PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES ON MIDDLE SCHOOL ADVISORY PROGRAMS

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

the School of Education in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

University of Pittsburgh

2015

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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December 2, 2014

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University of Pittsburgh, 2015

This qualitative study examined the phenomenon of perceptions' of middle school principals in southwestern Pennsylvania to determine their views on advisory programs. Middle school students are unique when in their academic, physical and socio-emotional characteristics, compared to students of other developmental age groups, as shown throughout the literature review. In total, six principals were selected for participation in a three-part interview process using open-ended questions. The participants are principals in southwestern Pennsylvania who met the three criteria: (a) hold a Principal's certificate from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, (b) employed in the role of a principal with a minimum of three years' experience, and (c) professional experience working with advisory programs. The interview script was designed to collect data that examined participants' views on middle school advisory programs. The findings resulted in six themes: (1) trust, (2) relationships, (3) sense of purpose, (4) connections, (5) transitions, and (6) child-centered. According to respondents, principals can create a positive learning and student-centered climate through advisory programs. Issues such as student-teacher communication, positive relationship building, trusting partnerships, and self-esteem emerged

during this study. A few barriers noted were the non-existence mentoring program for teachers, a lack of professional development and training, high stakes testing demands, time, and finances.

While these themes were evident in the literature, there was minimal research representing principals' view on advisory programs, particularly whether it was beneficial or not, as well as their views on mentoring in advisory. The findings revealed significant understandings about the success or obstacles associated with advisory programs. Key results from this study support middle school design as enhancing specific programs, unified vision, commitment, and attention focused on the child.

(Keywords: principals' perceptions, advisory programs, academic, social-emotional, physical attributes of students)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

PREFACE

This dissertation is dedicated to my family.   Rick, Maddie, and Ricky without your love and encouragement this accomplishment would not have been possible. I am grateful for my parents, Mary Lynn and John Lofink, for always believing in me and supporting my lifetime of learning and owe oversized thank you to Sarah, Albert, Meghan and Emma for always being there though this journey.

I wish to thank my advisor, Dr. Mary Margaret Kerr, for her support, direction, and advice throughout this entire process. I truly appreciate the way you guide, lead, and encourage your doctoral students. Thank you for helping me to think clearly, become stronger, and find my voice.

I want to recognize Dr. Gunzenhauser, Dr. Bickel, Dr. Kirk, and Dr. Trovato, for their time, support, and motivation throughout this process.   Additionally, I owe a special acknowledgement to my colleagues and friends, Dr. Tammy Andreyko and Dr. Michelle Miller, for their professionalism and support on this journey.

I would like to recognize and thank my research assistant, Alex Siler, and my editor, Sarah Capello.

My family, friends, and colleagues kept me going when things seemed most challenging. Through your belief and encouragement, I was able to complete this educational journey.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Middle school advisory programs are designed to meet the unique needs of young adolescents they serve. Middle school principals recognize the specialized needs of programming along with rapid changes that occur during the developmental stages of adolescence for students (Eichhorn, 1969a). Exclusively designed advisory programs address idiosyncratic adolescent characteristics (Alexander, 1998). During the middle school years, young adults transform rapidly, during their physical, intellectual, emotional, and social phases of pubescence (Lounsbury, 1996).

In the middle school setting, an advisory program is a unique period of time designated to address the students' needs each day. This design consists of smaller student groups assigned to one adult teacher. Additionally, each of these teachers serves as a child advocate, advisor, and mentor for each student in the program (George, 2002). Middle schools have several important elements that include teaming, and programs that feature guidance and mentoring. Advisory programs such as those I will essay in this study are unique to middle schools. The current research concludes advisory programs are an effective component that strives to meet the needs of young adolescent learners (Lounsbury & Vars, 2003).

1.1   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine the personal perspectives of middle school principals concerning advisory programs. The principals' views allow the researcher to present a distinctive set of data that may address the gap in the research literature on advisory programs. Given the current research on middle schools, this unique look into principals' views may provide a better clarity and understanding of advisory programs. This study of middle school advisory programs uses qualitative methods to examine principals' perspectives. The primary research tool is formal interviewing. Middle school principals serve as key informants while sharing their views on advisory programs. The interview is used to gather principals' stories as a way to identify patterns through a qualitative study.

1.2   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Middle school students are unique when comparing their academic, physical, and social-emotional characteristics, compared to students of other age groups, as shown throughout the research literature. In meeting the developmental needs of young adolescents, advisory programs have been determined to be the single most important element of a middle school design (Anfara, 2001). However, there are no significant studies on principals' perspectives on advisory programs. Therefore, a gap in the literature exists. As a result, this study had the opportunity to probe into middle school advisory programs from administrators' points of view.

The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. How do principals characterize the advisory programs in their middle schools?

a. Do these characterizations reflect in any way the essential components of advisory programs as outlined in the literature?

2. What meaning do principals make of their advisory programs?

a. How do they perceive and describe barriers to implementation of effective programs?

b. What do they see as facilitating implementation of effective programs?

c. How do principals describe mentoring?

d. How do they characterize training for mentors in the advisory programs?

e. How do they identify and measure outcomes of the programs?

The following section highlights and reviews the significant findings of this study.

1.3   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This qualitative study examined the perceptions' of southwestern Pennsylvania middle school principals on advisory programs. This study is significant as the research questions gave principals the opportunity to express their views of advisory programs while investigating this gap more closely. The study builds on the present literature and addresses a narrow gap in the literature that showed there are no studies about advisory programs explicitly from principals' perspectives.

This study is essential to the literature on middle school student achievement and success as it invites discussions on middle school advisory programs. Compared to students of other developmental age groups, middle school students face unique challenges due to academic, physical, and socio-emotional characteristics; therefore, the middle school years present a unique

opportunity to look closely at student advisory programs.   In this research study, six significant themes resulted: (1) trust, (2) relationships, (3) sense of purpose, (4) connections, (5) transitions, and (6) child-centered.   Additionally, this study is helpful to middle school administrators considering examining the professional development or components of their advisory programs. It will also serve as a future reference for researchers on the topic of advisory programs from the perspective of middle school principals.

Next, Chapter 2 contains the review of the existing literature on middle school advisory programs.

2.0   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION TO MIDDLE SCHOOL ADVISORY PROGRAMS

Throughout the last century, many educators have looked to research literature as a way to understand the middle school movement from a pedagogical perspective. Middle level education has changed its configuration throughout the years, while searching for the best grade level design to serve young adolescents. There are several differences between junior high and a middle school model.

The first section discusses terminology used throughout the literature and defines key terms such as adolescence, block scheduling, and exploratory program. Figure 1 explains the relationship between middle school concept, advisory, and mentoring. Next, this chapter includes a segment of a historical timeline and progression of the middle school movement. The review then addresses the middle level adolescent and the unique characteristics of adolescent development. These areas include academic, socio-emotional, and physical attributes of young middle school adolescents. Following this section is information on the types, functions, and expectations of advisory programs. Lastly, there is a section explaining the effectiveness and characteristics of mentoring programs.
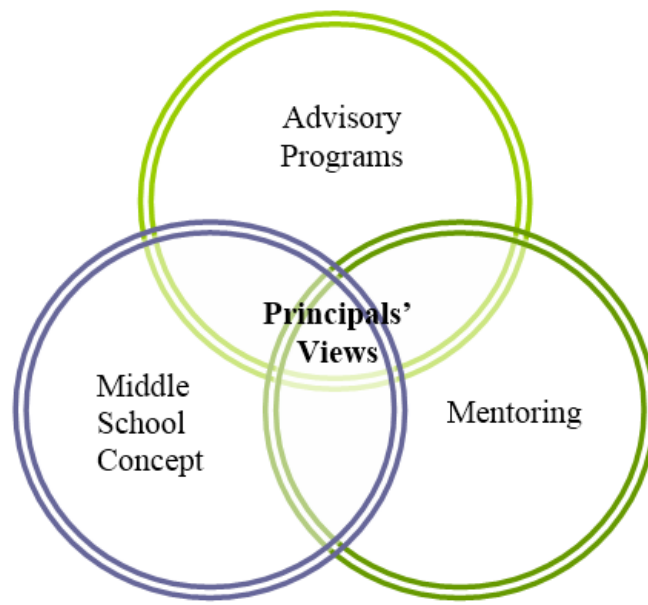
Figure 1. Illustration of the Gap from the Literature

The review of literature will include a short comparison between the middle school and the early junior high model, and the essential programming of both. It will define middle level as "a school unit, which follows the elementary unit and precedes the high school unit; students from grades six, seven, and eight of a graded school organization" (Eichhorn, 1966, p.107). The middle school unit includes developmentally appropriate programs and activities to maximize the learning opportunity for young adults in a nurturing climate (Clark & Clark, 1993). The three questions that will be the focus of the review of literature are:

1. What are the essential components of a middle school program?

2. How does the research literature define a good advisory program?

3. What defines effective mentoring programs in middle schools?

2.1.1 Definition of Terms

In this section, a few key terms and ideas are introduced to help the reader easily identify the components in middle school advisory programs. These terms and definitions serve the purpose to help the reader conceptualize the vocabulary that is used throughout this study. The following definitions will allow the reader to become familiar with key terms.

Adolescent-An age specific group of young students that have graduated elementary school and are preparing to enter high school. Adolescent puberty brings many changes that are physical, intellectual, and socio-emotional (Eichhorn, 1998).

Advisor-Advisee Program-A prearranged student group of 15 to 20 that can meet to talk about academic or social issues amongst the same age peer group. Advisory programs can range from daily, weekly or bi-monthly meetings times. Each young child bonds closely with one adult advisor. Certified teachers and other professional staff members usually lead an advisory base group. For example, titles such as teacher-based guidance, teacher advisory, or advisement are used (Myrick & Myrick, 1990).

Block Schedule-Schedules that leave large blocks of time available for interdisciplinary teams of teachers to plan instruction, schedule, and implement classroom activities (Dickinson & Erb, 1997).

Interdisciplinary Team-A small unit of young adolescents assigned to teachers on a team. Teachers have the advantage to hold interdisciplinary activities, and introduce units of materials that overlap and enhance the learning opportunity for young students (Knowles & Brown, 2000).

Junior High School-Young adults that have graduated elementary school, and are in between stages of pubescence, usually in grades 7 to 9, just prior to entering secondary level (Van Til, Vars, & Lounsbury, 1961).

Middle School-This unit recognizes unique traits and specific curriculum created for middle school students. Guidance services, individual encouragement, and connection with family members underlies support for middle schoolers (Alexander, Williams, Compton, Hines & Prescott, 1968; Eichhorn, 1969a; 1969b; 1984; George, 2002; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lounsbury, 2011; Lounsbury & Vars, 2003).

Mentor-A person who is involved with mentoring programs, serving as role model and tutor for an adolescent, helping with self-confidence, maturity, and improved academic skills.

National Middle School Association (NMSA)-In the 1970s, this group invested and committed to middle level education by providing research and advocacy in support of professional development for educators of middle level adolescents (National Middle School Association [NMSA], 1982).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)-A federal legislation replacing Act 1965 that offers funding, and subsidizes low-income school-aged students. The funding ensures equity to low socio-economic students who are eligible to receive educational services. NCLB provides funds for school districts who achieve annual progress by offering resources and professional development. Students must reach academic achievement through a rigorous, high standard of accountability and performance per child.

Transescent-A coined term by Eichhorn (1966) that refers to young adolescents during the pubescent stage. Middle school students experience several changes in a relatively short period prior to adulthood. Many social-emotional, physical, and cognitive changes take place with a young adolescent during puberty (Eichhorn, 1966).

These terms provide clarification for the reader while reading the literature review. The literature review will begin to help the reader answer two questions:

- What is so dynamic about middle school programming?

- Why should middle schools be attentive to specific traits of young adolescents?

Next, the following section explains the historical progression from early junior high models that emerged into the modern middle schools currently.

2.1.2 Historical Lens on Middle School

In this section, a timeline illustrates for the reader important dates and major contributions that were relevant to the emergence of the middle school model. The brief timeline and summary that appears in Figure 2 outlines some of the important dates associated with the middle school evolution.
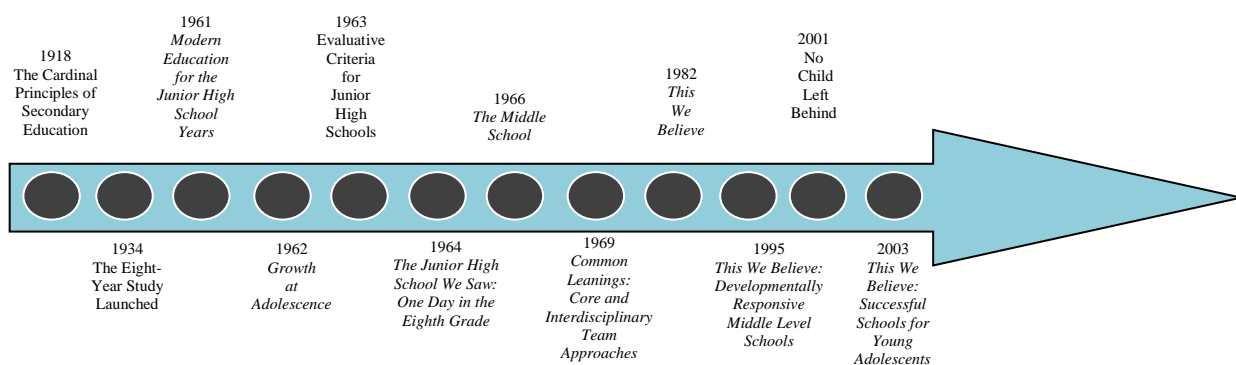
Figure 2. Timeline of Transition

1918 The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education. This committee made recommendations to reorganize the secondary school units.

1934 The Eight-Year Study Launched. A comprehensive research study on middle level curriculum, examined standards, and resources developed for educators.

1961 *Modern Education for the Junior High School Years***.** This book explored the history and background of junior high school education. VanTil, Vars, and Lounsbury contributed writing and research to this publication.

1962 *Growth at Adolescence.* Tanner described maturation of adolescents that required a 6-7-8 unit rather than the 7-8-9 structure for middle school students.

1963 Evaluative Criteria for Junior High Schools. A National Study on Secondary School Evaluation (NSSE) produced an accreditation system adapted for use by junior high schools.

1964 *The Junior High School We Saw: One Day in the Eighth Grade*. A national report detailed a typical school day for middle level students written with input from Lounsbury and Marani.

1966 *The Middle School***.** Donald Eichhorn was considered an expert on middle school philosophy and practice. This was the first book in which he introduced the term *transescent* to describe the young adolescent during their developmental and growth stage in the middle school.

1969 *Common Learnings: Core and Interdisciplinary Team Approaches***.** Vars contributed to this publication that describes the basic learning fundamentals of skills and academic values for students. In addition, issues on team teaching and flexible scheduling were included in this publication.

1982 *This We Believe.* A document that identified ten essential elements needed in an effective middle school. The National Middle School Association provides strong advocacy and support as written throughout the *This We Believe* publication.

1995 *This We Believe: Developmentally Responsive Middle Level Schools*. Gordon, John, and Burkhardt were committee members on this second edition and revision. It redefined, advocated, and brought recognition to students.

2001 No Child Left Behind.   This is a legislative Act requiring school districts to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) mandates for public funding. A political approach to education, repercussions of NCLB imposed restrictions on middle level education.

2003 *This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents.* A publication distributed and revised 7 years after publication of the original *This We Believe* (2003b).

This helps organize the events of junior high school as it began its transformation into 19th century middle level programming. Middle school programs reflect age- appropriate curriculum, student-centered activities, and guidance services (Eichhorn, 1998).

2.1.3   Junior High Influences on Middle Grades

Throughout the 19th century, middle schools faced funding deficits and curricula issues specific to their unique programming needs, components, and grade configurations. Middle school concepts and programming were constantly being scrutinized, reviewed and committee discussions took place to determine if there was any significance relevant to the grade level configurations of a middle school design. There have been many grade configuration changes between elementary and secondary levels, attempting to reach the best design possible. It is important to have an understanding of the junior high units that have evolved into the modern middle schools of today.

According to the National Education Association, established in 1894, junior high schools initially stemmed from visionary Charles W. Elliot. His involvement helped to

restructure secondary education by introducing the junior high model during the 19th century. It was a significant idea to reconfigure the original eight to four design of the educational system (Anfara, 2001). Traditionally, students spent eight years in the primary level and four years in secondary school.

Another important event, occurring in 1910, was *The Seven Cardinal Principles* (Clark & Clark, 1993; Cuban, 1992) report that favored secondary education changes. The purpose of the commission was to examine secondary education, formulate recommendations, and develop a plan to allow secondary education to meet the societal changes through best instructional practices (Anfara, 2001). The commission prepared recommendations that became the guidelines of change based on societal factors. In particular, the guidelines reflected the current educational theory and practices, and the attributes of middle level students (Koos, 1927). The recommendations became the "Seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Schooling" (Briggs, 1920). The seven areas identified in the report were (1) promotion of health and physical activity, (2) proficient language skills- reading, writing, listening, and speaking, (3) home-to-school connections, (4) career exploration and skill development, (5) civic community projects, (6) cultural awareness activities, and (7) character education (McEwin, Dickinson, & Jenkins, 1996). According to Mac Iver (1990), the vocational activities and a personal sense of adult responsibility were the reasons why students were successful in the junior high. Exploratory courses, academic rigor, and social development of young adults were at the heart of the junior high school agenda (Toepfer, 1988). The curriculum goals of the junior high-included departmentalization, student choices in content subjects, career exploration, and offerings to include social opportunities with peers.

Criticisms of the junior high model aside, comprehensive educational design and vocational offerings for students existed (Lipsitz, 1990). A few criticisms of junior high schools included lack of higher academic standards, tracking systems for college in comparison to vocational students, and limiting the expectations of students (Cuban, 1992; Mitchell, 1990). Lewis (1992) believed the junior high model was an attempt to provide dynamic instruction for adolescents and divide the younger students from older ones, but eventually the junior high resembled a smaller version of a high school. However, regardless of the negative feedback of junior high models, the current middle school model reflected the original seven recommendations for young adults (Cuban, 1992).

The middle school debate grew stronger throughout the 1950s, and remained until the 1970s. A specialized, comprehensive curriculum intended to support middle school students developed. Newly adapted curriculum that matched student need helped to change grade configurations for middle level throughout the 19th century. There have been many shifts in the grade levels from 8-year elementary and 4-year middle education. During the 19th century, both secondary models made grade configuration changes from 7-8-9 to the 6-7-8 levels that established a well-known pattern of middle grades (Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, & Petzko, 2002). During the 1980s and 90s, the preferred pattern was highly regarded as suitable for young adults in secondary grade arrangements (Valentine et al., 2002).

Why was it important to make the grade configuration changes? Although there was some criticism of junior high schools for ignoring the adolescent needs of young adults (Mac Iver, 1989), in theory, both models supported young learners to discover, mature, and learn. The paradigm shift from 7-8-9 to 6-7-8 grade levels (Alexander, 1998; Lounsbury, 1992) of the middle school design reflected intricate characteristics of young adolescents (Anfara,

Andrews, & Mertens, 2005). In contrast, middle school promoted a more student-centered approach, whereas junior high focused more time and attention on content materials for students (Clark & Clark, 1994). George and Alexander (1993) argued that several non-pedagogical reasons significantly influenced the patterns to change from a junior high 7-8-9 design to the middle school pattern of 6-7-8.

Valentine et al. (2002) indicated that their studies were both pedagogical and non-pedagogical conditions that resulted in the grade configuration changes during the 1970s through the 1990s. A significant study conducted on the grade level changes of the middle level education, *National Study of Leadership in Middle Level Schools* (Valentine et al., 2002), supported specific explanations that supported these changes. These findings revealed three reasons for grade configuration changes. The three restructuring reasons were: (1) the reorganization of the grade level structures, (2) supportive transition programs between elementary to high school, and (3) relevant, updated instructional methods for young adolescents (Anfara & Brown, 2001; Clark & Valentine, 1981). With this in mind, it is important to explain the programming options of the two models. Each model has a different approach toward educational philosophy, teaching, and instructional activities for students.

Are the two models significantly different? According to the literature, Table 1 provides a comparison chart to identify the programming differences between the two models.

Table 1. Junior High Program Versus Middle School Program

Junior High Encourages: (and practiced)	Middle School Encourages:
Curriculum driven process	Student-centered learning process
Teaching a prescribed knowledge and content learning	Teaching metacognition skills, how to learn problem solving skills
Proficiency of ideas and concepts	Creative exploration of learning styles
Competition among peers	Builds self-confidence and self-esteem
Teacher decision making power	Independent student thinking and exploration
Standard classes	Flexible block scheduling with team activities
Each class has one assigned educator	Team teaching
Time constraints of the content and texts that control the pacing of class	Differentiated instructional approaches for best practices of student learning at individual paces
Guidance delivers a basic curriculum and career exploration	Wide array of guidance services offered to students for support and career discovery

There are basic differences in the instructional design, approach, and methods of middle level practices. Middle school encourages young adults through reassuring and positive learning environments (Lounsbury, 1992). The junior high focused on curricula, whereas middle schools focus on the student. Therefore, developmentally appropriate middle schools provide challenging curriculum, varied teaching and learning styles, advisory programs, flexible teaming, child-centered climates, and guidance programs (Eichhorn, 1969b).

