

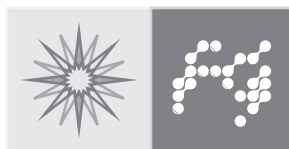
Connecting Learning/ Relationships

a guide to Family Group/Advisory

The Superintendency of Alternative, Adult and
Continuing Education, Schools and Programs

The New York City Department of Education





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JUNE 2003

The Superintendent of Alternative, Adult and
Continuing Education, Schools and Programs

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This *Guide* is designed to be accompanied by staff development and additional materials. A 12-minute video tape has been developed by the Educational Video Center to complement the *Guide*.

We wish to acknowledge the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation which provided the core financial support for conducting this project. Chris Sturgis has been an enthusiastic and wise program officer.

Critical to the success of this project has been the vision and support of Richard Organisciak, the Superintendent of Alternative High Schools and Programs, and Alan Werner, Deputy Superintendent. Elayna Konstan, Assistant Administrative Superintendent, has played a critical role each step of the way in supporting this project. A list of the staff who developed the content for the project appears on the introductory letter.

The project was facilitated by the Youth Development Institute:

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- Marsha Milan-Bethel, *Project Assistant*
- Pardeice Powell-McGoy, *Training Director*
- Jean Thomases, *Consultant*

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Thanks to all.

PETER KLEINBARD

Vice President, Fund for the City of New York and Director, the Youth Development Institute



How This Publication Was Developed & How To Use It

Dear Friend/Colleague:

Working in New York City Alternative High Schools and Programs presents many challenges, but also wonderful opportunities. We have a rich history of providing creative and substantive educational programs to young people from many different backgrounds. One of the most innovative and effective strategies has been Family Group/Advisory. Through Family Group/Advisory, relationships with students are strengthened. Family Group/Advisory builds a positive school culture that improves student performance.

A group of us who have been running or supporting Family Group/Advisory for years got together to discuss and document the many aspects of Family Group/Advisory. Our goal was to draw on our experience to develop a guide that would offer practical information to those seeking to implement or improve Family Group/Advisory in their schools.

In using the Guide to Family Group/Advisory, we urge you to take note of the following:

- *Family Group/Advisory can be implemented in any school.*
- *When starting Family Group/Advisory, it is best to start small. Begin with those teachers or other staff who want to do it. At first, focus on building quality rather than quantity. Work to achieve buy-in from a broader group. Then seek to expand Family Group/Advisory at a pace that makes sense for your school.*
- *The Guide should not stand alone. It should be used in conjunction with professional development, discussion and other resource materials.*
- *The Guide is divided into sections so that it is easy to use. You may want to read or copy out those sections most useful to you or your school.*
- *In this Guide, we use the term Family Group/Advisory rather than Advisory. We found that terminology varies from school to school. We also use the term Advisor to describe the person who runs Family Group/Advisory, even though this person is usually a teacher or may be a social worker or other staff person.*

Send your ideas and suggestions to Family Group/Advisory Task Force, Youth Development Institute, Fund for the City of New York, 121 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013. **We wish you well in building Family Group/Advisory.**

Sincerely,

ROSEMARIE ARONS . ALAN BARATZ . MARK CHENAULT . SHIRLEY EDWARDS . MADELINE FALK
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Background & Rationale for Family Group/Advisory II

MISSION STATEMENT

Family Group/Advisory supports and strengthens student academic, social and emotional functioning by developing the relationship between young people and the school and building a positive school culture.

OUTCOMES

Family Group/Advisory improves student outcomes by strengthening student engagement and performance of the tasks that are essential for completion for high school and transition to college and careers. Outcomes of Family Group/Advisory are:

| Retention | Personal skills & decision-making | Interpersonal skills | Relationships with families |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improved relationships between students and adults, and among students. ■ Greater student engagement and sense of belonging to the school community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ More informed decision-making about school courses, college and careers. ■ Increased ability to examine alternatives and make decisions. ■ Stronger orientation toward the future. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Heightened ability to communicate feelings, ideas and to clarify values. ■ Greater respect for other students and adults. ■ Improved ability to challenge stereotypes. ■ Improved ability to develop trusting relationships. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased and improved communication between families, schools and students. |

WHAT IS FAMILY GROUP/ ADVISORY?

“It is through Family Group/Advisory that we establish the bonds needed to create a feeling of belonging and reinforce the school’s values. We believe that this sense of belonging results in increased student success.”

—Sue-Ann Rosch, Satellite Academy

“It’s what I come for. Sure, I want to graduate, but I need people to talk with. Here, people will listen to you, and you can say what’s on your mind—you get your work done. But sometimes you have to feel that family is first.”

—Student at alternative high school

Family Group/Advisory (FG/A) is a regularly occurring meeting of students and staff conducted primarily for the purpose of building relationships among the participants. These meetings provide opportunities for students and teachers to communicate openly and help each other on a wide variety of issues, and to build skills for working together.

FG/A is more likely to succeed if:

- The rationale and benefits are understood by students and staff.
- The ratio of students to teacher is small.
- Meetings occur regularly and are structured with explicit themes and a sequence of activities.
- There is intentional development of staff skills and of student leadership.

FAMILY GROUP/ADVISORY: ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TODAY

High schools face increasing pressure to assure that all students achieve at higher levels than in the past. FG/A is a strategy that helps to address this challenge. Research cited in this publication, as well as the experiences of many educators, underline the importance of building relationships in schools. Young people are more likely to remain in a school and work hard where strong and positive relationships exist. And if they have opportunities to assume responsible and active roles, they become partners in building a strong school community. FG/A reflects the belief that school is likely to be more engaging, satisfying and that education is more powerful when it occurs in the context of strong relationships among young people and adults.



Photo: Jasmine Cruz

WHY FAMILY GROUP/ADVISORY?

A message from the Superintendent

The history of successful practices in alternative schools frequently includes lengthy discussions regarding the use of Family Group/Advisory classes. The reality that increased connections, stronger engagements, greater ownership for outcomes, improved student leadership and changes in student behavior all occur when an effective Family Group/Advisory class is conducted is testament to the power of this methodology.

Throughout the last decade, the significance of Family Group/Advisory has slowly diminished as a result of factors such as increased academic demands, teacher turnover, lack of effective professional development in the continued training and use of Family Group/Advisory methods, and possibly the lack of a standardized curriculum or guide that could help it evolve. As a result, Family Group/Advisory has all but vanished from some schools and been reduced in the number of sessions that are offered. Many schools that have retained a Family Group/Advisory class as part of a daily student schedule find the outcomes to be disappointing.

With the preparation of this guide, it is hoped that schools will reexamine the current status of their Family Group/Advisory classes with an eye towards strengthening its application in the future. For schools that have abandoned Family Group/Advisory, this guide may offer an opportunity to consider its return to the curriculum. For those schools that have never experienced the impact of successful Family Group/Advisory practices, it is hoped that they will take the time to consider adding it to the curriculum.

There is no doubt that Family Group/Advisory, when designed and delivered appropriately, represents a powerful combination of academic and effective approaches which have helped students handle the challenges of high school. It is hoped that this guide will provide the blueprint to construct a Family Group/Advisory program which reflects the unique needs of its students.

RICHARD ORGANISCIAK

Superintendent

Alternative High Schools and Programs

September 2002

*Background
& Rationale
for Family
Group/
Advisory*

RESEARCH

✧ Overview

Background & Rationale for Family Group/ Advisory

Research and the experience of practitioners both within schools and in non-school settings consistently point to environmental factors that help young people succeed. These factors center on emotional and physical safety, positive relationships between youth and adults, a focus on student achievement and opportunities for students to contribute and take responsibility. Family Group/Advisory (FG/A) can provide a structured and regularly occurring activity to assure that these qualities are developed within schools.

1. Relationships

School size is often cited as a key element in school success. By itself, however, size does not assure strong relationships and a sense of community. FG/A is a specific structure with the purpose of building relationships among those in the school.

Positive relationships among students help to assure that schools are safe. Feeling unsafe, physically and/or emotionally, is often cited by students as a reason for staying away from school or dropping out. Bullying by other students, including verbal abuse, can undermine even the best classroom efforts, and make school a scary place.¹ Because of its explicit focus on creating good relationships, its openness to student concerns and emphasis on high expectations for behavior FG/A can reduce negative behavior among students, and between students and teachers. FG/A advisors often work with their students to develop structured and safe ways to address conflict.



