

Teacher as Advisor Program (TAP) Career Development Delivery System

Overview

Amid all the recent flurry of state and national reports calling for educational reform initiatives to raise academic standards, add course requirements, require competency testing, and otherwise upgrade the quality of our schools, very little attention has been given to the need for improved guidance and advisement services. Yet effective learning can take place only within a supportive environment of which developmental guidance is a crucial component.

When students have problems, they turn to those whom they know the best and whom they think can help the most. Surveys have shown that the adults to whom students of all ages are most likely to turn, after their parents, are teachers. A Teacher as Advisor Program (TAP) is one very effective way to directly involve teachers in developmental guidance that fosters *informed and considered career decisions*.

Informed and considered career decisions are the product of a career development process that includes:

- Creating awareness of options
- Exploring possible career pathways
- Reviewing available information
- Clarifying interests, values, and skills through assessment
- Reflecting upon experiences
- Relating education and training options to occupational goals
- Experimenting through work sampling, volunteering or employment
- Consulting with knowledgeable people in the field of interest
- Formulating plans for education, training, career entry, and retraining
- Making decisions and refining plans
- Implementing and adapting plans
- Applying the career development process throughout the lifespan

Informed and considered career decisions represent a match of person and work. The individual's skills, a person's interests, values, beliefs, and purposes should fit, align with, inform, and contribute to work, and work contributes to the individual's well-being and life goals.

The career planning process was once thought to be completed during youth or young adulthood, but with the changing nature of employment and higher expectations of individuals for quality in their relationship with work, a need has emerged for career development processes to take place throughout one's life. In this challenging work world, one's ability to work is mediated by the degree to which one can self-market, self-manage, align skills with work requirements, and satisfy clients and customers. Such career self-management rests squarely on the individual's ability to make informed and considered career decisions.

Given the urgent need for tools, resources, and processes that lead to informed and considered career decisions, investment in career information and the processes that lead to

informed and considered career decisions are crucial. Career information is the intelligence that guides workers (and the professionals who advise them) in the process of examining, comprehending, and making decisions about the world of work. Career information comprises occupational information, industry information, education and training information, financial aid information, and career development process information. Career information is the one tool upon which nearly every step in the process of making informed and considered career decisions depends.

A recent study conducted by America's Career Resource Network Association (ACRNA) has shown that informed and considered career decisions result in significant educational outcomes. Their findings are summarized below.

Improved educational achievement

- Students in secondary school career development programs had higher test scores on the ACT exam, enrolled in significantly more Advanced Placement classes, and were more likely to enroll in early graduation scholarship
- Students who have an awareness of the career relatedness of education are more likely to engage and achieve in school
- Students in systemic advisement programs have improved attitudes toward education and better grades
- Academic planning counseling (advisement programs) leads to increased academic efficacy and motivation.

Improved preparation and participation in postsecondary education

Several factors influence postsecondary participation:

- Preparing academically through a rigorous program of advanced coursework
- Having intentions for higher levels of education
- Having expectations that one can achieve at higher levels of education
- Participating in a career planning process that articulates goals, steps, and benchmarks
- Receiving supportive guidance
- Having postsecondary information about institutions, majors, financial aid, the college applications process, and support services available
- Getting good grades
- Being satisfied with the school experience

The process that leads to informed and considered career decisions addresses these factors with the following results:

- Career education has positive effects on student intentions for and participation in higher education
- School-to-Work participants were well prepared for college and the world of work and just as likely to attend college as comparable students
- Having an individual career plan is associated with better grades, participation in more academically rigorous curricula, and a greater likelihood of expecting to complete four or more years of postsecondary education.
- Students in schools with highly implemented comprehensive guidance programs
 - Take more advanced courses
 - Female students tend to take more advanced mathematics and science courses
 - Report better grades and higher satisfaction with school

- Had fewer career decision-making difficulties and increased their sense of personal direction

Better articulation among levels of education and between education and work

- Middle school students who receive career interventions before entering high school are better able to make effective educational decisions in course specificity, sequencing, and appropriateness for postsecondary education
- Career planning interventions have a positive effect on students' career development/career plans
- Career services are instrumental for students to make adaptive transitions between school and work

Shorter time to graduation

- Students who take college career courses execute fewer course withdrawals and take fewer courses in order to graduate
- Career academy graduates were less likely to need remedial coursework and more likely to receive their bachelor's degrees than other graduates

Higher graduation and retention rates

- Comprehensive and developmental career guidance and counseling can decrease the dropout rate and improve the attendance rate
- Well implemented career academies lead to improved attendance and graduations, as well as higher GPAs
- Students who make informed and considered career decisions are more likely to graduate from high school and to succeed in postsecondary education*

*Scott Gillie and Meegan Gillie Eisenhour, *The Educational, Social and Economic Value of Informed and Considered Career Decisions*, America's Career Resource Network Association Research-based Policy Guidance, Fall 2003.

Why do schools need a Teacher as Advisor Program (TAP)?

In most schools, there are far from enough school counselors or other specialists to provide a comprehensive program for developmental guidance. Counselors' hands are normally full as a result of dealing with high-risk students who have special needs or emotional problems, and most other students are lucky if they can gain access to a counselor more than a few times during a school year. Yet all students, especially at the middle school level, need the support of a friendly adult who cares about them personally; someone they can confide in and who can help them deal with the problems of growing up, keeping up with their studies, and planning their careers.

Are teachers qualified to provide guidance?

Although they may lack the professional training of counselors, instructors have a long tradition of helping students. They interact with the students daily, and are in an excellent position to lead, guide, and direct students in many and varied situations. Effective teachers share many of the same traits as effective guidance counselors: the ability to empathize with students, patience and flexibility, excellent interpersonal skills, openness to new ideas, and awareness of individual differences. Good teachers also habitually promote and sustain positive group interaction in their classes, and develop a helping relationship with both students and parents.

Elementary school teachers who work closely with young children in a single classroom, generally accept the idea that developmental guidance is an integral part of their responsibility to students. But middle and secondary school teachers work with a larger number of students and usually spend no more than an hour a day with each class. Because their teaching is limited to specialized fields, they tend to emphasize academic skills, and have little time to spend getting to know their students or talking about students' needs, interests or problems. Yet adolescents at the middle and high school level need personal attention and guidance as much as, if not more than, young children. A trusted high school or middle school teacher is often the student's first choice as someone to turn for advice.