The next section will address the middle school components. As identified in the

research, there are nationally recognized components and characteristics that are relevant

in middle level education (NMSA, 1992).

2.1.4   Components

Students reach academic success through a well-rounded curriculum and programming

components contained within a middle school, allowing for exploration and active learning for

all students. Middle level curriculum supports active learning which provides opportunities for

teachers to connect with students.   Middle level curriculum is built upon the individual learning

styles of each student. The NMSA proposed components that aligned with the developmental

readiness of young adolescents.

To illustrate, a few important components that are sanctioned by National Middle School

Association (1992) include a variety of teaching methods and practices for young adults'

exploratory courses, guidance counseling services, advisory programs, team teaching, and a

healthy school environment for all students.   The instructional framework contains student-

centered activity options for young adult learners.

In 2003, NMSA made revisions that renamed eight traits and outlined six programs that

endorsed excellence in middle school programming for students.

In particular, these include:

1. patience and praise with adolescents,

2. cooperative and team teaching,

3. a mission statement reflective of shared decision making,

4. a healthy, safe and nurturing learning climate for students,

5. high standards, relevant and rigorous content for students to achieve,

6. collaborative partnerships between students and educators with active engagements,

7. a caring adult who campaigns for each child,

8. home-to-school connections that foster family orientated activities (NMSA, 2003c).

Furthermore, as the literature indicates, an exemplary middle school includes specific programming that revolves around students, teachers, and a school-wide community. In particular, there are the six curriculum and design implementations described in Thompson's book, *Reforming Middle Level Education: Considerations for Policymakers* (2004). The six recommendations include:

1. coursework that offers rigor, relevance, and inspires learning,

2. varied approaches to learning styles and instructional methods fostering diversity amongst the students,

3. learning climate that is fair and equitable for monitoring individual student progress,

4. building positive, professional teacher-student partnerships to enhance the teaching and learning practices,

5. health, safety and wellness guidelines that protect all stakeholders in middle school,

6. student support and counseling services for all students (Thompson, 2004).

Middle schools attempt to provide an all-inclusive approach while relying on comprehensive programming for students. The curriculum offers a multifaceted programs and community partnerships. The approach is to encompass all aspects of opportunities and engagements, with a variety of student choices. A school community involves students, staff, administration, parents…all those invested in middle level education.

In agreement, Alexander (1968) argued reassurance and support of young adults as they matured. The best approach for middle school curriculum was incorporating the main components through strategic alignment, while preparing young adults for the high school transition. According to Lounsbury (1996), middle school offered (1) advisory sessions and (2) an expansive offering of guidance services.

As Levine and Lezotte (1990) noted, a few important features were a positive school environment, monitoring of student progress, parental involvement, multicultural curriculum, social activities and teams, and high academic rigor. Alexander and George (1981) developed criteria that supported middle level concepts also. Middle level programs deliver adult guidance, orientation activities that support transition, block schedules, interdisciplinary teaming, age appropriate instructional techniques, exploratory programs and independent thinking skills (Alexander & George, 1981).

2.1.5 What is Developmentally Appropriate in Middle Grades?

How does the research define developmentally responsive middle schools? Building a culture of trust and embracing young adolescents is key to creating an authentic middle school (Anfara et al., 2005). The age range of students from 10 - 15 requires specially designed instruction, student-centered activities, and a positive school environment (Eichhorn, 1969a). The responsiveness of middle schools needs to be monitored, adjusted, and realigned to meet the changes of young adolescences (Eichhorn, 1998; George & Alexander, 2003).

Middle schools educators need professional development and current research to implement instructional practices offering support to middle school adolescents. Early adolescent developmental-stage theorists like Kohlberg and Havighurst (Anfara et al., 2005)

18

have made major contributions in child development, which has influenced middle level operation. To encourage the developmental phases during the middle years, Havighurst (1972) proposed eight responsibilities that young adults need to embrace to become productive, adult citizens (Anfara et al., 2005). For example, Havighurst (1972) explained how adolescents need to form maturing friendships with both genders, develop a sexual self-identity, have a healthy attitude about body image, develop emotional independence from parents, begin to think about family and marriage, form ethics, establish values, and set goals. Young adults who are able to attain these values and goals are better equipped to function responsibly (Anfara et al., 2005). During middle school years, if student behaviors, skills, and nurturing are positive, and the student is willing to accept responsibility and change, the results can be influential for a lifetime (Havinghurst, 1972). Middle school curriculum had to be rigorous, yet cultivate aptitudes, talents, and skills. The curriculum requires relevance, yet be dynamic enough to capture the attention of teenagers. Core subjects are fun, innovative, and become blueprints for student success.

Middle schools began to make marked changes from the original junior high features, by refocusing the attention directly on the child instead of the academic program (Lounsbury, 1992). In agreement, Eichhorn (1980) overwhelmingly believed the need for child-centered curricula was the most important factor of a middle school. To illustrate, Clark and Clark (1994) believed teachers used cooperative teaching and learning styles, served as role models for every child, created positive home-school-family relationships, and maintained a positive school climate. Stevenson examined the distinctive characteristics of middle school programs and described five characteristics of developmental readiness for young adults as:

1. experiencing a variety of changes and unpredictability,

2. experiencing personal, individual changes of pubescence,

3. being influenced by family background, environment and ethnicity,

4. impressionable, and beginning to form his or her own value systems and beliefs,

5. reaching success when they are actively engaged in learning. (Stevenson, 2002)

Middle school education began to include comprehensive teaching to maximize learning opportunities that included recognizing the special features of the young learner (Anfara et al., 2005). As a way to offer better services for young adults, The Carnegie Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989) aimed to support home-to-school partnerships through safe climates fostering social and individual growth for young adults. Furthermore, the Carnegie Task Force (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989) made eight recommendations for middle school programs, including forming small groups for learning, standard curriculum, increasing student achievement, supporting good teachers, professional development for staff on middle school philosophy, maintaining academic rigor, community involvement, and home-to-school partnerships (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Vars, 2001; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Association of Secondary School Principals [NASSP], 1985).

As a result, developmentally responsive middle schools aimed to accomplish and provide students with several options to nurture and accept all facets of academic, physical, and socio-emotional changes that occur during pubescence (Eichhorn, 1966). The middle school years are challenging for young adults during developmental growth (Alexander, 1968). Middle school programming is dynamic, striving to provide challenging curriculum, flexibility to team, and wide-ranging guidance services (Lipsitz, 1980).

2.1.6   Middle School: How Does Puberty Affect Learning?

The countless trials of pre-adulthood can be very stressful on middle schoolers. Eichhorn (1966) studied the significant changes during puberty. Through his research and writings on young adults, Eichhorn described the multitude of changes that were occurring during this stage of adolescence. The changes can be cognitive, physical and social-emotional for young adults at this stage, thus Eichhorn (1966) invented a new linguistic word that encapsulated the young adult. The newly created word he used to identify a young adult during puberty (between the ages of 10-15) became known as *transescence* (Eichhorn, 1966; 1967; 1969a; 1969b). A brief review in the following section helps to explain the pubescent changes that young adults encounter during middle school.

2.1.6.1 Traits of Young Adolescents

This section briefly explains the three areas of development of young adolescents as they approach adulthood (Alexander, 1968; Eichhorn, 1969a). The cognitive development occurs from childhood to adulthood (McKay, 1995); however, the range of thinking expands from the concrete to abstract stages of ability (Eichhorn, 1966; Lounsbury, 1996). Young adults begin to perform more difficult problem solving tasks, acquire language skills, and formal operations such as abstract thinking. Reasoning skills develop as mature behaviors emerge (Lounsbury, 1992). As maturity develops, young adults begin to accept responsibility and make good decisions. During puberty, the chronological age does not mirror the accelerated biological growth that is taking place physically in both genders (McKay, 1995). During this period of change, the accelerated growth rate is noticeable as females grow taller than males, bones and muscles lengthen, and features of body hair or pimples may be seen (Mertens, Anfara, & Caskey,

2007). Young adults are insecure and lack coordination. Sexual awareness of opposite genders begins to materialize (Eichhorn, 1966). As for changes in the social developmental stages, self-identity emerges as social interactions increase, and adolescents seek group acceptance among peers (Eichhorn, 1980). As social activities become more frequent, peer groups form bonds and friendships. Students begin to rely less on parental supports during this social maturing (Eichhorn, 1998).

In summary, Eichhorn (1966) believed middle school embraced the social-emotional model to help young adults cope and survive puberty. Furthermore, middle grades used specifically designed instruction and curriculum to meet the student's maturity levels (McKay, 1995). Additionally, the developmentally responsive middle school design supported students experiencing all the complexities of changes that occur through puberty (Irvin, 1992). According to the research, Eichhorn (1966) was committed to labeling all the changes that were occurring in pubescent adolescence. Eichhorn used this research as valid justification for the middle school transformation. Students needed a place to be accepted, learn independently, and achieve while undergoing many changes.

Eichhorn (1966) further described the puberty stages as areas that are interdependent, yet occur in unison. A brief listing in Table 2 below denotes a few of the changes that happen during adolescent puberty, divided into three areas.

Table 2. Middle Level Child: Traits of Young Adolescent

Intellectual Traits	Physical Traits	Social-Emotional Traits
Independent Thinking	Growth in muscle mass, body hair and hormonal changes	Self-conscious
Active verses Passive Learning	Rapid Bone Growth	Conformity to peer group
Short Attention Span	Clumsiness and awkward growth spurts of body parts	Insensitivity and over emotional reactions
Concrete to Abstract Thinking and Reasoning Skills	Maturing hands and longer limbs	Attraction to opposite genders, sexual curiosity and relationships
Varied Learning Styles	Adrenal glands produce estrogen and testosterone	Family loyalty versus friendships with peers
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Skills	Poor posture due to skeletal changes from puberty	Decision-making that may be impulsive and immature; experimentation with drugs or alcohol
Non-Academic vs. Academic Interests	Increase in lung capacity, increase in body size and weight gain	Language and vocabulary is reflective of peers, attention seeking behaviors

In his research on middle school programs, Alexander & George (1981) claimed students are recognized, accepted, and supported throughout their developmental years. A systemic process of uniformity within developmental curriculum for middle level education reassures the optimum use of staff, resources and promotes student progress (Irvin, 1992). The goal of middle school is to enhance self-esteem, provide a wide array of opportunity for success, active participation, and to offer exploratory courses (Toepfer, 1988). Effective middle school models offer an array of multifaceted approaches, courses, and options.

The curriculum includes interdisciplinary instruction, team teaching, and exploratory options for all students. To illustrate, a typical day in a middle school includes collaboration,

advisory, shared decision-making, and flexibility through block scheduling (Eichhorn, 1969b). The goal is to provide maximum instruction for a student population identified by their developmental differences (NMSA, 1992). The benefits that middle schoolers gain from a nurturing environment can have lasting effects that transcend the classroom, reaching far into their adulthood.

2.1.7   Summary

This literature review examined the question, Why should middle schools be aware of the specific characteristics of young adolescents? Alexander and McEwin (1989) stated the junior high 7-8-9 units moving toward a 6-7-8 configuration was a step in the right direction. The middle school design enhances specifically designed programs, unified vision, and commitment for young adults. Middle school students receive a child-centered learning climate that helps foster, motive, and stimulate their unique needs during adolescences.

2.2   ADVISORY PROGRAM

2.2.1   Are Advisory Programs Important in Middle Grades?

This section will examine the significance of advisory programs in middle schools. First, this section will define the purpose of an advisory program, describing the functions, activities, and types of advisory programs. Lastly, it identifies the advantages and disadvantages of effective advisory program. In Section 2, the sources describe the philosophies behind advisory programs,

as opposed to research studies about their specific benefits. This approach was used to later highlight the beliefs of middle school advocates in relation to the beliefs of principals involved in this particular study.

The second question asks, How does the literature define a good advisory program in a middle school? In this section, the definition of an advisory program is a routine weekly, prearranged student group of 15 to 20, gathering to talk about school or social issues amongst the same age peer group (Mauk & Taylor, 1993). Advisory programs can range from daily, weekly or bi-monthly meetings times. Each young child is recognized, and bonds closely with one adult advisor (Myrick & Myrick, 1990). According to Lounsbury (1984), a middle school advisory program promotes healthy teacher-student relationships by using smaller learning communities. In agreement, "The most significant development in middle school over the last decade has been the rapid emergences of teacher-based programs, usually referred to as advisor/advisee (A/A), home base, or advisory programs" (Mauk & Taylor, 1993, p. 6). A positive school climate refers to student advising and guidance provided by an advisory program in middle school.

Borrowing from Clark and Clark (1994), advisory programs focus attention on the high level of care and praise for every middle level child. Middle schools can choose a variety of flexible scheduling designs to include an advisor-advisee program. Clark and Clark (1994) described the purposes of advisory programs as:

1. promoting opportunities for social development,

2. assisting students with academic problems,

3. facilitating positive involvement between teachers and administrators and students,

4. providing an adult advocate for each student in the school,

5. promoting positive school climate. (pp.135-136)

A responsibility of a middle school is recognizing that a student's social development and academic growth occur simultaneously. To address student recognition, advisory programs allow time for student awards, accolades and accomplishments with peers. Middle schools have designed schedules and curriculum that include smaller learning communities such as advisory programs, cooperative teaching, and interdisciplinary instruction (McEwin et al., 1996). These activities encourage and support academic growth for middle school students.

McEwin et al. (1996) proposed that smaller learning communities specifically addressed young adults (10 to 14) as they are developing intellectually, physically, and emotionally. Advisory programs offer a dynamic curriculum that provides individual attention for each child. As Eichhorn (1967) described this pubescent stage, as "the critical point of child development, which occurs during middle school years" (p. 3). Advisory programs form a relationship of trust for the student by having a compassionate adult advisor. Galassi, Gulledge, and Cox (1998a) explained, "Middle School advisory programs provide an opportunity for both advisors and advisees to belong to a 'family,' a chance to secure physical and emotional affiliation" (p.9). Middle school advisory programs can offer remedial coursework, and support groups for adolescents.

Middle school advisory program serves as a vehicle to ease the difficulties of pubescent changes, and provide opportunities for individual recognition during middle school. The second important factor is support for adolescents. Establishing a strong positive rapport with at least one teacher who listens, leads, and supports them. Despite the urge to engage with peer groups, and the desire for independence, adolescents still will seek guidance and advice from adult mentors (Eichhorn, 1998).

2.2.2   Relationships, Topics, and Activities

This section describes and explains advisory programs as an essential component for middle schools. Gill and Read (1990) stated that advisory programs are scheduled small-group times, used for group discussions, decision-making, or personal issues. Weekly or daily meetings are flexible, with varying frequency and duration of the meetings (Myrick, 1993). Flexibility in scheduling, however, is important to emphasize a positive advisor-advisee relationship (Alexander & George, 1981). The advisor-advisee relationship is vital to establish a meaningful, effective bond with a nurturing advisor for the student.

Professional development offers comprehensive tools, resources, and training to help teachers become skilled advisors. Cole (1992) recognized the need for the advisors to be caring and compassionate, not taking the traditional authoritarian role of a classroom teacher. In agreement, NMSA (1995) stated, "Every student needs at least one thoughtful adult who has the time and takes the trouble to talk with the student about academic matters, personal problems, and the importance of performing well in middle grade school" (p. 37). In support, Van Hoose stated, "The quality of the relationship between teachers and students is the single most important aspect of middle level education" (1991, p. 7). Teachers who receive effective professional development and training are more equipped to address student concerns in advisory programs.

Advisory topics find students engaged in individual and group discussions using particular advisory activities, such as role playing, service projects or study groups. A few suggested topics are group dynamics, communication skills, and mediation training to solve conflicts (Gill & Read, 1990).   Advisory topics may include forming friendships, school adjustment, teaming, and learning about multiple intelligences. Students learn to manage and

organize their time, make choices about drugs or alcohol involvement, and discuss bullying and harassment issues that may begin in the middle school years. Activities may include individual conferences, group discussions, community service projects, intramurals, PSSA prep skills, or team fun days. The basic idea of advisory time it to help young adults understand, interact and make good choices with peers, teachers, parents and interact positively with the world around them. The "fundamental purpose of the advisor-advisee program regardless of its design in any school is to promote involvement between a teacher and the students involved in the advisory group" (Alexander & George, 1981, p. 90).

Students benefit from the family-like atmosphere created from a well-structure advisory program. Additionally, advisory programs may include time management, conflict mediation, community service, study skills, relationship building and decision-making. Advisory time provides students with the opportunity to transfer skills taught in one subject area to other subjects, and teachers benefit by providing common planning periods that allows collaborative development of interdisciplinary units, or monitor student progress (McEwin et al., 1996).

2.2.3   Functions and Expectations of Advisory Program

An advisory program should have one caring adult who is approachable and participates actively throughout the child's development (Eichhorn, 1966). Advisory programs recognize student progress in relationship to ability (Myrick & Myrick, 1990). The components of adolescent development and mentoring combine to a form a well-structured advisory program, which allows students to connect with one caring adult in a relationship.

Ziegler and Mulhull (1994) stated "the function of the (advisory) program is to promote student's educational, personal, and social development, and the guidance curriculum

emphasizing issues of personal and social importance of students" (p. 42). A few sample expectations of advisory programs may include skills such as time management, conflict mediation, community service, study skills, relationship building and decision-making. These types of child-centered activities found in advisor programs promote and support the student's developmental growth.

Is there any significant effect in a middle school without an advisory program? An advisory program that meets on a weekly basis directly affects students more intensely than a school that does not participate in the program. Students experience less distress caused by school phobias, academic failures, or peer problems. There are fewer reported cases of depression, anxiety and disciplinary problems (Valentine et al., 2002). Students benefit from academic success in core classes, and acquire problem-solving techniques (Galassi et al., 1998a). According to the literature, teachers report a higher work ethic in a positive learning climate, intrinsic motivation, and willingness to help others. Additionally, teachers have healthy relationships with their advisory students, active engagement in advisory projects, as well as intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and behaviors (Felner et al., 1997).

An advisory program is essentially the most significant factor that separates the middle level from both the primary or secondary levels (McEwin, Dickinson, Erb, & Scales, 1995). Advisory programs expose middle school students to a very nurturing, close relationship with one advisor. Beane and Lipka (1987) stated "transescents have an opportunity to get to know one adult really well, to find a point of security in the institution, and to learn what it means to be a healthy human being" (p. 40). Advisory programs allow students to accept more responsibility and take risks with good decision-making tools and resources.

Another function of advisory programs is to assist students in developing daily coping strategies for stress, time management, and organizational skills. These programs create a structured unit that fosters appropriate age instruction and offers intervention for students who may be at-risk during the middle school. A unique feature of advising is to include the young adult's voice in the discussion and discourse. This builds a sense of belonging and encourages students to talk openly about relevant issues while advisors offer a listing ear and guidance (George, Stevenson, Thomason, & Beane, 1992). Arnold (1991) contended that advisories should foster a sense of moral development, and promote citizenship that encourages students to become responsible adults. However, not all research deemed advisory topics as being proactive for student growth. In contradiction, Kohn (1997) was opposed to character education for students. Offering a difference of opinion, he criticized the "fix-the-kid" (p. 432) approach with regard to advisory offering character education. Kohn disagreed with an imposed belief of moral and ethical teaching from an advisor. He believed students should not be involved with activities that require them to think, reflect, and share opinions on ethics (Kohn, 1997, p. 429). Middle school advisory programs include moral and ethical character education activities and curriculum for middle school students. These types of programs offer emotional and social learning to coincide with academics (Goleman, 1995). To illustrate, middle school advisory programs can equip young adolescents with knowledge, resources, and decision-making tools to ensure an optimistic future.

2.2.4 Advisor

An effective advisor is the essential piece in an advisory program according to Myrick (1993). An advisor functions as the liaison between team teachers and adolescents. A few

responsibilities of an advisor include classroom management and orientation. Advisors facilitate goals for academic, social, and behavioral plans.

There are several suggested times, schedules and systems to implement advisory programs into a middle school building. For example, Allen, Splittgerber, and Manning (1993) suggested 25 to 45 minutes of time to meet daily to focus on student's issues and concerns. This seems to be the standard time allotted for the program in general. Every child has one adult mentor and has a sense of belonging to an advisory group. Additionally, advisors connect with parents to foster a home-to-school connection. Mentors may provide one-on-one student conferences that help with any conflicts and difficulties for their advisees.

A professional educator working in a middle school should enjoy working with young adults and receive proper training to run a successful advisory group. An advisor can be reassuring, become a good listener when a young adult shares frustrations, and become a confidant to he or she (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Building an atmosphere of trust to interact, lead, and facilitate a rich group discussion is key to being an effective adviser, as well as trust, safety, and open communication between advisor and advisees. According to Ziegler and Mulhall (1994), establishing a solid relationship allows an advisor to help students through confusing issues, if necessary. Effective advisors foster reassurance in advisees, towards confidence, and skilled decision-making that contributes to a positive school community.

