

Advisory Community-Building Project Guidelines

CULMINATING PROJECT OVERVIEW

Now that your advisees have seen examples of upstanders of all ages creating projects that have positively impacted their communities, it is time for them to take the lead and create their own school-based project. The goal of this final project is for the advisory to have the experience of working collaboratively on a project that benefits the school community. It is best to find a project that is realistic and doable, so that your advisees can have a sense of accomplishment and get a chance to “flex their muscles” by doing something together for their community. If this is the first time implementing an advisory project, it is more important to have a small success than to take on a major project and fall short. Regardless of the scope of the final product, it is important that everyone in the group plays a role in its planning and execution and that you build in time to allow the group to reflect on how they worked together to conceive of, implement, and present their project.

MATERIALS:

 **HANDOUT**
Project Planning Guide

 **HANDOUT**
Project Storyboard Template

The projects can be on any scale and at any level of visibility and will vary depending on your school, your advisees’ interests, what they perceive as the school’s needs, and the resources and materials available to your advisory group. In the past, advisories have done a variety of different *Community Matters* projects. Some examples include making posters to hang in the school to create a more welcoming environment; designing a museum of learning for others to visit on a topic advisees deemed important for the community to know about and understand; writing and delivering a performance about bullying to help others in the school recognize the signs of bullying behavior; planting a garden to learn more about sustainable living and provide vegetables to the school community; holding an assembly with featured speakers; creating a Facing History student council to implement restorative justice practices; and nominating and interviewing members of the community who they deem to be “upstanders.”

ADVISOR NOTES

1. Tips for Navigating the Project Guidelines

The project guidelines provide a range of activities and resources that you can use with your advisees to support a student-driven project that they design and implement in their school or local community. Depending on how much time your group has for the project, you can select some or all of the activities listed in the Procedure section and arrange them in an order that fits your group’s needs. There is also a section titled Questions to Support an Advisory Community-Building Project

that aligns with the steps outlined in the Procedure section and helps provide your advisees with some structure and guidance through the process.

2. Steps for Brainstorming and Implementing a Project

The steps we recommend for a successful project are the following: personal reflection, brainstorming a need, brainstorming a way to respond to the need, and then planning, implementing, and reflecting on the project itself. There are two separate brainstorming steps. The first is for the advisory to answer the question: “What does our community need?” Any of the brainstorming strategies listed below can be used with that step. It is up to you to decide if you want your advisory to end this step with consensus on the need they have decided to address OR if you want smaller groups or individual advisees to choose different needs to address in their project. The second step is to brainstorm ways to respond to the need. Again, any of the brainstorming strategies listed below can support this step.

3. The Importance of Ownership

The following activities help support a school-based project. While you might be overseeing the timeline and facilitating the activities, it is important that your advisees feel ownership of the process and product. They might feel passionate about working together to take on an issue in their local community rather than in their school. They might want to work on a project together, or small groups might have their own ideas. The process of coming up with a project and getting started is messy and probably can't be achieved in one or even two advisory sessions. However, if advisees feel like they have ownership of the project, they will be more excited by, invested in, and committed to the process and the outcome.

4. Additional Resources to Generate Ideas and Support Student-Led Projects

Facing History's **10 Questions for Young Changemakers** unit, available at facinghistory.org/advisory-media, includes lesson plans and resources to help students reflect on the values and actions that will help strengthen their communities. The final lesson provides explicit guidance to assist students' civic participation, helping them transfer the knowledge gained from their unit of study into tangible opportunities to take action in their community. While that unit is designed for 50-minute class periods, you could adapt its lessons and materials to fit within shorter advisory sessions or just focus on Lesson 1 and Lesson 4, which introduce a framework for enacting change and then provide materials to support the planning process.

If you feel like you and your advisees would benefit from seeing other examples of student-led projects, you can show additional Not in Our School project videos and draw ideas from their lesson plans and classroom resources, available at www.noit.org.

PROCEDURE:

1. Reflect on a Quotation by Toni Morrison

- In their journals, ask advisees to answer the following questions in response to a message that author Toni Morrison tweeted in 2013. Let them know that they will be sharing their ideas with their peers.

