ABSTRACT

Building a Participatory Action Research Team

The research team comprised of five students (n=54) and two faculty advisors to join the research team as an opportunity to improve the school’s advisory program, experience the research process firsthand, and learn about Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR). At the time of the presentation, the research team has met for 18 1-hour meetings throughout the course of the 2020-2021 school year. In early September, the students and faculty advisors met for the first time, and then met weekly through November. Throughout research meetings, the team raised themes of CPAR as described by Michelle Fine & Maria Torres (2019) as, “research rooted in politics, power, participation, and a deep assumption of (ultimately) the meaning of power.” In contrast to traditional research designs (e.g., experiments, surveys, etc.), the team engaged in “building” the research, that is, the team created something new (e.g., a project, products, etc.) in the process of engaging in the research. The team has learned how to frame and implement research methods, analyze data, and present findings. The research team has also learned about collaboration, research ethics, and the importance of taking a critical, reflexive approach to research.

Research Design

The research team designed a mixed-methods study including a 16-question survey and an arts-based participatory video mutual board using Google Jamboards. The research team decided to collect data from 11th and 12th graders that participate in the advisory program. This study was designed to explore students’ perceptions of their advisory program, to what extent do students feel as though advisory is a safe, inclusive, and impactful space.

SURVEY RESULTS

Advisory Structure

Some advisory activities or discussion topics that students would have found useful for future advising includes:

- **Some students felt that the content of advisory was helpful or intriguing, but would have preferred more opportunities for direct instruction or guided discussions.**
- **Some students expressed a desire for more opportunities to engage in face-to-face discussions with classmates and advisors.**
- **Some students felt that the advisory program should be more focused on a particular topic or subject area.**

Advisory as a Safe, Inclusive, and Impactful Space

If you were the principal of WHS, what are some goals you would create for the advisory program?

- **Some students suggested that the advisory program should focus on developing students’ social-emotional skills and providing opportunities for students to connect with one another.**
- **Some students felt that the advisory program could be improved by providing more opportunities for students to engage in extracurricular activities.**
- **Some students suggested that the advisory program should be more focused on providing students with opportunities to explore different career paths.**

IMPLICATIONS & LIMITATIONS

The study is complete, however data is still being analyzed and interpreted. The research team is particularly interested in looking at how each of the different demographics experience advisory, and what recommendations for future advisory content and structure can be offered to the school. Additionally, as mentioned in the above section, the research team is expanding for qualitative data analysis, further engaging in the participatory action of this study.

Advisory Structure

There was an overwhelming negative response about advisory being one hour long. However many students felt that advisory should meet once per week. This is a shift from past years, when advisory would meet one per 3 day rotation, and students were able to reflect on their advisory experience currently and from past years. Students also overwhelmingly agreed that each advisory group should remain the same over the course of their high school careers, a structural component that is already in place.

Advisory Content and Environment

Students overwhelmingly agreed that, with some minor adjustments, conversations would shift the advisory space and relationships. Further data analysis will provide additional important insights for this specific advisory program and high school, as well as other high school advisory programs.

LIMITATIONS

- The context of the pandemic cannot be ignored. While this allowed for advisory to be offered every Friday for one hour each Friday, many Fridays are remote, even for students participating in a hybrid schedule (coming into the school building 2 days/week) or those coming into the school building 4 days/week. Because of the remote schedule and the pandemic, there are only a few students on campus in any given advisory, which meant that some students did not attend advisory.
- Students felt that, while they had advisory for one hour on average, it felt shorter, and some students did not feel connected to the community, while some at least 1 day did not feel connected at all.

NEXT STEPS

➢ Due to the pandemic, it’s hard to see if there is only one week of only one class.
➢ Due to the wide range of students, including non-exploring and music participation, and other meetings, was done remotely. This impacted how the research team designed the study and collected and analyzed data.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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REFERENCES

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