While reviewing the literature on characteristics and functions of advisory bases, a few studies focus on the advisor. Effective advisers have distinctive qualities noted by several researchers such as Clark and Clark (1994); George and Alexander, (1993); George et al., (1992) and Wavering, (1995). Five factors summarized effective advisors: (1) extending kindness and compassion toward students, (2) building a positive rapport to connect with students, (3)

availability to students, (4) optimistic and confident approaches with student advising, and (5) interjecting their own personality or flare while offering guidance for students.

Further research shows the advisory component is the most popular aspect of middle level programming however, it is the most challenging task to implement, sustain and maintain continually for a length of time (George & Alexander, 1993). A middle school advisory program serves as the foundation for positive student-teacher collaboration. This advisory time can foster a student sense of belonging for all middle school students (Gallassi et al., 1998). It is crucial for advisors to keep close ties with their advisees while in their charge. Young adolescents experience an overwhelming amount of choices, and may not be equipped with good decision-making tools. Young adolescents need an adult to turn to for advice and guidance (Ames & Miller, 1994). Dynamic advisors provide effective and successful advisory programs for students. Advisory programs promote positive relationship building opportunities, and allow time to connect students with adults building a bond of trust, guidance, and positive influences from an effective advisor (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

2.2.5   Types of Advisory Programs

This review of literature describes the various advisory programs, determining the need or function they serve. Advisory program components address core curriculum (math, language arts, science, and social studies) or social issues experienced by middle school students, as evaluated by Galassi et al. (1998). Six categories determine each type or purpose of the various programs (Galassi et al., 1998). An advisor facilitates, assesses, and determines the best use of effective planning for advisories. Galassi et al. (1998) recognized several kinds of advisory programs and their roles to help cultivate significant relationships. He describes these areas as

being related to advocacy, community, skill development, and invigoration, academic and administrative responsibilities.

In a significant piece of research, *Advisory Definitions Descriptions and Decisions Directions,* Galassi et al. (1998a) describe each type as relational to the advisor and student. First, an *advocacy* program addresses students' individual concerns and personal issues, while fostering a nurturing relationship between advisor/advisee. A guidance curriculum fits well into this kind of program. Second, a *community* program concentrates on the social needs and interests of students. A *skills* program focuses on assisting students in the areas of tolerance of others and problem solving methods. It also incorporates goal setting and active community volunteerism. An *invigoration* program focuses on enjoyable activities of team building between students. It can offer stress relaxation and coping techniques for students. Exploratory courses invite motivation, intrigue, and support active engagement. Fifth, an *academic* program supports school excellence and growth through group and teamwork. It reinforces good study habits and organizational skills for students. Lastly, the administrative program emphasizes the basic skills of time management and scheduling. This is the basic daily events, routines and readiness for both students and the adult advisor (Galassi et al., 1998a). The advisors can select from a variety of topics that focus on advisees, but the primary objective is for the adult to cultivate a nurturing relationship with each student (Cole, 1994). This close bond is important to any successful advisory program.

In conclusion, as evident in the literature, the common components of an effective advisory program are clear goals, and a respectful relationship between advisor and students. The routine activities focus on the student within a protective climate. An advisor boosts the child's self-worth and teaches skills for life-long learning.

2.2.6   Advantages and Disadvantages of Program

As an expanding body of research cites the positive outcomes of effective advisory programs, there are also complications that could prohibit success. In the next section, three barriers to an effective advisory program are described (Galassi et al., 1998). The problems can arise in any stage of preparation. The beginning step refers to a conceptualization stage. Second, the resources, personnel, and financing occur during the operational stage. The last area is the maintenance stage; in this area, the feedback, monitoring, and evaluation occur.

Potential problems in an advisory program may arise if not addressed prior to implementing the program. Galassi et al. (1998) explained professionals should invest time and carefully design the program in an effort to avoid any complications.

Surveys of current advisory programs and qualitative interviews of professionals serving as advisors have noted universal problems (Cawelti, 1988; Epstein & Mac Iver, 1990; Myrick, Highland, & Highland, 1986; Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe & Melton, 1993). These problems may arise at the start, middle, or end of an advisory program. As indicated, it is important to identify, address and resolve any obstacles that may impede an effective program.

Time is always of the essence during the initial phase of implementing advisory programs. Ignoring potential problems may lead to an unsuccessful advisory program. According to Galassi et al. (1998) a few conceptual barriers are staff development, establishing goals, and job description. A few problems include (1) disagreement between the school mission and the advisory purpose, (2) untrained staff serving as advisors, and (3) an unrealistic timeline without long-range goals. Additionally, inept leadership and a lack of dedication from staff members will result in complications (Galassi et al., 1998).

Following conceptualization barriers, come maintenance difficulties. A few challenges need to be overcome with respect to the insufficient tools or lack of resources. In addition, Galassi et al. (1998) identified challenges such as a lack of time in the school day, staff development meeting unique needs of the children, and lack of commitment from the staff or parents within the school community.

Determining how to use advisory time is an administrative task that involves tracking, collection of data, and clarification of tasks. The resources need to be available for an advisor, as well as ongoing support for students. It is crucial to invest in the planning to ensure worthwhile advisor training. Galassi et al., (1998) proposed a few obstacles that may surface during an implementation phase. This example is theoretical, not based on actual research studies. The first problematic sign is lack of planning, and goal setting and common framework need to be given adequate time for proper planning to occur. The second obstacle is assigning advisors who lack the proper advisory training. Third, an area of concern is the training of new advisors, enabling them to better guide students. A fourth issue is the misconstrued perception of the amount of time required to become a responsible mentor. These obstacles can impede the success of an effective middle school advisory program as described by Galassi et al., (1998).

Current research indicates continued inadequacy of advisor training and staff development for educators as reasons for failure (Cole, 1994; Hutcheson & Moeller, 1995; Scales & McEwin, 1994). In agreement, Ames and Miller (1994), Ayres (1994), and Gill & Read (1990) also recognized the time commitment, the definition of the advisory role and duties, as well as the willingness of educators needed to invest in real-life problems confronting students. Furthermore, overcoming problems or complications in the planning stages is relevant

to building a strong foundation for a solid advisory program as described by Ames and Miller, (1994).

2.2.7   Summary

The reasons why some advisories thrive and others may encounter failure are unclear. The barriers of advisory programs frequently relate to the qualities of an advisor, ample training on middle level programming, administrative goals, strategic planning, and a commitment to middle school concepts.

According to research, advisory programs require continuous and consistent school community effort to be effective for middle school students. Although obstacles exist in all phases of an advisory program, the need to provide students with guidance, support, and advisement is essential to its success (Gill & Read, 1990). Continued efforts to implement, sustain, and maintain effective advisory programs at the middle level is significant to its success. It is important to note that the research cites benefits for students who are involved in advisory program (Cole, 1992; George & Lawrence, 1982; Phillips, 1986; Schurr, 1992). This research indicates a few beneficial long and short-term goals such as home-to-school partnerships, close relationships with an advisor, and student-centered climates.

Regardless of the advantages of advisory programs, further review needs to be done in the areas of development, organization, and long-range sustainability in middle level education. Teacher planning time, a well-defined advisory program curriculum, and good role models serving in the position of advisor also need closer examination (Gill & Read, 1990).

2.3   ADOLESCENT MENTORING PROGRAMS

2.3.1   Definition of a Mentor

This section of the literature review includes a description of adolescent mentoring, the reasons for mentoring programs, and the talents of mentors. It will also briefly describe types of mentoring programs and the qualities of mentors for young adolescents. The third question asks, What defines effective mentoring programs in middle schools? What does a mentoring program look like? Therefore, mentoring programs will be the focus of the next section.

An explanation of adolescent mentoring is the pairing of a youth with an adult mentor who can chaperone, guide, and encourage. The word "mentor" describes a person who cares and nurtures a younger person towards achieving goals, and life accomplishments (Freiberg, Zbikowski, & Ganser, 1996). A mentor is a caring adult who is willing serve in a supportive role model for a young adolescent. How can research determine if mentoring is effective for young adolescents?

The effectiveness of adolescent mentoring is hard to determine (Karcher, 2008) but generally, the results are beneficial for a mentee. Mentoring programs focus on topics such as moral attributes, social and emotional skills, self-esteem and perseverance, as well as work ethic. Are teachers able to mentor middle school students effectively? What is the impact of the mentoring programs on young adolescents during middle school?

Teachers and principals strive to provide equity for young adults through teaching, tutoring, and mentoring opportunities. According to Portwood and Ayers (2005), the state regulations directly correlate student achievement with good teaching and best instructional practices. Mentoring is one of the basic strategies used to increase student achievement at the

middle level as indicated by Karcher (2008). Mentoring relationships affect both the mentee and mentor.

2.3.2 Mentor and Mentee Relationship

Mentoring refers to a close relationship between a nurturing adult and young adolescent who needs support to achieve academically, informally, or personally (Akos, 2000). A mentoring program serves as prevention, intervention, or part of a student assistance service. Mentor-student relationships can develop naturally or within organized intervention activities (Akos, 2000). Young adults may gravitate toward a favorite teacher, sponsor, or peer as a survival mechanism. Karcher (2008) suggested low socio-economics, lack of education, criminal involvement, or dysfunctional families as a few reasons that are detrimental for a young adult.

Effective mentor programs that are open and collaborative, engage students and have long-term results for adolescents (McQuillin, Smith, & Strait, 2011). Staff development needs to offer a mentoring training with strong communication skills, creating positive home-to-school partnerships that can build a strong mentoring program at school. An added dimension of a well-developed program is the profession staff and teachers willing to extend themselves beyond the classroom to serve in the active role of mentor (Hayes, Ryan, & Zseller, 1994). Mentoring over the last decade has become a widespread choice for schools seeking to provide prevention programs to support adolescents. Mentoring options have involved more than two million young adults in a close, formal mentoring relationship between one caring adult and one student (Dubois & Karcher, 2006). To illustrate, a few mentoring programs include tutoring, remedial, or anti-bullying services for students. After school clubs, lunchtime groups, or individual tutoring may exist to counsel students (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002).

In middle school, a mentor program should provide training and support needed to implement and sustain effectiveness for the mentor (Portwood & Ayers, 2005). A mentor is someone with prior life experiences, talents or skills; whose assets towards advising are key (McQuillin et al., 2011). For an example, a mentor serving as an adult role model may help a student learn a skill, build self-confidence, or establish a life-long goal.

Positive mentoring partnerships and programs come in various models and designs. It is very important to recognize the difference of a naturally formed bond and prearranged mentoring relationship. Dubois and Karcher (2006) stated the benefits of a natural formed mentoring relationship outweigh a contrived mentoring arrangement. They believed planned mentoring results were easier to identify in comparison to a natural bond that may emerge. Despite limited research as to which type of relationship is the most beneficial, the overall results are positive (Karcher, 2008). The lack of time, financial burden, and inadequate mentoring training are reasons to examine and compare school and community programs for adolescents.

Is there a difference between school and community mentoring programs for young adults? Portwood and Ayers (2005) report a higher percentage of school based mentoring programs in comparison to community programs. One significant difference is school-based mentors usually spend 1 hour per week in comparison to community mentors that may spend more than 5 hours of time counseling mentees (Karcher, 2008). Time is another factor in a tight school-year calendar, whereas community programs can meet in the evenings and weekends. The school program goals are more academic in nature, whereas community goals focus on forming healthy, positive self-images (Portwood & Ayers, 2005; Karcher, 2008). Additionally, Portwood and Ayers (2005) and Karcher (2008) specify school-based mentoring

has a narrower period to help a young adults learn, mature and display suitable behaviors but community programs devote more time to at-risk youths.

2.3.3   Types of Mentoring Programs

Mentoring is a progressive program designed with activities for prevention, intervention or pro-action (Lentz & Allen, 2007). Middle schools have the option of creating in-house programs or joining nationally recognized programs to offer mentoring opportunities. For example, national community organizations include The Buddy System; the YMCA, Big Brother and Big Sister Programs; and MENTOR (Rhodes, 2002). The YMCA and MENTOR programs have missions and philosophies that support strong youth mentoring beliefs and activities. Youth mentoring programs confirm the positive effects of mentoring that teach young adults good decision-making skills (Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor, 2006).

The following are five types to illustrate and describe mentoring programs (Rhodes, 2002). The five types are conventional youth mentoring; group mentoring; sponsor mentoring; peer-to-peer mentoring, and E-mentoring (MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2003; Rhodes, 2002). A brief definition and description of the five mentoring programs is below in Table 3.

Table 3. Types of Mentoring Programs

Type of Mentoring Program	Definition and Description
Conventional Youth Mentoring	In this plan, one mature person collaborates with a young adult student. Goal setting should be established, while the mentor or mentee are forming a bond early on in the process. Minimum of four hours a month for one year is ideal to meet.
Group Mentoring	Group mentoring is comprised of one adult mentor bonding with a group of young adolescent students (four or more). The mentor has a commitment to hold regular meetings over a designated time.
Sponsor Mentoring	Sponsor mentoring is collaboration of mature mentors facilitating a group of adolescents.
Peer-To-Peer Mentoring	This arrangement allows opportunities for young adolescents to form a friendship, teaching with positive guidance. Specific activities that are curriculum based, such as reading or skill building for example during the school day. Active role models that provide close interaction with a peer student.
E-Mentoring	E mentoring is between one adult and one young adolescent. The team talks via the computer systems usually once a week over a semester or year. Generally, there is a requirement of one or more face-to-face meetings. A mentor serves as a guide for school related areas, future educational endeavors, or career options. E mentoring may also serve as a bridge over the summer months for the traditional mentoring program.

2.3.4   Adolescent Mentoring: What Does a Mentor Look Like?

The rapid pace of education today has a multitude of perplexing problems facing young adults. Education cannot confront the immense issues alone, but forming a positive relationship with a mentor helps to build strong, capable, and informed adolescents (Karcher et al., 2006). A few at-risk characteristics of young adults include unwarranted pregnancy, drug or alcohol abuse, court adjudication, and non-attendance issues (Slaven & Madden, 2004). Mentoring programs aim to assist those in poverty, those with mental health issues, adolescent pregnancy, and addiction. Youth mentoring programs provide an opportunity to teach, educate, and build goal-orientated young adults (Galassi & Akos, 2007). Can teachers who serve as mentors make a difference in the life of a young adult?

Mentoring activities in middle school includes resources to assist in helping at-risk middle school students (Carter, 2004; Coppock, 2005; Daloz, 2004). A mentor provides support through motivation, tutoring, and serving as a good role model for young students (Buckley & Zimmerman, 2003). They believed the negative risk factors about school should not dominate over the positive factors such as obtainable goals, increased self-confidence, and better grades. A strong intervention program focuses on perseverance, commitment, and the drive of a young adult, which can result in better lifestyle choices.

Mentoring programs can provide comfort and assurance to school students, and their influence can have a positive, long-lasting impression. A diligent advisor/student relationship can give hope for the future, and last several years (Lentz & Allen, 2007). A mentoring program promotes several benefits of friendship, positive attitude, and a healthy perception of future achievements. A mentor-mentee relationship may continue for many years (Rhodes, 2002). For most at-risk youths, an adult mentor's presence is significant to reinforce the importance of an

education, good study habits, and healthy life choices. Interpersonal skills allow a mentor to reach out to young adults in need of support and guidance while forming a close personal camaraderie. A responsible mentor invests the time with an at-risk adolescent to build self-confidence, trust, and security (Wollman-Bonilla, 1997).

The usefulness of a mentoring program relies upon the quality of the mentor. A mentor should be respectful and genuinely compassionate. Characteristics of quality mentors are maturity, confidence, leadership, and empathy (Akos, 2000). Mentors are adults who enjoy working with students, encouraging talents, teaching interpersonal skills, and build positive self-esteem (Daloz, 2004). A mentor who possess integrity, character, and honesty will make long-lasting impression upon a young adult. In agreement, several researchers focused on characteristics of mentors for young adults (Holloway, 2001; Rhodes, 2002). Below is a chart describing authentic qualities of mentors as described in Table 4.

Table 4. Mentor Traits for Young Adolescents

Traits of Good Mentors:	Skills and Abilities of Good Mentors:
Mentors should possess strong classroom management skills, and have held leadership roles in their professions. Effective teachers who can lead mentees to success are ideal.	Talents and competencies in areas of study that are practical for a mentee to learn is helpful.
Mentors need to be skilled in the art of good questioning strategies of mentees. They cannot simply provide the answers, but guide the mentees to a best solution through problem solving skills.	Enthusiastic mentoring, and opportunities to assist convey hope for a young adult learner in the mentor-mentee relationship.
Mentors need to be able to accept that there are several ways to solve problems, approach challenges, and build tolerance. A mentor must not impose his or her own style upon a mentee. Mentors should have the capacity to set high standards of achievement for a young adolescent mentee. Mentors should have the passion and desire to see their mentees excel and reach the next level of success and move beyond the standards or current levels of performance.	Communication skills that create a clear, direct image of personal values, attitudes, and moral beliefs are essential. Strong communication skills and sensitivity training to offer compassion, and feedback needed to guide and structure their academic progress. Possess ability to redirect inappropriate behavior that may impede success of a child.
Carefully selected mentors should be able to serve as good role models for young adults.	The capability to be a good listener, share ideas, offer help with their issues during adolescences. A positive outlook and a strong belief in the potential achievements of a mentee are important for a mentor to possess.

2.3.5 Peer Mentoring Program and Roles

Peer mentoring programs that are preplanned and properly implemented can encourage young adults in need of support systems and discipline (Karcher et al., 2006). An important element in

the peer mentoring process is the design model and program evaluation. A research article in *Educational Leadership*, written by White-Hood (1993) indicates a peer mentoring process has:

1. **Attraction**. It is important to form a positive rapport, and respect between both partners.

2. **Cliché Exchange**. Introductions and bonding during pleasant conversation starters are valuable.

3. **Recounting**. The personal conversations should include searching for commonalities in life experiences.

4. **Personal disclosure**. The sharing of personal stories and good listening skills are needed to have a relaxed atmosphere.

5. **Bonding**. A relationship forms through the sharing of similar ideas, values, and personal connections.

6. **Fear of Infringement**. Both partners are aware of insecurities and being respectful of public behaviors. Personal space is monitored while working together.

7. **Revisiting Framework.** Creating a plan for progress, reaching benchmarks and outcomes over time.

8. **Peak Mentoring**. This is the optimal time to offer support, advice, and encouragement to make a positive influence.

9. **Reciprocity.** Peer mentors form an equity partnership while balancing give and take exchanges begin.

10. **Closure.** The monitoring and reflection of the goal to determine the progress of the Partnership. (1993, p. 78).

The purpose of peer mentoring is to form a positive relationship ensuring both peers social support, guidance, and tutoring (Lentz & Allen, 2007). Peer mentoring strengthens both partner's sense of belong, self-esteem, and academic improvement. Karcher (2005) reported peer mentoring programs help ensure the program status, integrity and trust. Peer mentor meetings can occur throughout a school day or after hours. An older adolescent paired with a younger adolescent in a peer mentor program, is ideal at the middle level (Karcher, 2008). Additional benefits of peer mentoring program are encouragement, security, and friendship for the younger adolescent.

A quality middle school mentoring program involves planning, monitoring, and reflection.

2.3.6   Planning and Reflection

Mentors determine the goals based on the individual needs of young adolescents prior to starting a program (Liang & Rhodes, 2007). Multi-faceted approaches and goal setting encourage positive results from a mentoring program. A young adult will gain a sense of confidence, while a mentor gains a sense of accomplishment (Liang & Rhodes, 2007). Mentoring programs can flourish if both parties can agree that the interaction will work, and can work, as long as it is sustained. Liang and Rhodes (2007) stated mentoring middle level students involves good strategic preparation, observation, and review of the program.

In agreement, Clinard and Ariav (1998) described stages that are important for a middle school mentoring program to be beneficial. Furthermore, Clinard and Ariav (1998) believed mentors must establish goals for the mentoring partnership, adhere to routine meetings,

collaborate on activities or hobbies of interest to maintain an open line of communication and fine-tune as the relationship builds trust.

This section explained the stages of a meaningful mentoring program. An effective mentor is essential to plan and establishes a healthy relationship for a young adult in need of support and guidance. A mentor and mentee may form a close personal bond as an indirect outcome while working collectively together (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008). As the research indicates, there are many benefits of the mentoring process for the mentee. Are there any significant rewards or disadvantages for adult mentors?

2.3.7   Mentor Benefits: Rewards or Regrets?

Does the adult mentor benefit in a mentoring program? Lentz and Allen (2007) argued that only a limited amount of research revealed small benefits of mentoring. In contrast, a relative number of researches describe many significant rewards of mentorships.

This section briefly describes a list of mentoring benefits as examined by the literature review. The following research provides a listing of valid reasons and benefits reported by adult mentors through personal experiences (Resta, Huling, White & Matschek, 1997; David, 2000; Holloway, 2001). A brief list is included below:

1. **Professional competency**. Mentors benefit through use of academic counseling and tutoring such as listening, questioning, and offering feedback without bias toward students (Clinard & Ariav, 1998).