"If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it."¹

- In your own words, what message is Morrison trying to convey?
- How can you apply Morrison's message to your own life?
- In pairs or triads, have advisees share their thoughts about Morrison's message, as well as how they would apply her message to their own lives. Ask for a few volunteers to share with the group.
- Let your advisees know that they will be putting Morrison's message into action at their own school. They will have an opportunity to write their own book, one that benefits their school community in some way.

2. Brainstorm What Your School Community Needs and Ways to Respond

While you and your advisory group might already have ideas for a project, choosing one of more of the following activities can help provide some structure for the brainstorming process. You can use these strategies to help your advisees first brainstorm ideas for their project(s) and then brainstorm different ways they can respond to the need that they have identified.

- **Guiding Questions:** Start by choosing one or two guiding questions to anchor your project. While the guiding question(s) for the project should align with your school's mission and goals for advisory, the following ideas can help get you started:
 - What do I have to offer my community that can help make it a more inclusive space for everyone in our school?
 - What does our community need to bring us together? Why is this need important to me?
 - How can we help to create inclusive and welcoming spaces (or focus on one space) for everyone in our school?
 - What are some themes we discussed in advisory this year? How can we address a theme through a school-based project?
- **Graffiti Board:** Brainstorm project ideas on a graffiti board (visit facinghistory.org/advisory-media to learn about this teaching strategy). Don't edit ideas at this point. Think big. Think small. Encourage creativity. Then discuss the results as a group. Invite advisees to share their visions for projects and desired outcomes.

1 Toni Morrison, Twitter post, October 30, 2013, 5:26 p.m., <https://twitter.com/tonimorrison/status/395708227888771072>.

- **Sticky Blast:** Give each advisee a stack of sticky notes and explain that they will spend ten minutes brainstorming ideas for a project that addresses the guiding question(s). Encourage them to think creatively and not edit their ideas. Tell them to write one idea per sticky note.
 - Then have your advisees post their notes on the board and, as a group, read them out loud, asking advisees to explain their ideas in two sentences or less. Then have them start to group their ideas into categories that they create. Once they have finished, see if there is a category that they want to use as a starting place to develop a final project.
 - Alternatively, you might create a web or map from the sticky notes. Write "Advisory Project" in the center of the piece of chart paper and then start to create groupings of notes. Draw lines between notes and groupings, write connections and questions over the lines, and draw images to represent new ideas.
- **Idea Pass-Around:** Sit in a circle and give each advisee a piece of lined paper. Have them write a guiding question (see the first bullet point for ideas about guiding questions) at the top, and then have them explain one or more project ideas. Remind them that they don't need to edit their ideas! Then have them pass their papers to the right. They should read the new paper and write any ideas that their peer's paper generates for them. They might expand on an idea, pose a question, or draw an image or map. Keep passing and writing until everyone has their original paper. Advisees should read their peers' comments and questions and then share new insights with the group.
- **Calling on a Hero:** Sit in a circle and have advisees respond to the following prompt in their journals: *Who is your hero or alter ego?* (Real people, past or present, or fictional characters from books, films, or comics are all fair game!) *What would your hero or alter ego do to make a positive impact on your school community?* Have advisees share their ideas in pairs or trios and then discuss what they can learn from how their heroes or alter egos would take on this project.

3. Create a Project Storyboard Outline

Note: Your advisory group can design and implement one project or work in small groups on different projects. You may need to adapt the storyboarding activity accordingly.

Pass out the handouts [Project Planning Guide](#) and [Project Storyboard Template](#). Divide your advisory into groups of three or four to choose one idea that they would like to develop into a project. Have the groups complete the storyboard outline process, circulating to answer questions and offer encouragement. Note that the template asks them to envision and articulate their project's end point first before they consider the steps they will need to take in order to reach their goal. If your advisees are working on different projects, each group can present its storyboard to the advisory in order to share ideas and receive feedback. If your group is doing one project together, your advisees can vote on one proposal to implement or, alternatively, combine multiple ideas into a single project.

Depending on how much time your advisory can devote to its project, have advisees revisit their storyboards periodically. They may encounter roadblocks along the way, and taking time to reflect in their journals and revise their plan will help them develop problem-solving skills and resilience.

