

Aquinas Academy, a school characterized by its strong sense of community, boasts an intimate teacher/student ratio of 1:9. Perhaps what particularly distinguishes the school is the attitude of its teachers, however. They arrive early every day, enabling students to ask for aid before classes, and most remain after dismissal, either tutoring or supervising extra-curricular activities such as the play or cross-training fitness club. The teachers' close relationship with students is especially shown in the Advisory Program.

The Advisory Program is implemented each Wednesday, with the period sliding weekly to minimize the interruption of classes. Each teacher is given a list of middle school and high school "advisees"; female teachers have female students and male teachers have male students. These teachers keep their advisees' best interests and grade reports in mind when they meet, helping students to create goals and to devise strategies to meet those goals. Areas of focus might include a problematic subject, classroom behavior, peer relationships, and practical ways to grow in virtue. The goal of these meetings is to encourage students, to remind them that they are much more than a poor grade or an error in judgment. They are, in fact, persons of intelligence and faith, and the advisor serves as a guide on the road to success in both the academic and social spheres.

The advisory period actually extends far beyond Wednesday's time slot. As teachers so readily sacrifice their free time to aid students, the bond between advisor and advisee often becomes one of mentorship. Given this type of counsel, students are able to more easily make their way through the tumultuous years of middle and high school.

Rachel Hursen 2010