What is the difference between guidance and counseling?

Guidance is the help that ALL students receive from parents, teachers, counselors, and others to assist with educational and career development.

Counseling is the help that SOME students receive from professionals to overcome personal and social problems that interfere with learning.

Professional school counselors work on average at a ratio of 1 counselor to 477 students (*ASCA school counselor*, American School Counselor Association, May/June 2004). At this ratio it is nearly impossible for school counselors to meet the needs of all students regarding academic development, personal/social development, and career development. According to a recent GSCA survey, the statewide counselor-to-student ratio is 1 to 457 and most counselors spend 47% of their time in non-program events and situations.

What would a Teacher as Advisor Program involve?

Teachers, especially in middle schools and high schools, often feel so overwhelmed with their schedules and responsibilities that they do not have the time to build close personal relationships with their students. To be successful, a Teacher as Advisor Program MUST be incorporated as a part of the regular curriculum. One popular approach has been to assign each teacher 15-20 advisees and to arrange regular advisement sessions of 25-30 minutes. The teacher then devotes at least one session per week to developmental guidance activities, during which students can explore personal and social issues, career and educational goals including academic advisement. Teacher-advisors also hold regular student and parent conferences and keep track of their advisee's academic progress, consulting with other teachers, school counselors, and support personnel. In general, the teacher advisor builds and maintains an on-going relationship with the advisee and their parents during their three years at the middle school and four years at the high school.

What should be included in an advisement curriculum?

A developmental guidance curriculum can be structured to include but not limited to units that focus on the following themes:

- Getting acquainted/orientation
- Study skills and habits
- Self-assessment
- Communication skills
- Decision making and problem solving
- Peer relationships
- Motivation
- Conflict management

- Career awareness, educational achievement and lifelong learning, and career management
- Educational planning including secondary course selection and postsecondary planning
- Community involvement

These units may be organized sequentially according to a school guidance calendar and the major events of the school year. For example, orientation and study skills units would be scheduled early in the year to allow students to get to know the school and one another. A self-assessment unit would follow, enabling the students to map out their personal strengths and identify the areas where they need to grow. While some of these topics can be covered in a single advisement period, others can become recurrent focal points for group discussion, such as motivation, conflict management, communication skills, team building, and study skills.

Some sessions should be carefully structured to build group cohesiveness or to introduce important developmental concepts. Grade reporting sessions would be necessary for academic advisement. Other sessions should be left open-ended, allowing discussion to focus on students' particular interests and needs or for unique needs that may occur in the local school such as harassment, bullying, and prom behavior.

Like anything else that happens in a school, a Teacher as Advisor Program will work best if it is not just a "top down" decision. The idea to create the program may come from the principal, the guidance department or from a group of teachers, but it must not be mandated. A good way to start is by inviting a team from another school that has already implemented a successful advisor program to make a presentation to the faculty. Before this visit the principal should introduce the idea at a faculty meeting and provide staff with a brief overview of how such programs work.

Use the presentation by the outside team to give faculty the opportunity to ask questions. One of the first questions teachers will ask is how they will find the time to be advisors and still carry out other responsibilities. School leaders need to be prepared to answer this question. To assure that the program has a chance to overcome teachers' initial objections and concerns about time, administrators will need to have already determined how they will address these issues: scheduling, training teachers, developing a guidance curriculum to be presented by teacher advisors, providing ongoing support and continuity. *Planning and teacher in-service are critical to the success of the program.* Following the presentation from the outside team, schedule a second faculty meeting to give teachers an opportunity to air remaining concerns and to ask additional questions. If possible, schedule a visit to a school that has a successful Teacher as Advisor Program in place. The best time to visit is during the annual student/teacher/advisor meetings. This visit can solidify support for implementing a program at your school.

One recommended method for the first year is to launch the effort using a core of interested volunteer teachers. In every school, there is a cadre of enthusiastic teachers who are willing to volunteer to try new things. As teachers gain experience and confidence in their advisory roles, they will talk about their experiences to their colleagues to gain more buy-in for the Teacher as Advisor Program. Allow the process to gain momentum through several years before mandating the program for all teachers.

Another technique is to interview students on how the teacher-advisor has helped them and what it has meant for their success in high school. These can be live interviews conducted at a faculty meeting or videotaped to show later. Continue to conduct interviews periodically. They can be an effective tool to introduce new teachers to the advisement program.

Not only is it a good idea to start the Teacher as Advisor Program with volunteers, it is also best to phase in student participation. Most schools start with the freshman class. Other successful programs have started with sixth grade students and, in the process, involved feeder schools in implementing the program. In this case, students will have one advisor at the first school and when they move to high school they get a new advisor who will stay with them until graduation.

Will teachers support TAP?

In spite of the advantages of a Teacher as Advisor Program, many teachers are reluctant to support such a program because they are skeptical about its utility or wary of the extra preparation that such a program would involve. If most teachers are to support a Teacher as Advisor Program, they must clearly understand and embrace the essential concepts of developmental guidance underlying the program and the curricular goals.

If TAP is to be anything more than a formality, the time commitment needs to be adequate. Group meetings of once a month or less are not likely to allow valuable helping relationships between teachers and their advisees to develop, nor do they give teachers the opportunity to establish continuity or consistency. TAP works best when it is scheduled at least once a week, otherwise, teachers tend to view TAP as an added encumbrance, peripheral to their major duties.

Along with an adequate allotment of time, TAP must also have Teacher as Advisor Curriculum with clearly articulated objectives and with supporting materials and activities that can stimulate student participation. Finally, teachers need to be assured of full support and cooperation from both the administration and the counseling staff, so that they won't feel as if the burden of student advisement has been unfairly shifted to their shoulders. For this reason, TAP should be monitored and evaluated by students, parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators every year to ensure that the program is meeting intended outcomes.

What are the advantages and limitations of Teacher as Advisor Programs?

Teacher as Advisor Programs compensate for the high counselor-student ratios that make it impossible for school counselors to know all students personally. But beyond this compensatory role, TAP strengthens teacher-student relationships and creates a supportive learning environment in which teachers and counselors can *work together* to respond to students' academic and personal needs.

