
Getting Started: Navigating the Activities

Advisory is an intentional group, one that works at being an effective group for all members and provides a safe place for building skills, getting support, giving support, and doing short activities through larger projects—fun though serious. Therefore, advisory starts with fostering comfort and bonds, establishing a sense of “groupness,” and building a group culture that supports learning. The activities in *Community Matters: A Facing History and Ourselves Approach to Advisory* are developed to promote that sense of community because adolescents are best able to share ideas, take risks, and help each other when they feel a sense of belonging and safety in a given environment.

The 69 activities in *Community Matters* are not intended to be taught in sequential order in 69 consecutive advisory meetings. They are grouped into six sections, and each section starts with an overview and suggestions for how to navigate the activities. There is information about which activities fit well together and which ones are foundational to this Facing History program and should not be skipped.

It is important to remember that *Community Matters* is designed to be used alongside advisory activities that support academic and personal goal-setting, study skills, time management, college and career counseling, and other skills and habits of mind that your advisees need in order to feel successful both in and outside of school.

Navigating the Activities in Sections 1–6

- **You can find all videos, teaching strategies, and other online resources referenced throughout this curriculum at facinghistory.org/advisory-media.**
- The six sections of the advisory program are aligned with the following components of Facing History’s scope and sequence: the individual and society, membership and belonging, a central case study, and choosing to participate.
- Each section includes detailed activity plans with clearly stated purposes, notes to the advisor, materials, and a suggested procedure that advisors can implement as written or adapt for their own groups.
- The “approximate time” for each activity is an estimate. The reality depends on the size of the advisory group and the amount of time the advisor devotes to reflective writing and discussions.
- The activities do not include opening and closing routines, so advisors should add an opening and a closing routine that fits the needs of their group to each activity.

Advisory Folders and Journals

Because the activities in the first section of *Community Matters* can be ordered and combined in different ways, it is hard to know when your group will get its first handout or respond to its first journal prompt. You should be prepared to distribute journals and folders to each advisee in the opening days of the year. It is up to you to decide how to store them. Advisees will need their folders and journals in every meeting after the first week or two. Because reflection is at the heart of *Community Matters*, advisees will revisit their journal responses and handouts over the course of the year. It is important that they keep their advisory materials together so they can fully engage in the writing activities and discussions.

- You can set the expectation that advisees bring their folders and journals, along with a pen or pencil, to each meeting.
- Alternatively, you might collect the folders and journals at the end of each meeting to store in your classroom or office.
- Or, if possible, you can set aside a space in the advisory room where they can store their materials. Because journal responses can be personal, it is important that the space is secure and other students can't access the folders and journals between meetings.

The Advisory Community-Building Project (Section 6)

Community Matters culminates with a final project that invites advisees to work collaboratively to benefit their school community. Since the themes of community, membership, and participation are at the heart of this advisory program, and all of the activities direct energy toward this final project, **we recommend that you start by reading “Advisory Community-Building Project Guidelines” on page 269 so you can familiarize yourself with the project.**

You can introduce the project to your group in the fall and invite them to record ideas on a piece of chart paper or in their journals so they can make ongoing connections between the advisory activities and content, their experiences at school, and their school's culture. You may find that you don't need brainstorming activities at the end of the year because your advisees have been generating ideas for their project all along. Some groups might get excited about organizing a school-based project earlier in the year, and the activities and resources in Section 6: Choosing to Participate can help get them started.