Relationships between teachers and students are important. Youth with strong relationships to caring adults have higher educational and career aspirations and lower incidences of at-risk behavior. Research on youth resiliency “documents the powerful role that adults—teachers, principals, counselors, coaches, or janitors—play in fostering children’s resiliency, that is, in encouraging children to successfully adapt despite risk and adversity.”^{2,3}

The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation’s evaluation of the Career Academies found strong associations between “the interpersonal supports students receive early in high school and various measures of their subsequent engagement and performance.”⁴ The interpersonal supports include “students’ perceptions of their



Photo: Michael Kamber

teachers' expectations for them, personalized attention they receive from teachers, the degree to which they see their peers as being engaged in school, and the degree to which they have opportunities to work collaboratively with peers.”⁵ The study also found that the effect of these supports is much stronger for students at high risk of dropping out of high school than for other students. The researcher, Paul Hill, and his colleagues, in a study of 13 big city high schools, found that the relationships between students and teachers are much stronger in successful schools than in other schools. Relationships between teachers and students in these successful schools are built on a clearly understood and enforced social contract between the school, teachers and students.⁶ By social contract, they mean that there is a sense of the obligations of each

member of the school community to each other and the community as a whole.

In the same study, in which they compared urban “focus schools” (Catholic and special purpose—theme-centered schools) with zoned schools (to which students are assigned by their neighborhood rather than by student choice), Hill and his colleagues found that students in the former significantly outperformed the zoned schools in SAT score and percentage graduating. In contrasting the two types of schools, Hill and his colleagues state that “focus schools have a strong commitment to parenting,”—that is, caring for and addressing the whole student.⁷

*Background
& Rationale
for Family
Group/
Advisory*

2. High Expectations

Strong relationships in schools are especially valuable when they emphasize high expectations for students and teachers.

The *structure and content of relationships* schools establish with their students matter. Relationships should provide support and resources to students, but cannot be separated from high expectations and challenging course work. A study by the Consortium on Chicago School Research found that social support, defined as “the personal relationships that students have with people who may help them do well in school,” can have an important role in improving student performance. However, the study goes on to show that without academic press—a combination of “normative emphasis on academic success and conformity to specific standards of achievement,” student academic improvement is much less likely. The study emphasizes the need for both social support and academic press to be present in order to substantially improve student performance.⁸

In general, a strong academic focus and press for achievement have been noted repeatedly as an important feature of effective schools. Research links strong press for academic success with greater student effort, more time spent on academic tasks, and ultimately higher student performance.⁹

3. Student Participation

Stronger schools provide students with opportunities for contributing to the school and making decisions. FG/A creates a setting in which young people can practice and exercise leadership. In many of the programs studied for this publication, young people are supported in eventually leading their FG/A as well as taking on other leadership roles in the school.

These activities address several important goals. They help young people practice leadership roles in which they can feel successful. These roles include problem solving, decision-making, consensus building and

others. They also prepare young people for active and meaningful participation in their communities.

Michael Rutter's landmark study, *Fifteen Thousand Hours*, points strongly to the value of youth contribution. He identifies "the extent to which children are able to take responsibility" as one of the features of more successful schools: "...ample opportunities for children to take responsibility and to participate in running of their school lives appear conducive to good attainments, attendance and behavior."¹⁰ Students in the schools he studied where youth held positions of responsibility had better academic outcomes.

In "High Schools with Character," cited above, Paul Hill and his colleagues describe schools where students feel responsibility for their end of the social contract and the school as a whole. For example, they state that successful schools "try to create a supportive caring environment in which each student's talents and contributions are recognized" and that the schools "try to create a tone of community and shared enterprise."¹¹

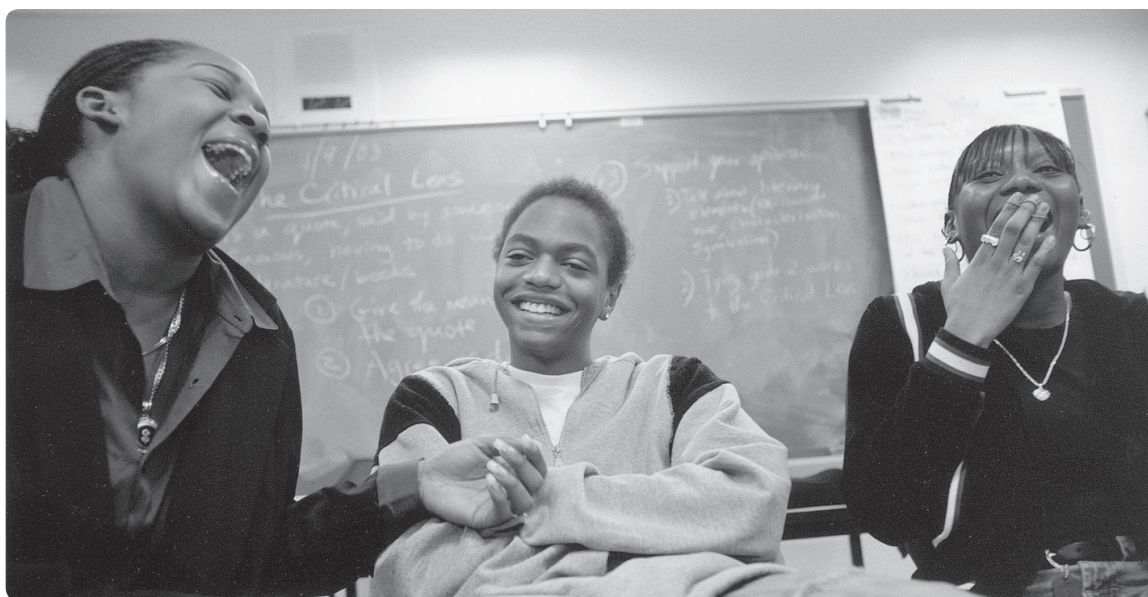


Photo: Michael Kamber



*Background
& Rationale
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Photo: Jasmine Cruz

4. High Quality Learning Experiences

Youth development research supports the idea that students will be more engaged and perform better if they are involved in high quality learning experiences. “High quality” has several components often associated with FG/A.

The experience must:

- Present youth with real options and choices
- Combine emotional, sensory and intellectual involvement
- Have clear goals and clear rules
- Allow youth to take on diverse roles and use different strengths
- Allow time for self-reflection
- Provide youth with feedback specific to the work they complete

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi provides a focused look at what makes up a high quality learning experience. He studied what happens during experiences that people describe as the best or most memorable in their lives. He calls these experiences “flow” experiences and found they are all bound by the same parameters. Activities in which people experience “flow” have clear goals, immediate feedback and offer a sense of control and demand focused attention. Because people are engaged and challenged, Csikszentmihalyi says “the flow experience acts as a magnet for learning—that is for developing new levels of challenges and skills.”¹² The qualities cited here can be helpful in designing effective FG/A experiences, and are apparent in strong programs.



5. Skills

Participation in FG/A can help students master skills and competencies that prepare them for adulthood and especially the workplace.

Experience in FG/A can prepare young people to work with others, communicate clearly, and solve problems in ways that are similar to those in the workplace. In studies of the workplace, and especially in what makes today's workplace different and more demanding than in the past, a key element has been "soft-skills," the ability to communicate with others and to work in groups:

The U.S. economy is changing rapidly in ways that have disastrous consequences for workers who lack the New Basic Skills, skills that were unnecessary even 15 years ago. These are the "hard" skills including the ability to do basic mathematics and to understand written instructions. These are also the "soft" skills including the ability to communicate clearly and to work productively in groups to solve problems.¹³

There are of course many other ways that FG/A can be of benefit to students. The research cited here helps those of us who work with young people to identify promising elements and directions for our work that are consistent with what is known about the successful development of young people.

The Importance of Family Group/Advisory

III

BENEFITS TO PRINCIPALS/LEADERS, STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Voices from Schools PRINCIPALS/LEADERS

The following quotations illustrate the importance and value of Family Group/Advisory.

On Academic Success:

"The beginning of each term is a time for Family Group/Advisory members to set specific goals. Report card times are opportunities to assess and make mid-course corrections. Family Group/Advisory is where the student is held accountable in a climate of un-anxious expectation. Study days, when cooperative groups work together on subject class assignments, permit teachers to work directly on academics with students in an entirely different setting."

On Interpersonal Skills:

"Students are encouraged to discuss difficulties they may be having with another student or a family member. Other members of the Family Group/Advisory help the student develop a course of action. The Family Group/Advisory provides the support necessary to help the student take the risk of pursuing the course of action. Newer students may simply listen. Soon they will offer ideas and eventually they will ask for and get support."



