

What the research says...

What's the problem?

- ✓ “Nearly one of every three eighth grade students in the U.S. does not graduate from high school and half of Black and Latino students do not make it to graduation day” (Orfield, 2004).
- ✓ “Eighth and ninth grade is a defining period for teenagers, and researchers have noted adjustment problems during this transition period that include decreases in grade point average, attendance, feelings of connectedness, and cocurricular participation and increases in anxiety concerning school procedures and older students, social difficulties, and changes in relationships with parents” (Isakson & Jarvis, 1999).
- ✓ “More students fail ninth grade than any other level, but when students experience a variety of programs such as social support, orientation to the next school, peer interaction and curriculum information as well as academic support, fewer students are retained in ninth grade” (McIver, 1990).
- ✓ “The most common reasons for dropping out of high school [have been identified as] attitude towards school, poor school performance, and relationship with teachers. [It was also found that] dropouts had lower academic performance, decreased motivation, and an increased sense of alienation from the school environment” (Lan & Lanthier, 2003).
- ✓ According to a recent article, “Dropout Nation” in *Time* magazine, “...an increasing number of researchers are saying that nearly 1 out of 3 public high school students won’t graduate... Virtually no community, small or large, rural or urban, has escaped the problem” (Thornburgh, 2006). One dropout interviewed in the article noted, “It would have been nice to have someone pushing me to stay. Who knows how things would have turned out?” (Thornburgh, 2006).
- ✓ “Programs that consist of minimal activities, building tours, and assistance in registration reported the highest drop-out and retention rates. On the other hand, students enrolled in the most extensive and comprehensive programs were able to maintain their grade-level placement in high school and thus has the lowest drop-out rates” (Hertzog & Morgan, 1999, n.d.).

Why Advisory?

- ❖ SLC Goals & Objectives: Goal 3 reads, “Personalize the learning environment at each high school to better support students’ increased academic achievement.” Objectives specifically include planning and implementing an adult advocate system and a freshman transition program.
- ❖ Advisory programs have had a positive impact on students. “Credit was given in evaluation reports for improved academic achievement, a reduction in failing grades, and an increase in higher test scores... More students took college entrance exams... There was more monitoring of student progress by advisors and this was corroborated by 61% of students surveyed... 46% of teachers believed they influenced several of their advisees to improve their grades. Student attendance in all participating schools improved 44%” (Myrick, 1990).

- ❖ “In general, students who do not feel an attachment to school personnel tend to have poorer attendance and to drop out more than students who perceive that they are part of a supportive, caring school environment” (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989).
- ❖ Recent research conducted by Paul George found that “93% of the exemplary schools has an advisory program that included every child. Some of the results were: consistent academic improvement (62%); an 80% reduction in office referrals; 80% of the respondents testified that confidence in self-directed learning was positively effected” (Killin & Williams, 1995).
- ❖ In a national survey, according to principals’ estimates, “schools with strong advisory programs were ‘more successful at meeting students’ needs for guidance, advice, and counseling and at lowering the proportion of students who will drop out before finishing high school” (Ziegler & Mulhall, 1994).
- ❖ “...advisory programs are a type of primary prevention effort, and meta-analytic investigations have shown that primary intervention and affective education efforts in schools have been generally effective” (e.g., Baker, Swixher, Nadenicheck, & Popowica, 1984).
- ❖ “...students in schools with advisement programs (a) saw their advisor significantly more often as helpful in selecting courses, planning long-range programs, and solving problems; (b) rated their discussions with their advisors as worthwhile; and (c) stated that their advisor was the adult whom they could trust” (Galassi et al., 1997).
- ❖ In one study, descriptive statistics indicated that students in Advisory were more likely to identify their advisor as the first person they would approach about a concern at school and were more likely to see their advisor as ‘there when I needed him/her.’...the majority of the parents (a) agreed that they had been informed about the program, (b) saw the advisor as the person to contact regarding questions at school, (c) agreed that the advisor was actually looking after their child, and (d) agreed that their child’s transition into secondary school had been made easier by the program” (Galassi et al., 1997).
- ❖ “With the Advisory program as a fundamental part of the schedule and curriculum..., its opportunities were made available to every student without regard to levels of achievement and without excluding anyone” (Galassi et al., 1997).
- ❖ “At New Trier High school, we struggled with ‘senioritis’ until we changed how we viewed senior year – and our seniors...Seniors are the most knowledgeable and developed learners in the school. Instead of strategizing how we might prod them through a ‘status quo’ senior year, we decided instead to view our seniors as a valuable resource of leadership who could enhance how our teachers deliver instruction...the leadership program now enables more than 150 seniors to work with a teacher mentor each year” (Seniors work with teachers in order to mentor lower classmen) (Dreis & Rehage, 2006).
- ❖ As highlighted in *Whatever It Takes*, Adlai Stevenson High School had more than 25% of the student body relegated to remedial curricular tracks. The failure rate topped 30% and the annual number of out-of-school suspensions had risen to 75%. After investigating and implementing intervention strategies, Adlai is now “one of three schools in the nation to receive the U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon award on four separate occasions – an accomplishment which means that the school has continuously increased student achievement for two decades” (DuFour et al., 2004). Adlai has been described as “an undeniably world-class school” (Schmoker, 2001). One key intervention and the base for Adlai’s entire Intervention Pyramid is the Freshman Advisory/Freshman Mentor Program.