Benefits to students

- Students get much more frequent one-on-one advice than is possible with the typical school's high ratio of students to counselors.
- Students are much more likely to have a clear focus on their future and a plan for getting there.
- This focus results in students taking higher-level academic courses, including advanced placement, and a concentration of academic or career/technical courses beyond the core.

- Students do not waste their elective. Instead, they fill them with those courses most likely to help them reach their career and educational goals.
- Students see a connection between their classes and future goals.
- More timely help is provided to students who are experiencing problems when they have a mentor who is keeping close track of their progress. As a result, *student performance improves*.

Benefits to parents

- Parents become more involved as a result of annual meetings with their student and the advisor.
- Parents know there is someone at the school with a strong interest in their child and they feel they have a contact they can call.
- Parents have a better understanding of the courses their child will need in high school to prepare them for postsecondary education or for a career.

Benefits to teachers

- Teachers have a much better understanding of graduation requirements and of all the school's offerings.
- Teachers develop strong bonds with their advisees that continue long after graduation.
- Teachers learn how to work as part of a team.
- Teachers see students from a different perspective that helps them understand how to structure classroom instruction to reach students more effectively.

What is the role of the administrative staff in the Teacher as Advisor Program?

Administrators play a critical role in the development and implementation of the Teacher as Advisor Program by:

- Researching various approaches for advisement and making recommendations for consideration by the administration and faculty
- Deciding who will be an advisor (assistant principals, non-certified staff, counselors, etc.)
- Pairing students with advisors and working with guidance staff to decide how best to serve students with special needs
- Developing a school schedule that allocates time for advisement
- Sending out mailings about the advisement program and parent/student/advisor conferences to parents
- Providing information about the advisement program to local media
- Conducting evaluations of advisement activities to share with faculty
- Assisting in making adjustments to advisement activities based on findings from evaluations
- Working with the TAP advisory staff to ensure that all logistics of the program are worked out

What is the role of the guidance staff in the Teacher as Advisor Program?

The first objection teachers are likely to raise about an advisor program is "Isn't this the counselor's job?" It is important to help faculty understand that teacher advisement is a way to ensure that all students get more support than is possible from a counselor who is assigned to serve several hundred students. In addition, faculties need to understand the central role that counselors will play in the success of the program. Typically, guidance staff is responsible for:

- Assisting in researching various approaches for advisement and making recommendations for consideration by the administration and faculty
- Working with the principal and other administrators to develop a school schedule that allocates time for advisement activities
- Serving as a continuing resource for the advisors
- Assisting in the development of the advisory curriculum with administration and faculty
- Connecting students referred by advisors with the needed academic, social, medical or mental health services
- Being on hand as a resource for advisors during the parent/student conferences
- Assisting in making adjustments to advisement activities based on findings from evaluations

How are students and advisors paired?

Most schools elect to have the same advisor stay with the same group of students each year until graduation. In this way, the students' freshman advisor moves up with them and becomes the sophomore advisor, and so on, throughout high school. In middle school, the grade six advisor would remain with the same student through eighth grade. This works well when the school is phasing in its Teacher as Advisor Program. In year two, a second group of volunteers can be paired with the incoming freshman class or sixth grade and the first group of advisors moves up with their advisees. Keeping an advisor with students in the same class also works best for delivering guidance lessons that are typically grade specific.

Another option used in schools that have established freshman academies is to use academy teachers as the freshman advisors and then in the sophomore year, assign students a new advisor who then stays with them throughout the rest of high school. A few schools have chosen to have students change advisors each year, but that approach does not appear to foster bonding of students and advisors to the same degree as an approach that maintains continuity over several years. The unique circumstances at each school must be given careful consideration in determining how to pair students and advisors.

Whatever system is selected, advisors and students can be matched alphabetically within the appropriate classes. This will eliminate the popularity factor. This also facilitates distributing test scores and other student materials because there is order to the system. Students who are non-English speaking should be paired with adults who can speak their native language, where possible. Both students and their parents are more comfortable with the situation if they can converse easily. Students with individualized education plans (IEP) can usually be accommodated in regular groups. IEP teachers may want these students in their own group since the IEP resource or special needs teacher will meet with these parent many times throughout the year.

Some schools have paired students and teachers based on similar career interests. This common interest contributes to bonding. Schools can survey teachers using the Georgia Department of Education Career Clusters or career clusters that the school has developed. Teachers can be asked to pick two clusters; students can then be given the same survey and the student/teacher matched accordingly.

Deciding how many students each advisor will be expected to work with is largely determined by the number of advisors available in relation to the number of students to be advised. Some schools elect to use only teachers, while others involve all staff from the

principal to the custodial staff. Using the latter approach does result in a lower advisor/student ratio but requires an intensive training program, especially for individuals who may not be accustomed to working one-on-one with students and parents. There is a clear advantage to having top administrators, including the principal, serve as advisors; it allows them to keep their fingers on the pulse of the school. To be effective, advisement groups should be limited to no more than 10 to 20 students.

How are advisement activities scheduled?

Implementing an effective advisement program requires some adjustment of the school schedule to provide the time advisors need to spend with their students. There are several options:

- Allocate time for advisement and other activities at least weekly. Some schools have set aside a period that is typically about 30 minutes each day as an advisement period. This time can also be used as an extra-help period for those who need it or as a study time for others. Using this approach the advisor can usually talk one-on-one with each advisee at least once a week, assuring that there is ongoing close contact. With such frequent meetings, problems can be caught early and appropriate interventions provided. Some schools that still have a homeroom period assign students to their advisors for homeroom and use this time as the advisement period. The daily advisement period is especially important in grade nine for at least the first nine weeks. That intensive time is crucial during the initial transition time to high school.
- Schedule time for advisement and other activities weekly. Another popular approach is to adjust the schedule so that at least a half-hour block can be used for advisement. Some schools also use this period for club activities, but that approach is not without problems. Students who need the support provided by an advisement period either get excluded from club activities or end up not seeking the extra support they need. Many schools that have tried to combine the two eventually decide to separate these activities. If this period can be kept primarily for advisement activities, the advisor has time to meet with at least half of the advisees weekly and the larger block provides more time for tutorial activities and gives students extra time to work on in-depth projects or enrichment activities.
- Set aside time monthly or twice monthly to offer an advisement session. Some schools schedule a block of time only once a month during which faculty are expected to present a series of advisement sessions. This approach does not provide the same amount of time for one-on-one advisement that a daily or weekly period offers, but may be the only option that some schedules can accommodate. In such cases, schools should allocate time immediately after report cards or progress reports are sent home for the advisors to meet with students to discuss progress and to determine which students will require extra help.