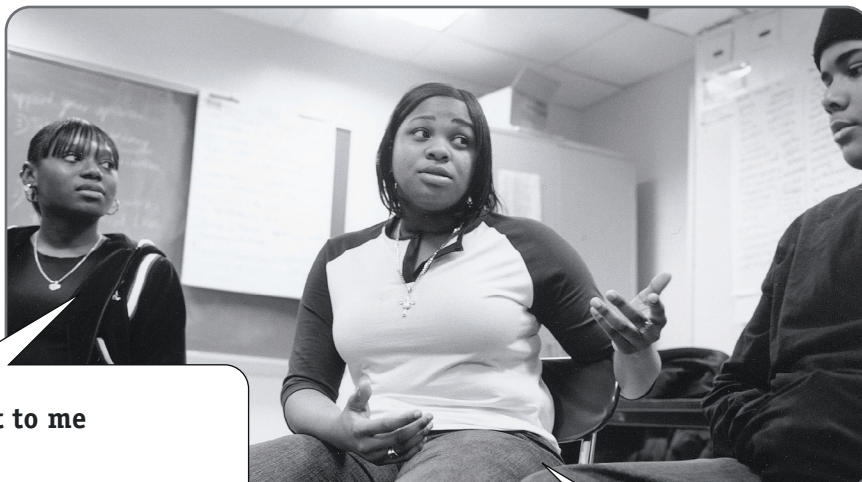
On Retention:

"The value of Family Group/Advisory at our school is apparent for both the institution and its staff. Family Group/Advisory has become one of the most effective vehicles for student retention. Ours is a transfer school with a teen population that has had past school failures. As a result, our youngsters are at high risk of dropping out, and any effective strategy for dropout prevention is firmly embraced. Being a part of Family Group/Advisory helps students feel as if they belong to the institution, and belonging is a force for school retention. Better student retention helps us retain and maintain a stable staff."





The
Importance
of Family
Group/
Advisory



Family Group/Advisory is important to me because I can:

- "Talk about problems"
- "Be with an advisor"
- "Talk about academic progress—like grades and classes"
- "Express my feelings"
- "Be in a place where confidentiality is maintained"
- "Talk about real issues"
- "Do academic work like catching up on homework"
- "Have group discussions"
- "Relax and unwind"

Family Group/Advisory helps individual students because:

- "Individuals get to talk over individual problems and issues"
- "Students respect each other"
- "Students learn to get along with each other"



Photo: Jasmine Cruz

Family Group/Advisory helps the school because:

- "Students are in academic classes together and so can push each other"
- "Everyone knows each other"
- "Teachers communicate with each other (classroom teachers with advisors and students)"
- "Family Group/Advisory deals with school-wide community issues"

Family Group/Advisory helps me grow and change because:

- "It is a place for peer support so that you get supported when you are having issues and you get practical support like morning wake-up calls, and help with school work"
- "The group does not give up on the individual"
- "Since this school is the last choice before a GED, Family Group helps you deal positively with the challenges of school"
- "You realize that others are going through the same issues"
- "You develop friendships through Family Group"

In General:

"The staff finds Family Group/Advisory to be essential, challenging and, for the most part, rewarding. As it cements the bond between the student and community, Family Group/Advisory places the Advisor in a pivotal role. The Advisor is the guidance counselor, coach and liaison with other staff and parents for each of his/her advisees. The role is a complex one and at times can be stressful, especially when the student is having trouble in negotiating their school or

personal life. We have worked hard in our training of Advisors to have them know that they cannot solve every student's issues nor are they trained to do so. The stress at times is in the desire to make things right for the student when there may not be any easy solutions. Our Advisors need to learn how to develop our students' abilities to be reflective and responsible young adults in school and their personal world. This takes much focus and experience (for both!)."

Voices from Schools TEACHERS



The Importance of Family Group/Advisory

Why teach Family Group/Advisory & how do you teach it?

"Although people often talk about a school-student-family partnership, this can often be a theoretical and amorphous concept. What does that partnership look like and where does it take place? One place the teacher can see that partnership is through teaching Family Group/Advisory. One adult gets to know one group

of students well. As a teacher you can see students in multiple ways and this expands your understanding of our students and your work. We are not only "subject" teachers, we are teachers of individual students who have many facets. The more we understand those students the more we understand our role as teachers."



How does Family Group/Advisory help the school?

"Our school would not be what it is without Family Group/Advisory. Each Family Group/Advisory is a unit that links to the greater community's norms, values, and efforts. Students know that as they are responsible to the greater school community they are even more directly responsible to their Family Group/Advisory members and their Advisor. Family Group/Advisory is embedded in our structure; it is not an additional component. Much of the effective work that we do across the school is more personally developed in Family Group/Advisory. The support network that we provide for all students often finds its nexus in Group."

"Family Group/Advisories can generate ideas for school-wide activities and send the ideas to staff or a student activities group. Family Group/Advisories can be given "pieces of the plan." If each Family Group takes a piece of the responsibility for the Thanksgiving Sharing, then they are all involved in the project and yet each has a specific task responsibility. Family Group/Advisories will want to have their own individual activities and also want to promote school-wide events. It is important that both be nurtured since we want to develop group bonding and loyalty, while at the same time not losing the sense of family the whole school embodies."

IV School-Based Supports for Family Group/Advisory

The support of the District Superintendent and the leadership and commitment of the principal provides a critical foundation for the implementation of an effective Family Group/Advisory (FG/A) in the school. At the same time, there are a series of important questions that must be answered in implementing this practice and integrating it into the overall life of the school.

Q. At what scale should Family Group/Advisory operate?

- A.** This is a critical decision for a principal planning to implement FG/A for the first time.

If it is feasible, it is better for the overall climate of the school to implement it throughout the school. However, it is sometimes preferable to start it on a small scale so that it can grow as more staff see its value and gain the skills to lead it successfully. While starting small may be a necessary first step, there should be an explicit plan for expansion over a designated period of time. For example, one could start with the ninth graders or with the ninth and tenth graders and phase it in over a three or four year period.

Whatever the implementation plan, principals will also have to determine which staff will be involved and the extent to which social workers, counselors and others, as well as teachers, will have a role. Often, these other staff can help teachers develop the FG/A skills because of their training in small group leadership. At the same time, teachers must be centrally involved from the very

beginning since it is intended that FG/A will build bonds between teachers and students and that the engagement of students in FG/A will be infused into the classrooms.

Q. What should be the content and structure of Family Group/Advisory?

- A.** The questions related to the content of Family Group/Advisory, whether or not it is given for credit and how frequently it meets are closely related. Whatever the decision regarding content and credit, it is critical that students be scheduled for FG/A on a consistent basis and for a long enough period of time to assure a strong experience.

Schools have implemented a range of FG/A models, but in general FG/A should meet a minimum of three times a week for a full period in order for students to develop the personal relationships with each other and with the teacher that allows them to address important issues together.

Whether or not the course is offered for credit, the content must be focused and relevant for young people. There are many

approaches to developing the content of FG/A. It can be primarily a student support group but can integrate reading, personal writing and public speaking as part of making it into an English or language arts experience. It can be organized around educational support and future planning and include both community service and introductions to college and the world of work. A variety of approaches to the content are offered in Section v of this document.



Photo: Michael Kamber

Often, FG's students have a specific role in determining some of the content of what is going to be discussed. Whatever the approach, the content must be thoughtfully planned and the purpose of FG/A must be thoroughly articulated to students.

Many schools decide to give credit for FG/A because they feel that emphasizes the importance of FG/A to the students. Depending on the content of the course, credit can be given in English, civics, health or as a general elective credit. These are just a few of the options. If credit is not given, there must be an explicit strategy to establish the importance of FG/A for students and teachers.

Q. How are students assigned to Family Group/Advisory and how is it organized over time?

- A.** There are a variety of options for grouping students. They can be grouped by age and grade or they can be grouped in mixed ages. Some schools feel it is better for students of the same age to be together because they are at the same point in their high school career and are facing similar issues. Schools may build FG/A around classroom blocks so that students who are in classes together are also in FG/A. Other schools feel that there are advantages to having older students together with younger students. There are also different approaches to having mixed gender groups or separating out young men and women. While in most cases FG/A is mixed, there are some schools that have separate groups or offer that option to a limited number of students. Finally, there is the question of how long a group stays together with their

advisor. Some schools try to keep the group together for two or more years to increase the level of connection that can develop. Other schools see it as a one year assignment and have students change advisories at the beginning of every year.

Q. How can students assume leadership roles in the operation of Family Group/Advisory?

- A.** Student involvement in FG/A can offer important opportunities to assume different responsibilities and to make a contribution of the overall effectiveness of the experiences. As has been mentioned earlier, depend-

*School-Based
Supports
for Family
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Advisory*

ing upon the content of FG/A, students can contribute to selecting topics and issues to be discussed. If FG/A includes some kind of community service either within the school or in the broader community, students can be given responsibilities in planning and carrying out these activities. If FG/A includes the development of a group journal or newsletter or a group art activity, students can be directly involved in the design and implementation of these projects.

Finally, students can receive specific training and can assist in leading FG/A. Frequently, as they become more comfortable, they can also share these leadership roles in the larger school community. Whether it is through contributing to the content or assisting in the leadership of the group, FG/A provides invaluable opportunities for students to assume active responsible roles that enhance their own learning and development and can also impact positively on both FG/A and, eventually, on the broader school community.

