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## ***Designing and Implementing Effective Advisory Programs***

### **Introduction**

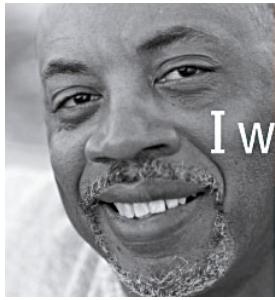
The benefits of implementing school-wide advisory programs are well documented. Advisory programs can play a critical role in a school's overall academic and student support services plan. Advisories are a primary vehicle for creating a more personalized learning environment where all students are well known by at least one adult. Moreover, advisory provides a structure and a set of practices for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress and college and career readiness throughout their high school career.

In most secondary schools, advisory is a new and distinctly different construct for student-teacher engagement. The emphasis on relationships, coaching, and facilitation and an agenda driven by student needs and realities—rather than subject matter content—is a huge shift for most faculty members. Understandably, many schools experience major obstacles in developing an advisory program that is fully supported by faculty, parents, and students over the long term.

Over the last ten years, Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) has provided advisory program consultation, training, and technical support to more than 250 schools. We have partnered with large urban school districts to support advisory development including Austin, Atlanta, San Diego, Chicago and NYC (through the Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation). We work closely with intermediaries and schools in their networks including College Board and Diploma Plus. We have collaborated with the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) to offer national introductory and advanced advisory design institutes and workshops for recipients of federal Smaller Learning Community (SLC) grants. We have also worked in many individual districts and schools in various settings across the country, including new small schools, comprehensive middle and high schools, and schools that are creating SLCs. In addition, ESR has facilitated advisory workshops for educators at national conferences and annual institutes with aspiring principals with New Leaders for New Schools.

### **ESR's Approach**

ESR's approach to advisory programs is guided by principles of youth development and personalization. Effective advisory programs are an important vehicle for ensuring that every student feels known, heard, and understood. Students gain key academic and social competencies that they will need for success in school and in life and make meaningful connections with other students and with adults.



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ESR's work is also guided by principles of adult development and organizational development. Our process takes a school through the steps of establishing or redesigning an advisory program from start to finish and makes sure that all constituencies have a say in the goals, structure, and content of the program. Developing a good design model, however, is not enough. What makes ESR's approach unique are the practices of advisory that we model and integrate throughout the entire design and development process. Participants engage in direct experiences that build a clear understanding of the activities that are essential for building effective advisory programs and the skill sets needed to become effective advisors.

This comprehensive process includes at least these five core phases:

- 1.study and investigation
- 2.planning and design
- 3.activity mapping
- 4.training for advisors
- 5.follow-up support to help ensure continuous improvement

From study and investigation to the launch of an advisory program takes between eight and 12 months depending on school readiness and current programming. The process begins with phone, email, and on-site consultation to assess needs and develop a schedule and work plan.

### **1. Study and Investigation**

During the study and investigation phase, a study group or advisory design team learns about key advisory design questions and options, gathers information about advisory, examines best practices of successful advisory programs, and begins a process for building faculty buy-in.

### **2. Planning and Design**

ESR's planning process will help an advisory design team develop a program that meets the specific interests and needs of faculty, students, and parents. The team will learn about various advisory models so that they can make informed decisions about the best design for their school. At the center of the planning process is the development of a fully articulated advisory model that addresses nine key issues:

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1.purpose, goals, and student outcomes | 5.content, themes, and formats      |
| 2.scheduling and frequency             | 6.materials and resources           |
| 3.size and grouping                    | 7.professional development          |
| 4.advisor role and expectations        | 8.accountability and assessment     |
|  | 9. links with other school programs |

The team will answer questions related to these issues and develop a plan to build faculty commitment to the final design and implementation time line.



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### **3. Activity Mapping and Writing**

Activity mapping begins with articulation of cross-grade and grade specific benchmarks and expectations that reflect the overall purpose and goals of advisory. A mapping team identifies activities for the year that align with the goals and benchmarks. It then assembles resources, and creates an advisory notebook for all advisors. Teams of writers develop session agendas and descriptions as needed. In the process, the committee will gain a full sense of ownership of the program, skills for advising, and for leading collegial workshops.