Regardless of the schedule a school selects, there must be planned activities for each advisement session. Lack of a formal structure will result in ineffective advisement and dissatisfaction among students and staff; it may ultimately destroy the advisement program.

What do advisors need to know?

The success or failure of the Teacher as Advisor Program ultimately rests with how well advisors are trained. Failure to prepare advisors adequately for their new role is the primary

reason programs do not succeed. In designing a training program, several questions must be answered.

The following list notes the essential knowledge advisors must have. Other items can be added to this list, depending on the unique requirements of each school, but these items are “musts.” All advisors should know and understand:

- How to read a student transcript
- School graduation requirements, including required courses and options
- Difference between college prep, career/technology and dual seals, and the specific course requirements for each
- Course offerings as outlined in the course guidebook (chairs of each department can be enlisted to review the offerings in their areas)
- How to design a six-year individual career plan (ICP)
- Difference between college-preparatory, honors, and Advanced Placement courses
- Opportunities students have to earn postsecondary credit while in high school: articulated credit, AP credit, dual enrollment, joint enrollment
- Postsecondary opportunities and entrance requirements for area colleges and universities (This should include state colleges/universities and technical colleges. Advisors should also be trained in how to obtain information about requirements for other institutions of interest to their students, including how to request information from counselors or conduct searches using database resources available at the school.)
- Military opportunities, special-purpose school opportunities, state-registered apprenticeship opportunities, industry-sponsored training opportunities
- School-sanctioned work programs that enable students to connect on-the-job experiences to their school work
- State scholarship opportunities including the HOPE program
- How students can access career information
- Basic information about each of their advisees, including ethnic background, socio-economic status, grades, test results, school attendance, and previous disciplinary actions
- How to talk with parents about their children’s current status, how they can best be prepared for the future, and how parents can help (including goal setting, time management, and study skills)
- How to conduct a successful advisement session
- How to deliver the advisory curriculum
- How to have a conversations with parents and students about what they don’t want to be doing two years after high school
- How to talk with parents from poverty
 - All parents from all ethnic groups and social classes from all parts of the country and all walks of life want their children to do well. Educators need to understand the culture and values of poverty in order to effectively engage parents in their child’s educational planning and progress. (Being in poverty is rarely about a lack of intelligence or ability.)
 - Make parents feel welcome. The school building may not be the best place to meet with these parents. Many have had negative experiences with school and may not trust school staff. The school must reach out to build trust and respect.
 - Educators need to establish a conversational tone at parent and student conferences. Teachers may want to cut through the conversation and get right to

the point. However, parents need to feel the school cares and one way to exhibit that caring is through casual discourse.

- Discussions may need to begin with a question. The question can lead parents to list things they don't want to happen for their child. The conversation can then begin to focus on helping them understand what their child needs to do at school to be successful.*

*Ruby Payne, *Poverty: A Framework for Understanding and Working with Students and Adults from Poverty*, 1995.

Available at www.GeorgiaCRN.org is a complete TAP workshop including tools and materials an administration would need to create, implement, and evaluate a Teacher as Advisor Program. This workshop includes power point presentations and forms program leaders would need to help a faculty understand the importance of such a program as well as the necessary ingredients to make the advisor and the program more successful.

How should teacher advisors be trained?

Training activities should be delivered in small packages, accompanied by written support materials. A number of schools with well-developed advisor programs are willing to share examples of the materials provided to each advisor. (See the Resources section at the end of this section for a list of schools to contact.)

One effective approach is to divide the “must know” items into a series of training modules that can be offered in short sessions over a period of weeks. In any case, the trainers should employ the best possible adult training methods to deliver the material. Training should involve work in teams, role playing, the opportunity for questions and answers, and assignments between sessions that require participants to practice what they are learning. Adequate time should be scheduled for the staff development. Schools may need to use some of their “dedicated” staff development time for this activity rather than adding time to the regular day.

The first session should start with a clear explanation of the purpose of the Teacher as Advisor Program and why it is needed. **It is important for the principal to lead this session.** This makes it clear to all faculty members that administrators have bought into the process. This convinces participants of the importance of the advisor program and inspires them to put forth their best effort to make the program successful.

When should training occur?

The training sessions would need to occur in the spring prior to the year in which the program will be implemented. In this case, advisors will need at least one half-day training session prior to the start of school. Another alternative is to plan at least two half-day training sessions prior to the start of the school year.

Some of the training will occur later in the year just before events are scheduled to occur. For example, teachers should have the opportunity to review each advisory curriculum activity right before it is to be delivered in order to make sure that the key points are fresh in their minds. Intensive training on conducting the annual meetings with parents should occur during the month before the scheduled conferences.

It is important to schedule feedback sessions for faculty as they begin to implement the program. This provides a much needed opportunity to discuss problems that advisors may encounter and to reinforce effective advisement strategies. These sessions can occur as part of regularly scheduled faculty meetings. Counselors should also be available to offer one-on-one assistance to teachers. They may want to observe advisors in action so they can offer advice on improving the sessions.

How does the training approach change after all faculty members have been trained?

There are two training issues that will need to be addressed as teachers become more familiar and comfortable with their role as advisors. First, what training will continuing faculty need to receive? An annual optional refresher course open to all faculty is advised. This allows advisors the opportunity to opt to participate if they feel they need additional support. Second, new advisors will need to receive a minimum one day of training, delivered in the number of sessions that fits best with the school schedule. It is a good idea to assign each new teacher a mentor to help them through their first year. This is a strategy that might be employed as a general practice for beginning teachers and not just limited to support for their role as advisors.

What are the best ways to develop an advisory curriculum?

An effective advisement curriculum is grade specific and designed to address the issues that are likely to be most important for students at each stage of their schooling. Many schools now have excellent curricula in place that can be used as models. (See the Resources section for a list of schools with advisory curricula.)

