



🔊 AUDIO (4:22 MIN)

## Student Advisories: Taking Ownership

Leslie Kelly, M.A.

September 2012

### Topic HELPING STUDENTS NAVIGATE THE PATH TO COLLEGE

- Highlights**
- » Middle and high school students in Albuquerque Public Schools participate in the Student Advisory Program as part of the district's comprehensive approach to increasing postsecondary access.
  - » The course of study teaches study and goal-setting skills, explores career options, and promotes citizenship.
  - » The program promotes supportive relationships between students and adults in schools, which is connected with better high school achievement.
  - » Students become owners of their high school accomplishments and postsecondary goals.

### About the Interviewee

Leslie G. Kelly, MA, LPCC, is the Director of Counseling and Prevention for the Albuquerque Public Schools serving over 90,000 students. Leslie supervises over 200 school counselors and mental health professionals, as well as works collaboratively with all departments in the district to improve outcomes for students and families. She has worked for over 20 years with youth, adults, and families as an educator, counselor/therapist, trainer, and program administrator. Her areas of work have included, but are not limited to: special education, professional school counseling, substance abuse prevention and intervention, group work, domestic violence, trauma, systems navigation, skill building, legislative advocacy, and networking. Having worked in large systems like the Albuquerque Public Schools, the University of New Mexico, the Department of Health, and various school districts as well as being a

school-based provider and educator, has allowed her the opportunity to get a unique perspective of the needs of professionals in the field, consumers, and families.

## Full Transcript



🔊 00:04 I'm Leslie Kelly, Director of Counseling in the Student, Family, and Community Support Division for the Albuquerque Public Schools in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

🔊 00:14 In approximately 2008, the Albuquerque Public School system implemented a districtwide student advisory system, which was developed in order to create a more college- and career-ready focus for all students 6 through 12. So every adult in the school is assigned an advisory. And it may be an administrator has an advisory, the counselors have an advisory, not just teachers, so that the student/teacher ratio can be lower. They're designed so that students can see how their education creates this pathway towards college and careers. There is career interest inventories. They get to see the importance of finishing school; study skills. There's a variety of activities throughout advisement.

🔊 01:06 So they would do much more inventory kinds of things in sixth and seventh grade curriculum. They work much more on exploration of who they are as a person, trying to get an idea of what kinds of things are out there in the world in terms of career. They look at what kinds of jobs provide what kinds of income. We also talk about the academic rigor and skills they need in terms of study skills, the kind of habits they need, how to balance their time, how to take care of themselves, how to ask for help, all those kinds of things to be successful students.

🔊 01:45 So by the time they get to eighth grade, then they start building on this Next Step Plan. They go to high school, that plan follows them, and then the work in advisory becomes much more specific to credit. The credit system takes place when you enter high school. All classes are connected to credits and high school graduation, so kids are working on transcripts; and really understanding and owning a transcript is really important. It's a very, very important skill—understanding your transcript and owning your transcript. And what I mean by that is, knowing what course work you need, looking at your Next Step Plan, and knowing which classes you need to take and how many credits you need for graduation.

🔊) 02:29 I think one of the biggest challenges that we faced in looking at all aspects of college and career readiness, whether it be in advisory or just in my work in the district, has been the career part of college and career readiness. And we do have some curriculum, we do have a lot of outreach, and we do have some programs, but I think it's very difficult to stay current and it's difficult as a school district without a lot of resources to keep connected.

🔊) 03:03 The high school that has had probably the longest running student advisory, I believe has had the most successful student advisory. They have had one dedicated person who really helped organize advisory. And I think that really helps a lot and that they've made a portfolio a pinnacle part of this whole program. And the portfolio is something that they start putting together as a freshman in advisory, and they stay with the same advisor throughout ninth through twelfth grade. And the students keep their portfolios; they don't lose them. They really value their work and what they put together, and they present their portfolios as graduating seniors. And the school holds an event where the students can invite their family and grandparents and whoever they would like to have come to their final advisory student-led conference.

🔊) 03:59 I really believe a lot of time and energy and thought went into making sure that advisory and all the lessons really do ensure and align with our district's vision: that students are college and career ready when they graduate from the Albuquerque Public Schools.