

# Responsive Advisory Meeting Overview

Responsive Advisory Meeting bolsters students' academic and social-emotional growth and provides meaningful opportunities to build positive relationships with peers and adults at school.

## What Is Advisory?

**A**n Advisory program is a critical component of middle school because it connects a teacher (the advisor) with a group of students (the advisees) to provide academic and social-emotional support and to strengthen the community of the school. The primary objectives of a structured, purposeful Advisory program are to:

- ▶ Support students in building positive, meaningful relationships with one or more caring adults at school
- ▶ Help students develop positive relationships with their peers
- ▶ Provide a safe place for students to strengthen their academic and social-emotional competencies, explore their interests more deeply, and nurture the development of new skills and talents

Responsive Advisory Meeting, which is a key *Responsive Classroom* middle school practice, has a set, predictable structure. Each meeting is organized around one of seven distinct purposes that underlies the meeting's topic and activities. Responsive Advisory Meeting thus offers a solid framework for building meaningful connections and developing respectful and

trusting relationships, while meeting students' developmental needs to belong, feel significant, and have fun. Responsive Advisory Meeting:

- ◆ Empowers students to create relevant connections to the school at large and with students who share similar interests (sports teams, clubs, and so on)
- ◆ Strengthens the community of learners by providing opportunities for positive student-student and student-teacher interactions
- ◆ Improves academic performance by helping students develop an academic mindset
- ◆ Communicates about the life of the school

The Responsive Advisory Meeting plans in this book are based on comprehensive research conducted by Center for Responsive Schools at seven public middle schools (rural, suburban, and urban). Over 250 middle school students in grades six, seven, and eight generated ideas and tested them in teacher-led student focus groups and Advisories. For more information on this research, see the “Research and Development on Responsive Advisory Meeting Purpose Topics” report at [www.responsiveclassroom.org/printables](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/printables).

## The Benefits of Responsive Advisory Meeting

**R**esponsive Advisory Meeting benefits students in a variety of significant ways.

### Promotes a sense of community

By providing a safe space to develop respectful, trusting relationships, such as by sharing multiple perspectives on various topics, Responsive Advisory Meeting helps to create and extend connections among all members of the Advisory community. Each component is designed to incorporate positive social interactions, helping students to be known and to get to know others.

### Meets students' needs for belonging, significance, and fun

Social science theory and research by Maslow, Dreikurs, Adler, and others confirm that once basic needs are met (food, water, shelter, etc.), all human behavior is motivated by the need for:

**Belonging**—the feeling of knowing you are a part of something greater than yourself. Examples: Students feel a sense of belonging when they know how to function (because expectations have been taught) and are recognized as a contributing member of a learning community. Students feel like they are a part of a community when classmates express concern after their absence.

**Significance**—being known for a strength, talent, or characteristic. Examples: Students feel a sense of significance when they are able to use their talents (such as to create a poster for the room) or when they are known among friends for a skill (such as giving good advice).

**Fun**—finding joy in a situation, being engaged, and feeling motivated. Examples: Students feel joyfully engaged when they are appropriately challenged during a whole-group activity, when sharing a piece of knowledge about their interests, or when laughing together during Advisory.

Responsive Advisory Meeting is designed to meet these needs as students engage with their peers in purposeful, structured activities.

## **Improves students' academic performance**

Responsive Advisory Meeting helps students develop and strengthen skills and build an academic mindset (that they belong in this school; that their effort improves performance; that they feel they can succeed academically; that they see the value in their work). Students have opportunities to explore and grapple with engaging, challenging content, collaborate with one another, build perseverance, and learn how to set and reach goals.

## **Encourages communication**

Throughout Responsive Advisory Meeting, students can strengthen key listening, speaking, and other communication skills that are needed for success in and out of school when they communicate about their personal and academic lives. Responsive Advisory Meeting also provides an outlet for schoolwide communication.

## **Builds essential social-emotional learning (SEL) skills**

Responsive Advisory Meeting is designed to help students build SEL competencies in cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. These SEL competencies are essential for academic success, for healthy relationships, and for job readiness.