Share samples of curricula with teachers and ask for their opinions about topics for advisory sessions. School administrators might ask for teacher volunteers to serve on an advisory curriculum committee to provide suggestions for topics, identify resources that can be used, and write some lesson plans. It is critical that each lesson introduce a worthwhile concept and have enough depth to fill the scheduled timeframe.

A developmental advisory curriculum can be structured to include units that focus on the following themes:

- Getting acquainted/orientation
- Study skills and habits
- Self-assessment
- Communication skills
- Decision making and problem solving
- Peer relationships
- Motivation
- Conflict resolution
- Personal hygiene and wellness
- Career awareness and development
- Educational planning and community involvement

Grade-specific topics could include the following:

Sixth through Eighth Grade

- Study skills
- Class social etiquette

- Nontraditional careers
- Setting future goals
- Completing an Individual Career Plan (ICP)
- Beginning a career portfolio
- Understanding graduation requirements
- Determining your learning style
- Interest and aptitude assessment
- Driving laws
- Child labor laws
- Time management
- Money management
- Decision making skills
- Communication skills
- Team work and competition
- Balancing your life
- Determining your learning style
- Introduction to Georgia Career Information System's (GCIS) resources
- Course descriptions
- Career clusters
- Character development
- Understanding your grade point average (GPA)
- Conflict management
- Transitioning to high school
- Organizational skills

Ninth Grade

- Setting future goals
- Getting the most from you high school years (including academics and extracurricular activities)
- Study skills
- How to form effective study teams with other students
- Maintaining a career portfolio
- Time and stress management (could repeat every year)
- Interest and aptitude assessment
- Decision-making skills
- Conflict management skills
- Communication skills
- Understanding graduation requirements
- Revisit/adjust ICP
- How to read a transcript and figure a GPA
- Investigating scholarships and financial aid sources

Tenth Grade

- Test-taking skills
- Test preparation (offered at an appropriate time to prepare students for taking each test, including state tests and ACT, PSAT, SAT, PLAN, ASVAB)
- How to interpret test scores

- Interest and aptitude assessment
- Revisit/adjust ICP
- Nontraditional careers
- Serving your community
- Maintaining a career portfolio
- Team work
- Character building
- Investigating scholarships and financial aid sources

Eleventh Grade

- Relating school to work
- Finding the right balance of school, work, friends, and family
- Postsecondary offerings in the area and state (may require more than one session)
- Making the senior year count
- Revisit/adjust ICP
- Test preparation (offered at an appropriate time to prepare students for taking each test, including state tests and ACT, PSAT, SAT, PLAN, ASVAB)
- Developing a resume
- Job search techniques
- Job interviewing skills
- Completing a job application
- Take a postsecondary college exam, if applicable
- Take the ASVAB
- Analyzing exam results
- Summer opportunities
- Finding scholarships/financial aid sources

Twelfth Grade

- Senior projects, portfolios, and presentations
- Preparing a successful college application
- Finding scholarships/financial aid (may require more than one session)
- Handling money and credit matters responsibly
- Work ethics
- Conflict management
- Military opportunities
- Countdown to graduation
- Getting ready for postsecondary education and work
- Preparing a successful employment application
- Revisit/adjust ICP

The further in advance activities can be developed, the more effective the curriculum will be. The curriculum for the full year can be distributed to teachers at the beginning of the year. This approach requires advance planning but will assure that there is continuity throughout the year and allows teachers to see the full picture. Alternatively, each activity can be provided a week or two before it is to be delivered. Whichever approach is used, each activity should be reviewed with advisors about a week before the scheduled time for delivery. In addition to the activities, teachers can be provided other resources such as

videos, articles, and examples of student activities to be used to reinforce the activity. (See the TAP activities at the end of this section.)

How should the Teacher as Advisor Program be introduced to students and parents?

Assuming that the program will be phased in grade by grade, the initial announcement might begin with a letter sent to all eighth graders and their parents in winter before they begin high school or to all sixth graders before they begin middle school. The letter should provide an overview of the program, and an invitation to join school representatives at an open house. The open house can provide an opportunity to explain the program and its benefits to both the students and their parents and should include time for questions from participants.

Explain that the next step will be an individual conference for high school students and parents to help the student set a goal for after high school and to develop a six-year individual career plan to meet the goal. Middle school students would set high school goals and create individual career plans. Students and parents can be asked to sign up for these sessions that evening. If possible, arrange for a newspaper article on the planned advisor program. This can offer an opportunity to reach a wider audience with information about the expected benefits of the program. Another idea for informing and engaging parents is to establish an “advisor call” program where each adviser calls the parents of each of their advisees to discuss conference nights and other topics.

When should a student/parent/advisor conference be held?

Perhaps the most critical activity carried out by advisors is the annual conference with parents and student. Schools have adopted a wide variety of approaches for how the conferences are conducted. Here are some general guidelines.

The ideal time of year for the conferences is in the late winter or spring around the time that students traditionally make course selections for the coming year. Some schools plan a single big event held over several afternoon and evening hours. Others have decided to hold conferences on a Saturday followed by a day off on Monday to make up for the time teachers are asked to work on the weekend. Another option is to leave it up to each advisor to schedule appointments at the mutual convenience of the advisor and each family. In this case, the conferences must span a week or two. Conferences may be held at school or away from school.

How should appointments be scheduled?

One method is to ask each advisor to schedule appointments. Another is to send a letter home with a return card for parents to indicate a preferred meeting time. Yet another method, designed to avoid the scheduling conflicts, is to hold all conferences during certain hours on a designated day each year. That day is determined more than a year in advance so it can be placed on the school’s master calendar. A few weeks before conference day, students are asked to find out from their parents the time that will be most convenient to meet. During an advisory session, students fill in the designated time on a personalized letter to their parents. The letter is then mailed by the school to each home. About a week before conference day, all families receive a postcard reminder. Information about the conferences is also published in the local newspaper. On the day before the conferences, a reminder announcement is made over the school’s TV channel. This approach results in far higher parent participation. (See the Resources section for samples)

What is important for setting up the conferences?