Q. What kind of training and ongoing support should be offered to staff who are leading Family Group/Advisory?

- A.** Family group should be built around interested and competent staff, but the staff also will need ongoing support and training to lead FG/A effectively. Within every school, there needs to be a point person who is responsible for FG/A. The person with that responsibility should have experience with

FG/A; a vision for how to implement it that is developed in collaboration with the Principal and, if possible, with interested staff; and the skills to help other operate FG/A effectively. This individual's responsibilities include staff training, monitoring FG/A and connecting activities in FG/A to other classes and activities within the school.



Photo: Jasmine Cruz

There are many ways to provide support to staff who are implementing FG/A. Once the content focus has been determined, relevant materials should be provided either from the existing staff, through the District Office or through other organizations that may have useful resources. Staff that is conducting FG/A should have the opportunity to meet together regularly to share materials and approaches. Some schools arrange for after-school or lunchtime meetings providing per session funding and/or food to reward those who participate. Since FG/A does not have a prescribed curriculum, staff find it especially valuable to discuss their progress, what has worked, what has not and get the support and knowledge of peers who are working on the same issues.

Some schools use outside agencies or community organizations to help with FG/A. They can assist with training staff or providing resources on particular issues.

Q. How can the philosophy and strategies of Family Group/Advisory be communicated to the broader school community?

- A.** To be most effective, FG/A must be understood as integral to the life and culture of the school and not viewed as an isolated experience that students participate in a few times a week. FG/A needs to be linked to the mission of the school and to its overall approach to working with students. Its role needs to be articulated in written material that is developed on the school and described/explained in staff, student and parent orientations. Students can often provide the strongest testimonials for its value to staff and to other students. Through the words of students FG/A can be described as a school experience that belongs to the students and is vital to building their connection with each other, the staff and the broader school community.

Both students and staff need to work together to identify ways in which the values of FG/A can be infused into the broader school community. Are there school-wide activities that can be planned jointly by students and staff using the FG/A structure that can strengthen the school community? Are there strategies that are used in FG/A that can also be used in content classes to increase opportunities for student participation and potential leadership roles? The answers to these questions will vary from school to school, but it is critical that every school implementing FG/A raise these questions as they recognize the potential contribution FG/A can make to building a stronger more engaged school community.

Q. What strategies can help build support for Family Group/Advisory among the school staff?

- A.** There are a variety of ways that principals and teachers can encourage other staff to learn about FG/A. Materials such as this booklet and other resources can help to introduce staff to family group. Staff can discuss their work with FG/A at staff meetings and share materials and approaches they are using. Staff should also have opportunities to observe FG/A, provided this does not violate students' sense of privacy or confidentiality. Another way to help staff learn about FG/A is to pair teachers so that those less experienced with FG/A or lacking the skills can learn about it while they are receiving support and guidance from a more experienced peer. Finally, it might also be possible to invite students to discuss their experience in family group with members of the staff as a way of informing them directly of the positive impact of family group on their school experience.

Q. How will Family Group/Advisory be assessed?

- A.** The assessment of FG/A will be shaped by the purpose and focus that it is given. Criteria for assessment may include overall engagement of the students and the number of students who earn credit, if it is offered as a credit-bearing course. Students could also be asked to provide specific feedback on FG/A including what they liked, what they did not like and what recommendations they might make to improve it. Staff might be invited to participate in an assessment both of the content and structure of FG/A and the broader impact on other aspects of school life.

*School-Based
Supports
for Family
Group/
Advisory*



PhotoDisc



All photos by Michael Kamber unless noted

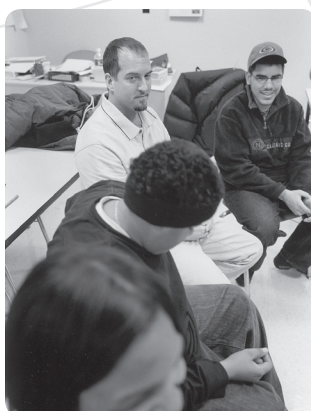


PhotoDisc

In the following sections, Stages of Family Group/Advisory and Constructs of Family Group/Advisory, we present two approaches to structuring/designing Family Group/Advisory.



PhotoDisc



In each, we name those themes, objectives and activities that may comprise FG/A at any given school.



The two sections represent different ways of thinking about planning and implementing FG/A – you may pick one way of approaching FG/A, or you may interweave the two.

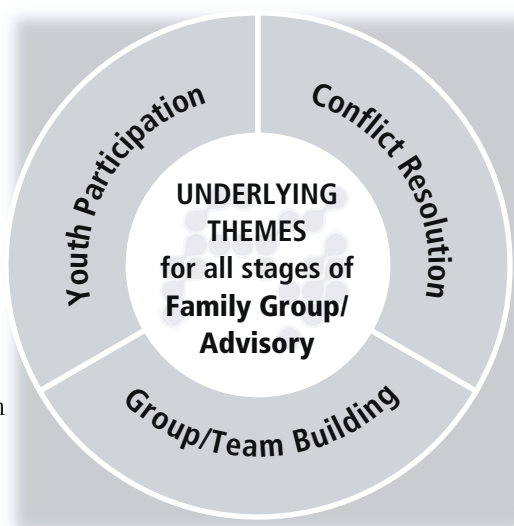
Stages of Family Group/Advisory: Beginnings, Middles and Endings

V

The underlying themes for all stages of Family Group/Advisory are:

- Youth Participation
- Group/Team Building
- Conflict Resolution

The following describes the stages of any FG/A, regardless of the context. The themes, questions, activities and tips will be relevant no matter the idea, structure or purpose of FG/A. This section may be used in conjunction with the following section, which describes in detail various constructs and activities for FG/A.



All of the activities described can be carried out by the Family Group/Advisory Advisor. They draw on two fundamental teaching concepts that are also key in good group facilitation. They entail:

- Developing essential questions for group consideration and discussion, and;
- Using open-ended questioning to expand student thinking and participation.

It should be expected that there will be some overlap between the stages of FG/A. It should also be expected that FG/A members will naturally return to the themes of previous stages. There are certain phrases and questions that may be helpful in facilitating group discussions and student participation. These can be found at the end of this section.

BEGINNINGS

Themes

- Ice-breaking
- Motivation
- Trust
- Commonalities
- Safety
- Stereotyping
- Questioning involvement
- Acceptance
- Ambivalence
- Expectations/purpose
- Authority
- Rules/limits
- Role/status

Questions

- Who are these people, anyway?
- Will they like me?
- Will I like them?
- What's in it for me?
- Should I say anything, or just listen?
- What can I reveal safely?
- What do they want from me?
- What do I want from them?
- What do I have in common with them?
- Who's in charge? Who's boss?
- What if I get hurt?
- What can I get away with?
- What am I coming here for?
- Am I a leader, or a follower?

Activities

See boxes of
activity descriptions

- Desert Island
- Group Mural or Poem
- The Values Auction
- Magic Hat
- Throw a Sock
- Two Pieces of Paper
- Ropes
- Stereotyping

Tips for Advisors

You are primarily responsible for initiating activities and encouraging discussion, more so now than later. Try to facilitate connections among students. Find commonalities while appreciating individual differences. Acknowledge uniqueness of each member.



Photos: Michael Kamber

MIDDLES

- Value of others
- Closeness
- Letting go
- Decision-making
- Identity
- Problem-solving
- Re-establishing boundaries
- Meaning
- Commonalities
- Self-disclosure
- Differences
- Self-esteem
- Initiative in group

- What do I like about these people?
- What does group mean to me?
- Can I share my feelings of closeness?
- What do I have in common with them?
- Can I allow myself to get really involved?
- How much can I tell them?
- How do I make choices in life and decisions in group?
- Where do I draw the line in being close to others in group?
- Is it OK to be different here?
- How am I unique from others?
- What are my strengths?
- How can I work on problems I have uncovered?
- How do I take more responsibility for what goes on in group?

- The Rubber Band
- The Commercial Game
- Dear Abby, Soap Operas
- What Would You Do If...
- Wearing the Sign
- Self-Esteem

Shift from primarily advisor-centered content to more student-generated ideas for discussion and activities. Encourage students to volunteer to lead activities and discussions. Keep acknowledging commonalities among group members and also appreciating differences.

ENDINGS

- Separation/individuation
- Dependence/independence
- Regression
- Early loss
- Recapitulation/review
- Replication
- Anxiety
- Current loss
- Denial/devaluing
- Repression
- Continuance
- Value
- Ambivalence

- If we care about each other, why are we ending?
- Will group members miss me?
- Will I be able to manage without the group?
- Group's ending—so what?
- Can I turn back the clock?
- If I squash these feelings, will the pain go away?
- Why me?
- Why don't we meet again?
- What have I learned in group (remember when...)?
- What is mine to take with me?
- Where else can I get the things I've gotten from group?

- Symbolic Gifts
- Termination
- How Group Members Will Be Remembered
- The Web
- Certificates

The process of ending the academic year and saying 'goodbye' takes time, and the time will vary according to the people involved. This process could take anywhere from two to six weeks. Ambivalence and anxiety are very prevalent in this stage of group and should be recognized and addressed.

