

Huddle Up in Advisory



Huddle Up in Advisory is a project developed by CHARACTER^{plus} and the Center for Character and Citizenship in partnership with the St. Louis Rams Foundation. It explores the potential for Advisories to build trusting relationships; support academic and character-based goals; and promote active citizenship and service.

Huddle Up Schools

Bayless Jr. High
Bayless District

Hollenbeck Middle
Francis Howell District

Lift for Life Academy
St. Louis Charter School

Margaret Buerkle Middle
Mehlville School District

Project Staff

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Supporting Sponsor



Advisory Conversations about Belonging & Trust

The Huddle Up School Teams started their work together by exploring what makes us feel like we **belong** and how do we come to **trust** another person to guide us. Their responses create a foundation for two Advisory activities. We suggest using one or both, relatively early in the life of an Advisory group. They help to set common understandings and shared responsibility for two of the most vital aspects of Advisories.

Included in this packet you will find:

- ◆ Directions to “Advisory Conversations on Belonging”
- ◆ “Reflecting on Belonging” Worksheet
- ◆ Reflections on Belonging

- ◆ Directions to “Advisory Conversations on Trust”
- ◆ “Reflecting on Trust” Worksheet
- ◆ Reflections on Trust

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CHARACTER^{plus}
SCHOOL HOME COMMUNITY®

Advisory Conversations about Belonging

Question:

Think of a time when a group of people made you feel like you really belonged. What did they do to make you feel this way?

Directions:

1. Distribute the "Reflecting on Belonging" worksheet. Ask students individually to complete the top portion.
2. Use the concentric circle format (for additional application see *The Advisory Guide*, p.118). Step 1: Half of the students arrange themselves in a circle facing out; the other half form an outer circle facing in. They align with a person in the opposite circle. These partners share their responses to the question above.

Step 2: Instruct the outer circle to move two spaces clockwise. Those on the *outer circle* ask their new partners: "What makes you feel excluded or like you don't belong?" They listen respectfully and add their insights.

Step 3: Instruct the outer circle to move two more spaces clockwise. Those on the *inner circle* pose this question: "What can you do to make someone feel like they belong?" They listen respectfully and add insights.
3. Distribute the "Reflections on Belonging" in response to this question. Ask students to work in pairs, read the responses, and identify common themes. Ask them to report out to the group or proceed with a class meeting (Step 4).
4. Bring the group together in class meeting format using the following discussion prompts:
 - a. In thinking about the reflections on belonging to groups, what common elements did you find?
 - b. Think about our advisory. What can we do to make someone feel like they really belong? Develop a list to post, perhaps a take-off of "You know you belong to our Advisory when..." Ask all members of the Advisory to sign it as they commit to its principles.
 - c. Reflect on the process that we used today. How did it feel to share in pairs, to reflect individually, and to share in class meeting? Did you feel safe and comfortable sharing?
5. (Optional extension.) Have students share their reflections with family members and ask them the same question, recording their responses on the bottom portion of the "Reflecting on Belonging" worksheet. These can be shared in a follow-up advisory.

Poliner, R. & Lieber C. (2004). *The advisory guide*. Cambridge, MA: Educators for Social Responsibility.

Reflecting on Belonging

Think of a time when a group of people made you feel like you really belonged. What did they do to make you feel this way?

Respond to the question by writing your thoughts in the space below.

Share your thoughts with a family member and ask him/her to reflect on the same question. Record the answer here.

Reflections on Belonging

The students, educators and parents below responded to this question: "Think of a time when time when a group of people made you feel like you really belonged. What did they do to make you feel this way?"

- Student A time when a group of people makes me feel like I really belong is whenever I'm at play practice. I feel like I belong and am welcome at play practice because everybody is themselves and creative. I also feel welcome because everyone's ideas and opinions are shared and not shot down.
- Student When I went to eat at the lunch table I felt normal. They don't talk bad about other people at the table.
- Student My volleyball team makes me feel like I belong. They do this by being supportive and not making fun of me.
- Student Whenever I get to school every day all of my friends run up to me and hug me and so I know I really belong!
- Teacher People brought me into the conversation, used my name, asked me questions, listened to my answers and invited me to go along with them.
- Principal My first day at Middle School, five years ago, the entire staff welcomed me and made me feel accepted as part of their family. This transition was easier, after being at my previous school for ten years, due to the welcome.
- Teacher They laughed at my jokes.
- Parent Eye contact, active listening, nice facial expressions, asked questions.
- Student My friends told me that I was important and they always hugged me. I felt like I was needed and important to my friends. I also felt like I could do anything and talk to anybody. That's how I felt like I really belonged.
- Counselor They smiled, used eye contact, introduced everyone. They asked my opinion and included me in discussion. They remembered my name the next time I saw them.
- Teacher When I was first hired at the Middle School, the faculty made me feel like a part of the "family." They all did whatever they could to help me. I felt from the very first day like I had been there for years. No one treated me like I was an outsider.
- Student Once I started choir I felt like I really belonged. They encouraged me to keep trying my best and now I love it.
- Student One of the times that I was with a group of people that made me feel like I belonged was when I went to camp. They told me what I needed to do and what was expected of me. They also tried to become my friends and then I was able to talk to them freely. I also tried to get to know them because they tried to get to know me. This is how they made me feel like I belonged.
- Teacher When I came to work at the Middle School, people helped answer questions, showed me procedures, invited me to events, made sure I felt welcome. They showed me the ropes and procedures of the building.
- Student One time when a group of people made me feel like I really belonged was when I was at student council camp. I felt really connected to the people in my group. I think we all had a lot in common with each other.
- Student A couple of nights ago I was at a birthday party. My friend invited some girls that were her friends but more popular than me. They accepted me by actually talking to me more than what they did at school - they considered me cool and laughed when I talked. It boosted my self esteem so much.
- Studentl When I broke my arm and went to the hospital everybody made me feel good. I talked with everybody I saw and had them sign my cast. They made me feel really good.

