

STRATEGIES FOR ADVISORY

The strategies are organized into six areas: Relationship, Teacher Preparation, Expectations, Accountability, Endorsement, and Engagement. Follow these steps to make the most of the detailed suggestions provided:

1. Read Chapter Two: Mindsets Create the Tone of Teaching as context for all the strategies.
2. Read the strategies areas identified by your review of Barriers to Advisory.
3. Follow suggestions and your interest to read other, related areas.

General resources

Find specific resources are referenced throughout the strategies, e.g., a grid of activities or article about creating endorsement. Explore the following *Developmental Designs* resources for additional, detailed support for advisory:

- *Developmental Designs 1 Resource Book*
- *Developmental Designs 2 Resource Book*
- *The Advisory Book: Building a Community of Learners Grades 5-9*
- *Face to Face Advisories: Bridging Cultural Gaps in Grades 5-9*
- *Classroom Discipline: Guiding Adolescents to Responsible Independence*
- *The Circle of Power and Respect Advisory Meeting DVD*
- *Modeling and Practicing Classroom Routines DVD*
- www.DevelopmentalDesigns.org (free articles, meeting content, and other resources)
- <http://www.YouTube.com/user/DevelopmentalDesigns> (see practices in action)

RELATIONSHIP

A fundamental *Developmental Designs* principle is that students are more successful when they have strong, positive relationships with their peers and their teachers. Advisory is a time when students and teachers can create, strengthen, refresh, and celebrate their connectedness and prepare for a peaceful, productive school day.

Mindsets are key

All of the components of advisory are designed to strengthen students' relationships with each other and with their teacher. A low level of trust makes students reluctant to take the risk of participating in school. Some may participate minimally, but show little engagement or interest.

Your belief that a strong community can and will develop, no matter what challenges arise, and your leadership to make it happen, are vital. If students are reluctant at times to follow your lead to participate or share in advisory, think about whether

your verbal and nonverbal language invites participation. Do you consistently indicate that students' lives are of interest to you? Be clear with students about the fact that their good relationships with each other will help the community, will strengthen their social skills, and will help them succeed in school. See Chapter Two: Mindsets Create the Tone of Teaching, and Endorsement below, pages 59, for strategies.

Is this a group issue or an individual issue?

To assess trust levels in the group, ask:

- Do we need more time and/or support to get to know each other, or does everyone feel comfortable and safe?
- Do certain students dominate the class or otherwise disrupt feelings of safety?
- Has there been an incident recently, in or outside of school, that affects our advisory?
- Do you have unresolved issues with someone in the group?

If the answer to any of these questions is “yes,” consider the issue, and read the following suggestions for strengthening relationships in your advisory community.

Build Teacher-student Relationships

Reflect

Reflecting on your relationships with students may reveal needed changes for optimal student growth.

Think of a student you struggle with, and list several of his positive traits. Reflect on how frequently you acknowledge those with him. Does he know you see good in him?

Think of a student you struggle with, and list some of her negative aspects. Write an opposite for each negative characteristic, and think about situations when this student behaves in a positive manner.

Think of a student you often redirect. Reflect on your relationship with him/her. Use the Student Profile in the *Developmental Designs 1 Resource Book*, page 22. Is it generally positive? What do you do to get to know him/her better?

Support relationship by supporting student accountability

Redirecting students and keeping them accountable is hard work, but it is essential, because it protects and encourages them. Build trust with students by showing them that you will be fair and consistent and will keep the classroom safe.

Use the Loop

In connection with an activity, or new greeting or share experience, or whenever you think students might need to reflect and note or plan for improvement ask students:

- How did we do?
- What should we do differently next time?
- What strengths will we retain?
- What do we want to remember about this experience?

Every time you ask students these questions, you check in on their comfort level and you reinforce the community's strengths. Use Loop questions to teach students how to create supportive, safe environments and to show your commitment to the advisory community. You are saying: *How are we doing? Let's make it better!*

Encourage Healthy Peer Relationships

You are the relationship shepherd for your advisory

Students rely on their advisory teacher to teach and assess skills and to set and revise boundaries appropriately for the community of growing adolescents.

Assess the strength of the community: Periodically (every month or six weeks or if a recent change or experience warrants) assess the sense of safety for individuals and for the group. Use a quick visual show of thumbs or “fist of five” at the close of a meeting: *Use a fist of five to show me how comfortable you were with our sharing today, one for not comfortable and five for very comfortable.*

Assess social skills: Use Assessing Social Skills in *The Advisory Book*, page 267, to gauge students' social skills in each component. Help them strengthen their skills with appropriate greeting, sharing, and activities. See *The Advisory Book*, pages 211-215, for a table of meeting content for various needs.

Reinforce the importance of rules and expectations: Using personal stories and drawing connections to students' lives outside of school make clear the essential role that rules and protocols have in creating and maintaining a safe community. See Endorsement below, pages 59, for more about helping students endorse the challenging aspects of advisory meetings.

Greeting hazards and opportunities

The greeting must not be used to convey negative feelings or opinions or to display power. Once students are clear about the expectations, rigorously enforce the standards, and do not overlook small infractions. A seemingly small thing like mumbling or mispronouncing a name damages the connectedness of the group. On the other hand, a special greeting can be a bond among students; for example, the group could create a unique handshake.

Activity hazards and opportunities

Use low-risk activities until you feel students are ready for additional challenge, even if other advisories have moved to greater challenges. Use a quick assessment (fist of five or show of thumbs) after activities to find out which are their favorites. You might be surprised! One sixth grade teacher's group latched on to the nurs-