

## Huddle Up in Advisory



Huddle Up in Advisory is a project developed by CHARACTER<sup>plus</sup> 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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# Top Five: The Goals of Advisories

The unique feature of the Huddle Up in Advisory Project is the leadership team itself. It involves the principal, several teachers and counselors, and at least two students from the 6th & 7th grades. The power of this staff-student combination was evident from the start.

Their first step was to build common ground within each team on the goals for their Advisory. *The Advisory Guide* (2004) provided a starting point with a list of suggested "Goals & Outcomes" on pp. 43-44. The authors, Rachel Poliner and Carol Lieber, offered a wide range of options and some tricky terminology (what does it mean to be self-managed?). It was just enough to launch rich conversations between the adults and students at the tables. They followed the Steps to the Team Process in the first session, then took the process back to their school community.

### Distinct priorities

The Hollenbeck Middle School team spontaneously decided to distinguish their votes for the "Top Five" as students placed their dots (see Steps of the Team Process) on one side of a goal and adults on the other. They realized some common ground, but a distinct difference in priorities. The students were emphatic about peer support and that barely made the radar screen for the adults. It made us realize the value of involving all staff in a voting process and all students in a separate voting process. You'll see this reflected in "Steps for involving the whole school."

### Motivated teams cover a lot of ground in a short time

We learned that a motivated team could tackle the suggested list from *The Advisory Guide*, make it make sense to them collectively, and experience the voting process described below in less than 2 hours. They then planned how they were going to replicate this experience for the rest of their school community.

Each school had a different set of goals at the end of our first session and came back two months later after sharing the process with their school community with a revised "Top Five."

### Based on their experience, we've outlined the

- Steps for the team process
- Reflections from team members
- Steps for involved the whole school
- Results of the Huddle Up Team Schools' final "Top Five."

**Suggested Resource:** Poliner, R. & Lieber C. (2004). *The advisory guide: Designing and implementing effective advisory programs in secondary schools*. Cambridge, MA: Educators for Social Responsibility. [www.esrnational.org/resources.htm](http://www.esrnational.org/resources.htm)

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## Steps of the team process

1. The Huddle Up Teams used *The Advisory Guide* as the backbone of their sessions together. We recommend a book study, adapted to work for both the students and adults on your team, that invites questions and dialogue, demonstrates some of the facilitation skills, and allows the team to try out some of the activities.
2. The team zeroes in on “Goals & Outcomes” (pp.43-44), reviewing the list together and making it their own, talking through words and concepts so they have a shared understanding.
3. Each team member then identifies their top 3 choices for goals on a note card.
4. Members share their choices as a Recorder writes them on flip chart paper, until all selections (without repeats) are listed.
5. Further discussion clarifies what is meant by the goals, if any can be combined, how they would look when activated, and why members think they are important. At this time, invite team members to “campaign” for goals they want to make the list.
6. Team members each receive 5 sticky dots and vote for the goals they most support. They can place all 5 dots on different goals or concentrate several dots on one or two goals. Ask students to place their dots on one side of each goal listed and adults on the other for insights into the priorities of each.
7. The five goals garnering the highest number of votes become the team’s initial “Top Five.” [The number five is not set in stone; any workable number will do.]
8. Ask team members to debrief the process. What do they understand about Advisories that they didn’t before? What questions do they have? Did everyone feel like they had a say in the process? Did they understand why the “Top Five” are important to the team?
9. They use their own feedback as a springboard to plan how to involve their school community--staff, parents and students--in a similar process to determine their goals.

### Reflections from team members on this process:

“The process was painless.” “It was quite easy to have open conversations.”  
“Very useful.” “No barriers.” “The change of venue (being off campus) helps.”  
“We’ve been at advisories for 13 years, but this helps us refresh and reinvigorate our approach.” “This helped us realize a way to develop common language. Our students had a different sense of ‘self-managed’ and it made a difference in their voting.” “To see the difference in the goals students chose and adults chose opened up the kind of quality conversations we needed. We realized staff can’t do this alone.”

