NSI TOOLKIT

ADVISORY PLANNING CHECKLIST

Improving Student Outcomes with Advisory

With the launch of the College Readiness Network for School Improvement (CR NSI) during the 2018-2019 school year, New Visions for Public Schools supports data-driven efforts that will increase the number of low-income students of color graduating from high school on time and prepared for success in college and careers. CR NSI focuses on building the capacity of school teams to lead improvement efforts that result in 9th grade success.

This toolkit is the fourth in a series that the New Visions Organizational Learning & Improvement team has developed to support CR NSI schools in addressing shared problems of practice. In addition to study skills, student perception surveys, and mentoring, schools have surfaced advisory as a mechanism to advance CR NSI goals. This toolkit leverages a set of interviews with CR NSI coaches and resources from thought leaders in the field to present advisory design considerations for teams who plan on launching or rebooting advisory to achieve CR NSI goals.

What is advisory?

Springpoint characterizes an intentionally designed advisory structure as a space that "**builds community, provides students with a safe environment, and forms the basis of a primary person model wherein all students have a trusted adult invested in their success.**"

Why advisory for CR NSI?

The CR NSI network team has learned that leveraging advisory to establish primary point person relationships has wide-reaching benefits. While primary point person models can exist without advisory, and vice versa, the combination of both is uniquely suited to advancing CR NSI goals:
1. Most CR NSI schools either already have an established advisory or are considering developing an advisory for the upcoming school year.
2. Advisory allows adult staff to view the whole school not only through their content specialization but also through the lens of holistic responsibility for their group of advisees. As such, advisories build shared ownership among school staff in ensuring student success.
3. A primary point person, or a school staff member who is the first point of contact for students and caregivers and who has a bird's eye view of students' well-being, can help ensure that students stay connected to their school and to their learning. In the context of remote and blended learning, these connections become even more paramount to student success.

How do I use this toolkit?

The following checklist walks CR NSI teams through a sequential set of planning decisions and considerations. School staff and CR NSI coaches can leverage this checklist to craft a series of advisory design meetings, or select a set of essential considerations to dive more deeply into as a team. The toolkit is not meant to help teams design advisory curriculum, but rather launch the process of determining structures and norms that makes advisory possible.

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	CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES	POSTSECONDARY TEAM NOTES
1	Goal of the System		
1a	*Determine your school's "why" for advisory.* Establishing the purpose of advisory through crafting a mission or goal statement helps guide its design and protect its parameters. The advisory team should decide whether it wants to focus on academics, social-emotional learning, relationship-building, or some combination of these and other foci.	UChicago TYWLS - Astoria Casco Bay (pg 8) Urban Assembly (pg 4) Outward Bound	
1b	*Identify the skills, knowledge, and outcomes that advisory will help foster; discuss how advisory will accomplish these things in ways that other structures or supports do not.* Skills, knowledge, and outcomes can include students' study habits; social emotional learning; navigational knowledge of college and career; sense of belonging; growth mindsets; and attendance.	Urban Assembly Example (SEL-Based, pg 5)	
1c	*Decide the desired scale of starting or re-designing advisory.* A strong advisory structure becomes a foundational component of school culture, which makes it highly complex to design. Advisory should begin during a student's 9th grade year based on the strength of 9th grade success as a predictor for on-time graduation.	Incoming Cohort Template (to inform focal group selection and advisory focus)	
2	Establishing Roles and Responsibilities		
2a	*Clarify the role of the advisor and what tasks they would support or uniquely own.* Advisors are point persons who build relationships with students and caregivers, and have a birds-eye view of students' well-being to help advocate for their success across school spaces. Consider: ● The frequency and format of student check-ins that allow advisors to develop trust and rapport with students. ● What advisors help students and adults monitor and keep track of (e.g., attendance, social-emotional health, goal-setting). ● How advisors are positioned to act as decision-makers and advocates for advisees in cross-school spaces (e.g., discipline, IEP meetings, parent teacher conferences). ● Whether advisees have the same advisor through all years of high school, or if advisors change as advisees are promoted.	HS for Commerce Example TvF example	

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	● With these responsibilities in mind, what the characteristics of a good advisor are.		
2b	*Establish expectations for how advisors would develop strong relationships with their advisees' families.* Advisors should serve as the primary contact for families with regards to their advisees. Consider what methods and mechanisms advisors would use to establish rapport, trust, and lines of communication with caregivers.	Family Wellness Check-In Tips Virtual Conferencing Guidelines	
3	School Programming		
3a	*Determine the time of the day and space for advisory.* Consider how to program the day to allow for the necessary time and to communicate the advisory's importance. ● For those students who are in-person, prioritize advisory for their in-person days. ● For students who have opted for remote learning, group them in an all-remote advisory to foster relationship-building within a stable peer group. ● A 15-20 minute advisory session once a week will not be enough time. ● A specific time of each day should be devoted to check-ins, and times such as first period, last period, and lunch should be avoided.	11th Grade Advisory Structure (pg 18)	
3b	*Decide if and how advisory is credited.* If advisory is credited as an elective, consider alignment to CDOS standards to allow students to work towards attaining CDOS.	CDOS Planning Sample Sequence	
3c	*Establish how advisory content will coordinate across advisor-advisee pairings.* Decide whether each advisor will use the same schedule and set of questions each day, and/or if sessions are tailored to student needs and individual timelines from the goal-setting process.	5 Minute Check-ins with Students Daily Planners	
3d	*For remote and blended models, determine which platform will best support advisory goals.* Consider what digital platform should be collectively used to ensure engagement from advisees and maximum effectiveness from advisors. Discuss whether this platform necessitates additional training for advisors and support for students.		