Schools will want to designate a large area of the school for the conferences. The most likely locations are the school cafeteria, gymnasium or library. Guidelines to help assure a smooth flow include:

- The custodial staff assumes full responsibility for setting up the cafeteria for the conference. They ask high school CAD students to develop a layout for the arrangement of tables that is followed each year. Student helpers are enlisted to get the room ready.
- Teachers are assigned to tables in alphabetical order by their last name.
- Student organization members are on hand to help participants find the correct table.
- A festive atmosphere is created with balloons and refreshments.

What else can add value to the conferences?

Some schools combine the conferences with a career fair. Colleges, military representatives, technical school representatives and local employers distribute information and talk with students and their parents. A wide range of career and scholarship information is available. Organize handouts for parents that provide helpful information about workforce demands and the impact of rigorous academic courses on student achievement.

What should be covered in the parent/student/advisor conferences?

A common outline of items to be covered in the conference, such as the list below, can be most helpful for advisors.

- Make introductions (if this is the first meeting).
- Review the student's academic profile (which includes test scores and samples of student work).
- Review the student's performance in each course.
- Review the student's goals to determine if these have changed. In the initial meeting, goals will need to be established.
- Review the courses that are recommended for the student for the next year. Remember, the academic courses that prepare students for college are also the best course to prepare students for work.
- Review, if possible, the student's career portfolio - this review can open many avenues for conversation between the student and parents.
- Discuss recommended courses and future implications.
- Discuss work-based learning opportunities, extracurricular activities, and extra-help activities that support the goals established in the student's plan.
- At the end of the conference, have parents complete an evaluation.

Other handouts useful for teacher advisors are shown on the next page.

How to Talk to Parents

- Show respect to parents.
- Show them that you share a common goal for their children. You both want them to succeed.
- Be realistic in discussing students' current status and what it will take to get them ready for postsecondary study and a career.
- Help them understand the meaning of test results.
- Paint a clear picture of the realities of today's rising workplace requirements and the academic and technical skills needed to succeed.
- Explain why taking and succeeding in high-level courses in high school is an indicator of how well students will succeed as adults.
- Tell parents how they can help.
- Explain how the school will help, including how to access extra help and other support services that will help their child succeed in school.

How Parents Can Help Their Students Succeed

- Help them set a goal and explore the possibilities for achieving it.
- Expect students to take high-level academic courses in high school and to work hard to succeed.
- Ask about school work every day.
- Establish a regular time for homework and limit television and computer games.
- Expose students to postsecondary education and work opportunities.
- Participate in annual meetings with the student and the teacher advisor to review the student's progress and individual career plan for the next academic year.
- Review materials and checklists provided through the advisory program.

How can one-to-one student advisement be most effective?

Teacher advisors need to keep track of how each of their advisees is progressing through the regular advisement sessions discussed earlier. Some of the things that should be discussed in the advisement sessions are:

- How students feel they are doing in classes
- Communications the advisor may have received from teachers about problems
- Student's grades and attendance after each reporting period
- Test results
- Future goals and special concerns that affect students at each grade level
- Creating and maintaining a GCIS portfolio
- The actions students need to take to achieve their post-high school goals
- How to access resources for personal and academic problems the student may bring up

Advisors cannot be the sole source for solving all problems student may encounter. Instead, they are the critical link between the home and school and between the student and other sources of help. Advisors must always have antenna out to detect problems students may be experiencing. They will need to decide when parents need to be contacted and when the student should be referred to a counselor or to a source of additional academic support in the school. It is important for advisors to understand that their responsibility as mentors is primarily to be a source of information and support for the student. Ultimately, they may be the only one in the school the student feels truly comfortable turning to with problems and to keep them on track.

Advisors will be expected to access pertinent information about each student. Resources should include copies of report cards, test scores, career interest inventories, and the student's address, home phone number, and contact information for parents.

How do you evaluate the Teacher as Advisor Program?

Evaluation is key to the successful continuation of any advisor program. Adjustments can be made based on feedback received. In addition, positive evaluations and works or praise provide valuable data to support the program's continuation. At a minimum, the evaluations conducted should include:

- An annual survey of students to determine the benefits they received (paper survey or a series of focus groups led by members of the guidance staff)
- Parent survey completed at the time of the annual conference
- Annual teacher survey to gather information about their experiences, additional support needed, and suggestions for improvements

All evaluation data should be tabulated and shared with school leaders, faculty, parents, district leaders, and the school board. It is a good idea to establish an evaluation committee with responsibility for developing evaluation instruments, tabulating data, and disseminating results. (See the Resources section for samples)

Resources for Teacher as Advisor Programs

System Contacts

Apollo High School - Owensboro, Kentucky

Contact: Matthew Constant

Phone: (270) 685-3121

Email: Mconstant@davies.k12.ky.us

Indiana Middle Level Institute - Indianapolis, Indiana

Contact: Sally Steward

Phone: (317) 940-8036 or (800) 368-6852, Ext. 8036

Email: ssteward@butler.edu

Istrouma High School - Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Contact: Lorraine Fitzgerald

Phone: (225) 355-7701

Loganville High School - Loganville, Georgia

Contact: Karen Rutter

Phone: (770) 466-4892

Email: krutter@walton.k12.ga.us

Lost Fresnos High School - Los Fresnos, Texas

Contact: Sherryl Loya,

Phone: (956) 233-3300

Email: Sloya@los-fresnos-cons.k12.tx.us

Pickens Middle School - Pickens, South Carolina

Contact: Ricky Evans

Phone: (864) 878-8734

Email: evansrd@pickens.k12.sc.us

Polytech High School - Woodside, Delaware

Contact: Scott Kemerling

Phone: (302) 697-3255

Email: Skemerli@polytech.k12.de.us

Springdale High School - Springdale, Arkansas

Contact: Jan Struebing

Phone: (501) 750-8883

Email: jstruebing@k12.sdale.org

Talbot County Schools - Easton, Maryland

Contact: Deborah Urry,

Phone: (401) 822-0330

Harlem High School - Harlem, Georgia

Contact: Carla Shelton, Assistant Principal

Phone: (706) 556-59980

Email: cshelton@ccboe.net

Dougherty Comprehensive High School - Albany, Georgia
Contact: Janice McKinnons, Career/Technology Director
Phone: (229) 431-1324
Email: jmckinno@dougherty.k12.ga.us

Claxton High School, - Evans County, Georgia
Contact: Cheryl T. Lawson, Career/Technology Supervisor
Email: clawson@evans.k12.ga.us

School Name

Student

School

Teacher Advisor

Dear Parents:

(Date) from (time) to (time) has been set aside for your conference with you, your child, and his/her advisor.