BEGINNINGS

Desert Island

- **Instructions:** Each Group member is asked to introduce him/herself and to state three things he/she might take along on a trip to a desert island. The three items should be fairly specific and reflect the interests of the member. The facilitator may ask for a little more information to help the member be more specific. For instance, if a person says that he/she will bring music to the island, the facilitator should ask which music and also about the member's favorite musician, composer, or song. Members may also elect to take other people with them on the fantasy trip, and the facilitator should also ask about these people.

Throughout the exercise, the facilitator should ask Group members to concentrate on what is being said. He/she should make

connections among members, noting comments by Group members that are similar.

After the introduction of all the members, everyone should be asked to write his/her name on a slip of paper and place it in a common pot. Then, each member should pull one slip from the pot, identify the person whose name is on the slip, and tell one thing about that individual which was learned during the desert island exercise. Anyone struggling with remembering should be helped to do so in order to keep the activity as non-threatening as possible.

- **Note:** Works with any population.

- **Value:** Develops trust among members, helps people get to know each other, and engages participants in a manner which entertains and is somewhat personal but not so much as to be scary.



Throw A Sock

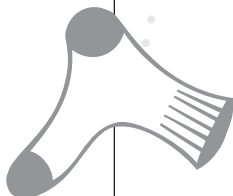
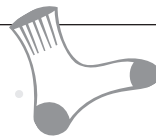
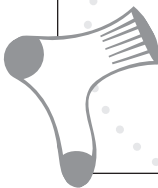
- **Instructions:** A ball or a rolled up pair of socks is tossed among Group members who are standing in a circle. When a member receives the ball, he/she must answer some non-threatening question about him/herself (e.g., number of brothers and sisters, likes and dislikes, etc.).

In the first round, members may be asked to state their names, in the second round, grade in school or place of birth, and so on. The questions become only slightly

more intimate as is comfortably tolerated by the members. Following the activity, the facilitator may make connections among the comments made.

- **Note:** Works with any population.

- **Value:** Helps members share information, allows choice, makes initial connections between members, and provides a safe structure for communication.



Group Mural or Poem



► **Instructions:** Need a large blackboard or sheet of newsprint and chalk, crayons or markers for the mural. A large blackboard or pad is needed for the poem. The exercise proceeds with the facilitator suggesting a theme for a group mural or poem on which everyone will work together. Members of a parenting group, for example, may be asked to make a mural or poem about the hardest things they experience in being parents. For the mural, members may either draw for themselves or ask other members who are more secure in drawing to draw on their behalf. In the case of the poem, if no group member is willing to initiate the process, the facilitator may offer an initial line, and each

member may be asked to contribute some free association or image that comes to mind. In both the mural and poem, everyone must contribute ideas. Pictures or thoughts can be symbolic as well.

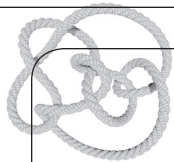
► **Note:** Large groups can be divided into sub-groups. Works with any population, but facilitator may have to modify the theme. Useful in beginning with short-term groups when members need to be engaged quickly.

► **Value:** Gets group involved in visceral and emotional way concerning content of meetings, begins to create a sense of mutuality and cohesiveness early, and develops cooperation.

Stereotyping

► **Instructions:** Hand out sheets of paper with the following statements written on them to all students in the group. Ask students to react, respond to and discuss the statements. Statements:

1. All white teachers just come to the schools, do their thing, and then go back home to the suburbs where they all live.
2. Whites are never stopped by police officers.
3. All Blacks live in the inner city.
4. Spanish people only like to eat rice and beans.
5. Black people don't read.
6. All Muslims are terrorists.



Ropes

► **Instructions:** This is an exercise that can be used to create ground rules with the Group. Facilitator writes ROPES vertically on the chalkboard. Ask Group what ropes are usually used for (to connect, hold together, support, etc.). Explain the analogy: like strands in a rope, our strength lies in ability to work together in a non-threatening way, etc. Then ask the Group for words that begin with R, O, P, E, and S to serve as ground rules. Students can also come up with phrases that start with each letter. Write everybody's response. If a response is questionable, ask for clarification. Ask if everyone agrees to abide by the ground rules. Try to make sure that the following words/phrases are included: responsibility for our own learning, respect, openness, participation, examination of ourselves, empathy, safe space, etc.

► **Note:** Be sure to include everyone's response – if you do not write someone's response, they will feel left out or inferior. Make sure everyone agrees with the ground rules before moving forward.

► **Value:** Working together to create ground rules not only gets the Group moving, but also helps everyone to feel ownership of the agreed upon rules, and therefore more likely to abide by them.

The Values Auction

- **Instructions:** Facilitator explains the following rules to students: each student has \$20,000 to spend – they can spend it all on one item or on several items; bids must be a minimum of \$1,000; if a person wishes to bid on an item, he or she must raise his or her hand and call out the bid; the bid has to be acknowledged by the auctioneer to be valid; the highest bid acknowledged by the auctioneer will designate the purchaser; in the event of a dispute between bidders, the auctioneer will have the final decision; once the auctioneer says an item is SOLD, the bidding process is over.

The facilitator then serves as the auctioneer, and reads through the auction catalogue, which includes: to be able to do what I want to do; to have a happy life; to feel free from worry;

to have good health for the rest of my life; to have friends who understand and accept me; to accomplish whatever I set out to do; to always be successful; to have the opportunity to influence other people; to have a satisfying marriage; to live in a society that is free from discrimination; to be able to survive without money.

When the auction is over, the facilitator asks the following questions: Who is happy with the item they purchased? Why? What would you have done differently? Looking at the items you chose, can you make an observation about the importance of the values to you?

- **Value:** Students explore their values and the priority order they have for them.

Two Pieces of Paper

- **Instructions:** Group members are each given two pieces of paper.

On one piece (A), they are asked to write down something that they would like to give up. On the other piece (B), they are asked to indicate why they would like to give up what they listed on the first paper.

The A and B papers are collected in separate piles. The responses in each pile are jumbled. An A response is drawn and read aloud and then a B response is drawn and read aloud until all the A and B responses are drawn and read.

- **Value:** Reduces initial anxiety, creates a sense of bonding in the hilarity, provides fun, and introduces members' needs in a non-threatening manner.

Magic Hat

- **Instructions:** Ask each student to write on a small piece of paper a topic they would like to discuss in Group. Fold the papers and place them in a "magic hat" – a baseball cap, bowl, envelope, etc. Each member closes his or her eyes and picks a topic to be discussed for the day. This may be a way to set an agenda for the next few sessions. The person who picks the topic can facilitate the discussion or can turn it over to the person who wrote the topic originally. Make sure all the topics are addressed at some time during the semester by going back to the hat from time to time.

- **Value:** This is a good exercise to use if the Group needs to be re-energized. It is also a fun alternative to brainstorming. It encourages students to increase their participation in the Group.

MIDDLES

Rubber Band



- **Instructions:** Divide the Group into teams. Tell each team to imagine that they represent groups in a community that has mistakenly received a delivery of thousands of boxes of rubber bands. Each team must develop a list of things that can be done with the rubber bands. The team with the longest list is the winner. Teams are encouraged to be as creative as possible.
- **Value:** Helps groups develop cohesiveness and mutuality and to learn problem-solving techniques, requiring a cooperative effort and using a spirit of fun.

Wearing the Sign

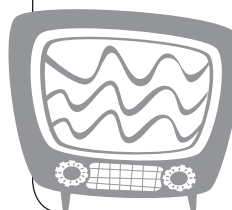
- **Instructions:** Each group member has a sign pinned to his or her back. They must guess what the sign says by questioning the other Group members. The sign may have the name of a famous personality or an object or an emotion. The category depends on what the Facilitator wishes to achieve with the game.
- **Value:** May stimulate reminiscences, or help adolescents identify feelings or may merely be used to stimulate socialization of group members who may have difficulty interacting.

Dear Abby, Soap Operas

- **Instructions:** Facilitator selects advice columns to read with the group or videotapes of soap opera programs to watch with the group which are a catalyst for addressing issues germane to the group and pertinent to the population in general. In the beginning, the facilitator may generate all the material, selecting letters or tapes that are non-intrusive and non-threatening. Later on, group members may be encouraged to contribute material for discussion. Columns from newspapers or student writing may be used as well.
- **Population:** Any population, but especially useful for group members who have a hard time focusing, problem-solving, and verbalizing feelings.
- **Value:** Facilitator may select material to open up areas of resistance or address painful or problematic issues. The activity often moves the group to greater cohesiveness and intimacy.

