

URBAN STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH ADVISORY:  
A CASE STUDY

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The findings of this qualitative study show that students at New York Middle School (NYMS) experience advisory through two interconnected systems. One matches Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework and is conceptualized as the microsystem of school, in which students have a dyadic advisor-advisee relationship bound by the time and space of school. There is also a group relational structure, which I have named the endosystem, which is bound by the time and space of the group meeting. In both of these systems, students' experiences are shaped by an interplay of activities, roles, and relations.

Students describe advisory in terms of activities, roles, and relations, and from these descriptions the themes that emerge include: everyone experiences advisory differently; advisory is different from other classes; advisory helps students make sense of and navigate their school experience; and advisory provides students with a sense of belonging. Advisory group meetings provide social and emotional, and some academic, support for students.

It is in the one-on-one relationship with their advisors, however, that students primarily experience advisory as a social, emotional, and academic support system. This component of advisory provides students with someone to go to when they need help either with their work or with negotiating their relationships with peers and teachers. Many students articulate that without an advisor, no one would be keeping track of them.

Building community is a central activity at NYMS, and advisory is one piece of this endeavor. The principal calls it the core of the school, and in many ways it is. It is

the sense of community permeating the school that allows advisory to be a support mechanism in the school. Without advisory, the students in this study believe that the school would be more chaotic and that more students would get into fights, because they would not have anyone to talk to. As well, advisory provides an opportunity for students and teachers to engage in relationships characterized by care.