2. **Reflective Practice.** Mentors use reflection as an opportunity for renewal and energy. Reflection allows time to refocus and redirect efforts towards eliminating work burnout and career stagnation (Daloz, 1999; Stevens, 1995).

3. **Renewal**. Mentors report a professional renewal and reconnection to the profession of teaching (Ford & Parsons, 2000; Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 2000).

4. **Emotional Rewards**. Mentors report rewards as both psychological and career-related. Self-esteem increases as well self-satisfaction for mentors (Wollman-Bonilla, 1997).

5. **Collaboration**. Self-confidence increases, along with experience to better advise mentees. A specifically designed set of values and beliefs about learning and teaching are shared (Freiberg et al., 1996).

6. **Contributions to Leadership.** Mentors, through experience, will gain recognition, leading to possible opportunities in school leadership (Freiberg et al., 1996).

7. **Mentoring combined with Inquiry**. Mentors are able to analyze strategies, and philosophies of teaching and learning (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998).

Generally, as the literature review described effective mentoring programs having equal benefits for both the mentee and mentor (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998). A middle school can strengthen its mentoring program with inclusive professional development focused on adolescent growth and transition (Freiberg et al., 1996). Mentoring programs are beneficial for partners who commit and invest time in the process (Daloz, 1999; Stevens, 1995). As a result, a mentoring program that invests in it's young adults ultimately will affect the entire school community in a positive manner.

Offering an opposite opinion, Herrera (1999) shared a few disadvantages of school-based mentoring programs. First, the length of time and duration can be a detriment to the program. The school calendar has interruptions due to semester breaks, holidays, and summer vacation throughout the year. A second reason is the lack of consistency in a program. Herrera (1999)

48

explained that a disruption in the normal programming, such as a mentor replacement or lack of short or long-term goals distracts from the advantages of mentoring. A third reason is the termination of the program that has not completed a full cycle as originally intended. Herrera (1999) explained at-risk adolescents who are transient; frequently move from school-to-school. This is counterproductive for an at-risk child living within a dysfunctional family unit. For example, negative behaviors may increase during unstructured time as boredom sets in for an at-risk adolescent outside of school hours. These are a few reasons noted as disadvantages of school mentoring initiatives.

2.3.8   Summary

In recent years, there have been research studies conducted on school mentoring programs to determine the effectiveness on young adolescents in middle level school (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998). This section explained factors involved in a mentor – mentee relationship. Additionally, this section provided the description of a mentor, types of programs, and the self-satisfaction of being a mentor. A common occurrence in mentoring is the willingness to invest time and commitment to young adults, regardless of the adversities. An effective mentor is able to overcome any present difficulties a young adult faces, and strive for a promising future.

Additionally, this review explained the advantages and shortcomings of mentoring programs for both at-risk students and mentors. As a result, there needs to be further research on mentoring programs associated with advisory programs to determine the impact on middle level education.

The purpose of this study is to determine the perspectives' of middle school principals on advisory programs. Given the current research on the middle school concept, this unique look

49

into the principals' views will offer better clarity and understanding of advisory programs. Next

Table 5 illustrates the emergent frameworks from the literature review, the researchers and the

theoretical frameworks used in this study.

Table 5. Emergent Frameworks

Significant Literature Review Findings	Researchers	Theoretical Framework
The purposes of advisory programs are described as: • promoting opportunities for social development • assisting students with academic problems • facilitating positive involvement between teachers, administrators and students • providing an adult advocate for each student in the school • promoting positive school climate	Clark & Clark (1994)	Clark and Clark (1994) identify advisory programs as focusing on the high level of care and praise for every middle level child. A historical framework was used to explain the research.
Middle School Encourages: •Student-centered learning process •Teaching metacognition skills, how to learn for problem solving skills •Creative exploration of learning styles •Builds self-confidence and self-esteem •Independent student thinking and exploration •Flexible block scheduling with team activities •Team teaching with inclusionary professionals •Differentiated instructional approaches for best practices for student learning at individual pace	Alexander & George (1981), Lounsbury (1996)	Traditionally, a historical approach was used to gather information on the emergence of middle schools from the original plans of the elementary and secondary school units. The models of well-known configurations included elementary school (1-6), junior high (7-8) and high school (9-12). Ethnography approaches have examined middle school advisory programs from the views' of teachers and students.

Table 5 (continued)

•Wide array of guidance services offered to students for support and career discovery		
Characteristics describing the developmental readiness for young adults as: • experiencing a variety of changes and unpredictability at this stage, • experiencing personal, individual changes of pubescence, being influenced by family background, environment and ethnicity, • impressionable and begin for form his or her own value systems and beliefs, • reaching success when they are actively engaged in learning	Stevenson (2002), Eichhorn (1969)	Middle school students experience many changes during the young adolescent phases that involve the 4 traits referred to as intellectual, physical, social and emotional. Research studies have been conducted from narrative approaches on young adolescents during the middle school years in these 4 areas of adolescent development.

The next chapter on research methods will explain this study in further detail for the reader.

3.0   METHODS

The current study of middle school advisory programs uses qualitative methods to examine principals' perspectives. In the first section, the aims and research questions frame the study. Next, the theoretical framework is explained. The following section focuses on the research setting, which was several middle schools located in southwestern Pennsylvania. The last section includes the data collection, analysis, and the safeguards used in this research study.

The researcher selected this qualitative study method in order to give voice to the perspectives of the middle school principals, whose views are absent in the published literature. A qualitative method offers the opportunity to engage with participants and use the interview tool to investigate this gap more closely. According to Wolcott (1994), a qualitative design will permit the researcher to include description, analysis, and interpretation. This design will yield authentic data from which general and relational themes may emerge.

3.1   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Middle school students are unique in regard to academic, physical, and social traits. To meet the unique needs of this population, principals often rely on advisory programs (Lounsbury, 2011). Interestingly, there are no seminal studies related to advisory programs in the middle school that specifically relate to principal perspectives. Given this gap in the literature, the aim of this study

is to explore the perspectives of middle school principals related to advisory programs that were designed to focus on the unique needs of the young adolescent. Figure 3 represents this gap in the research literature. This figure shows the connection between the research, recognizes a gap in the literature, and offers a link to seek an answer to the problem statement.

Research literature:

Middle School Advisory Programs
Addresses the developmental needs of young adolescents (academic, physical, social-emotional)

Gap in the Research literature:

Middle school administrators' views of advisory programs.

Results:

What middle school principals think about their advisory programs.
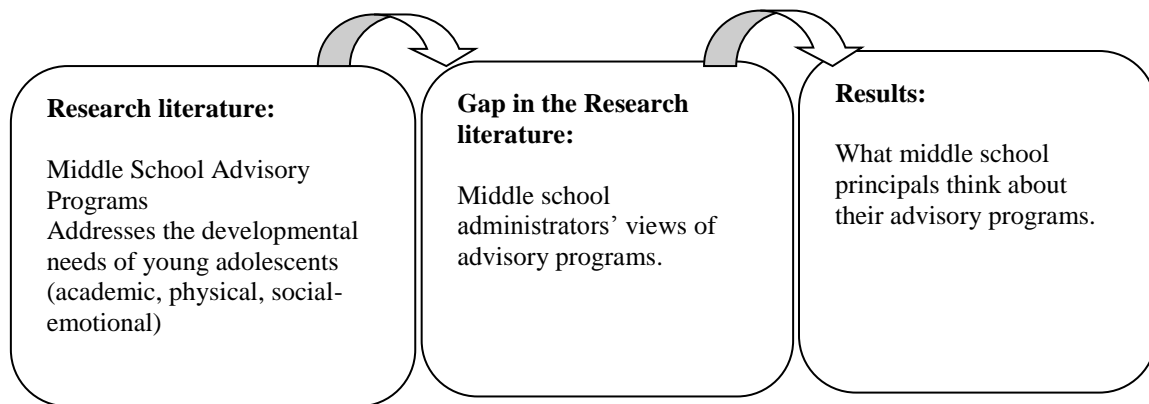
Figure 3. Presentation of the Literature Gap

In the subsequent section, the research questions serve to provide a framework for the current study.

3.2   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study will seek to answer the research questions listed here with their sub questions:

1.   How do principals characterize the advisory programs in their middle schools?

a. Do these characterizations reflect in any way the essential components of advisory programs as outlined in the literature?

2. What meaning do principals make of their advisory programs?

   a. How do they perceive and describe barriers to implementation of effective programs?

   b. What do they see as facilitating implementation of effective programs?

   c. How do principals describe mentoring?

   d. How do they characterize training for mentors in the advisory programs?

   e. How do they identify and measure outcomes of the programs?

Table 6 helps to demonstrate the relationship between the literature review and the research questions. This matrix shows the way the research was framed to conduct this qualitative study as the focus of the study was on the principals' perspectives of advisory programs and mentoring in middle schools.

Table 6. Framing the Research and Proposed Literature Review Questions

Theoretical Frameworks	Research Questions
The middle school advisory programs indicate there are specific reasons for the success or failure of effective advisory programs. Historically throughout the research, the successful components of advisory programs have been identified (Eichhorn, 1969).	How do principals characterize the advisory programs in their middle school?
Traditionally, a solid middle school program supports the components of student characteristics, advisory components, and key mentors as all three contribute to an overall success rate of a middle school design (Lounsbury, 1970).	Do these characterizations reflect in any way the essential components of advisory programs as outlined in the literature?
However, the research suggests that the belief of Table 6 (continued)	What meaning do principals make of
the school leader has an influence on the success of failure of an advisory program (Eichhorn, 1998).	their advisory programs?
	How do they perceive and describe barriers of implementation of effective programs?
	What do they see as facilitating implementation of effective programs?
	How do principals describe mentoring?
	How do they characterize training for mentors in the advisory programs?
	How do they identify and measure outcomes of the programs?

Table 7 shows the relationship between the research inquiry and the relationship among the supporting literature, the research questions, and the interview questions.

Table 7. Supporting Literature, Research Questions, and Interview Questions

Questions Asked of the Literature Review	References	Research Questions	Interview Questions
What are the essential components of a middle school program?	Alexander (1968), Alexander (1989), Alexander (1998), Ames & Miller (1994), Anfara (2001), Anfara, Andrews, & Mertons, (2005), Anfara, Mertons, & Caskey (2007), Arnold (1991), Eichhorn (1966), Eichhorn (1967), Eichhorn (1969a), Eichhorn (1969b), Eichhorn (1980), Eichhorn (1984), Eichhorn (1998), Koos (1927), Lipsitz (1980), (1990), Lounsbury (1992), Lounsbury (1996), Lounsbury & Marani (1964), Lounsbury & Vars (2003).	How do principals characterize the advisory programs in their middle school?	5-8
How does the research literature define a good advisory program in a middle school?	Alexander & George (1981), Anfara & Brown (2001), Ayers (1994), Beane & Lipka (1987), Brown & Knowles (2000), Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989), Carter (2004), Clark & Clark (1993), Clark & Valentine (1981), Cole (1992), Cole (1994), Dickinson & Erb (1997), Epstein, & Mac Iver (1990), Galassi,	Do these characterizations reflect in any way the essential components of advisory programs as outlined in the literature?	9-15

Table 7 (continued)

	Gulledge, & Cox (1998a), George (2002), Irvin (1992), Myrick & Myrick (1990), Ziegler & Mulhall (1994).		
What defines effective mentoring programs in middle schools?	Akos (2000), Buckley & Zimmerman (2003), Culinary & Ariav (1998), Coppock (2005), Cuban (1992), David (2000), Daloz (1999), Daloz (2004), DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper (2002), DuBois & Karcher (2006), DuBois & Rhodes (2006), Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois (2008), Ford & Parsons (2000), Freiberf, Zbikowski, & Ganser, (1996), Gallassi & Akos (2007), Gallassi, Gulledge, & Cox (1998a), Goleman (1995), Havinghurst (1972).	What meaning do principals make of their advisory programs? How do they perceive and describe barriers to implementation of effective programs? What do they see as facilitating implementation of effective programs? How do principals describe mentoring? How do they characterize training for mentors in the advisory programs? How do they identify and measure outcomes of the programs?	16-20

Next, the research framework is presented to explain the phenomenology approach used for this current study.

3.3   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: PHENOMEMOLOGY

Mac Iver (1990) suggests a constructivist lens for a qualitative study that closely aligns with presumed professional opinions of life experiences. Since the epistemological view of a researcher must align with the design and methodology, the researcher selected an in-depth, formal interviewing tool to gather data from the participants. The interview questions, which serve as the instrument for the current study, align the research questions with the phenomenon under study (principals' perspectives of advisory programs). Discovering the essence of participants' experiences related to advisory programs is integral to the current study (Moustakas, 1994).

Middle school principals served as the key informants involved with advisory programs. Research states that qualitative studies from a phenomenological approach best match interviewing administrative participants. Schultz (1967) and Van Manen (1990) believe that human participants is regarded as a well-known phenomenon in collecting qualitative data. I approached this qualitative study through interviews that shed light on principals' views on advisory programs to collect data from his or her stories that may or may not be related to the literature. Schultz (1967) describes a phenomenon as a reconstruction of the lived experiences of a participant as a reflection that allowed the phenomena to form meaning for both a participant and an interviewer. Van Manen (1990) states interviews yield the best results while trying to attain qualitative data through a guided interview. Van Manen (1990) also asserts that the guided

interview permits participants to share experiences using language that results in a genuine and truthful response. Therefore, primary interviewing was the method selected for this study. Guiding questions were used, such as, "What do you perceive as a benefit of middle level programming?" This type of qualitative questioning supports the constructivist approach while attempting to capture and develop the "essence" of participants' experiences.

3.4   RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design of this qualitative study consists of formally structured interviews with participants exploring their perspectives on advisory programs. Wolcott (1994) explained organizing and presenting qualitative data through description, analysis, and interpretation. The analysis shaped the experiences, descriptions, and perceptions captured by this study. The procedural steps included data collection that involved interviews, note taking, and transcription of the audiotaping. The interviews provided unique conversations that were used to gain insight on participants' perspectives of advisory programs (Creswell, 2013). The researcher did not interject or help along the participants in their open-ended responses, as cautioned by Patton (1990). Doing this would limit the person's experiences, contributions, and perceptions of authentic data gathering through a genuine interview process.

A semi-structured interview allows the opportunity to acquire a more in-depth understanding of the participant's experiences in comparison to another research method. Hatch (2002) suggests that the primary data collection tool often guides the study's purpose. To that end, a narrow set of research questions framed this study. To create a meaningful and manageable data set, the researcher divided the data into smaller categories (Le Compte &

Preissle, 1993) based on codes predetermined by the researcher. A small sample size was collected in hopes of gathering unique patterns, not generalizations, from the stories. By reducing the data based on indicators, the researcher was better able to uncover embedded common themes.

3.5   SETTINGS

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, there are currently 500 public school districts. Additionally, Pennsylvania identifies approximately 570 public and private middle schools (Pennsylvania Department of Education [PDE], 2011). This study focused on six middle schools in southwestern Pennsylvania. Current middle school grade configurations vary and include 5th-8th grade, 6th-8th grade, and 5th-7th grade models. A typical middle school is usually a sixth through eighth grade configuration; however, a few school districts have redistricted and redesigned various grade level configurations due to financial constraints (PDE, 2011).

The six middle schools selected for the current study are located in southwestern Pennsylvania. The interviews took place in the middle school principals' offices at participating middle schools.

While gathering research, I chose a purposeful sample consisting of middle school principals to interview. This proposed study involved six middle school principals to participate in the study.

Three methods determined the sample. These methods are described, with the inclusion criteria for the sample, here. First, I consulted the Pennsylvania Association of Middle Level education website http://pamle.org, to determine which middle schools had active advisory

programs. This was an important criterion for the selection process to determine if the school was selected as a sample school. In addition, the middle school had to have a principal holding a Secondary Principal Certificate from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to be included in the study.

Next, I reviewed the 2013 intermediate unit directory that listed southwestern Pennsylvania school districts within my target area to determine if the advisory base has been in existence for more than three years. This was an important criterion, as each middle school principal had to be actively involved in the advisory program for at least three years.

Lastly, superintendents and middle school principals were located through technology resources (e.g. email, school district websites, and professional networks). In reviewing a school district website, for example, I sought information that would identify whether or not a middle school claimed to have an advisory program. If none of my sources indicated the presence of an advisory program, the school and its principal were not included in the sample. The search for unique principals' perspectives resulted in the limitation of a small sample size. Data from each site visit shown below in a matrix (Table 8).

Table 8. Data Collection of Information Reviewed in the Study

Middle School Name	Grade Level of Students	Approximate Student Enrollment	Administrators within the Middle School Building	Approximate Teacher Enrollment	Advisor Teacher / Student Ratio Advisory Program
Middle School A	6-7-8	687	2	33	1:20
Middle School B	6-7-8	797	2	57	1:14
Middle School C	6-7-8	874	3	38	1:23
Middle School D	5-6-7-8	910	2	46	1:20
Middle School E	6-7-8	347	1	25	1:14
Table 8 (continued)					
Middle School F	6-7-8	527	2	26	1:20

Additionally, this section includes criteria used to identify active participants for this study. This criterion ensured that participants were able to respond to the research questions underlying a phenomenological approach that emphasized the importance of personal perspectives and interpretations (Husserl, 1970). The six participants met the following criteria:

(a) Hold a Pennsylvania Certificate of Secondary Principal issued by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

(b) Employed as a middle school principal with at least three years in this position

(c) Have current knowledge, experience, and active participation with an advisory program in his or her building.

In all, only six schools and principals met the criteria outlined above. This may be a reflection of the reduction in advisory programs in this region. Some district leaders have suggested in communications with me that several factors have led to the changes or termination of advisory programs in their districts. A few include the added financial costs and budgets for advisory programs as well as the expense of hiring additional staff members to serve in the program and professional development training needed for each advisor. Many middle schools were forced to discontinue their advisory programs due to these types of barriers mentioned by middle level leaders.

The next section explains the measure chosen for this study.

3.6   MEASURE

According to the literature, advisory programs are beneficial to student growth, achievement, and learning potential in the middle school years (McKay, 1995). A sample of this study included building level administrators as key informants sharing their perspectives on this phenomenon. To this end, I developed an open-ended interview in three parts that served as the main measure for the study. According to Seidman (2013), the first interview allowed the participants' experiences to be shared with the researcher and established its context and / or essence. The second interview permitted the participants a chance to discuss their experiences in more detail related to the context in which they have come to form meaning of it. Lastly, the third interview, allowed participants to share their own story of their experiences and to explain how they understand and build meaning when they share their views. The three-part interview process provided a solid rationale for the study. This process and content allowed me to gather the

background and professional history of the participant, the details of the experience, and their reflection of meaning (Seidman, 2013). The rationale for choosing the three-part interview was to gather the context of a participant who offered meaningful perceptions revealed through a series of interviews for a qualitative study rather than a quantitative study of experimental research. Note, for my study I conducted a variation of my interview strategy by conducting the first and third interviews via the telephone, due to time constraints and availability of participants. Administrators are in and out of the office during the summer months and were available via the telephone.   This is a variation of the three-part interviewing process as advocated by Seidman (2013).

The interview scripts for this study can be located in Appendix C. The first interview took approximately 10 to 15 minutes via the telephone. This call intended to confirm that the interviewee met the criteria for the study and established rapport. The second interview took 45 to 60 minutes in person on site. The interview consisted of three major parts. Lastly, a third interview took place (via telephone) to share the transcripts with the participants to verify, change, or address any further information needed for this study.

First, the interviewees shared their professional backgrounds and work-related information via our first telephone conversation.   A few examples of questions asked are included below, such as:

- *How long have you been the middle school principal in this school district?*

- *What is your job responsibility as a middle school principal?*

- *As a middle school principal, what are your professional experiences with your advisory program?*

Following the introductory questions in the interview session, the questions focused on personal views of middle school advisory programs. The participants reflected on their own experiences and knowledge as well as building-implemented systems, advisor training, and selection to answer the following open-ended queries. The first set of questions focused on middle school advisory programs.

- *What would you consider the essential components of an advisory program in middle school?*

- *What factors do you believe led to the success or shortcomings of your advisory program for young adolescents?*

- *Do you perceive any specific outcomes of the advisory program relative to the middle school concept?*

Next, the questions focus on the topic of advisory.

- *Can you share any barriers of the advisory program that you feel are important to know for this study? Please share the details of a specific example.*

- *How do you see the facilitators or training as being related to the advisory program? Please share the details or a specific example that has meaning for you.*

- *How are the characteristics of adolescent development addressed inside your advisory program?*

Lastly, the questions focus on the topic of mentoring.

- *When you interview candidates, do you hire teachers who have prior experience as an advisor and/or have mentor training? Please explain further.*

- *How much time or training is offered to a teacher serving in the role of advisor or mentor for the program in your building?*

- *Is there a system of measure or accountability for this training?*

- *What are the criteria to be a mentor in your middle school? Please explain.*

- *Do you have any documents to share?*

- *What do you see as the greatest impact either positive or negative from mentoring inside the advisory program?*

During the third phone-call interview, I clarified and verified any unclear information from the second interview. Finally, these questions were asked of each participant:

- *Would you like to add or delete any information from the transcripts?*

- *Would you like to share any additional information that will be of value to my research study?*

- *Do you have any need for clarification or may I answer any additional concerns you may have at this time?*

The next section will discuss the data collection of this study.