The Commercial Game

- **Instructions:** Divide Group into pairs (use random selection method such as drawing names from a hat). Each member of the pair must act out a commercial advertisement selling the assets of his or her partner. The facilitator may want to participate in the process or begin it.
- **Value:** Develops intimacy, helps focus on strengths, creates and encourages spontaneity, and deepens cohesiveness. If the facilitator begins the process, it gives members permission to express themselves.



What Would You Do If...

- **Instructions:** The facilitator or certain group members write about a conflictual situation or feelings. For example: you are in a store and you are tempted to steal....or you are feeling suspicious, etc. Several group members act out the situation and other group members guess what is being portrayed.
- **Value:** Encourages cooperative behavior and creativity, prompts the expression of feeling in a safe manner, provides the opportunity for developing problem-solving skills, and strengthens the ego through problem solving.

Self-Esteem

- **Instructions:** Break the group up into two smaller groups. Ask students in each group to come up with typical put-down statements that teens say to each other (leaving out curse words or words reflecting bigotry). Ask each group to write down the put-down statements. Then ask each group to come up with build-up statements that have the opposite meaning as each of the put-down statements. After about 20 minutes, ask both groups to come together to discuss the following:
 - How do you feel when someone builds you up?
 - Describe how you feel when someone put you down.
 - How can build-up statements promote trust and respect in the group?
 - What can we do in the group to encourage saying build-up statements to each other?
 - How can we eliminate saying put-down statements?End the activity by asking each student to say one positive thing about what a member of his/her team did or said today.
- **Value:** Improves students' self-esteem which reinforces positive behavior in the group.

ENDINGS

The Web

- **Instructions:** Group members give each other compliments as a parting gift. This reinforces the positive impact each member has made on the group and the positive effect the group, as a whole, has made on the individual.

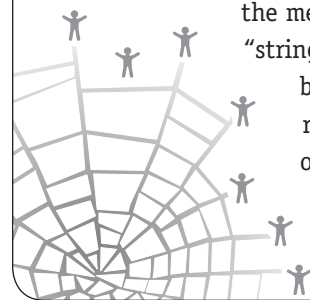
The facilitator holds the loose end of string of a ball of yarn. The facilitator explains, "we are going to create a web of compliments."

The instructions for the exercise are that when you get the ball tossed to you, you choose a person in the group who you wish to compliment. You hold on to the string and say the compliment as you toss the ball of yarn to that group member. Hold your end taut. You can only toss the yarn to a person once and the web is only complete when everyone has been complimented.

At the end, the facilitator can make the connections to the beginning of year (or term) when membership in the group was new and how now we are "connected" like the web.

The facilitator can then cut the pieces of yarn and give

the members a "string friendship bracelet" as a remembrance of the group to take with them.



Symbolic Gifts



► Instructions:

Group members verbally give each other fantasy gifts (objects, people, ideas) as a parting gesture.

They may be asked to stand in front of the persons to whom they are giving gifts and to hold eye contact with them during the process.

How Group Members Will Be Remembered

- **Instructions:** One person starts explaining in detail everything he/she can remember that happened during a specific period of time or event in the history of the group.

If anyone else thinks that the person who is talking has missed something in relating the story, the new speaker yells “hold it,” explains what was missed, and then continues with the story.

- **Value:** Allows for reminiscence, the acceptance of and expression of feeling, and evaluation

Termination

- **Instructions:** Facilitator suggests that the time is coming to end the school year and the group members will all be leaving each other. This leaving is like many other changes that have taken place in our lives – there are happy and sad feelings associated with it.

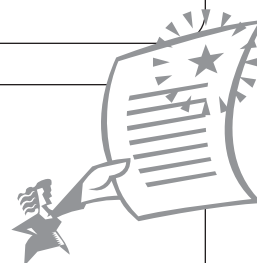
Facilitator asks a series of questions of group members: What are you looking forward to (plans for the summer, for September)? How do you feel about these changes? How do you feel about leaving school? How do you feel about leaving the group? Will you miss the group? If so, what about it? How has the group changed since September (or since you joined it)? What have you learned in the group? Do you think you have changed over the year? If so, how? Do you think there were opportunities you may have missed to get to know others in the group? To work together more? How could the group have helped others share more?

Certificates

- **Instructions:** Give each student an index card and ask everyone to write his/her name on top of the card. Everyone then passes the card to their right (this is easier if all are sitting in a circle). Everyone writes one or more positive characteristics about the person on the card (e.g., funny, smart, considerate). Keep passing the cards around with each person writing positive things on the card.

Rather than having students see their own card, the Advisor should collect them, and announce that each student will receive a surprise based on the cards.

The surprise is a Certificate of Achievement that the Advisor makes for each student, with personal information on it. The certificates are presented at the last session of Family Group/Advisory.



Helpful phrases in facilitating group discussions and student participation:

TO FOSTER GROUP PARTICIPATION

- Who wants to comment on that?
- Let's check that out with the rest of the group.
- How do you see it differently?
- How about that?
- Good idea or not?
- How do you feel about that statement?
- How is it true to life?
- Won't you carry that idea a bit further?

TO ACKNOWLEDGE PEOPLE'S CONCERNS

- I can see by your expression that you disagree. How would you state it?
- How do you see the problem?
- Sounds like that's a problem we ought to address.
- Looks like you're really concerned about this issue.
- Seems like you're all worn out. Would you like a five minute break?

TO CLARIFY CONTENT

- OK, where are we now?
- What's the purpose of this presentation?
- Are you saying...?
- Give us an example of what you mean.
- I still don't have a handle on the real problem. What is it?
- I hear that you're saying.... Am I saying it right?
- Is that how you see it?
- Have I missed your point in any way?

TO GET BACK ON TRACK

- Hold on, I think we're talking about two issues: _____ and _____. I think they are both important, but let's talk about them one at a time.
- That's an important point. Let's write it down and get back to it after we finish the subject we're on, ok?
- What do you think – do we want to deal with that now or stick to our agenda and deal with that concern later?

TO ENCOURAGE CONSENSUS

- What will success look like today?
- What do you want to have happen?
- Can we all agree on this?
- Does anybody disagree?

The following are some additional tips that will help in conducting group discussions or activities:

- **Be a Good Listener:** make eye contact, don't interrupt the speaker
- **Show Respect to Others:** respect other's beliefs and opinions even when you disagree, don't put people down
- **Be an Active Participant:** participate in discussions and activities, help support others to help them engage
- **Observe Confidentiality:** ensure that what is said in the group stays there, don't gossip

Family Group/Advisory Constructs/Activities

VI

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SUMMARY

Understanding Changes of Adolescence:

Students will have opportunities for self-exploration and to understand themselves and the changes they are going through.

STRUCTURE Unit consisting of a few lessons (usually 4–6 sessions) depending on approach or need of the group. Activities will focus on the needs and challenges of young people between the ages of 14–20.

★ **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- Help students gain a greater understanding of self.
- Promote student engagement and participation in their life choices.
- Incorporate academics.
- Identify and address both individual and group problems and issues.

◎ **DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS**

- Explore and question personal values and values of others, validate what others have said and feel validated by others.
- Feel supported and provide support for others.
- Understand cognitive and affective development of adolescents.
- Make healthier life choices.

✂ **SPECIFIC PRACTICES/ACTIVITIES**

- Open discussion on what is adolescence and what happens physically and emotionally.
- What happens to boys and girls? Guided questions include:
What did you look like as a child? How do you look today? Who were your friends then and who are they now? Are you similar to who you were then? What is the ideal you? Describe yourself in 10 years.
- Read relevant articles, essays and books out loud.
- Students will do individual reading and journaling and will also be involved in engaging activities including art, music, video etc.
- Students make a collage using newspaper articles, magazines and pictures.
- Small group discussions and role-plays using students' own personal experience.

🔍 **ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION**

- Reflective essay and journal
- Participation and listening in group discussions
- Completion of projects

🌀 **TIPS FOR TEACHERS**

- Listen to student concerns. Encourage verbal participation using role-plays and discussion activities.
- Pay attention to different learning styles.
- Don't be afraid to seek outside help.

❖ **RESOURCES**

- Cooperman and Rhoades. "They Tell Me I'm Going Through Puberty". New Methods for Puberty Education, 1983.
- Bell, Ruth. "Changing Bodies, Changing Lives," Crown Publishing Group. May 1998.

SUMMARY

Family Group/Advisory Publication

STRUCTURE Journal or newsletter produced by group on a regular basis (i.e., quarterly or twice a semester).

✦ **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- Create situations in which students can realize their talents and demonstrate learning.
- Incorporate academics.
- Incorporate Family Group/Advisory into larger school environment.
- Create nurturing and safe environment.

🎯 **DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS**

- Explore and question personal values and values of others.
- Feel supported and provide support for others.
- Assert ideas in a way that will enhance respect.
- Enhance literacy skills.