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4	Recruiting / Getting Buy-in		
4a	*Identify the desired composition of advisory teams.* School leaders should consider an array of questions when staffing their advisory teams, including: • Who can be recruited that might best achieve the advisory's goals (e.g. grade-level teachers). • If there other staff that can support advisors (e.g., paraprofessionals). • Whether all teachers would be expected to serve as advisors, or if advisory participation is an opt-in process.		
4b	*Convey roles and responsibilities to potential advisors.* Being an advisor is much more involved than some staff are often aware. Role descriptions should emphasize the importance of advisors serving as the key advocate and point persons for advisees and their caregivers.		
4c	*Communicate the importance of advisory to the school.* In order to garner buy-in more broadly, a clear vision and statement of importance should be communicated by school leaders. Actions which prioritize advisory (e.g., dedicating a set time of the day for check-ins) reinforce that importance.	FDA II Advisory Handbook	
4d	*Communicate the purpose and end goal of advisory to students and staff.* Students and staff should be able to connect advisory lessons and activities to student learning, academic and SEL goals, and college and career aspirations. As such, every check-in, staff meeting, and parent meeting should reinforce these connections.	Presentation for Advisees	
4e	*Select and match advisors to advisees.* Consider the maximum composition of advisory to allow for meaningful relationships. To supplement advisor-advisee relationships, consider fostering connections with older peers as well.	Relationship mapping: Agendas for Virtual and In-Person	
5	Staff Planning and Support		
5a	*Identify potential professional development for advisors.* Determine the set of competencies and professional learning opportunities necessary for a strong advisor, and determine which PD might build the capacity of advisors to become more effective. Consider: • Leveraging grade team structures for PD	Adult SEL and Cultural Competence	

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	● Devoting special attention to building the cultural competence of advisors, given the extent and depth of interactions with students and their families.		
5b	*Establish norms and processes for the leadership team to support advisors.* Determine how supervision will happen, especially if advisory is happening across multiple grades. School leadership involvement is critical. Consider when the principal can attend grade-level meetings, meet with team leads to provide feedback, and/or make observations of advisories.		
5c	*Decide what spaces and resources will be given to advisors to support their rehearsal and refinement of lessons.* Ensure that advisors have time to vet a common scope/sequence and plan for lessons; reflect or refine according to student feedback; and finally organize support around individual student needs.	Curriculum/Course Overview	
5d	*Institute expectations and criteria to guide when the CR NSI advisory planning team will meet, and what the team's collaborative work will focus on.* ● Set meeting routines and criteria to help productively constrain the team's focus. ● Allocate time to maintain momentum and troubleshoot impediments to progress.		
6	Monitoring Student and Adult Progress		
6a	*Plan to collaborate with students on setting goals.* Leveraging student voice develops students' ownership over their learning and progress. Determine: ● The timeframe for a student's goals (longer term e.g. college and career, and/or shorter term e.g. marking period). ● The type of goals a student might set (e.g. homework completion, grades, leadership in school or community). ● What recurring structures help make goal-setting authentic. Consider revisiting progress to goals every end of the month, prior to parent teacher conferences, marking period/mid-semester in-person meetings, and/or benchmarks based on student's goals.	Goal Setting (WOOP) SMART Goals Check & Connect	

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6b	*Identify key data points that advisors should monitor.* ● Surface a set of indicators for the advisors to closely monitor, such as daily attendance, period attendance, and homework completion. ● Set criteria for advisors to help determine when and how often frequency of outreach to students and families should occur.		
6c	*Determine the tools and resources that teams will use to monitor student progress.* Tools should be accessible by all key staff at the school and position everyone to coordinate support (e.g., student information systems, the Portal, or other mechanisms). Teams should leverage Portal features such as assigning point person supports.		
6d	*Encourage advisors to solicit student ownership of their learning.* Advisors should allow students to see key data, provide feedback, and co-construct content to ensure that the advisory is meeting its goals and modelling tenets of positive youth development. Decide: ● Whether advisors should invite students to give feedback on their experiences. ● What pieces of student feedback would help advisors monitor growth. ● How advisory and CR NSI teams would look at this feedback and reflect on it, and how often. ● If students will lead alongside advisors in creating content, and how that might happen. Fostering student leadership helps empower student voice and reflect culturally responsive content.	How Students Thrive: Positive Youth Development in Practice	
6e	*Identify early indicators of success to closely monitor.* Advisors should hold students accountable for attendance and engagement. Similarly, leadership should hold advisors accountable for engaging advisees. Consider how the team might monitor the success of advisory in the early stages (e.g., ensuring that advisors and advisees meet twice a week), and continuing on in the longer-term.	Sample Accountability Partner Document	

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Other resources and research leveraged in this toolkit include the following:

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CASEL. (2020). Reunite, renew, and thrive: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) roadmap for reopening school.

Springpoint. (2018). Designing Advisory Systems: Innovative Approaches From High Schools.

Vander Ark, T., Ryerse, M., Lathram, B. (2015). The Role Of Advisory In Personalizing The Secondary Experience.

Williams, J. M., & Bryan, J. (2013). Overcoming adversity: High-achieving African American youth's perspectives on educational resilience. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *91*(3), 291-300.

Williams, J. M., Bryan, J., Morrison, S., & Scott, T. R. (2017). Protective factors and processes contributing to the academic success of students living in poverty: Implications for counselors.