3.7   DATA COLLECTION

This study involved three semi-structured interviews, audiotaping of the sessions, and a follow-up review of the written transcript if requested by participants. The principal investigator took the following steps to gather data from six middle schools in southwestern Pennsylvania. The researcher:

- Contacted each middle school principal via a recruitment email informing the participant about the purpose of the study, research background, and the research questions under investigation and explained the confidential safeguards;

66

- Conducted formal, semi-structured interviews with each participant at the middle school site or by telephone while audio recording each interview, and took field notes (body language, ideas, or opinions) to help capture and begin to formulate themes or patterns that emerged;

- Transcribed each interview;

- Used a professional web-based software program, Dedoose, to analyze the principals' transcripts and code data; worked with a second coder to assure reliable coding;

- Offered a final study report to each participant upon the conclusion of this study.

3.8   DATA ANALYSIS

Research data for this study was categorized and analyzed. First, each interview was transcribed. The transcription process involved listening skills, analytical thought, and interpretation. Secondly, the annotation process involved the preparation of the transcribed data with any field notes included.

Analysis is the most critical and challenging part of research (Hatch, 2002). Using a qualitative approach, the data analysis included forming, describing, and relational data analyses for this study. During the investigation phase of the data analyses, the interview transcripts were analyzed to determine the appropriate codes for the data, as suggested by Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006) and Krippendorff (2004). The data from the interviews helped to frame the initial codebook and support specific codes that emerged through this data investigational phase.

During the analysis phase of the study, the data was analyzed and coded. According to

Mertens (2010), this type of process is called initial coding. While thoroughly analyzing the interview data, any key terms, wording phrases or life experiences that formed a pattern from the multiple transcripts served as the initial codes. The PI worked closely with a second coder to assure reliable coding. This process of cooperative coding method ensured a greater transparency for this study. Qualitative data is more authentic with double coding research practitioners (Saldaña, 2009). Data analyses of transcripts occurred through several rounds of coding using a process described by Saldaña (2009) as First and Second Cycle coding. Table 9 provides a visual representation of the data analysis steps for this study.

Table 9. First and Second Cycle Coding Steps

Coding Cycle	Steps	Descriptor	Reference
1	1. Read each transcript.		
	2. Code each transcript to identify the school by its demographics (size, grade configuration, etc.).	Structural codes	Saldaña (2009)
	3. Mark excerpts (short phrases or key words spoken by participants) that address the research questions.	In vivo coding	
	4. Write researcher memos to capture what I am seeing in the transcripts.	Analytic memos	Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (2011).

Table 9 (continued)

	5. Analyze all memos to identify ideas that appear with some frequency.	Review analytic memos.
	6. Develop codebook of (major) codes to capture these key ideas.	Develop codes
2	7. Identify codes (subcodes).	Subcodes
	8. Upload codebook into Dedoose program.	Codebook
	9. Code all interviews again, using entire codebook.	Comparative coding
	10. Continue writing analytic memos to develop the major themes.	Analytic memos begin to build the writing of the findings

3.9   RESEARCH SAFEGUARDS

This dissertation proposal received exempt approval from the University of Pittsburgh's Internal Review Board (IRB) on January 27, 2014. A modification was submitted and approved on July 8, 2014.   The exempt status allowed for the data collection methods to include formal interviewing, audiotaping, transcription, and a selection of confidential participants.   The level of confidentiality was of upmost importance to protect the participants in accordance with the IRB procedural safeguards. Identification of the names were not included in the transcription dialogues; only the PI and participant know the identities.

The PI met with her faculty research mentor monthly to discuss the study (e.g., study goals and modifications of those goals, subject assent, progress in data coding and analysis, documentation, identification of adverse events, violations of confidentiality) and to address any issues or concerns at that time. The meeting minutes were maintained in the study regulatory binder.

4.0   FINDINGS

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the views of middle school principals'
concerning advisory programs. The research questions were designed to address the relationship
and perception of principals' views on advisory programs and middle school concepts and
mentoring, as described in the literature review. In this section, the findings are presented
according to each research question. The findings for the research questions were gathered by
interviews with each participant.

A three-part interview process was followed. First, each principal was contacted to be
certain that all demographic data was accurate for each site. Next, a face-to-face interview was
conducted between the participants and the researcher. Finally, the researcher made a follow-up
call to verify that transcripts and responses were accurately represented from each person
(member checking). After completing all interviews from each single participant, I formulated
themes that emerged from all six interviews independently. Chapter 4 reports the findings from
each participant in this study as I captured their responses to the following research questions,
listed here with their sub questions:

1. How do principals characterize the advisory programs in their middle schools?

    a. Do these characterizations reflect in any way the essential components of
        advisory programs as outlined in the literature?

2. What meaning do principals make of their advisory programs?

a. How do they perceive and describe barriers to implementation of effective programs?

b. What do they see as facilitating implementation of effective programs?

c. How do principals describe mentoring?

d. How do they characterize training for mentors in the advisory programs?

e. How do they identify and measure outcomes of the programs?

A brief profile of the participants' responses is included next, as a way to frame the findings before I present the data collection of this qualitative research study.

4.1   PARTICIPANTS' PROFILES

Six semi-structured interviews were completed as part of my research study. Six participants were contacted using purposeful sampling. All six interviewees offered full participation, responded energetically and would like a copy of this study after its completion. As a result, six middle school principals responded. Both middle schools are located in southwestern Pennsylvania and met the required criterion to be included in the research project.

The table below presents the pseudonym indicator of each participant, the current professional positions, and career experiences of each principal who was interviewed in this study. Pseudonyms were assigned to the six middle school principals who participated in interviews and all school district identifiers were removed.

Table 10. Participants' Profiles

Interview Number & Pseudonym Principal Name	Present Career Title & Professional Years in Role	Experience with Advisory Programs
Interview #1 Principal Ann	Middle School Principal 3 years as the principal	10 years as a professional teacher 3 years in current role
Interview #2 Principal Ben	Middle School Principal 13 years as the principal	7 years as a professional teacher 13 years in current role
Interview #3 Principal Clay	Middle School Principal 15 years as the principal	5 years as an Assistant Principal 3 years as Special Education Director and Psychologist 15 years in current role
Interview #4 Principal Diana	Middle School Principal 7 years as the principal	5 years as a professional teacher 6 years as Assistant Principal 7 years in current role
Interview #5 Principal Emma	Middle School Principal 6 years as the principal	8 years as a professional teacher 6 years in current role
Interview #6 Principal Faith	Middle School Principal 10 years as the principal	5 years as a professional teacher 1 year as an Assistant Principal 10 years in current role

4.2   DATA ANALYSIS AND REPRESENTATION

Table 11 shown below displays data stemming from my first telephone conversation for each site in the beginning of the study.

Table 11. Demographics of Schools Represented by the Participants

Name of Middle School	Grade Level of Students	Approximate Student Enrollment	Administrators within the middle school building	Approximate Teacher Enrollment	Advisor Teacher/ Student Ratio Advisory Program
Middle School A	6-7-8	687	2	33	1:20

Table 11 (continued)

Middle School B	6-7-8	797	2	57	1:14
Middle School C	6-7-8	874	3	38	1:23
Middle School D	5-6-7-8	910	2	46	1:20
Middle School E	6-7-8	347	1	25	1:14
Middle School F	6-7-8	527	2	26	1:20

Next, I analyzed the participants' transcripts. As suggested by Creswell (2013), all written transcripts need to be read numerous times for clarity, coding, and deducing in search for deeper meanings from the anticipated codes. Through this process, meanings began to formulate leading to the discovery of generalizing patterns or themes generated from the data. Significant phrases or statements were extracted and next coded into associated meanings as suggested by Creswell (2013). The formulated meanings turned into clusters and emerged to form the six common themes.

By using a comprehensive description of the results, I attempted to present an in-depth explanation of this phenomenon from the principals' perspectives on advisory programs. Table

12 depicts the actual codes used to analyze data along with the research questions initiating the

development of the codes.

Table 12. Interview Questions, Research Questions, Theoretical Codes, and Emergent

Codes

Interview Questions	Research Questions	Theoretical Code(s)	Emergent Code(s)
1-4	Background information gathered from Principals Experiences with Advisory Programs How do principals characterize the advisory programs in their middle schools?	Advisory program	• trust and support • cognitive • sense of community • bullying and anti-bully issues • accountability and responsibility • assessment and testing • bullying issues and programs • child centered learning environment • professional development and training • role playing
5-8	How do they perceive and describe barriers of implementation of effective programs?	Barriers	• financial costs • high stakes testing / assessment practices • lack of commitment or staff "buy in" • lack of resources • lack of training and staff members • time, planning, and preparation
9-11	What do they see as facilitating implementation of effective programs?	Benefits	• confidence • future pathways (college/ career choices) • goals, values, sense of purpose • life-long learning experiences for adulthood • self-esteem, confidence,

Table 12   (continued)

			and growth
			• skill building for students
12-15	Do these characterizations reflect in any way the essential components of advisory program as outlined in the literature?	Middle School Concept	• academic
			• curriculum and guidance
			• emotional
			• middle level components
			• physical
			• social
			• student-centered
16-18	How do they identify and measure outcomes of the program?	Relationships	• accountability and responsibility
			• connections with adults
			connections with peers
			• consistency
			• healthy partnerships
			• positive or negative experiences
			• self-awareness
			• adult or child advocate
19-20	How do principals describe mentoring? How do they characterize training for mentors in the advisory programs?	Mentoring	• advocacy and building relationship with child
			• good role models
			• growth and building connections
			• intrinsic traits or characteristics
			• training and development programs

Next, the following section explains the benefits the interviews.

4.3   BENEFITS FROM ACROSS THE INTERVIEWS

Figure 4 below represents the overall view and reveals the three most frequently identified codes from the participants' interviews. These are connections with adults, benefits, and skill building for students.

Theoretical Codes

Mentoring, 10

Relationships, 12

Middle School Concept, 5

Benefits, 28

Skill Building for Students, 25
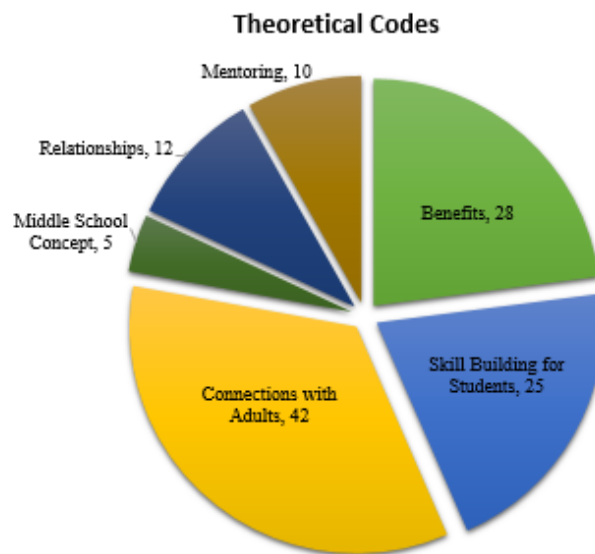
Connections with Adults, 42

Figure 4. Theoretical Codes

Figure 4 illustrates the theoretical codes that came from the interviews of all six principals. I labeled these six codes according to their frequency in the following order:
connections with adults, benefits, skill building for students, relationships, mentoring, and middle school concept.

For example, a few benefits reported were robust relationships, best practices for young adults, instructional design addressing academic and social concerns, skill building, and opportunities building adolescents' self-esteem. Benefits existed in the forms of well-balanced curriculums, high attendance rates, increased academic growth, less student discipline and bullying issues. Next, I explain to the reader the benefits that emerged from the interviews. I share tangible excerpts from each participant, as they related to the benefits in Figure 4.

The following sections will report each participant's responses to the first research question: "*How do principals characterize the advisory programs in their middle schools?*" and the second question, "*What meaning do principals make of their advisory programs?*" Each participant's responses will be represented according to interview order.

4.3.1   Interview #1: Principal Ann

Principal Ann has a background in secondary education, holds a Reading Specialist Certificate, and currently is working toward a Master's Degree in Education. Principal Ann is a middle school principal with three years of experience who shared her views on advisory programs, "*I really do think it is a very valuable piece of the middle school.*" She feels that the policies and procedures that provide the basis for a solid program are these three categories: *connections with adults, benefits,* and *skill building for students*. These three categories appeared with the most frequency in Ann's interview as she expressed her views based upon her professional experiences. *Connections with adults.* Principal Ann stated, "*If you have too large of a group it's too hard for those kids to make those* [adult] *connections.*" Her statement is reflective of her robust beliefs and convictions of best practices and implementation of advisory programming in middle school curriculum. Additionally, she declares, "*having that one extra adult in the*

building that they can develop that relationship with students who knows that they have their back" is an essential component of advisory programs. This perception draws a strong correlation between the literature on middle school advisory programs and the current belief by this particular administrator. In addition, she comments, "[Students] *still need that adult mentor in their lives that is not necessarily a parent that can help guide them*." This reinforces a common thread of having advisors in the middle school to offer students guidance, mentoring, and support as needed. She further added comments emphasizing the significance of adult connections for students, such as, "*they* [teachers] *do have that opportunity to make those connections and build those relationships with the kids.*" A final, third major theme prevailed from Ann's interview in relation to her perceptions of the benefits of advisory programs in her middle school. This becomes a reoccurring theme in the data.

Benefits. Principal Ann's responses to the research question were reflective of her observations on advisory as beneficial in middle school. She emphasized this by saying, "*it is crucial to the development of adolescents to have that advisory time and to learn those skills and to make those connections. I really do think it is a very valuable piece of the middle school.*" She is a proponent for student advocacy, child development, and specialized curricula designed for the middle school child. She empathetically voiced her strong advocacy of middle school advisory programs serving as a keystone for teens. Ann ended her interview with simple, yet profound words, "*advisory program gives* [students] *the idea that they are not alone.*" This is crucial for student development of self-esteem, confidence building, and growth through challenging times as young adults in the middle school. Transitions, changes, and life-learning experiences occur continually during the middle school years, and Ann asserts, "*the benefits* [of advisory programs] *outweigh the barriers for a child.*" She also notes that benefits seen over

time surpass the problems that stem from a lack of training, resources, and financial concerns in her building.

   Skill building for students. Ann expressed a belief that, *"*[Students] *need to learn how to...relate to other peers and to other adults."* She validated and relied heavily on this concept of skill building for students to grow, flourish, and become active young adults in a middle school setting. She further supported her views on advisory time with statements such as, *"It is crucial to the development of adolescents to have that advisory time and to learn those skills and to make those connections. I really do think it is a very valuable piece of the middle school."* Furthermore, she noted the importance of building student skills as she offered another comment: "[Students] *are a small piece of a much larger puzzle. And...their actions and their ideas can influence, can have a greater influence on those around them."* She also reiterated the importance of skills as she restated her opinion in the end, *"I'm kind of repeating myself with that social and emotional* [traits], *but that is so important at that age to focus on the skill development of middle school students."*   Principal Ann has a strong belief in students being taught foundation skills while moving toward more advanced skills in the areas of social-emotional and academics to help students become successful. Throughout this interview, her views reflect her commitment to middle school components and she places high importance on advisory programs for students. She measures the outcomes to be beneficial over a few barriers in her experiences as she continues to foster, grow and improve the advisory program inside her middle school.

4.3.2   Interview #2: Principal Ben

Principal Ben has background in elementary education, holds a Secondary Principal Certificate and a Master's Degree in Education. Principal Ben, is a veteran middle school administrator

who has 13 years of experience along with seven years of experience as a Pennsylvania certificated professional teacher. His data revealed categories with high frequency in the following three areas: *connections with adults, benefits,* and *skill building for students.* Ben reflected on adult connections as a means for "*building a rapport with the teacher or developing empathy for the feelings of their classmates.*" He pointed out his use of connections with students to build positive relationships with adults in the building and to encourage adult mentors to demonstrate how a good role model conducts himself or herself. He supported forging healthy interactions with adult partners outside the family unit yet within the safe climate of a middle school community.

Connections with adults. As Ben reflected on his professional opportunities as a principal, he highlighted the "*most essential component is making a connection with kids*" in his role of a building leader. He was charged with making good educational decisions and implementing practices for teachers of middle level students. Ben's comments were frequently consistent with the theme of adult connections: "*I think the characteristics of adolescent development don't work without a teaming atmosphere ...where students have that home-based type feel...it could make connections with adults.*" However, he explained the need for staff training, character education, and teaming to ensure solid adult connections for students. Furthermore, Ben notes:

> *If there is a bad connection between the student and teacher, there will not be open discussion...A healthy connection is key to a successful bond between a student and advisor, if not established, nurtured and reflected upon...it will not flourish and no gains will be seen by both persons.*

Benefits. As an administrator with hands-on experience in advisory settings, Ben believed advisory programs are a "*perfect time for school districts to roll out new initiatives, [and take a] dipstick on what is happening in the community, and make connections with*

81

students." He believed this unique opportunity allows students a voice in the decision-making process, and the *"benefits of an advisory program outweigh the negativity."* He was aware of high stakes testing demanding a lot of time from the teaching staff, but he believed this can be achieved through advisory time as opposed to the elimination of it.

Skill Building for Students. As an example, Ben shares that students gain perks such as, "*skill building for themselves, help them to learn respect, communication skills and goal setting*" from participation in advisory programs. In addition, he adamantly commented, "*I view the skills that students gain are life lessons....like character building, good decision making, time management, and organizational skills.*" His statement strongly supported his convictions on the benefits of advisory programs. He also shared how students who "*feel connected with school tend to do better and work harder to please adults. They also have high goals for themselves and have excellent attendance.*" After his reflection on this topic, Ben was able to offer several positive outcomes as evidence for advisory programs being beneficial for students.

4.3.3   Interview #3: Principal Clay

Principal Clay has a background in special education, holds a Secondary Principal Certificate as well as a Master's Degree in Education. His commitment to education was evident as he shared his background having a professional career of 15 years as an administrator in a middle school. Clay had prior experiences as an assistant principal, a school psychologist and Special Education Director. His data matched these three areas: *connections with adults, benefits, and skill building for students.* His direct connection with students is notable as he shared his stories of connections, interactions, and reflections with advisory programs from his life experiences in the role of a principal.

Connection with adults. Clay's comments were strongly attached to his beliefs in building solid relationships between the adults and students. In fact, he shared his view on adult connections as the "*best services the student and teacher relationship can have if it is consistent* [and] *the biggest influence is the relationship between the teacher and the students and their education within the building.*" He found that this connection piece is the most important aspect of advisory base programs and suggested the "*promot*[ion of] *positive interactions and activities that generate positive experiences for the kids.*" He found an additional benefit of advisory programs: "*By doing these activities they're getting to know me better and I'm getting to know my teachers better, and it's a plus all the way around.*" He shared his remark as a way to emphasize a student's self-realization on learning how to interact well with adults as well as other students.

When sharing his opinions on the relevance of connections with adults in advisory programs, Clay stated:

> *Having the connection with an advisor base teacher, where they discuss these things as activities at the beginning of the school year, they can go in and say, 'You know we talked about this in advisor base earlier. I need help or I'm worried.' What if my teachers won't let me in class or what would happen if I was late? They can work that out with their advisor base teacher. They will give them some great suggestions, it resolves many of the issues that they may have at that level. And, therefore, it alleviates some fear of going to the principal's office; it alleviates the problem in general.*

Specifically, he noted the progress of solid connection building with adults by further adding,

> *I have seen teachers who were advisor base teaches for sixth graders coming in, eighth graders going back to them saying, 'You were so good to me, can I talk to you with my other advisor base teacher to solve some problems?' Maybe it's related to, you know, studying, or they want someone to help them, or 'Can I come in after school and work with you,' or 'Will you help me do some work, I need some tutoring maybe.' So, those are issues that we see. So, we have the community discipline type of fears, 'I'm gonna be late for class' or 'Ok, I need help to do better in school, who should I go to…could you recommend a teacher for me to maybe go see after school?' or 'Could I go over and work with another teacher in my team and get some help?'*

In summary, Principal Clay reported this connectivity between the adults and students as a vital "*process where students and teachers involved got to do activities, interactions, things like that would bring them closer together and connect the students and teachers in a new, healthy environment.*"

Benefits. One of Clay's statements reveals the relevance of consistency in the scheduling of advisory programs*, "I think being able to find 20 minutes every day and have meaningful activities and interactions with the students makes it very successful.*"
Also encouraging are his words relating the advantages of teaming in advisory classes:

> *Teachers have much better rapport I feel, with the parents and the students because the kids have a team approach. Then, the parents know who the teams are, they can come in and talk to them anytime and review anything the kids may be bringing home either positive or negative.*

His responses to the open-ended portion of the interview reveals his position on the benefits of advisory. Clay shared advisory programs should be a "*positive community…rather than just a place to go learn because you have to be in school all day.*" His comments highlighted the importance of mentoring inside the advisory base program. Interestingly, he was the sole participant to delve into mentoring, as five out of six participants did not see this as a component inside their advisory program. He speculates, "*Mentoring inside the advisory base is positive for both. I feel it's positive for both the teacher and the student.*" He further adds, "[Mentoring is] *going to make things better in your classes all together if you understand how that kid is.*" He trusts advisory program to be worthwhile and shared very positive experiences for the students as well as the adults involved in it too.