4. Implement the Project

After your group has identified its project(s), discuss the desired outcome(s), create a schedule, and assign roles (as needed). Then encourage advisees to work together as a whole group or in their smaller groups, helping them build in time to reflect on the process, asking questions to help them troubleshoot issues, and providing materials as needed.

5. Reflect on the Project

It is important that your advisees have time and space for individual and group reflections. They can start their reflections in their journals and then share their thoughts in small- or whole-group discussions. Discussion strategies like **Fishbowl**, **Save the Last Word for Me**, and **Learn to Listen, Listen to Learn** can help provide structure to these discussions. Also, in addition to individual journal responses, you can also use the **Big Paper** teaching strategy or “Small Paper” variation for a silent discussion of some reflection questions. Visit facinghistory.org/advisory-media to learn about these discussion and teaching strategies.

QUESTIONS TO SUPPORT AN ADVISORY COMMUNITY-BUILDING PROJECT

Choose from the following menu of questions or create your own to help support your advisees through the process of brainstorming, planning, implementing, and reflecting on their project.

Brainstorm What Your School Community Needs

1. What do I have to offer my community that can help make it a more inclusive space for everyone in our school?
2. What does our community need to bring us together? Why is this need important to me?
3. How can we help to create inclusive and welcoming spaces (or focus on one space) for everyone in our school?
4. What are some themes we discussed in advisory this year? How can we address a theme through a school-based project?

Consider How to Respond to a Community Need

1. Why does this issue matter?
2. What might we do to respond to this particular need in our community?
3. Who should we talk to in order to better understand this issue?
4. What research should we do to better understand this issue (interviews, surveys, data analysis, online research)?
5. What would a successful response look like?

Develop a Plan of Action

1. What would success look like, sound like, and feel like?
2. What steps do we need to take to complete our project?
3. What steps are you most interested in being involved in? What skills and talents can you bring to these parts of the project?
4. What challenges might we encounter while we implement our project?
5. What are some strategies we might use to overcome these challenges?

Respond to Challenges and Make It Happen

1. Are we making progress? Are we moving through the steps we identified on our storyboards?
2. Do we need to change course or plans? How might we need to modify our original project?
3. Are we uncovering additional or different needs as we implement our project?
4. Who can help us address additional needs?

Reflect on the Project

1. What did you learn about yourself during this project?
2. What did you learn about your school during this project?
3. What new knowledge or skills did you develop during this project? How did you learn or develop them?
4. What is one challenge that you faced in doing the project? What strategy did you use to overcome this challenge? How was the strategy effective or not effective? What might you do differently if you face a similar challenge in the future?
5. Did your project achieve the desired outcome? If so, how do you know? If not, what work still needs to be done?
6. What is an example of your group collaborating effectively during the project? What factors contributed to this success?
7. What is an example of your group not collaborating effectively during the project? What factors contributed to this breakdown?
8. What advice would you give to an advisory group doing this project next year?



Project Planning Guide

Directions: The following questions will help you make a plan for implementing your project. For each step listed below, discuss the questions with your group and then follow the instructions as you outline your project using the **Project Storyboard Template** handout.

Step 1

Discuss the following questions as a group. Then, starting with the **last square** on the storyboard, use text and images (simple sketches are fine) to represent what you envision the end of your project looking like.

1. What will the end of your project look like?
2. Because of this project, what will have changed in your classroom, school, or community? Write your answer under your image.

Step 2

Fill in the rest of the storyboard. Include information that helps you answer the following questions:

1. In order to get to our final vision, what steps do we need to take?
2. What people are needed at each stage?
3. What role will different members of our advisory or project group play? Write the names of people and their roles on the lines below each picture.
4. What materials do we need? At what stage in the process do we need them? Draw and highlight the materials in each part of the storyboard.

Step 3

Review your completed storyboard, and then make a list of "Things We Need." Include materials, support from school administrators or community members, a mentor you can go to if/when you hit a roadblock, and any other people you might consult to get ideas, support, or materials.

Remember that your project storyboard is a starting point. You will have opportunities to revisit and revise it once you start implementing your project.



Project Storyboard Template

Directions: Outline each step of your project using words and images. Remember to start with the last box to capture your vision of a successful finished project.