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# Steps for involving the whole school

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1. The team facilitates the whole school process. Members start by backing up from their "Top Five" to develop a broader list of possible goals to present. Lift for Life Academy used the original list from *The Advisory Guide* for their staff. Hollenbeck Middle School streamlined the list to 13. [See box.]
2. Team members present what they've learned about the range and potential of Advisories to the staff, particularly all advisors. Students share their discoveries and perspectives. Together they facilitate a discussion of possible goals and guide the staff through the voting process.
3. They prepare advisors to take this back to their Advisories in two sessions. The first session is designed to (a) underscore that everyone involved in advisories will be a part of determining the goals for this daily time together, and (b) to get a handle on the possibilities by talking about what the words mean and what these goals would look like in action. For instance, what would it look like for students to offer peer support? Consider splitting student team members among several advisories to share their understanding and perspective.

4. The second session is dedicated to voting. It can be as simple as placing all possibilities on flip chart paper or smart boards asking each student to "dot" their top five in turn. Or steps 3-7 of the Team Process can be replicated in each Advisory to allow more personal reflection and sharing before students vote with their "dots."

5. The votes are tallied. Because there are far more students than staff, we suggest working in percentages. Let's say Goal 4 received 6 out of 36 staff votes (16%) and 140 of 540 student votes (26%). Combine the percentages and compare to the those of other goals to determine the "Top Five."

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### Hollenbeck's Streamlined List of Goals

1. *Hollenbeck will develop a partnership amongst students, teachers, and parents.*
  2. *Students will be known and feel known by at least one adult.*
  3. *Students will develop constructive peer relationships.*
  4. *Students will develop cooperation and teamwork skills.*
  5. *Students will offer and find peer support while attending Hollenbeck.*
  6. *Students will learn to make a connection between success at school and their future.*
  7. *Students will develop the skill of advocating for themselves and deal effectively with adults.*
  8. *Students will develop a sense of belonging with their peer group.*
  9. *Adults in building will get know students as people.*
  10. *Students will be able to adjust more effectively to high school or middle school, and to new grade levels.*
  11. *Students will become more self aware and self directed with their academics.*
  12. *Positive school climate.*
  13. *Students will be involved in school decisions.*
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6. The team plans how they will communicate the results: reports in Advisories, announcements over intercom or in-school TV broadcasts, posters, newsletters and so on.
7. Advisors come together with the team to identify (a) practices already in place that meet the goals; (b) ways to share those practices with all advisors, and (c) resources and ways to develop areas they need to add.
8. A student focus group comes together to discuss how students will address the goals, particularly those focused on peer support, creating a sense of belonging, advocating for themselves, developing cooperation and teamwork. They plan a way to report back to the whole school.
9. The team meets regularly to plan, problem-solve and assess progress.

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## Huddle Up Teams “Top Five” Goals for Advisory

### Hollenbeck Middle School

1. Hollenbeck will develop positive school relationships within the school community, including students, teachers and others.
2. Advisories will help build a positive school climate.
3. Students will develop the skills of advocating for themselves by becoming more self aware and self-directed with their academics.
4. Students will be involved in opportunities to allow for student voice & choice.
5. Students will develop cooperation and teamwork skills within our school community.

### Bayless Jr. High

1. More cooperative learning, less of a classroom-like experience
2. Establish goals related to sense of connection.
3. Establish goals related to parent/guardian contact and ownership/investment.
4. Increase student voice; Students want more competition between 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>.

### Lift for Life Academy

1. Advisees will learn to be more self aware, self-managed and self-directed.
2. Advisors will get to know advisees well as learners and as people.
3. Advisors will help advisees see the connection between success in school and options for the future.
4. Advisors will develop cooperation and teamwork skills.
5. Advisors will develop partnerships with parents and guardians to support and encourage their child's progress.

### Buerkle Middle School

1. Advisees will feel a sense of belonging to a peer group.
2. Advisors will help advisees see the connection between success in school and options for the future.
3. Advisors will get to know advisees as learners and people.
4. Advisees will develop study and academic skills to support.
5. Advisees will express opinions on what has changed in school and what needs to change and to find out the reasons why.