Skill Building for Students. In an effort to ensure that students are gaining and building upon their primary (foundational) skills from the elementary years, Principal Clay emphasizes the importance of skill building for middle level students. The advisor provides the lesson in

84

advisory time to offer students and to provide "*the connection with advisor base teacher where they discuss these things as activities at the beginning of the school year they can go in and say, 'You know we talked about this in advisor base earlier, I need help or I'm worried.'*"

As a senior principal, he theorizes that it is very important for students to "*become an advocate* [stick up for themselves] *or maybe even for another student.*" He explains a specific example, from his school:

> *Our anti-bullying programs. When you look at schools, this was never an issue 15 years ago, it would seem. But, now we have to adapt and had to improve, and now we are doing things like role playing.* [He asks students,] *'How would you tell somebody this?' or 'Who would you go to if this situation happened in your school?' 'If somebody was beating someone up and you were aware of it, what should you do? Should you just walk away and not tell anybody, what is your role as a participant or as a student in that ... should you go tell a teacher?'*

In addition, he believes his job is to present opportunities for students, in such ways as, "*role playing and rehearsing.*"

In summary, Principal Clay's interview reflected his hearty belief in the mentoring components as relevant and important to the advisory program. He perceived the benefits as being more numerous than the barriers for students and teachers. He values, respects and continues to use advisory for role-playing opportunities to teach life skills and anti-bullying to young adults.

4.3.4   Interview #4: Principal Diana

Principal Diana has a background in elementary education, holds a Secondary Principal Certificate and a Master's Degree in Education. She has held her current position for the past seven years and prior to that served in the capacity of the assistant principal for six years. She

began her career as an elementary teacher five years before accepting an administrative role in Pennsylvania.

While I was interviewing her, Diana's priorities and systematic way of ordering items of importance of advisory programs became clear. She provided me with several candid and direct comments in the following three areas: *connections with adults, benefits,* and *skill building for students*. She shared her stories, philosophies, and her actions plans for implanting, maintaining and sustaining the program.

Connections with adults. Throughout the bulk of her professional career, Diana devoted time to "*developing a sense of 'community' amongst the students*" in her building. She had the ability to create a "*network of support* [counselors, social workers] *available for students and staff who want to or need to pursue particular issues further than the classroom for the advisory program.*" She encouraged staff members to have open and honest discussions with students in positive manners. She believed these options, "[allow] *results that are seen in the healthy relationships which are built with students* [*and their families*]." At one particular faculty meeting, she remembered telling staff, "*Never underestimate the influence a mentor can have on the general well-being of a child.*" Despite these benefits, Diana did acknowledge a time barrier that exists in having an advisory program instead of RTI, PSSA prep course, or academic tutoring. Still, she unwaveringly stated "*establishing relationships with students and their families lead to a positive, safe, and rewarding educational and social experience.*" This is invaluable. *Benefits.* As she discussed her views on the benefits of advisory programs with me, it was evident quickly that she was empathetic, compassionate, and strived to leave a legacy in her middle school. She shared her opinions on advisory programs as advantageous and that students would not receive these advantages if the program were non-existent in the school. She

reported the highlights and overemphasized positive attributes for students that she observes daily in her school. She began her interview saying, *"Never underestimate the influence a mentor can have on the general well-being of a child."* As a principal, she depends on her advisory teachers to be strong mentors and offers her faculty resources to be successful, such as *"the needed services, through personnel and other supports."*

She is able to articulate the need to grow a positive sense of community by *"developing a community* [*mentoring program*] *within a community* [*a school*]*."* She was well aware of the need for consistency, implementing the best practices for middle school teachers, leading positive change with fidelity, and closely monitoring her staff.

As a principal in the middle school Diana's positive experiences have outweighed the negative experiences.   She credited,

> *A successful advisory with strong veteran teachers extending themselves beyond the classroom walls as mentors yield*[ing] *the greatest results for both students and adults. If you are willing to frontload, do all the hard lifting and invest time in the initial purpose, organization, and rollout of an advisory program, you will establish a protocol of how to deal with concerning issues as they arise.*

In the end *"establishing relationships with students and their families that lead to a positive, safe, and rewarding educational and social experience."* Proudly, she summarized, *"as the educational leader of this building, it's a very positive experience for our students. I am proud of the hard work we do as a team daily."*

As a middle level administrator for over 13 years, her focus was on the child. This is one of the core values of the middle school principles, as supported by the National Middle School Association(2003). Diana encouraged all middle level teachers to understand the complexities of adolescents and, at the same moment, recognized the *"existence of an advisory programs [as] being able to reach every child and giving him / her the time, attention, and due diligence to*

make a positive and lasting impact make the value of the advisory program immeasurable." When asked to respond to the beneficial essential components of the program, she remarked, "*empathy, friendship, charity, honesty, time management, patience, understanding, kindness, self-discipline, courage, and self-worth.*" Before moving on to another topic, she ended simply with only a few words: "*The greatest impact of the advisory program is simple…it's being able to help a child.*"

Skill building for students. Principal Diana explained what she perceived as important inside the advisory program. She sensed if*, "the advisory program has consistently focused on the social and developmental needs of the adolescent learner,*" then the skills learned provide a solid path leading to confident and productive middle school students.

In addition, Diana commented on the importance of the ever-increasing bullying issues associated with the middle school years for teenagers. She reported, "*A concrete advisory offers students life-long skills to avoid, overcome issues related to disciplinary, bullying and negativity that can result from a poorly constructed and supervised advisory program for young adults.*"

With regards to bullying, advisory programs offer an opportunity for students to share their feelings in this manner. She mentioned, "*The benefits of this advisory topic* [bullying] *were felt far beyond the school walls, and hopefully for many years to come.*" She recollected a time when a child had to make a decision to be part of gang-mentality action and impose hurtful remarks on another peer or independently make the right decision and not be a bully. She credited this to skill building for students: "*Much time and focus was spent in our school's advisory program on 'Student Owned Technology Devices' and the accompanying issues which surround them, such as cyber bullying.*" Healthy aspects and outcomes "*develop students' independence, a sense of empathy, and a commitment to learning in developmental years which*

can be very difficult both academically, socially, and behaviorally." She reported a positive effect on students' social and academic developments was critical to the success of providing solid footing and foundational skills to be effective for students. Using resilient tools, strategies and techniques help to navigate through difficult paths during adolescences such *as "academics, social peer pressures (drugs/ alcohol), and dysfunctional family situations*" and the need to build self-confidence to be independent along the way. The transitional years for adolescents present ever challenging situations but only require honesty, trust, and skill building with children to offer positive experiences again and again, according to this principal.

Principal Diana was a firm believer in advisory programs and continually strives to implement, maintain, and sustain her advisory program. She echoed the value of mentoring inside advisory programs to benefit students.

4.3.5   Interview #5: Principal Emma

Principal Emma has a background in elementary education, holds Secondary Principal Certificate and a Master's Degree in Education. Principal Emma entered the administrative role six years as a middle school principal after eight years as a classroom teacher. She wanted to use her leadership skills, sense of community, and wanted to continue to grow professionally. Emma was also concerned with enhancing the school's curriculum programming to offer students excellent 21st century skills and options to excel after leaving the middle school for high school. She enthusiastically participated in this study and shared personal views on advisory programs resulting in patterns of frequency for the three categories: *connections with adults*, *benefits*, and *skill building for students*. She was knowledgeable, professional, and comfortable sharing her story with me as I interviewed her.

Connections with adults. As Principal Emma recommended and reported on highly effective advisory programs in her school, I noted her following statement as particularly relevant:

> *The students who form a strong bond with an adult outrank, grow, and excel the high standards set forth by the advisory program for each middle schooler. This adult connection is imperative as a key factor in fostering a sense of genuine caring, kindness and self-worth that is optimal for all children to be stable in all facets of academics, social-emotional, and physical traits of young adolescences.*

In addition, throughout her responses, she again reiterated the significance of the earlier mentioned essential skills as reasons for the adult connection is vital. The overlapping themes are relevant to her schools' exploration phase or advisory which focuses heavily on the *7-Essential Skills*.

Benefits. Principal Emma restated that the middle school portfolio system was being designed to bridge or scaffold into the high school programs. She shared the three important statements that explained and supported the advisory program in the building. She simplified her view of the benefits to the following three statements:

1. *The use of best practices* [research] *on the topic of the middle level learner.*

2. *The embedded nature of the exhibits/projects/learnings (embedded within the curriculum).*

3. *The deliberate attempt to construct a scaffold from the middle school advisory program to the high school program.*

Next, the outcomes were measured accordingly and viewed as positive. Emma reported self-discovery lessons, "*Taking a break from drilling content…is a necessary component often missing from middle schools.* Accordingly, she stated, "*Students learn what we value by looking at what we spend time on…what we devote time to. We need to devote time to their self-*

awareness and helping them to see their strengths and to build on those." She continued to support her views by adding, "*Advisory is embedded into the curriculum. Each department and each grade has specific assignments* [projects] *or exhibits for which they are responsible. There is no need to alter the schedule -- that is what makes this work so well.*"

Principal Emma concluded her point of view by sharing:

> *I see students stopping to reflect on themselves. If we focus on the unique needs of the middle-level student, if we constantly provide experiences for our teachers to hone their understanding of this unique group, if we provide targeted experiences for the students, then what we value* [the 7-essential skills] *will expand.*

> *Skill building for students.* Emma reported one of the first action items she did in her role as principal: "*We re-tool our program to better meet the needs of middle-level learners, but we also wanted to have our advisory program naturally spiral into or complement the high school advisory program.*" She explained that she'd used a team approach to research, and with a sense of purpose and investing time for planning sessions, "*We reviewed best practices related to advisory programs and reviewed the high school program. Based on the data we gathered, we created a path for 7th and 8th graders that naturally lead them to their high school advisory program.*" She expressed a belief in creating a smooth transitional process at the middle school from investing in a robust advisory program to having continued success in high school if the program was properly implemented during the middle school years.

Through tremendous persistence in perseverance, commitment, and time investment, she was able to create, lead, and implement a well-respected advisory program with her team.

She steered her team in the following way to design career goals in middle school advisory programs. Emma's vision encompassed 21st century skills, building student confidence, and creating pathways for their futures. She explained why she created a portfolio in advisory:

The middle school portfolio system was designed to be viewed as a bridge or scaffold to the program designed for grades 9-12. As it was designed with the end in mind, it is pertinent to review the requirements for the 9th and 10th grade years, the Career Exploration Phase.

Her approach to advisory was as a perquisite to high school skills. Each child "*must submit one artifact per skill, which exemplifies the skill, to showcase in their portfolio.*" She shared one vital question that is asked of each middle school student, "*Which Essential Skill best exemplifies you?*" She described in detail, the seven skills that make up their advisory program. She explained, "*Our Middle School Advisory Program focuses on the seven essential skills: communication, problem solving, setting and evaluating goals, technological aptitude, teamwork, leadership, and work ethic.*" The middle school advisory focuses most directly on *problem solving*, *setting and evaluating goals*. Additionally, self-awareness was addressed in the advisory program but was not one of the essential skills.

It was evident that Emma had extensive background knowledge and training in middle school concepts as she explained the purpose of "*learning to problem-solve effectively and to set and evaluate goals have been positive outcomes of our advisory program which relate directly to the middle school concept.*" Emma has served on the PMSA Western Regional and Executive Boards for five years while serving as a middle school principal. She received training and professional development from the National Middle School Association and served as an evaluator for middle schools applying for the Schools To Watch award. After explaining she summarized, "*Our advisory program helps them to do just that. It holds a mirror in front of them and tells them it is okay to look -- and that it is admirable to make changes.*"

She also discussed the outcomes measuring the embedded "*projects/exhibits/learnings*" for which every middle school student is responsible. "*The teachers guide the students to a greater awareness of their strengths and areas for growth through each exhibit*" in our program.

I noted her sharing the "*two most important outcomes are a better sense of self* [strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes] *as well as the ability to see their development in the 7-essential skills over time* [7th - 12th grades]." She reported a comprehensive approach and system that is critical inside her advisory program.

This principal shared a sense of what is valued by looking at how schools allocate time and what they devote time to. This advisory program emphasized self-awareness and helped students to see their strengths and to build on those within the program. Self-reflection was key in her responses to the open-ended questions.

Principal Emma valued the outcomes as they were measured in their embedded projects, exhibits, or experiences that every middle school student is responsible for. The teachers guide the students to a greater awareness of their strengths and areas for growth through each exhibit. Her views shared the richness of advisory, students' DOP (depth of knowledge), and credit student skill building in areas as problem solving, communication skills (writing and speaking), and goal setting ability.

4.3.6   Interview #6: Principal Faith

Sequentially, in the last interview Principal Faith has a background in secondary education, holds a Secondary Principal Certificate and a Master's Degree in Education. Her sense of purpose for and aptitude of middle school students was keenly observable through the interview process. Progressive thinking and visionary descriptors come to mind. In fact, as the interview unfolded, a few specific data points led to a relative and dynamic understanding of how a school leader views and has substantial impact upon middle school advisory programs.

93

Her experiences include ten years as a veteran principal, one year as an assistant principal, and five years' experience as a classroom teacher. Her responses as a participant in this study led to her sharing opinions and career experiences as a middle school principal. Her results demonstrated patterns of frequency for the three categories: *connection with adults*, *benefits*, and *skill building for students*. She was charismatic and shared her views candidly.

Connections with adults. Principal Faith mentioned, *"*[The advisory program] *functions as a way to keep students connected closely with a small group of peers and a teacher"* stressing the importance of connections with adults. The small size of an advisory group is significant in students forming tight bonds of trust and belongingness amongst their peer group. Relationships are established and there is a system of support within the group as a method of building connections with adults in a program. As the responses went more in-depth, she shared, "*Students must know that they can trust their teachers, and know that their teachers are there to support them, and care about their successes as well as failures and struggles.*" She reported that adults who care and peers who support them are priceless. "*Positive relationships are the key*" inside advisory. Students gain a better self-imagine, confidence, self-esteem and learn how to build relationships amongst peers, teachers, and adults.

Benefits. Principal Faith was quick to respond to benefits that she viewed as being closely related to positive, intimate teachers who immediately connected with students to build a positive rapport from day one and to support through invested time, interest, and personal attention all year long. One benefit, she says, is the size of advisory*, "as groups to become smaller and more personalized*" they yield more success stories. Another comment, shows her views on benefits, such that, "*more positive approach from teachers because they felt a sense of 'ownership' because of their input into activities and structure…because of the teachers having*

94

a more positive outlook, this carried over to students." She was quick to overstate a benefit of the program: "*Caring teachers that embrace the need to support students beyond academics!*" She was direct and explicit in her comments with me on her views of teacher input: "*When teachers build relationships with students, confide in the teacher and build a strong rapport. They are comfortable sharing needs as well as successes!*"

Principal Faith expressed her views on the benefits of advisory*, stating a* "*decrease in the number of discipline issues, as well as a reduction in the number of incidences of bullying across all grades and classrooms.*" She specifically mentioned discipline referrals were 10% less after student began active involvement inside of their advisory program, and participated in school-wide initiatives that encouraged students to become aware of bully issues. Strategies and coping skills were added into the advisory program. Her responses stated benefits such as, "*Students gain a better self-imagine, confidence, self-esteem and learn how to build relationships amongst peers, teachers and adults.*"

Skill building for students. While examining the skills learned by students, she insists, "*Advisory groups have a powerful positive impact on middle school students. Having adults that care and who are involved in their school experiences helps students to transition from grade - to-grade and to be more prepared for challenges that they face.*" She feels skills such as time management, organization, and study habits are important to teach in advisory.

In sum, the foregoing benefits related data reveal how administrators' views acknowledged the purpose of advisory programs. These are aligned with the literature findings. The perspectives found similarities in their practices that discovered the student-centered curriculums and focused on student self-confidence and skill building for students. Additionally, the discovery of similar practices in smaller learning communities is advantageous for students

in middle school advisory programs. Also, the features and components of advisory programs highlighted the uniqueness of scheduling, sense of small learning climate, academic and guidance curriculum offerings, and addressed the developmental appropriateness of adolescent growth in social-emotional, academic, and physical areas. There is consistency in the views of administrators in this particular study and the literature that highlights the benefits of advisory programs. In reality, the benefits outweigh the barriers in forms of addressing master scheduling issues, student and staff resources, and budgeting that are key to sustaining effective advisory programs as seen from the principals' views.

A balancing act must be accomplished while juggling the middle school pedagogy and practice can be difficult from the principalship with regards to their advisory programs.   In this study, principals shared how they have been hands-on in their professional staff training, communication skills, and keeping their advisory program's main priority and focus on young adolescents.

The next section following will address the barriers in this study.

4.4 BARRIERS: ACROSS THE INTERVIEWS

In this section, the barriers are examined from across the interview data gathered in this study. Each participant shared specific examples that were extracted to formulate meanings associated with identified barriers in advisory programs. Specific excerpts from each participant that were associated with barriers in advisory programs are examined in this section. Figure 5 represents excerpts extracted from each respondent. For example a few barriers reported were a lack of resource such as time limitations, personnel and poor quality professional development. Barriers

96
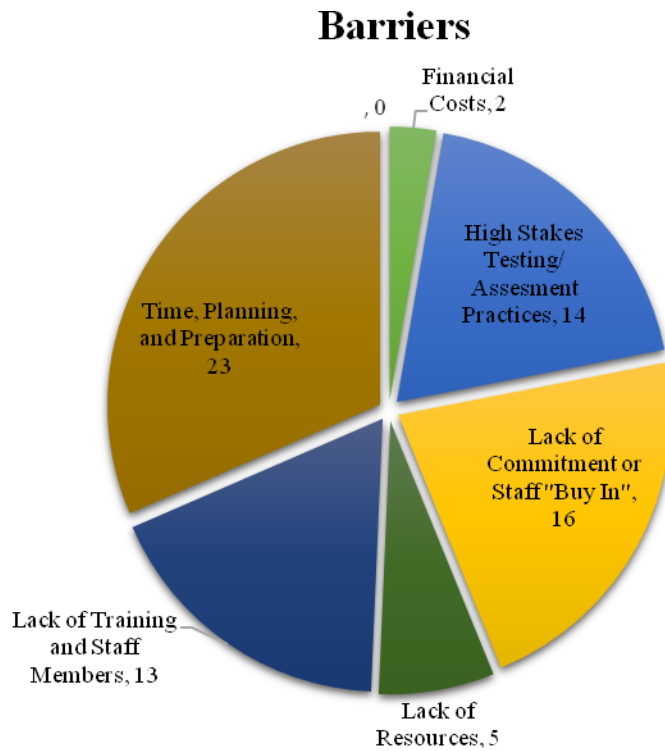
Barriers

Figure 5. Barriers

existed in forms of financial, systematic approaches and the regulations from PDE that place rigid and high demands on middle school professionals.

Next, I explain to the reader the barriers that emerged from the interviews. I share specific excerpts from each principal's comments, as they relate to the barriers listed in Figure 5. Principal Ann stated, "*Some people didn't feel comfortable having hard conversations with kids*", "*They said that was for school counselor.*", and "*Everything that happens in homeroom is informal.*" This was significant in the study to note her identification of barriers, for example, she views mentoring training was non-existent for teachers due to financial limitations, and she felt

there was a lack of specific training for teachers and the finances due to a limited budget.   There is great need for more staffing for advisory programs according to her. This data is represented above in the pie chart labeled as High Stakes Testing/Assessment Practices.

Principal Ben stated, "*We do not provide specific training or accountability, or payment for any type of advisor work. Perhaps this is why the program was not as successful as it should be, no monetary incentives are offered.*" Along with, "*I have seen a decline in the attitudes both students and teachers.*" *In addition,* "*This is a result of PDE demands on public schools today.*" and "*High demand for student data and teacher effectiveness to close the gap and make the scores is relevant in our schools today.*" This is reflective of his views on the barriers from the interviews and this resulted in the summary of his beliefs that PDE demands on public schools in Pennsylvania in grade levels fifth to eighth in middle school. Currently, there is greater time demands needed for PSSA to determine student growth and closing the achievement gap. In addition, the reality of high stakes testing demands tremendous amounts of student data and teacher evaluations to close the student achievement gap.   Which is largely due to the constraints of the systematic approaches seen to be large barriers facing the advisory time. This is depicted in the pie chart above under the section labeled Time, Planning, and Preparation.