We are eager to visit with you to discuss how to help your child with his/her future. We will be meeting in the (location). Staff will be available to direct you to the location of your conference.

If you cannot keep this appointment, please call the school at (phone #) to cancel and to reschedule the conference. Thank you.

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL
Anywhere High School
600 First Street
Everywhere, Georgia 30054-6754

(Date)

Dear Parent:

Anywhere High School has implemented a new Teacher as Advisor Program this year. The purpose of this program is to provide additional guidance for your child in the areas of academics and career choices. This guidance comes from a faculty member to whom your child has been assigned.

It is important to us that you become an integral part of this guidance process. We recognize the educational efforts you already make at home and are certain that you will see the value of becoming part of a team consisting of you, your child, and your child's advisor. As part of the team you will help plan your child's educational and career goals and see to it that his or her individual career plan in high school will contribute to those goals in a meaningful, positive way.

You are being asked to attend a conference with your child and the faculty advisor in order to finalize an individual career plan that will support your child's anticipated career path. This schedule will be based on your child's pre-enrollment choices made in February. Conferences will be held in the cafeteria on **(date)** from 3:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Your conference will last approximately 20 minutes.

Your appointment has been scheduled on (date) at _____ with your child's advisor, _____ . If you cannot attend or need a different time, please call your child's advisor at (phone number) to reschedule. We want you to be a part of this very important team.

We look forward to meeting with you and planning you child's enrollment for next year.

Sincerely,

Pat Thompson, Principal

Date _____

Dear _____,

Parent-teacher conferences will be conducted at school on (day of the week), (month) (day) and on (day of the week), (month) (day) (year). We have set aside the hours from (time) to (time) on (day of the week) and from (time) to (time) on (day of the week) for the conferences.

Student success is greatly enhanced when parents “team up” with teachers and become part of the student’s decision making process. I hope you will be able to attend!

Our school now has a Teacher as Advisor Program. I am your child’s advisor and will meet with you and your student each time we have parent-teacher conferences until your child graduates. I also meet each month, or as needed, with your child to discuss career planning, academic achievements, communication, self-concept, decision making, and problem solving techniques.

The time scheduled for your conference is (time). We will meet in (location). I will have your child’s report card for you. Enrollment information will be sent home with your child prior to the conferences to give you time to look over our course offerings. Other teachers may have times available if you wish to visit with them while you are on campus. Counselors will also be available for any questions you may have.

If this time is not convenient, please indicate the time you will be able to come. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (phone #) during the hours of (times).

Sincerely,

Teacher Advisor

Please respond below:

Student’s Name: _____

Parent’s Name: _____

_____ I will attend at the scheduled time.

_____ I would prefer the following date and time: _____

_____ I will not be able to attend.

Parent’s Signature: _____

Teacher as Advisor Program Student Evaluation Sheet

Please respond to each item by circling the appropriate answer.

Overall, I believe the Teacher as Advisor Program sessions were a positive experience.	YES	NO
I feel there should be more sessions.	YES	NO
I feel that the sessions should be longer.	YES	NO
I feel comfortable in Teacher as Advisor Program sessions.	YES	NO
I feel that this program is valuable and helpful to my future.	YES	NO

What session(s) was the most useful to you? Why?

How do you feel we could make the sessions better?

Thank you

Teacher as Advisor Program Conference Evaluation Parent Survey

In order for us to be better prepared each year to meet with parents of incoming students, we would like for you to take a minute to tell us what you think. Please complete this evaluation and put it in the boxes located by the doors. **THANK YOU!**

1. Do you feel that the parent/academic advisor conference was beneficial for you and your child?

Very Beneficial					Not Beneficial
5	4	3	2		1

2. If you did not feel it was beneficial, please tell us what we need to change.

3. Did scheduled appointments make it more convenient for you to attend?

Yes	No
-----	----

Comments:

4. Were you provided with adequate information to assist your child with the career planning process?

Yes	No
-----	----

Comments:

5. If not, please let us know what additional information you need.

6. Do you have any suggestions to help encourage more parental involvement?

Additional Comments (please use the back if necessary):

Teacher as Advisor Program (TAP) Rubric*

This rubric is designed to assist in rating the current implementation status of your school's **TAP Program**. This self-rating tool assists school personnel in setting systemic goals. It can highlight at what level your program is being implemented and serve as a benchmarking tool for improvement. Steps are listed in the suggested order of occurrence. Under each step, please mark each statement that reflects what has been implemented at your school. Add the number of check marks under each step; then add the totals for Steps 1-8 and use the chart to evaluate your program.

Describe your primary responsibility: (CHOOSE ONLY ONE)

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (a) Superintendent | (f) Academic Teacher |
| (b) High School Principal | (g) Elective Teacher |
| (c) Middle School Principal | (h) Career/Technical Teacher |
| (d) Assistant Superintendent | (i) Guidance Counselor |
| (e) Assistant Principal | (j) Other: _____ |

Planning Process

1. Administrative support:

- ___ Administrative leaders work in concert with teachers
 - ___ Review/discuss teacher as advisor role during teacher evaluation
 - ___ Review teacher expectations during hiring process
 - ___ Appoint a Teacher as Advisor (TAP) coordinator
 - ___ Organize and work with a planning committee that includes parents, students, faculty, and other stakeholders
 - ___ Approve established goals and a plan of action
 - ___ Market program name/logo
 - ___ Foster communication among parents, teachers, counselors, and students about the program
 - ___ Provide via technology opportunities to tour or observe model TAP school programs
 - ___ Provide TAP orientation for key staff
 - ___ Actively participate as an advisor to a group of students
 - ___ Develop a school master schedule that allocates time for advisement activities
- ___ **Total of twelve points possible for Step 1**

Set Calendar

2. Yearly Calendar Schedule:

- ___ Establish planning committee meeting times
 - ___ Target staff training dates
 - ___ Schedule regular student advisory meeting sessions exercising care to minimize the impact on a single class period
 - ___ Schedule parent/teacher/student conference dates/times
 - ___ Conduct enrollment utilizing TAP process and available resources
- ___ **Total of five points possible for Step 2**

Curriculum

3. Curriculum Development and Implementation (To be addressed by planning committee and administration)

- Develop and administer a student-advisory needs assessment
- Identify or develop grade-level materials for program use
- Prepare lessons/advisor outline guide
- Copy materials for use by advisors
- Identify categories to be incorporated into the development of student portfolios

Suggested lessons include but are not limited to: (Please check lessons being utilized. Each checkmark counts one-half (.5) point toward total.)