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Advisory Conversations about Trust

We asked the following question of the Huddle Up in Advisory Leadership Team members when they arrived for the first session. The teams included educators parents and students. Their responses are attached. By reading their reflections you learn a little more about the team members. We encourage you to reflect on the same question.

Think of a time when you trusted one person to advise or guide you. What did they do to earn your trust?

1. Distribute the "Reflecting on Trust" worksheet. Ask students individually to complete the top portion.
2. Group students in teams of four. Distribute "Reflections on Trust." Ask them to read the responses together, talk about them and list common themes.
3. Ask them to "locate" their personal reflections: do they fit within one of themes identified? Do they stand on their own? If so, add them to the list of themes.
4. Share out: Rotate through each group, asking them to share one theme at a time (without repeats) and record them on flip chart paper. Provide every member (students and advisor) with three sticky dots. Ask them to vote for the three qualities or themes that are most important to them in a trusting relationship.
5. Ask for student volunteers to create a clean poster or flip chart of the top three vote-getters by the next session, labeling it "Trust-Builders" or their own title.
6. At the next session, ask the students to present their poster and, as a class, talk about the three themes. What do they look like, sound like and feel like in action. Ask each student (and Advisor) to write on separate post-it notes several things they can do to build trust. They share their post-it contents with the group as they attach them to the poster. The Advisor summarizes these commitments to building trust and the poster becomes a reference point.
7. Consider creating a "Trust Thermometer," designed by volunteer students. Monthly or quarterly, take the temperature of trust. Create a matching handout. Ask students, individually and anonymously, to indicate the "level of trust they feel" on the left side of the thermometer and "the level of trust they build" on the right. Average these to develop a class rating and mark this on the poster. Invite dialogue, asking students to share their reflections.

Reflecting on Trust

**Think of a time when you trusted one person to advise or guide you.
What did they do to develop your trust?**

Respond to the question by writing your thoughts in the space below.

Share your thoughts with a family member and ask him/her to reflect on the same question. Record the answer here.

Reflections on Trust

The students, educators and parents below responded to this question: "Think of a time when you trusted one person to advise or guide you. What did they do to develop your trust?"

- Teacher My high school art teacher suggested I teach art as a profession; he saw in me what I didn't see in myself. He was a firm but fair teacher.
- Student My math teacher helped me a lot. I had a difficult time studying. She told me to go to a tutor in her classroom. The tutor thing helped me a lot. I learned so many more things. I learned more stuff every time we did it. I learned very fast from it. My grade point average is an A in math now.
- Student When I first came to this school I was a little worried that nobody would trust me. When I met my new principal I thought it would be cool to be his friend. I started to go and talk to him just so he would start to trust me. He started to tell me about stuff that I could do in the near future. He told me about the junior high and stuff to do like student council.
- Principal The person went out of his way to speak with me and made me feel like my thoughts and opinions really mattered. He also encouraged me to try things that I otherwise would not have attempted, like leadership roles in student council and class officer positions back in high school.
- Parent They listened before they offered an opinion. They didn't have a judgmental tone of voice. The person looked me in the eye and had a conversation with me rather than a lecture.
- Nurse I had a professor who guided me academically and professionally during school when great trauma was happening in my life. He never made me feel singled out but gave the extra push I needed without making me feel pressured. This is the difference between a teacher and an educator. The educator teaches the curriculum while also enriching their students' lives. This professor taught us how to "carry on" in life through the roller coaster ride it can sometimes be.
- Teacher They were patient and kind with criticism. They listened to what my concerns were and gave realistic responses (advice). This person was honest and sincere and worked hard to help keep me encouraged by pointing out positives and things to focus on (as goals).
- Teacher My mentor teacher spent time with me but did not stifle me. She continues to always put aside what she is working on to discuss stuff.
- Student When I trusted my friend. I developed trust in her by gradually telling her to help and seeing if she would help.
- Counselor A few years ago I really needed some advice on a situation at school and I called a principal I had worked with and who had since retired. I had always respected and trusted him. He had always been fair and honest with me, not always telling me what I wanted to hear but what I needed to hear. As usual, he gave me sound advice once again!
- Parent My boss. She treats people with respect. She listens to what they have to say. She encourages people in their work.
- Teacher They believed in me. They provided advice and positive feedback that made me feel comfortable.
- Principal A friend of my family was a man of character. I could confide in him my deepest fears/conflicts. He was nonjudgmental of me as a person and always offered me sound/practical advice/guidance.
- Student I knew that person for a while. I could trust him because I knew he was responsible.