



## Superintendent's HOPE Note - May 2023

*There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.*  
— Nelson Mandela

### Advisory is More than Homeroom

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), improving students' relationships with teachers has significant, positive, and long-lasting implications for both students' academic and social development. Solely improving students' relationships with their teachers will not produce gains in achievement. However, students with close, positive, and supportive relationships with their teachers will attain higher levels of achievement than those with less positive relationships with their teachers. Positive teacher-student relationships have many benefits, including:

- Improved academic performance: Students who have positive relationships with their teachers are more engaged in the classroom, participate more, and have better academic outcomes. They are also more likely to enjoy school and have a positive attitude toward learning.
- Better social-emotional development: Teachers who form positive relationships with their students create a supportive and caring classroom environment. This can lead to better social-emotional development for students, including improved self-esteem, resilience, and emotional regulation.
- Reduced behavior problems: When students have positive relationships with their teachers, they are less likely to engage in disruptive or harmful behavior. This is because they feel a sense of connection and belonging in the classroom, which can lead to increased motivation and a desire to do well.

Overall, positive teacher-student relationships can significantly impact a student's academic and personal success, making them a crucial aspect of any effective educational program.

#### The Challenge of Adolescence

Just when students need these connections the most, forming them becomes more difficult. Instead of a single classroom and a single primary teacher, students have multiple teachers, and each of those teachers may be responsible for 150 students or more. This makes it difficult for teachers to forge relationships with their students, especially those who need the relationships the most. Making this even more complicated, adolescents are, well, adolescents and may resist forming relationships with any adults, especially school staff. Advisories help to counteract this trend by creating a dedicated space where students and staff can put the work into establishing these relationships.

#### Protective Factors

Advisors can get to know their students, monitor their academic progress, and build a relationship that may allow them to intervene in discipline issues more effectively than school administrators. Advisory also offers students the opportunity to form close bonds with their peers under the guidance of their advisory teacher. As adolescents increasingly turn to their peers for social validation, the environment of an advisory class affords them a safe place to practice developing healthy, age-appropriate identities through peer discussion and personal reflection. This is particularly important for students from troubled backgrounds, as an advisory class may serve as the only place in their lives where they can practice this in an emotionally safe environment. In fact, advisory programs offer a host of benefits to adolescents struggling with adversity. While advisory programs have shown a positive effect on student attendance in general, research suggests that this effect is more pronounced with academically struggling students. When successful, these programs can have significant positive impacts on many key indicators of students' engagement with their education, from decreased referrals and less staff time devoted to behavior management to increased attendance and a greater sense of belonging and community.

Sources: [American Psychological Association \(APA\)](#) and [Association of Middle Level Education \(AMLE\)](#)

Visit the district's webpage to see the [Strategic Plan](#) and the full [Portrait of a Graduate](#)



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### Core Value Alert:

- Every learner has the right to a world class education.
- The learning environment must be safe and supportive.

### Creating Safe and Supportive Environments for Every Learner

**Risk factors** are conditions that increase the likelihood of a young person becoming involved in drug use, delinquency, school dropout, and/or violence. Risk factors are characteristics linked with youth violence, but they are not direct causes of it. A combination of individual, relationship, community, and societal factors contribute to the risk of youth violence. Research on youth violence has increased our understanding of factors that make some populations more vulnerable to victimization and perpetration. Many risk factors for youth violence are linked to experiencing toxic stress or prolonged and repeated stress. Toxic stress can negatively change the brain development of children and youth. The Centers for Disease Control identified the following risk factors for children:

- Social rejection by peers
- Lack of involvement in conventional activities
- Poor academic performance
- Low Commitment to school and school failure

**Protective factors** identified through research include strong bonding to the community, family, school, and peers, healthy beliefs, and transparent standards for behavior. Research on risk and protective factors has important implications for children's academic success, positive youth development, and prevention of health and behavior problems.

Protective factors may lessen the likelihood of youth violence, victimization, or perpetration. Identifying and understanding protective factors are equally as important as researching risk factors. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) identified the following protective factors for children:

- Possession of affective relationships with those at school that are strong, close, and pro-socially oriented
- Commitment to school (an investment in school and in doing well at school)
- Exposure to school climates with the following characteristics:
  - Intensive supervision
  - Clear behavior rules



### Piece of the Puzzle



Please join me in celebrating Mrs. Cara Klinger as our Piece of the Puzzle! We extend our gratitude for all of the hard work and dedication she has put into coaching and supporting our teachers. Her years of experience and willingness to share her knowledge have made a tremendous impact on our school community. Mrs. Klinger's tireless efforts to improve the quality of education at our schools are building much-needed efficacy and inspiring teachers to take center stage as the learning experts that we have always known them to be!