✂ **SPECIFIC PRACTICES/ACTIVITIES**

- Pick themes (i.e. welcome back, holidays, seasons, academics, sharing interests and hobbies, staying in school, getting along with peers and family members, etc.)
- Set aside time for writing during Family Group/Advisory and encourage participation and creativity.
- Create structured opportunities to share work.
- Journals should include poetry, essays, artwork, photographs, etc.
- Publish and distribute.

🔍 **ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION**

- Quality and consistency of contributions
- Overall participation in Family Group/Advisory

🔄 **TIPS FOR TEACHERS**

- Design pages that require a contribution from each member.
- Include student input in picking themes.
- Ensure that all students have a role, assist with production, distribution, etc.

❖ **RESOURCES**

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ New Youth Connections/ NY Center, Inc. 224 West. 29th St. New York, NY 10001 P (212) 279-0708 www.youthcomm.org | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Harlem Overheard 301 West 125th Street, 3rd Floor New York, NY 10027 P (212) 222-4681 www.harlemlive.org | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teachers and Writers Collaborative 5 Union Square West New York, NY 10003 P (212) 691-6590 www.twc.org |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

SUMMARY

Increasing Student Literacy

STRUCTURE Activities will support individual and group literacy by engaging students in reading and sharing exercises.

✦ **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- Emphasize that literacy is vital to student success in all aspects of school and life.
- Create situations in which students can realize their talents and demonstrate learning.
- Incorporate academics.

🎯 **DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS**

- Set learning and educational goals, and self-advocate, self-monitor and self-assess progress toward these goals.
- Effectively communicate ideas, practice active listening, argue points of view, see multiple perspectives, and make informed decisions.
- Improve ability to read, write and speak.
- Explore and question personal values and values of others, validate what others have said and feel validated by others.
- Feel supported and provide support for others.

✂ **SPECIFIC PRACTICES/ACTIVITIES**

- *DEAR (Drop Everything And Read)*: Students individually select literature and are given time to read, do structured journaling around questions and discuss their learning.
- *Author's Chair*: Students convey author's voice through a book they have read.
- *Book Review*: Students write review of books and share with peers.

🔍 **ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION**

- Reading log that keeps track of the number of books read
- Reflective journals
- Oral presentations

🌀 **TIPS FOR TEACHERS**

- Start with short periods of reading and build.
- Allow students to choose books while continuing to expose them to new genres.
- Be sensitive to the different reading levels.
- Read alongside students in order to model behaviors.
- Select a range of strategies that support individual reading.
- Explore students' resistance to reading through discussion.

❖ **RESOURCES**

- Books on Tape (available at all public libraries)
- Questioning the Author, An Approach for Enhancing Student Engagement with Text by Alison Donlon
- In the Middle, Nancy Atwell
- The Book Group Book: A Thoughtful Guide to Forming and Enjoying a Stimulating Book Discussion Group by Ellen Slezak
- Teachers College Bookstore
1224 Amsterdam Avenue
New York, NY 10027
www.bkstore.com
- Bank Street College Bookstore
Broadway at 112th Street
New York, NY 10025
www.bankstreetbooks.com

SUMMARY

Helping Students Plan for Post-Secondary Options

STRUCTURE Ongoing activities that help students make informed decisions.
These activities should be focused on increasingly during their senior year.

✦ **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- Be aware that students benefit from high expectations.
- Ensure that students are exposed to post-secondary possibilities.
- Provide structure and support to students so that they are able to make informed decisions.
- Create situations in which students can realize their talents and demonstrate learning.
- Provide ways for parents to participate in student learning.
- Provide opportunities to develop decision-making skills.

🎯 **DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS**

- Self-advocate, self-monitor and self-assess.
- Make more informed decisions about college and post secondary career options.
- College acceptance, employment, post-secondary training school.

✂ **SPECIFIC PRACTICES/ACTIVITIES**

- Create personal statements and résumés.
- Maintain student portfolios that may include: résumé, letters of recommendation, personal statement, work samples, SAT scores, transcript, cover letters and a letter of introduction).
- Essay writing.
- Students conduct mock interviews with one another.
- Peer review and editing.
- Invite Alumni to share experience with present participants.
- Invite university, college and technical school personnel and conduct trips to those schools.
- Present student work. Participants present their portfolio to a panel of peers, teachers and parents.

🔍 **ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION**

- Number of college acceptances, admission to post secondary training school, job offers/ acceptances

👤 **TIPS FOR TEACHERS**

- Be aware of writing process (multiple drafts, editing and save drafts).
- Present a full range of college and scholarship options and provide adequate information about options.
- Be sensitive and aware of cultural issues related to college.
- Include parents and families in exploration of post-secondary options and create opportunities for family to play a role (i.e. invite them to the presentation of learning).

❖ **RESOURCES**

- OPTIONS Program / www.bkqnclus.unhny.org
- Career Zone / www.nycareerzone.org

SUMMARY

Interview Project: Method of Inquiry

STRUCTURE Ongoing project where students form a question, hypothesis and conduct interviews to get evidence to support their hypothesis. The project can be related to school, community or city at large.

✦ **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- Create situations in which students can realize their talents and demonstrate learning.
- Establish clear goals and objectives, and a clear process (with beginning, middle and end).
- Incorporate academics.
- Be aware that students need to feel they are making a contribution.

◎ **DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS**

- Identify current events around the world and make connections and see implications for selves and community.
- Effectively communicate ideas, argue points of view, see multiple perspectives and make informed decisions.
- Identify issues in community, design an intervention to support community involvement and implement the plan.

✂ **SPECIFIC PRACTICES/ACTIVITIES**

- Students identify topic of interest or concern in their community.
- Do initial research.
- Formulate questions.
- Take notes and collect information.
- Organize quotations and analyze data.
- Write essay or article using information gathered.

🔍 **ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION**

- Portfolio of interview project/ inquiry steps
- Completion of article
- Presentation to group

📝 **TIPS FOR TEACHERS**

- Look for varied ways adolescents learn to retain information.
- Encourage students to use photography, art, videos, etc. to tell their story.
- Focus on development of quality questions.
- Consider pairing students with different skills (i.e. photography with writing, etc.).
- Provide time for students to share progress in a structured process.
- Be alert to varied academic skill levels.

❖ **RESOURCES**

- New Youth Connections
www.youthconnections.com
- I-Search Documentation
www.edc.org/FSC/MIH/i-search.html
- *The Air Down Here* by Gil Alicia
- *The I-Search: Guiding Students Towards Relevant Research* by Zorfass, J., and Copel, H

SUMMARY

Law & Ethics: Understanding the Law and How It Affects You and Your Community

STRUCTURE Students will study the law as it relates to youth, community and school with a special emphasis on personal safety, knowing your rights as a citizen and knowing how to take action to improve your community.

★ **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- Provide opportunities for involvement for all parts of the school community.
- Create situations in which students can realize their talents and demonstrate learning.
- Incorporate academics.
- Identify and address both individual and group problems and issues.
- Provide opportunities to develop decision-making skills.

◎ **DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS**

- Identify current events, make connections and see implications to themselves and their community.
- Identify issues in community, design an intervention to support community involvement and implement the plan.
- Assert ideas in a way that will enhance respect.
- Learn about stereotyping and prejudice and identify examples in own lives.

✂ **SPECIFIC PRACTICES/ACTIVITIES**

- Study law and ethics and how the law impacts on issues of personal rights and responsibilities and protecting the quality of life in own community.
- Conduct mock trials and debates.
- Read and write on relevant topics.
- Encourage multiple forms of expression through writing, discussion and art activities.
- Create bumper stickers, posters and t-shirts.
- Take field trips to courts and prisons.
- Visit lawyers and police officers.
- Attend community meetings.
- Have a school community meeting discussing issues that students have researched that may affect school as a community.

🔍 **ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION**

- Participation in group
- Written assignments
- Completion of project
- Participation in group discussions and/or group presentations

👤 **TIPS FOR TEACHERS**

- Have students contribute from their own personal experiences.
- Be aware/sensitive to issues concerning police and court system.

❖ **RESOURCES**

- Films, videotapes (regarding law), and field trips: i.e. Civil Court, Criminal Courts mock sentencing and trials. Film depicting actual cases.
- Textbook:
 - *Street Law*, Lee Arbetman, M. Ed, J, D, Edward McMahon, M.Ed. JD West Publishing Co 5th Edition 1994.

SUMMARY

Opportunities for Students to Explore the World of Work

STRUCTURE Ongoing activities that encourage students to explore career options.

✦ GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Be aware that every young person needs an opportunity to explore their future.
- Create situations in which students can realize their talents and demonstrate learning.
- Establish clear goals and objectives, and a clear process (with beginning, middle and end).
- Provide satisfying developmental opportunities for youth.
- Ensure each student is engaged with an adult.
- Provide opportunities to develop decision-making skills.

⦿ DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

- Develop negotiating skills.
- Effectively communicate ideas, practice active listening, argue points of view, see multiple perspectives and make informed decisions.
- Explore and question personal values and values of others, validate what others have said and feel validated by others.
- Identify issues in community, design an intervention to support community involvement and implement the plan.