Principal Clay stated, [Advisory program is] "*going to affect all the social, emotional, and developmental things that we feel kids need*" and "*There is not as much focus now on the emotional and social aspects of a student that there was ten years ago.*" These excerpts are reflective on his beliefs, "*I think that [Advisory program] going to be a loss for all schools and especially kids that may just have a little small need or some issues that they can be really brought up to speed or move forward on, they just won't get attention in the middle school anymore.*" As I summarized his responses, the following statements showed the mentoring

program lacks current training and research. Specifically, PDE regulations pose a barrier for advisory programs. The policies and mandates placed on all PA middle schools impede principals' leadership in maintaining effective advisory programs.

Furthermore, PDE constantly changes and institutes new state initiatives that often creates a lack of focus on child's developmental stage and growth due to time and lack of consistency year to year. This is depicted in the pie chart above under the section labeled Lack of Training and Staff Members.

Principal Diana stated, "*Unfortunately, with the expectations put forth on educational professionals in today's society with student test scores, shrinking budgets, and growing student needs, it isn't always feasible to implement and/or maintain the most effective advisory program one wants.*" This is indicative of her views. I extracted from this study as interpreted as time, budget, and staffing limitations. In addition, the regulations from PDE highlight the growing student needs of the 21st century in light of less feasibility of implementing and maintaining effective advisory programs. These constraints are secondary to PDE initiatives and School Performance Profiles as ratings are perceived as the most important indicator of middle school students. This is shown above in the pie chart labeled as Lack of Resources.

Principal Emma stated, "*Trying to retrofit advisory into a pre-existing curriculum can be challenging*" and [having an] "*honest conversation about what a child needs—academically, socially, emotionally, and physically to be healthy and prepared for the next phase of their life.*" *Another excerpt, "Having faculty with the content expertise, but not the expertise regarding this stage of adolescent development can prove difficult.*" To summarize her comments, the lack of expertise, training, and professional development on adolescent developmental growth and stages is a barrier because there is less time devoted to teacher training on advisory programs.

This lack of training can produce a lack of commitment and dedication to investing in advisory-based programs. This is captured above in Figure 5 labeled as Lack of Commitment or "Staff Buy In".

Principal Faith reported, "*Most teachers were not thrilled with the program and felt that most of the activities were outdated and had run their course.*" Along with her comments, "*Students must feel a sense of safety and security in terms of being open and honest within the group.*" Her responses were analyzed and reflected in this study as seen that advisory lesson plans have become outdated, activities need revamped, such as Character Education and technology needs refreshed for students learning goals in the 21st century and to build their skills, self-esteem and connections with peers. Furthermore, advisory time has been replaced with programs and training devoted to safety costs, crisis teams budgets, and emergency school-wide expenses, which take time away from advisory activities for adolescents. These important daily challenges are real world problems facing Faith daily. The information is shown above in the Figure 5 labeled as Financial Costs.

In sum, the barriers have led to a discovery of how principals' perceptions recognized the fact that the original purpose of advisory programs have barriers causing a lack of focus on student-centered advisory and obstacles that led to the migration of the original purposes of advisory programs according to the literature. In practice, the daily routine of master schedules, staffing problems and lack of funding and budgets impede the best instructional design for advisory programs. There is inconsistency in the views of administrators and the literature that highlights the benefits of advisory, however from a supervisory role the obstacles emerge daily. In reality, barriers exit in forms of managing resources, staff and students, and fiscal responsibility as seen from the principals' views.

A balancing act between middle school pedagogy and practice is difficult from the role of a principal with regard to their advisory programs. Principals must be proactive in their professional staff training, communication skill, and the purpose of their advisory programs. Advisory programs' obstacles exist in the form of fiscal responsibility, time constraints, personnel staffing, and poor quality teacher training or middle school advisory.

The next section introduces the topic of mentoring and its relationship to the associated research question, "How do principals describe mentoring?"

4.5   MENTORING: ACROSS THE INTERVIEWS

Figure 6. Mentoring

The following categories advocacy and building relationship with child, growth and building connections, intrinsic traits or characteristics, training and development programs, and good role models emerged from the data collection on mentoring.

While analyzing the data, a lack of data on the mentoring topic from all six interviews was observed. A few generalizations were gathered from each participant's responses. However, all six interviews revealed no formalized mentoring piece and a lack of professional training and development for teachers and advisors. As an educator, I feel this is important to acknowledge the lack of mentoring in advisory.

As the data suggest, there appears to be a lack of formal planning for a systematic measure or accountability of mentoring programs from the principals' perspectives. However, one out of six interviews did reveal that, in fact, there is a peer-mentoring component, as Principal Clay noted the existence of a student-peer mentoring programs, although no adult mentor program existed within the school.

Next, I explain to the reader the mentoring themes that emerged from the interviews. I share specific excerpts from each principal's comments, as they relate to the mentoring themes listed in Figure 6. I will use a specific quote excerpt from each participant and the formulated statement that helped to answer the research questions.

Principal Ann stated, "*Caring teachers that embrace the need to support students beyond academics.*" This was significant to the study as noting her belief in mentoring is an intrinsic characteristic as opposed to extrinsic characteristic of a teacher.

Principal Ben stated, "*Mentors are teachers and teachers are mentors. Every staff member has a group and it is an expectation that all staff will lead an advisory group.*" This was significant in the study to note his beliefs in mentoring teachers who are perceived as mentors

based on the positive attributes associated with the role. This is shown in the pie chart above in the section labeled Good Role Model.

Principal Clay stated, "*Continue to educate them, and work with them as they go through the middle school*" and "*Mentoring inside the advisory base. It's positive for both. I feel it's positive for both the teacher and the student.*" This is reflective of his views from this study relating his beliefs on mentoring to be a positive experience for both the student and teacher. However, it can have negative connotations and consequences if not properly supported, supervised, and monitored over time. This is depicted in the pie chart above under the section labeled Advocacy and Building Relationship With Child.

Principal Diana stated, "*There is no specific evaluation process to review the mentoring done by an advisor in this role*." This is indicative of her views I extracted from this study as being lack of evaluation, observation, and measurable objectives for a mentor. This is shown previously in Figure 6 as Growth and Building Connections.

Principal Emma stated, "*Every MS teacher is assigned the role of 'mentor.' This, by the way, is perhaps another weakness as every teacher may not be a good selection.*" This is indicative of her views I extracted from this study as, mentoring programs are non-existent in advisory program. No measure or evidence was collected to ensure a teacher is a good candidate for a role as a mentor. This is labeled in the pie chart above as Good Role Model.

Principal Faith stated, "*A 'type' of advisory program at the school and it was called 'Citizenship.' Teachers met with students every-other day and followed a planned lesson/activity.*" and "*Even though teachers serve as the mentors for groups, we also bring high school students to the middle school to mentor their younger peers. The HS students must apply to be a mentor and are interviewed prior to selection and assignment to a group. These high*

school students have a powerful impact on the groups, especially with our 8th graders. They provide insight on life at the high school level and help to support students' transitions to the high school building." Next, the statement as follows emerged to summarize her beliefs of mentoring stating these guidelines are policies established for student mentors. Peer mentoring has application processes, however not aware of any teacher guidelines, policies or training programs for teacher to assume the role of mentor. This is labeled above in the pie chart as, Training and Development.

In summary, the lack of principals referencing mentoring indicates the lack of professional development and training for teachers in advisory programs. The majority of principals stated reasons for mentoring such as teachers "strictly considered mentoring as a trait that is intrinsic as opposed to extrinsic characteristic of a teacher." An additional barrier came from principals' assumptions about teacher mentoring. First, there was an assumption that that positive teacher attributes inherently make a good mentor, and, secondly, there was a belief that mentoring is a healthy, positive, reciprocal relationship between the student and teacher. Specifically, principals did not mention the idea of mentoring having negative consequences or the implications of a poorly or ill-advised mentoring relationship formed between student and adult mentor.

Furthermore, the lack of evaluation, observation or measurable outcome of a mentor program is a barrier the principals stated. An important factor to point out is the agreement that mentoring programs are non-existent inside advisory programs. However, there was one principal who reported a strong peer-to-peer mentoring component exist inside his advisory program.

4.6   THEMES FROM ACROSS THE INTERVIEWS

Six significant statements were extracted as over-arching themes from this study. Table 13 includes excerpts of significant statements with their formulated meanings. Below, the table contains examples of thematic groups/clusters that emerged from their associated meanings.

Table 13. Selected Significant Excerpts from Principals' Perspectives Formulating Themes

Significant Statement Excerpt Quote	Formulated Meaning for Themes
"The most important factors are that students feel valued and understand the purpose of the advisory program. This is something that is not easy to achieve, especially at the beginning of the implementation process. However, if students understand that it is something Table 13 (continued) *important to the staff, and for their well-being in both the classroom and beyond, the necessary trust can be established, and built upon, to strengthen the message, the purpose, and the impact. And…the quickest way for an advisory program to fail is for students to experience a lackluster commitment from the adults who are expected to mentor students and develop the necessary relationships for students to feel valued through the advisory process."*	Forming, cultivating and learning to **trust.**
"…having that one extra adult in the building that they can develop that relationship with …students know that they have their back. They can go to them with question…keep any eye on them, and monitor throughout the year. And just kind of always be that one person…that go to person…I think is definitely…the biggest influence."	**Relationships.** Building healthy, reciprocal relationships between student and adults.
"If they [students] *don't see the importance of the relevance of it, they're not going to get what we would like them to get out of it. I also think you need to have a purpose for your lessons."*	**Sense of Purpose.** Building a child's sense of self-importance, confidence and support through adolescent development.

Table 13 (continued)

"The most essential component is making a connection with kids."	**Connections.** Strong, positive, life-long connections for students, parents, and the community.
"Advisory programs ...use a portfolio system...eventually reaching 12th graders in an individual conference setting. We have found that this is a rich experience and has become a "rite of passage" from our students."	**Transitions.** Bridging the gap between elementary and high school programming.
"Benefits of this advisory topic (technology/ bullying) were felt far beyond the school walls,	
and hopefully for many years to come." *"Positive! Students know they are important and that the adults in the school truly care about them."*	**Child-Centered.** Focusing on the middle school child is key to successful advisory programs.
"Students feel safe and secure; they know they are trusted adults in the building that they can go to when help is needed. Students perform better as a result."	

The principals in this study believe that the purpose of advisory programs is cultivating trust among students and teachers working together in the middle school. The student-teacher relationships formed through positive experiences establish a sense of purpose for the advisory base lesson and make it relevant for a student, such as having connections to authentic real-world information, connectivity and skill building application that extends beyond the school walls into their home lives as well. For the student, the connections to their school community, which is made up of teachers, principals, and peers, must have fluidity and connections to be built upon with prior knowledge and experience that keep expanding their worldviews and skill set with problem solving techniques. Transitions need to include opportunities to explore, participate and

bridge the gap for adolescents traveling from the elementary years to the high school years. Furthermore, the perception of child-centeredness is key from a principal's view on a solid advisory program. It offers specific programming, content focused on rigor and relevance in an advisory lesson that influences students' realization that they are most important in the advisory program. Principals state that success and effectiveness of the program is determined by the training, development, and individual growth of each adolescent. Advisory builds on the self-esteem, self-confidence, and skill set of each middle school student as they head off to the high school.

Chapter 5 discusses in more depth findings of this study.

5.0   DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided into five sections that include the discussion of findings, limitations, recommendations for further study, and conclusions. The focus of this study was to examine principals' perceptions of their advisory programs in middle school. All six principals' responses were analyzed to determine their understanding and experience in regards to middle school components, advisory programs and mentoring. Their responses were analyzed to determine if any connections were discovered between the literature and research questions. The research questions and sub-questions lead to the discussions on key findings and themes.

5.1   DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THEMES

The six themes that emerged from this study were *trust, relationships, sense of purpose, connections, transitions,* and *child-centered* as they relate to the principals' interview responses.

This research study provided detailed accounts from six principals' perspectives that contribute to the research literature on middle school advisory programs. The six themes are significant because this study found a narrow gap in the literature on principals' perspectives on middle school advisory programs that led to the opportunity to share views from the principals' lens of middle school advisory programs. The first research question and its sub question are:

1. How do principals characterize the advisory programs in their middle schools?

a. Do these characterizations reflect in any way the essential components of advisory programs as outlined in the literature?

These six themes emerged while seeking answers to the research questions of this study:

Theme 1: Trust. *Data revealed meaning making from forming, cultivating, and learning to trust in advisory programs.*

Theme 2: Relationships. *Healthy, reciprocal relationships between students and adults can emerge from advisory programs in middle school.*

Theme 3: Sense of Purpose. *Defining the purpose of advisory programs for students is key to middle school climates.*

Theme 4: Connections. *Advisory programs can build positive, robust, lifelong connections amongst students, staff and parents throughout the middle school years.*

Theme 5: Transitions. *Transitions and consistency in middle school advisory programs help bridge the gap between elementary school to high school.*

Theme 6: Child-Centered. *Focusing on the middle school child is key to successful advisory programs.*

Next, I discuss the six themes that emerged in the findings and expand upon each theme as they relate to the literature regarding principals' views on middle school advisory programs.

Theme 1: Trust. The findings of this study align with the research literature suggesting that middle school advisory programs encourage young adolescents through positive learning climates and offer reassurance for students (Lounsbury, 1992). This major theme was important to all principals, who foster trust inside advisory programs. According to this finding, advisors need to form and cultivate a climate of trust by establishing personal bonds and building strong relationships with students. This theme is essential and supported throughout the literature. For example, Jackson and Davis (2000) reported time to connect students with adults is important in building a bond of trust, guidance, and positive influences with advisors. Furthermore, Galassi,

Gulledge, and Cox (1998a) argued that advisory programs form a relationship of trust for the student by offering a compassionate adult advisor.

Trust is an important theme in the findings, because it is crucial to understanding the importance of a student learning to trust an adult, how student's beliefs or value systems, along with lifestyles may differ from each other, and how those differences influence their ability to trust adults inside a supportive advisory program.

Theme 2: Relationships. As evidenced in the findings, all six principals responded in a similar manner concerning positive and nurturing relationships in advisory programs.   This was seen as key to successful advisory programs.   All findings were aligned closely with the literature as evidenced from the responses and discussions of all principals on relationships. To illustrate NMSA (2003) research stated that collaborative partnerships between students and educators are healthy with active engagement.   In agreement, Thompson (2004) reported his beliefs in building positive, professional teacher-student partnerships to enhance healthy, robust relationships for students.

 Taking another illustration from the literature, Galassi, Gulledge and Cox (1998a) claimed, "Middle School advisory programs provide an opportunity for both advisor and advisees to belong to a 'family', a chance to secure physical and emotional affiliation" (p.9). In addition, this theme resonated with Alexander and George (1981) who reported an advisor-advisee relationship was vital to establish meaningful, effective bonds to nurture young adults. This theme was very consistent in the findings, and one particular principal mentioned he did research years ago on Van Hoose who stated, "The quality of the relationship between teachers and students is the single most important aspect of middle level education"(1991, p. 7).

It is empowering to realize that middle school principals who are currently practicing have the expertise and background knowledge of advisory programs that is essential to embrace while serving middle school students. I believe middle school principals hold many responsibilities such as manager, personnel director, public relations, and budgeting to name a few. However, I believe the most important role of a principal is to be highly educated on middle school concepts, adolescent development, and recognize the key components of a well run advisory program. Principals need to provide learning opportunities for skills and problem-solving options, while at the same time, building strong foundations for student academics, social-emotional development, and physical achievement. In my opinion, this theme is key to an effective advisory program if properly supported by a middle school principal.

Theme 3: Sense of Purpose. A defining purpose of advisory programs is to offer coursework that is rigorous, relevant, and inspires learning. According to two principals, a good, solid lesson should take place daily in the program. A specifically designed curriculum should address the issues that reflect the world around us and offer application skills for students to problem solve, collaborate as a group, and encounter authentic, real world problems that teenagers face currently. Findings indicated that the majority of responses clearly agreed with a sense of purpose ranking highly among all principals in this study.

The findings emphasized the basic daily events, routines, and readiness for both students and advisory as significant and supported by Galassi's (1998a) literature. As this theme is reflected in the literature, it appears to be a significant finding from the principals' perspectives. Why is it important to have a purpose for advisory programs?   Belief and a sense of purpose are powerful in sustaining growth, improvement or reaching a goal toward a measured outcome. Thus, it is essential to establish sense of purpose for advisory programs.

111

Theme 4: Connections. According to the literature, advisory time fosters a student's sense of belonging (Galassi et al., 1998). It is important for advisors to monitor students in this setting. The responses in the findings showed a need for building a positive, healthy lifelong connection among the school community. A finding emerged from the principals' views that a connection exists not solely between student and teacher, but reached farther than the advisor-advisee connection among parents, staff and between grade levels in middle school. As an educator, I believe this theme is significant to the literature as it reveals a perception that advisory connections reach beyond the classroom walls and into the everyday lives of the school community while encouraging positive school experiences for young adolescents.

Theme 5: Transitions. Transitions were a continual theme that reoccurred through the interview findings. The discussions centered on a portfolio system designed to bridge between the middle school students going to high school in grade nine. Principals responded that career exploration was an important phase in transitioning to the high school. Principals saw the need for skills such as communication, problem solving, goal setting, and aptitude for technology, teamwork, and leadership skills. In agreement, Alexander (1968) argued that the best approach for middle school curriculum was to incorporate the main components through strategic alignment while preparing young adults for the high school transition. This theme emerged because the conversations centered on mentoring, but it was not reflective of the literature. This theme stemmed exclusively from the principals' views on advisory.

Theme 6: Child-Centered. The sixth theme that emerged from the findings is parallel to the ideal belief that a middle school child can achieve and grow into a productive adulthood. A child-centered theme was the most significant in this study. As reiterated throughout the literature, children need learning climates that are fair, equitable, and where each child is closely

monitored in their student progress during adolescence (Thompson, 2004). Moreover, middle level advisory programs deliver guidance, orientation activities that support transition, teaming, interdisciplinary planning, exploratory programs, and independent thinking skills which all center on the child (Alexander & George, 1981). In agreement, Eichhorn (1980) passionately believed the need for child-centered curricula was the most important factor of an advisory program. To illustrate, Clark and Clark (1994) claimed that providing an adult advocate for each student in middle school is valuable for every student. Therefore, the findings are closely related to the literature on middle school advisory programs, as seen from the principals' perspectives in that were accurately reflected. One further point to mention is that the literature proposed that a smaller learning community (advisory programs) addressed students (ages 10-14) as they developed intellectually, social-emotionally, and physically (McEwin et al., 1996). Consequently, the literature aligns in this study as all six principals' findings reveal a common theme that is fundamentally the belief that advisory programs offer a dynamic curriculum that provides individual attention for each child. Hence, child-centered theme appeared from six perspectives. It is important to note that no empirical evidence was offered that significant barriers exist to implementing these themes.

The next section focuses on the limitations of this study.

5.2   LIMITATIONS

Three limitations associated with this particular study included open-ended questions in the semi-formal interviewing stage, the personal biases that could influence the data analysis, and the small sample size. To address the limitations of the open-ended interview questions, I

refrained from interjecting words that would reveal my position on advisory-based programs. As I spent time devoted to data analysis, I took precautionary steps to eliminate bias by writing researcher memos and including another coder. I also attempted to minimalize any stereotyping and generalizations based on my personal experiences as a principal.

Additionally, this study examined only six southwestern Pennsylvania public middle schools and did not include any private schools, parochial, or cyber schools. Different types of schools may have more time allotment and/or resources to devote to advisory programs, whereas public schools' time and resources are focused on meeting specific state mandates. I view this limitation in my study also as a strength, because it allowed me to maximize the chances of principals chosen for selection who were advocates of true-middle school advisory practices and philosophies. It is important to note this to understand this limitation can affect the interpretations of my study. It also affects areas for future research, as the principals' perceptions are unique to their beliefs, training and experiences within a middle school advisory program.

Secondly, the limitations also included the small number of participants; these limited responses from this study cannot be generalized, and there is not substantive empirical evidence to support the tentative claims. It is significant to note that this study is a beliefs study. This is a limitation, yet it is important to acknowledge that, as a study of beliefs, it contributes to the literature.

Next, we turn to the recommendations for further research.

5.3   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Due to the small sample size and response rate, it is not possible to offer firm recommendations from this study in and of itself. However, the study does allow me to speculate upon future research areas that connect to my themes and to identify unanswered questions from my study. More research needs to be conducted on principals' beliefs about advisory programs. The findings of this study strongly recommend that the six themes of *trust, relationships, sense of purpose, connections, transitions,* and *child-centered* need to be the focus for future researchers on this topic of interest.

The following recommendations for further study are based upon the discussion and interpretation of the findings.

1. This study could be conducted with other middle school principals in school districts throughout Pennsylvania to compare their views on essential components of middle school advisory programs. Do principals have the background knowledge, training and experience working with middle school components?

2. A replication study could be conducted to include questions that are more open-ended perhaps to gather more information on principals' perceptions on mentoring beliefs associated with advisory programs. Additionally, it would be useful to probe into the beliefs of mentoring associated with a theme of relationships between students and teachers.

3. A study could be conducted on gender-relationships study of female or male principals' role in relation to their perceptions of advisory programs in middle schools, specifically to determine how each gender views the phenomenon of

mentoring inside advisory programs. Do men or women, in the role of principal, view it from different perspectives or conceptualize it differently?

