

What is Advisory?

You are now an Advisory/SPARTA teacher at Minico High School. This document will explain to you the reasoning behind having an 'almost' daily Advisory (also called SPARTA) class. It will also offer explanations and advice regarding this class.

Currently, it is a class that meets Monday through Wednesday for 30 minutes. Advisory classes are kept as small as possible, usually somewhere around 20 students. Each teacher has chosen, or been assigned to, an Advisory grade level. Teaching the same grade of Advisory each year allows the teacher to get to know the strengths and weaknesses of that age of student. The teacher becomes very proficient in explaining and conducting the activities and assignments for that grade level. The name SPARTA (created by an Advisory class several years ago) stands for "Students Practicing Academic Responsibility Through Actions."

One of the main ideas behind an Advisory class is to ensure that every student has at least one adult that they can trust, that they know cares about them, that they can talk to or get information from, and that can be an advocate for them. An advisory class also functions well as a place to send information home to parents or distribute information to an entire grade of students without missing anyone. It is a class in which students can work on their Senior Projects and where they have a teacher specifically assigned to help them. The advisor also encourages them to pass their classes, get good grades, work hard, and make good choices. The SPARTA class should also be a place where students learn about post high school life and educational opportunities. It is a class where they can have time to do their work like a "study hall." It is a time when the entire grade can easily get together for an assembly - such as for elections, registration advice, standardized testing, etc.

Ideally, the SPARTA teacher should develop good relationships with all of their SPARTA students. If possible, they should almost be like an 'extra parent'

watching out for these students even more than they do for their other students. In keeping with this goal, Advisory teachers should try to get to know their students on a personal level. Knowing these students will come in handy when it's time to help students select and work on their Senior Projects. It will also help teachers select specific topics to share with the class regarding opportunities after high school.

Will you develop an excellent relationship with every one of your Advisory students? Probably not. However, you should make an extra effort to do so. If you find that things are really not working with one of your Advisory students, or that there is a bad combination of students in your class, please talk to the principal about it. This class will be together for the entire year, so it needs to be a good situation for everyone. If it is really necessary to change a student's SPARTA class, it can be done.

Here is a link to an excellent, and not too long, paper discussing Advisory classes. It will help you get a good grasp on the point of Advisory as well.

<http://oemanagement.com/data/ files/HSadvisory.pdf>

Below are a couple of key excerpts/lists from that paper:

Major Findings and Conclusions:

Effective high school advisory programs address the following key areas;

Advisory Goals in the Domain of Relationships and Self-Esteem:

1. provide the opportunity for students to develop personal relationships with adults and peers;
2. develop a strong bond with and feel a sense of support from the Advisory adult and peers, giving the student a "home base";
3. promote student-teacher relationships;
4. demonstrate acceptable social behaviors and attitudes;
5. understand themselves and others better;

6. identify their needs and abilities;
7. develop positive self-images;
8. address general self-esteem and competence beliefs;
9. provide social exchange and peer recognition in a safe environment;
10. link parents and school;

Advisory Goals in the Domain of Academics

1. provide academic and emotional support to students to ensure their academic success;
2. facilitate the transition from junior high to senior high school;
3. receive appropriate and thorough academic advising;
4. guide the development of portfolios;
5. know what it takes to be successful in school and accept responsibility for the level of their own success;
6. identify and use appropriate study skills;
7. learn to set goals;
8. participate in academic programs that respond to their individual needs and goals;
9. mediate between academic and social concerns;
10. identify career interests
11. skills development, portfolio presentations, SAT Prep, college applications, and financial aid information.

Many activities and assignments for SPARTA are prepared and are available for your use. These are things that all Advisory teachers should do the same in each grade so that the classes are similar to each other. A lot of class time, however, is up to your discretion and you may use it however you wish. There is a list of “Good Ideas” for Advisory available as well. These are things that teachers have found effective in their Advisory class that you might want to incorporate into yours. Each SPARTA class will be unique-based on the teacher and students in the class. It is up to you, as the Advisory teacher, to make your class as good as it can be. If you are having trouble, speak to anyone on the

Advisory Team, or another teacher, or an administrator for advice. The items mentioned earlier in this paragraph will be available via google drive as soon as that is set up. Until then, see Amy Larson for these items.

A word of advice: even though Advisory is different from a regular academic class, it is still wise to establish rules for behavior, cell phone use, etc. These procedures need to be one you can stick too throughout the entire Advisory course. You will also want to make a seating chart, at least to use on the days students are working on projects or should be listening to what you are presenting or when you have a substitute. Be sure to explain the purpose of Advisory and your vision for Advisory to your students in order to keep them from trying to take over the class and tell you what to do. Remember, even though SPARTA is supposed to be a time to help them, you are the one in charge of setting the tone and establishing the rules and procedures for the class. You will also need to establish a grading system for Advisory.

Advice/suggestions/ideas: (others can be found in the Advisory folder)

- Give them points for behavior every day = getting to work quickly, bringing what they're supposed to, etc.
- Grade every assignment and be sure to take off points if it is late.
- Have an area on your board or wall where due dates are displayed and review these frequently with students.

And finally, many teachers like to prepare their lesson plans for Advisory one month at a time. This makes it easier to see 'the big picture' and helps you to remember things (such as PTC's or Senior Project due dates) well before they come up.

Below is a list of a few tasks and activities you can look forward to in your Advisory/SPARTA class:

- Election assemblies & voting (**Wednesdays** will be the day that assemblies during Advisory are held – so watch out for this when doing your lesson plans for Advisory – although it is not encouraged, sometimes little notice is given prior to an assembly during Advisory.

- Parent Teacher Conferences
- Career interest surveys & looking into careers – lots of activities may be found in the SPARTA folder,
- Test administration and test prep (SAT, SBAC, STAR, etc.)
- **Checking on grades, graduation progress, attendance, and makeup hours**
– This is probably the number one activity we should be doing in Advisory. Advisors need to constantly check students' grades and encourage them to do any missing work and to pass their classes.
- Assisting with registration for next year's classes
- Goal setting
- Fun activities/getting to know each other
- Senior Projects – discuss in 9th & 10th grade; begin working on in 11th grade; work on, complete, and present in 12th grade
- Etc.

To summarize, these are the four main items this Building Leadership Team would like to stress to you about Advisory:

- 1) Have a positive trusting relationship with each student in your class.
- 2) Reinforce the school requirements.
- 3) Monitor the academic success of each student (study hall, power hour, etc.).
- 4) Develop a culture where students can go as a safe place to make connections and have fun.

Good luck! Let us know if we can assist you with anything.

The Advisory Team (aka the A-Team) :)

Amy Larson-ext. 220

Others to be listed when known.

You may also want to talk to the Advisory Grade Level Leaders:

12 =

11=

10=

9=