- Develop an individual 6-year plan to identify course selection
- Interpret interest inventories/academic assessments
- Create resume
- Demonstrate employability skills
- Improve study skills
- Explore lifelong learning options
- Figure grade point average (GPA)
- Address high school graduation requirement
- Learn college & military entrance requirements
- Develop the GCIS lifelong electronic portfolio related to future goals
- Utilize the US Department of Education (USDE) 16 Career Clusters (www.careerclusters.org) to explore potential career opportunities
- Integrate use of Georgia Career Information System (GCIS)
- Other _____

Total of eleven and 1/2 points possible for Step 3

Advisor Time with Students

4. Student Advisement:

- Work with career cluster or single grade peer groups for one to four years as a unit
- Meet with small equitably distributed groups of students
- Meet a minimum of six to ten times per year
- Meet with advisory group for a minimum of thirty to forty-five minutes
- Provide a senior seminar to address grade specific needs

Total of five points possible for Step 4

Teacher Training

5. Teacher Involvement:

- Train staff on TAP topics prior to advisor/advisee time
- Establish peer mentors for new advisors
- Train substitutes, new staff, and support staff on the use of TAP materials
- Train advisors with guidance counselor's assistance prior to sessions. (Planning committee responsibility)
- Provide advisors inquiry-only access to advisees' attendance, grades, discipline, etc., records on a need-to-know basis

Teacher training includes but is not limited to: (Please check training opportunities being offered. Each checkmark counts one-half (.5) point toward total.)

- TAP purposes, activity, and benefits
- Advisor responsibilities/duties for quality
- Orientation to technology center programs, such as the Georgia Career Information System

- ___ Cooperative agreements
- ___ Completion of enrollment forms/personal data
- ___ Sequence of core class selection
- ___ Academic progress, attendance, and future plans
- ___ Enrollment forms
- ___ Plans of study for students
- ___ Assessment interpretation (Interest inventories, ACT, etc.)
- ___ Career Clusters
- ___ High school graduation requirements and NCAA requirements
- ___ College entrance requirements
- ___ Other _____

___ **Total of twelve points possible for Step 5**

Parent/Student/Advisor Conference

6. Parental Participation:

- ___ Increase parental attendance at conferences and their involvement in the enrollment process
- ___ Provide a course description booklet
- ___ Provide information booths (e.g., yearbook, PTA-PTO, student organizations, military, postsecondary education, etc.)
- ___ Update students' Individual Career Plan (ICP) at least annually

Observed benefits at your school: (Please check measurable benefits observed at your school. Each checkmark counts one-half (.5) point toward total.)

- ___ Increased parental participation/attendance (75% or above)
- ___ Improved course selection and scheduling
- ___ Decreased schedule changes
- ___ Increased faculty ownership for student success
- ___ Increased time for counselors to focus on counseling
- ___ Increased student participation in enrollment with parents as a team
- ___ Increased knowledge of educational opportunities
- ___ Improved understanding of graduation requirements/college entrance requirements
- ___ Increased enrollment in math and science
- ___ Greater number of students with a career plan/focus on higher achievement
- ___ Increased number of partners (businesses, colleges, etc.,)
- ___ Greater percentage of students passing all parts of the GHSGT before graduating

___ **Total of ten points possible for Step 6**

Marketing

7. Community and Parental Public Relations:

- ___ Provide letter to inform parents of program purpose and meeting dates
- ___ Maintain contact with parents regarding student progress and TAP activities
- ___ Publish a newsletter (bi-annual, annual, quarterly, etc.)
- ___ Report to the community on a regular basis about the program and its results (TV, radio, etc.)

___ **Total of four points possible for Step 7**

Evaluation

8. Program Evaluation and Improvement:

- _____ Parents evaluate conference/enrollment time
- _____ Students evaluate advisor time and conference/enrollment time
- _____ Teachers evaluate advisor time and conference/enrollment time
- _____ Advisory Committee compiles, reviews, and shares program evaluation results
- _____ Program adjustments are made prior to the next school year's sessions

_____ **Total of five points possible for Step 8**

_____ **GRAND TOTAL for Step 1 through Step 8**

Evaluating Your Teacher as Advisor (TAP) Program

Add one (1) bonus point if additional specific lessons are listed after "Other" in Section C and one (1) bonus point if additional specific training topics are listed after "Other" in Section E.

Advanced (Majority of criteria checked in each section)	Proficient (Minimum of 3 criteria checked in each section)	Basic (Minimum of 2 criteria checked in each section)	Developing (Must have <u>at least</u> 1 criterion checked in each section)	Not Yet Established (No criteria checked in one or more sections)
56-66 Points	41-55 Points	26 – 40 Points	11- 25 Points	0-10 Points

Advanced Your TAP is well established. Continue to review and self-evaluate after every session and make required adjustments as needed to continue to help students be successful.

Proficient Your TAP has engaged the majority of your school's staff, students, and parents. The TAP activities are varied and supportive of students' goals. Continue to challenge yourselves to find additional ways to provide students the opportunity to develop skills they need for future success.

Basic Your TAP is meeting the standard. Continue to meet on a regular basis with your advisory committee, encourage staff participation, and seek feedback from students and parents to help make progress in what you're doing.

Developing Your TAP is in the development stage. You most likely have been working hard to develop a program in which everyone is actively involved. You feel frustration because not everyone views it as their job to assist students in planning for their future. Continue to seek administrative support, train staff on a regular basis and seek community assistance.

Not Yet Established Seek assistance because your TAP may need improvement or you have not worked to develop and implement a TAP.

* Developed by, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education. Revised to reflect Georgia-specific terminology and resources. Contact Vivian Snyder for more information at vsnyder@doe.k12.ga.us.