4. A research study could be conducted on how the changes in a 21st century world affect resources, time management, and the organization of middle school advisory programs. A study could address barriers of effective advisory programs that align with the 21st century needs of the middle school programs.

5. A study could be conducted specifically focused on the theme of trust could identify barriers to trust in advisory programs, such as high stakes testing, bullying, and safety issues in middle schools. Further, how does a theme of trust affect principals' perceptions?

6. A study could examine how barriers affect a middle school's Pennsylvania School Performance Profile (SPP) score and how it is viewed by principals who believe they have effective advisory programs.

7. A research study could be conducted on the role of the principal who is attempting to implement an advisory program into a middle school. A case study approach would be interesting on the views and barriers of advisory programs. What does a principal view as an effective program after identifying the barriers?

8. A comparison study could be done of two middle schools in separate school districts that have either identified their districts as containing advisory programs or not. A suggestion would be to include questions on mentoring beliefs that can expand on the idea of whether it is existent or non-existent in advisory programs. What are the views and beliefs principals may or may not have on mentoring beliefs in comparison to their advisory programs?

9. An ethnographic study could be done from the principals' perspectives throughout a one or two year period to delve more deeply and rigorously into the barriers, benefits, and mentoring issue through the collected data. What are principals' conceptual ideas of the barriers, benefits, and mentoring beliefs?

10. Another study could evaluate the current middle school advisory programs existing (in practice) that could identify and measure the outcomes of the actual program from administrators' views in comparison to the literature on advisory programs.

5.4   CONCLUSIONS

Six themes of *trust, relationships, sense of purpose, connections, transitions, and, child-centered* emerged from this study. Upon conclusion of this study, it became evident that these themes were also in the literature. However, there was minimal research representing principals' views on advisory, specifically whether it was beneficial or not, as well as their views on mentoring associated with advisory programs. As a result, this study tried to determine how advisory programs were viewed from the principals' perspectives. This study gauged how principals' views were aligned, connected, or have migrated from the original intent or purpose of advisory programs according to the literature. The findings revealed significant understandings about the success or obstacles associated with advisory programs.

In addition to the findings of my study, my personal experiences add insight into this gap in the literature on principals' perspectives. As reported, the barriers of time, professional development, high stakes testing from PDE, and lack of staff training are all present in this study. I believe that middle school principals and teachers benefit immensely from their dedication and

passion working in middle school programs with students, receiving middle school training and development to increase skills, and keeping practices current. Maintaining a focus on adolescent developmental stages for young adults is key year after year in middle schools. It is important to recognize that teachers need to receive specialized professional training and development on middle school students and programs. In my 20 plus years as an administrator, I have had ample training on middle school design. However, it is not beneficial to have such knowledge if it is not consistently shared among professional staff members committed to maintaining effective advisory programs for students.

My recommendation would be to center the middle school mission on students, effective advisory components, mentoring beliefs, and motivating students to become active adults. Striving to provide solid professional development training is key to helping teachers succeed in advisory based programs.

Being a middle school principal is often viewed by the community as being the person in charge of not only leading but also sharing knowledge with students and staff. As infallible as this concept is in practice, ideally as a middle school principal it is important to guide instructional practices and continue to educate teachers on the importance of advisory programs for students. As a change agent, a coach, and leader of middle level students, a provoking thought is: if it is not the principal who motivates and reinvents advisory program, who else will take up this challenge? It is important to recognize as a middle school principal, strength is found in being a good role model for students and staff, aligning middle school curricula to meet the current 21st century education agenda, and modeling effective middle school advisory programs. As an education leader, experience with middle level students is invaluable to meet the unique needs of students through solid advisory programs. Throughout this study, I had an

opportunity to interview administrators to seek answers to the research questions surrounding their perspectives on advisory programs. I believe there is still a lot of research that needs to take place; however, I am hopeful that I have piqued the curiosity of educators committed to their noble profession working with middle school students.

My experience in public education has afforded me the opportunity to be immersed with young students in a middle school for more than 20 years. I believe a middle school design enhances specific programs, unified vision, commitment and dedication focusing on the child. I hope that this study sparks new conversations about advisory programs, which I believe to be vital for middle schoolers' success and achievement.

RECRUITMENT LETTER

July 2014

Dear Principal_____:

I am writing to ask you to participate in a research study that focuses on middle level education. I have obtained permission from your superintendent to contact you and to include your school in my study. This research project is my final requirement as a doctoral candidate at the University of Pittsburgh. It is titled *Principals' Perspectives on Middle School Advisory Programs.* It focuses on advisory programs and activities conducted in public middle schools in Western Pennsylvania.

I am asking middle school principals to take the time to participate in a forty-five (45) minute interview. As a fellow principal, I am certain that you know how important your input is in completing this study. Your cooperation is voluntary. Data collection procedures have been developed to ensure quality and to protect participant confidentiality. Your responses to the inquiries will be kept strictly confidential. They will be cross-referenced and analyzed in relation to responses of other participants and used for research only. No information identifying individual participants will be reported.

I am hoping you are willing to meet with me for a face-to-face interview at your middle school. My goal is to complete all of my interviews for this study by July 28, 2014. If you are willing to participate in my research study, please contact me directly at (724) 457-2241 or via email at Jam260@pitt.edu to schedule our meeting. After we talk initially, we can make the specific arrangements for the date and time that is most convenient for your schedule.

If you have additional questions, please contact me at the phone number above. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Julie A. Moore
University of Pittsburgh
Doctoral Candidate
114 West Wind Drive
Moon Township, PA 15108

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION LETTER

July 2014

Dear Superintendent _____

        Your participation is requested in a study of Principal's Perspective on Middle School Advisory Programs in Western Pennsylvania as identified by the principal investigator of this study.

        The results of the study will help to increase the knowledge base for decision-making related to middle school advisory programs in Western Pennsylvania.

        I am a doctoral student at the University of Pittsburgh. I am requesting your permission to contact Dr./Mr./Mrs. _____, the middle school principal in charge of advisory programs in _____School District. I would like to interview him/her as part of a research study for partial fulfillment of the research requirement by University of Pittsburgh's Doctoral Program in Administrative and Policy Studies.

        There are no foreseeable risks to you, administration, or the school district. All responses will be kept confidential. Names will not be used in this study. The administrator may withdraw at any time. As the primary investigator of the research study, I may also withdraw the participants from this study if necessary.

        In order for me to be able to contact the above-mentioned administrator for participation in this study, I must have your permission. I will contact you by telephone to answer any questions you may have and to request your permission.

The University of Pittsburgh's Institutional Review Board has approved this activity. This Committee administers both the General Assurance of Compliance with the United States

Department of Health and Human Services Policy for the protection of Human Subjects and the University policy covering the protection of human subjects.

Thank you for your valuable contribution to this research. I thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Julie A. Moore
University of Pittsburgh Doctoral Student
114 West Wind Drive
Moon Township, PA 15108
724-457-2241

APPENDIX C

PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES ON MIDDLE SCHOOL ADVISORY PROGRAMS

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Julie A. Moore
Doctoral Candidate
University of Pittsburgh
114 West Wind Drive
Moon Township, PA 15108

Contact #1: Telephone Interview

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. The purpose of this research study is to learn about middle school principals' perspectives on advisory programs. I am interested in your perspective as a middle school principal to gain valuable views about advisory programs that you can offer for my study.   The goal of my study is to interview six middle school principals on their views.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project, nor is there any direct benefit to you. All responses are confidential and results will be kept under lock and key. The services of a professional transcription service will be retained to type the transcripts of this interview. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, there is no financial compensation for your participation, and your confidentiality will be respected throughout the study.   Therefore, you are welcome to withdraw from the interview or not answer any questions at any time.

The interview process will occur in three steps. The interview is designed to be time efficient, yet allow me to capture your perspectives on advisory programs. There will be three points of contact between us for this study. The first and third contacts can be done quickly via the telephone. Our second contact will be a face-to-face interview session.
-

Prior to starting, I need your consent to participate. If you agree, I would like to audiotape this interview, unless you disagree. Are you willing to participate in the telephone / face-to face interviews? I am conducting all parts of this study and can be reached at (724) 457-2241 if you have any further questions.

(*After receiving participant consent, I will follow the first interview script*)

Now at this time, I will be confirming the demographic information that I read on your school's website pertaining to your middle school. I am interested in the following information such as the grade level configurations, approximate student enrollment, and the ratios in your advisory program. *(*I will read each middle school demographic information set for each principal to confirm for accuracy or offer changes.)*

Category of Middle School:	Grade Level of Students	Approximate Student Enrollment	Administrators within the middle school building	Approximate Teacher Enrollment	Advisor Teacher / Student Ratio Advisory Program
Middle School A	6-7-8	687	2	33	1:20
Middle School B	6-7-8	797	2	57	1:14
Middle School C	6-7-8	874	3	38	1:23
Middle School D	5-6-7-8	910	2	46	1:20
Middle School E	6-7-8	347	1	25	1:14
Middle School F	6-7-8	527	2	26	1:20

Thank you for your time today on the telephone. I would like to select the date and location for our second interview. Can you give me a date and time when we can meet at your earliest convenience?

Contact # 2: Interview (face-to-face)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. The purpose of this research study is to learn about middle school principals' perspectives on advisory programs. Prior to starting today, I need your consent to participate. If you agree, I would like to audiotape this interview, unless you disagree. This is our second interview and it will be approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project, nor is there any direct benefit to you. All responses are confidential and results will be kept under lock and key. The services

of a professional transcriptionist will be retained to type the transcripts of this interview. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, there is no financial compensation for your participation, and your confidentiality will be respected throughout the study.   Therefore, you are welcome to withdraw from the interview or not answer any questions at any time.

> *Every interview will begin with some basic questions to help participants feel comfortable with the interview process along with the audio-recording device used during the interview (if participant permitted audio-recording). These general questions provide the demographic information and context of this study, and will help set the tone for the interview session.*

Background Questions

As we begin our interview today, I'd like to start with a few simple background questions about your professional career in the middle school.

1. How long have you been the middle school principal in this school district?
2. What is your job responsibility as a middle school principal?
3. As a middle school principal, what are your professional experiences with regards to your advisory program?
4. Please describe how your advisory program functions in your school. Can you offer your opinion on your advisory program containing elements based on a middle school concept and/or mentoring? Please share in detail.

Interview Questions

Next, the questions will focus on personal views of middle school advisory programs. The participants will reflect on their own experiences and knowledge on three topics associated with advisory programs.

> *As the participant responds, he or she will be asked additional probing questions and open-ended questions that will help to delve more in-depth and offer details for this study.*

These questions will be chunked into three topics 1) middle school concept, 2) advisory training, and 3) mentoring. This will help to clearly focus on one topic at a time throughout the interview.

Topic: middle school concept

5. What would you consider to be the essential components of an advisory program in middle school?
6. What factors do you believe lead to the success or shortcomings of your advisory

program for young adolescents?
7. Do you perceive any specific outcomes of the advisory program relative to the middle school concept?
    a. If yes, can you tell me more about those?
    b. How have you measured or documented those outcomes?
8. Do you perceive any advantages or disadvantages of the advisory program based on the middle school concept?
    a. If yes, can you tell me more about those?
    b. How have you measured or documented those outcomes?

Next, I would like to gather important insight into advisory programs relative to adolescent development. I am seeking responses to understand the principals' views on advisory and the unique reasons for its successes or failures. I will be probing as to determine if any aspect of adolescent development (academic, social-emotional, physical) is considered relative to advisory programs.

Topic: advisory program
9. Can you share any barriers of the advisory program that you feel are important to know for this study? Please share the details of a specific example.
10. How do you see the facilitators or training as being related to the advisory program? Please share the details or a specific example that has meaning for you.
11. How are the characteristics of adolescent development addressed inside your advisory program?
    a. Can you share your reflections on this with me or provide any documents?
12. In your view, what is the biggest influence of your advisory program on young adolescents? Please explain with detail.
13. What are the benefits of the advisory program? Please explain why.
14. Do you believe middle school advisory programs offer positive or negative experiences for your students? Please explain why.
15. How is your advisory program scheduled in the building?
    a. Can you share any documents related to your advisory schedule? Do you have a schedule I may keep?

As I continue to probe further in the interview, I hope to discover more in-depth data with each participant.

Topic: mentoring
16. When you interview candidates, do you hire teachers who have prior experience as an advisor and/or have mentor training? Please explain further.
17. How much time or training is offered to a teacher serving in the role of advisor or mentor for the program in your building?
    a. Is there a system of measure or accountability for this training?
    b. What are the criteria to be a mentor in your middle school? Please explain further. Do you have any documents to share?
    c. Is there an evaluation process annually to review the mentoring done by an advisor in this role?

18. What do you see as the greatest impact either positively or negatively from mentoring inside the advisory program?
   a. Please share an example or a personal view.
19. What is your perception on the skills your students learn from a mentoring experience while participating in the advisory program? Can you give an example?
20. Can you share your opinion on advisory programs as you see their value in terms of diminishing or expanding currently in middle schools today?

Before we end today, is there any additional information that you would like to offer? I appreciate you sharing your opinions and views on advisory programs. I will be sending you a transcript of this interview so that you may check it for accuracy and to ensure that your ideas are reflected appropriately. Thank you for your time again.

Please let me know of a convenient time to call you next week after you have read through the transcript. If you need to contact me for any reason, I can be reached at (724) 457-2241.

Contact #3: Telephone Conversation

Hello, today is the third contact we will have to verify or clarify any information from our second interview.

I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. Again, there are no foreseeable risks associated with this project, nor is there any direct benefit to you. All responses are confidential and results will be kept under lock and key. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, there is no financial compensation for your participation, and your confidentiality will be respected throughout the study. You are welcome to withdraw from the interview or not answer any questions at any time.

Prior to starting, I need your consent to participate. This is our last interview and it will last no longer than 5-10 minutes.

Questions:
1. Would you like to add or delete any information from the transcripts?
2. Would you like to share any additional information that will be of value to my research study?
3. Do you have any need for clarification or may I answer any additional concerns you may have at this time?

Conclusion:
I appreciate all your support and professional experience that has been beneficial to this study. Thank you for helping to create a transition between what the research tells us are best practices for middle school advisory programs and your own perspectives from the role of the principal. If you need to contact me after today, please do not hesitate to reach me at (724)457-2241. Thank you.

APPENDIX D

IRB NOTIFICATION

University of Pittsburgh
Institutional Review Board

3500 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 383-1480
(412) 383-1508 (fax)
http://www.irb.pitt.edu

To: Julie Moore
From: Christopher Ryan, Ph.D., Vice Chair
Date: 1/27/2014
IRB#:   PRO13110369
Subject: Principals' Perspectives on Middle School Advisory Programs

The above-referenced project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board. Based on the information provided, this project meets all the necessary criteria for an exemption, and is hereby designated as "exempt" under section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) Tests, surveys, interviews, observations of public behavior.

Please note the following information:

- If any modifications are made to this project, use the "**Send Comments to IRB Staff**" process from the project workspace to request a review to ensure it continues to meet the exempt category.
- Upon completion of your project, be sure to finalize the project by submitting a "**Study Completed**" report from the project workspace.

Please be advised that your research study may be audited periodically by the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office

University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board

To:	Julie Moore
From:	Nicholas Landolina
IRB#:	PRO13110369
Title:	Principals' Perspectives on Middle School Advisory Programs

You have been designated as the individual to be contacted for assistance regarding the above referenced study. To initiate review of this research study, log into the Osiris site then click on the IRB# link above. Please go to the "**History**" tab to view the comments and contact the sender directly if needed.   This email sent on: 7/8/2014.

Comment or Question from Sender:
As your proposed modifications do not alter the risk level of your study, you may proceed with these changes.

If you require technical assistance, please contact the OSIRIS support team via email at irb@pitt.edu

Figure 7. IRB Notification

MIDDLE SCHOOL PORTFOLIO DESIGN

The Middle School portfolio system was designed to be viewed as a bridge or scaffold to the program designed for grades 9-12. As it was designed with the end in mind, it is pertinent to review the requirements for the 9th and 10th grade years, the *Career Exploration Phase.*

In the *Career Exploration Phase*, students are required to focus on any **two** of the 7-Essential Skills each year. The 7-Essential Skills are:
1. Communication
2. Problem solving
3. Setting and Evaluating Goals
4. Technological Aptitude
5. Teamwork
6. Leadership and
7. Work Ethic

After determining which **two** skills on which to focus, students in the *Career Exploration Phase* must submit one artifact per skill, which exemplifies the skill, to showcase in their portfolio. The students are **not** required to submit a reflection on each artifact, but rather are required to submit **one** reflection on the prompt: "Which Essential Skill best exemplifies you?" Skills chosen in the 9th grade year may not be chosen again in the 10th grade year.

In addition to the two artifacts of Essential Skills and one reflection, students must also submit each of the following artifacts during the *Career Exploration Phase*:
1. A snapshot of courses and activities
2. An autobiography
3. An IEG
4. PSSA scores
5. Keys2Work Career Portfolio

The Middle School Proposal

The Middle School process, designed to naturally flow into the *Career Exploration Phase*, will be referred to as the *Introductory Phase*. During the 7th and 8th grades, students will be directly and indirectly introduced to **two** of the 7-Essential Skills:
1.) Problem Solving and 2.) Setting & Evaluating Goals.

Additionally, students in the *Introductory Phase* will be required to submit each of the following to showcase in their portfolio:

1. **A snapshot of current core courses** – During the first two weeks of school, teachers will detail the core content skills to be learned / mastered throughout the year. Students will write the core content skills on a form that directs the students to designate a corresponding quarterly numerical self-assessment of each skill's mastery. An analysis of learning in the last month of school will be facilitated by core course teachers.

2. **A description of activities, school or community based, in which the student participate**s – Students will use flexible formatting, associated with Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences. Students, for example, may elect to create a brochure, write a news story, compose a song, etc. that illustrates their non-curricular life.

3. **An autobiographical pre-writing activity** – Students will construct a time line of the notable events in their life with corresponding historical events to add another layer of context. This activity will become a natural product of the social studies curriculum. This pre-writing activity should be used to inform the construction of the autobiography exhibit during the *Career Exploration Phase*.

4. **Individualized Education Goal (IEG)** – Students will complete a two-part form called an IEG. The first part, data collection, will require students to review their PSSA performance – scaled score, performance level which utilizes a data collection and goal setting form. The second part, goal setting, will require students to create goals that are SMART – **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**ction-based, **r**easonable, and **t**ime oriented.

5. **Evidence of 4 Core Content Skills** – At the onset of the *Introductory Phase*, teachers will articulate the content and skills to be mastered throughout the course (see #1 above). Students will select two core content skills for each semester (total of 4) and showcase supporting artifacts in the portfolio. Reflections are **not** required for these artifacts. A selection from each core course is **not** required.

6. **A Data Profile** – Part of the data profile will be the data collection portion of the IEG which requires which requires the collection and analysis of PSSA data. The second part of the data profile will require students to maintain core course graphs of their grades based on three categories/strands: 1.) tests and quizzes,
2.) homework, 3.) other.*
    The third category will naturally vary based on the course (e.g. Science and labs, Math and rubrics, Language Arts and essays, and Social Studies and current events).

7. **A Career Guide*** – Students will create a career guide in FACS II by completing the computer simulated "My Career Journey" program. The career guide will give the students their first glimpse into career clusters as well High School coursework which would support their clusters
   *The career guide is for 8th grade students only.

Since the Middle School and High School schedules are inextricably intertwined, the middle school will utilize regularly scheduled advisory periods set forth by the high school's portfolio committee; it is requested, however, that after the first year of implementation, that the middle school committee be involved and consulted about the frequency of advisory periods which require an altered schedule and the specific dates chosen for advisory tasks.

Additionally, as it is viewed as imperative that goals in the IEG be revisited with frequency during the *Introductory Phase,* the middle school will increase homeroom by 10-minutes every Friday (this will not affect the high school bell schedule). Increasing homeroom time will provide the advisors with sufficient time to conference with 4 students (after normal tasks are completed), thereby ensuring that all 16 advisees receive at least one personalized conference each month to discuss their progress toward their IEG goals. It is suggested that the Conference Day(s) in February be used to facilitate conferences with students and parents to discuss student goals and progress, which has been a consistent request of parents as noted on the yearly parent surveys.

Social Studies 8

Content Skills (September & October)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Identify and explain the 5 Themes of Geography				
Label various landforms				
Label various political regions				
Evaluate and label the physical regions				
Define and explain civics and citizenship				
Understand how history is studied and what biases may exist				
Identify the term Economics				
Explain free enterprise system				
Explain the 3 economic questions (needs vs. wants, and consumption)				
Utilize a map key/scale to identify various items on a map				
Locate / label the 50 states & capitals of the U.S.				
Discuss current events				
Explain the make-up / purpose of government				
Define democracy				
Identify and explain the various forms of government and their strengths and weaknesses				
Summarize the basic principles behind the Articles of Confederation				
Identify the process that was used to create a new republic				
Identify the term *compromise* and discuss the major compromises used to complete the Constitution.				

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