

Creating Advisory Teachers for Student Success

How one school district is reducing student-to-advisor ratios from 400-1 to 22-1.

Hamblen County Schools CTE program had a problem: In 2017, the district's student-to-advisor ratio stood at 400-to-1. Counselors didn't have enough time to provide the level of personalized career advising that their students deserved.

To put that into perspective, the American School Counselor Association recommends a maximum ratio of 250-1. Hamblen wasn't alone—48 of 50 states in the US have ratios above the ASCA mark. It's an all-too familiar story: counselors are asked to do more with less, budgets are slashed, and school staff are stretched razor thin.

CTE Supervisor Chuck Carter and Morristown East High Social Studies Chair Karen Rogers knew that Hamblen needed to create more time for the individual, one-on-one work of helping students find their path towards post-graduate success. "I saw students walking out the door who didn't know what they were going to do after graduation," says Carter. "That bothered me—a great graduation rate doesn't matter if you don't have a plan for what comes next."

The Solution: A new teacher advisory program.

The district empowered classroom teachers to act as advisors, pairing them with students and carving out 25 minutes from block classes every day for career advisory time. Starting in 6th grade, every student began using the MajorClarity platform to explore and choose career paths. This MajorClarity activity formed the jumping off point for discussions with advisors. With their advisor, each student created a student success plan in the MajorClarity platform. **Here are some of the factors that made the program work:**

Schedule a consistent time

- It was important that teachers meet with students every day of the week. Teachers could discuss a variety of topics—ACT prep, career planning, academic planning, or just check in on current school performance—but no matter what they covered, this time was always reserved for advising.

Encourage meaningful relationships

- Teachers became true mentors to students, providing a personal touch critical to student engagement. "One teacher can make a connection that's not just academic, it's social. That's powerful," says Carter.



Give teachers the support they need

- The county embedded the MajorClarity program into every aspect of the new advisory program. Hamblen married this advising time with an already robust CTE programming—internships, industry days, career fairs, and parent meetings. Additionally, specific teams of 5-6 teachers at each high school were formed to create lessons and support for teachers to use during their advisory time.

Win over skeptics

- Carter and Rogers admit that some teachers were resistant to giving up some instruction time. But they showed teachers that the benefits of the program would extend far beyond CTE—with the new personalized attention, students are more engaged in school, less likely to be absent, and more motivated to learn. “Once we show them the results,” says Rogers, “they love it.”



The Results

Here are some of the outcomes in Hamblen County:

- 22-to-1 student-to-advisor ratio, down from 400-to-1.
- 2 point increase in ACT scores.
- Reduction of “chronically absent” students to < 0.7%.
- Increased attendance.
- Fewer behavioral incidents.
- 96% graduation rate of students who complete the CTE program.

Want to see how MajorClarity can help support your school's career advisory efforts? Get in touch at support@MajorClarity.com.