest support, how much do you agree with the decision our advisory made today?

Payoffs of reflection

In these couple of minutes of looking back at the end of advisory, students reinforce the habit of reflective thinking after an activity. It’s a habit that provides lifelong payoffs. Also, instead of merely leaving after clean up, students and teacher get a minute to take a breath, think together, and experience the satisfaction of closure before hurrying off.

Remember that you can invite students to reflect on the *process* of the activity as well as its substance. Advisory is a good time to focus their attention on how they work with others, on how they solve problems, and on their work habits.

How well did you and your partner work together?

Do you feel that the work was done equally by everyone in your group?

What’s one thing you might do differently if we do this activity again?

How focused were you throughout the activity?

The reflection is also a time when you can encourage higher-level thinking about a topic. Invite students to evaluate, compare, integrate, and apply what they have learned during the activity.

On a scale of one to five, how would you rate the speaker in his understanding of adolescents?

How might the work you did with your partner help you in school?

In what ways might you use what you learned during this advisory in your life outside of school?

Save time for reflection

Sometimes it’s not easy to stop in time to reflect, but reflection needs to become a habit. Even if you stop just one minute before the bell rings, and have time for only one person to answer the question you pose, or a little time for students to talk with partners, even that little bit of reflection will support the routine, strengthen the habit, and give you and your students closure for your time together. Another alternative when time is short is to capture a quick, written reflection using an Exit Card (see above).