



Washington State Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

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How Can We Establish Stronger Academic Relationships in High School?

The Standards and Accountability movement and direction have caused ripples outside of the classroom as well. One such area that this ripple is occurring is in counseling—not scheduling—but rather, the transition into high school initially and then from year to year.

As schools continue to reduce the achievement gap, they have added five-year plans, a four-year portfolio, and increased emphasis on culminating projects. What is left out is the ability to focus on the individual student by an adult educator. Counselors cannot spend that amount of quality time, as many have a student load far greater than that of an individual teacher.

One solution is to establish mentoring programs, student-to-student relationships. The April 2005 issue of ASCD's Educational Leadership features an article on “Easing the transition to High School” which provides an overview of mentoring and advisory programs.

Another solution is to establish small advisory groups, led by a faculty member. This is not the old advisory model, though it has similarities. The effort of this model is to support each student through his or her various transitions in middle school and high school, to assist with appropriate scheduling, to support in academic achievement, and to guide each one in a yearly student-led conference.

The potential is worth reflection. Because parent involvement spirals downward after elementary school, student-led conferences are between the parent and the student. Students also have a support group of peers connected to an advocate whom they get to know over four years' time. This model has been successful in many educational environments producing ownership of direction, goal setting, and achievement. It influences the parent to have a stronger relationship with their student's academic future and direction. High stakes testing is one thing. Having a goal for one's self and being able to articulate it to others with evidence is the achievement we are all seeking.

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