### **4. Professional Development for Advisors**

ESR will provide an orientation and training program for advisors to ensure that they acquire the skills, develop the comfort level, and gain the knowledge to be effective in this role. Advisors will become familiar with a range of activities that address the school's goals for advisory and practice the skills associated with academic and post-secondary coaching and advisement, personal conferencing, group facilitation, learning-to-learn and life skill development. We also work with leadership groups to build their capacity to carry out on-going professional development.

### **5. Capacity Building**

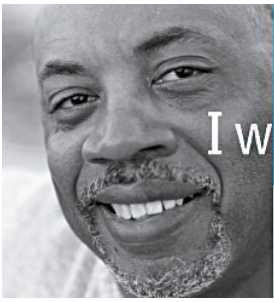
ESR will help build district capacity to sustain the advisory program through coaching of the advisory design team, the advisory coordinator, and the principal. We will conduct, and teach the design team to conduct, observation and feedback processes for broad patterns and specific support needs. We will coach staff to develop a long-term professional development plan; supervise, mentor, and train advisors; assess the program's progress; conduct internal marketing; and continually improve the program.

## **The Importance of Direct Experience with Advisory Activities and Advisor Skill-sets**

In order to make informed decisions about what students and advisors should do in advisory, design teams must experience directly the kinds of activities that will help them achieve the desired goals and student outcomes they have identified. Core advisory activities emphasize: group building; self-perpetuating routines and rituals; one-on-one conferencing; personal learning and postsecondary planning and products that support college and career readiness; learning-to-learn skills; life skills and healthy development; student voice; and school culture. In addition, teams need to experience the skill sets of facilitating, conferencing, and coaching in order to construct adequate advisor training and on-going professional development.

for a complete list of ESR training programs,

visit us @ [www.esrnational.org](http://www.esrnational.org)



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## **Advisory Resources**

ESR published *The Advisory Guide: Designing and Implementing Effective Advisory Programs in Secondary Schools* in 2004. It is a practical “nuts and bolts” manual for tackling the design, content, and implementation challenges of building effective advisory programs. The guide helps leadership teams and faculty move beyond theory and design to the concrete shifts in *practice* that personalize relationships and support the academic, social, and emotional development of students. The guide also provides nearly 150 activities for use in advisory.

ESR created The Advisory Library in 2006. With 16 individual books handpicked and recommended by the authors of *The Advisory Guide*, The Advisory Library offers a wide variety of resources and activities for community building, journaling, collaborative problem solving, and social skill development. More than just a collection of books, The Advisory Library also includes a handbook that demonstrates how to use the books, and gives schools up-to-date information and resources to keep advisory sessions fresh.

In addition we provide samples of a variety of schedules, monthly and semester advisory maps, and advisor notebooks from schools that are implementing successful advisory programs. We also work with advisory design teams to develop and write their own school-focused advisory session descriptions.

## **ESR and Secondary School Reform**

ESR’s work in the area of school reform, redesign, and continuous school improvement is called Partners in Learning. Partners in Learning provides consulting, training, follow-up support, coaching, and technical assistance to help schools implement school redesign initiatives and sustain changes that foster: a safer, more welcoming and respectful school climate; a fair and seamless system of discipline and student support; more positive and caring relationships among students and staff; and a learning culture that expects and supports every student to be academically successful.

Since the early 1980s, ESR has been a voice for change in America’s education system—a voice that says we must create the safe, respectful, and productive learning environments that all young people deserve. We have a proven track record of offering practical know-how, consultation, training, coaching and resources through a wide variety of programming. Most importantly, ESR is an experienced group of teachers and administrators who have extensive experience with school reform. We understand education systems inside and out.

**To find out how *Designing and Implementing an Effective Advisory Program* can serve your school or district, call us today toll free at 1.800.370.2515 and we’ll show you how, together, we can make a difference.**