✂ SPECIFIC PRACTICES/ACTIVITIES

- Community Service
- Internships
- Career Shadowing (a career-match based on the student's interest, to talk with a professional)
- Students meet regularly to debrief and to reflect on their field-based experiences and address issues they are facing.
- Reflective journal on all aspects of field based experience.
- Encourage students to write letters to supervisors thanking them and requesting recommendations.

🔍 ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION

- Students keep journals and record the number of hours they worked, days off, sick time
- Develop resume and collect references based on all external experiences
- Feedback from supervisors

🌀 TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- Have students meet individually with teacher to discuss outcomes.
- Establish relationships with supervisors as a way to get feedback on student's performance and plan necessary intervention.
- Contact community planning boards as a way to develop sites.
- Structure community service, internships and career shadowing as a gradual sequence from 9–12 grade.

❖ RESOURCES

- United Community Services of America
www.ucsofa.com
- Corporation for National and Community Service: Learn and Serve
www.learnandserve.org
- Local Community Planning Board
www.nyc.gov
- New York City School-to-Work Alliance
www.stwalliance.org

SUMMARY

Teen Parents: Making It On Your Own

STRUCTURE Teen parents will share experience and develop skills to become better parents and live independently.

✦ **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- Help students make healthy life decisions, set goals, become active participants in change and become advocates for themselves and their children.
- Create extended family environment.
- Establish clear goals and objectives, and a clear process (with beginning, middle and end).
- Ensure each student is engaged with an adult.
- Identify and address both individual and group problems and issues.

🎯 **DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS**

- Set learning and personal goals, and self-advocate, self-monitor and self-assess progress toward these goals.
- Make healthier life choices.
- Effectively communicate ideas, argue points of view, see multiple perspectives and make informed decisions.
- Express selves more clearly.
- Feel supported & provide support for others.
- Assert ideas in a way that will enhance respect.

✂ **SPECIFIC PRACTICES/ACTIVITIES**

- Budget exercise: how to create a budget and balance a checkbook.
- Research social services agencies such as WIC and Child Health Care Plus.
- Choices activities:
Where will you be in 5 years? Where will you work and how will you take care of your child?
- Students will keep a journal describing their experiences and challenges as teen parents.
- Have group discussions relating to student experiences.
- Have students role-play and problem-solve situations they face in housing, childcare, healthcare, practicing self-advocacy and negotiating skills.

🔍 **ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION**

- Portfolio of personal records (i.e. birth certificate, immunization record, W4 and 1080 forms, Social Security card, etc.)
- Completion of journal assignments
- Participation in group discussions
- Collection of research of social service agencies
- Development of a personal budget

👤 **TIPS FOR TEACHERS**

- Generate topics based on journals and group discussions. Have books, videos, articles and/or other research to support each topic available for students.
- Create opportunities for students to include their children on special occasions (holiday parties, field trips, family group picnics, etc.)
- Have students create project based on research (daycare, employers that are parent friendly, health care facilities, social service agencies, etc.)
- Have students creatively express their five-year plan for themselves and their child.

❖ **RESOURCES**

- The Children's Museum of Manhattan / www.cmom.org
- Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Clinic / www.msnyuhealth.org
312 East 94th Street, New York, N.Y. 10128
- Websites
 - www.budgetmap.com
 - www.budgetyourmoney.com
- Budgeting resources:
 - Lawrence, Judy. *The Budget Kit—The Common Cents Money Management Workbook*, Dearborn Financial Publishing, 1997
 - Scott, David. *The Guide to Personal Budgeting*, (2nd Edition), Globe Pequot, 1995

SUMMARY

Community Service/Community Building

STRUCTURE Students will identify, research and learn about community issue(s) and will work on them individually or as a group.

✧ GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Work with students holistically.
- Provide satisfying developmental opportunities for youth.
- Create situations in which students can realize their talents and demonstrate learning.
- Provide opportunities for students to contribute to school and community.

🎯 DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

- Identify current events in neighborhoods and see implications for selves and community.
- Feel supported and provide support for others.
- Learn to listen.
- Identify issues in community, design an intervention to support community involvement and implement the plan.
- Create action plans.

✂ SPECIFIC PRACTICES/ACTIVITIES

- Have students identify needs in their community (i.e. need of a community garden, elderly that are home bound etc.)
- Identify community resources to address these needs such as community planning board, non-profits, police, etc.
- Organize community meetings to present issues.
- Write letter and plan meetings with key public officials.
- Identify a specific community project to work on as a group or individually.

🔍 ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION

- Students write reflective essays and/or articles about what they learned about the community
- Write letters to officials and/or key stakeholders
- Participation in projects and group discussions

👤 TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- Encourage participants to choose topics they are passionate about.
- Allow students to debate their different perspectives regarding community.
- Have information about community and be well informed about community issues.

❖ RESOURCES

- Community Youth Employment Program (CYEP)
Youth Development Institute
121 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10013
www.fcny.org
- New York Cares
116 East 16th Street
New York, NY 10003
www.nycares.org

SUMMARY

Family Group/Advisory Leadership Development

STRUCTURE Group activities supporting students at home, school, with their peer groups and in their communities.

✦ **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- Work with students holistically.
- Create nurturing and safe environment.
- Create extended family environment.
- Identify and address both individual and group problems and issues.
- Ensure students are part of process of defining and maintaining Group.

🎯 **DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS**

- Self-advocate, self-monitor and self-assess.
- Express selves more clearly.
- Feel supported and provide support for others.
- Problem-solve.
- Learn to listen.
- Make healthier life choices.

✂ **SPECIFIC PRACTICES/ACTIVITIES**

- Structured discussions of critical issues in the lives of students and the school community. Topics may include relationships with parents, peers and important adults.
- Activities to address progress in school, review of transcripts, credits and course advisement.
- Planning school wide events.
- Addressing current employment needs, job shadowing, internships and part-time employment.
- Skill building in problem solving, negotiating and developing listening skills.

🔍 **ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION**

- Journaling around school and community challenges and experiences
- Employment, attendance and completion
- Regular participation in discussion, journaling and activities

🗨 **TIPS FOR TEACHERS**

- Students should be given opportunities to select topics and co-lead discussions.
- Establish ground rules to support listening, participation and non-judgmental comments.

❖ **RESOURCES**

- *Leadership 101: Developing Leadership Skills for Resilient Youth (Facilitator's Guide)*. Mariam G. MacGregor. Youthleadership.com, 1997. (To order, please phone 303-358-1563.)
- *Leadership 101: Developing Leadership Skills (Student Workbook)*. Mariam G. MacGregor. Youthleadership.com, 1997. (To order, please phone 303-358-1563.)
- Convey, S. (1998). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Graham, S. (1998). *Teens Can Make It Happen: Nine Steps to Success*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Websites
 - www.youthleadership.com

Endnotes

¹ The National Education Association reports that 160,000 students cut class every day because of their fear of physical harm. Suellen Fried and Paula Fried, *Bullies and Victims* (New York: M. Evans and Company, 1998) 20.

² *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*, National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council, Jacquelynne Eccles and Jennifer Appleton Gootman, eds. (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2002) 90.

³ Bonnie Benard, “Fostering Resiliency in Urban Schools,” in *Closing the Achievement Gap: A Vision for Changing Beliefs and Practices*, Belinda Williams, ed. (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1996) 98.

⁴ By “performance,” the study indicates improvement in credits earned toward graduation and preparation for post-secondary education. The evaluation of Career Academies did not find any systematic improvements in achievement test scores in reading or math. James J. Kemple and Jason C. Snipes, *Career Academies: Impacts on Students’ Engagement and Performance in High School* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2000) 12–14.

⁵ *Career Academies: Impacts on Students’ Engagement and Performance in High School*, James J. Kemple and Jason C. Snipes, (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2000) 14.

⁶ Paul T. Hill, Gail Foster, and T. Gendler, “High Schools with Character” (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1990).

⁷ Other key characteristics of focus schools include: concentrate on student outcomes, have strong social contracts that communicate the reciprocal responsibilities of all participants, and curricula that draw all students toward learning core skills and perspectives. Hill, Foster, and Gendler vii.

⁸ Valerie E. Lee, Julia B. Smith, Tamara E. Perry, and Mark A. Smylie, *Social Support, Academic Press, and Student Achievement: A View from the Middle Grades in Chicago* (Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research, 1999) 9-10.

⁹ Lee, Smith, Perry and Smylie, P. 10.

¹⁰ Michael Rutter, Barbara Maughan, Peter Mortimore and Janet Ouston. *Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1979) 216.

¹¹ Hill, Foster, and Gendler, P. 28.

¹² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life*. (New York: Basic Books, 1997) 33.

¹³ Richard Murnane and Frank Levy, *Teaching the New Basic Skills*. (New York, The Free Press, 1996) 50.

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