



Stuck under the surface

Advisory attempts to improve Creek's mental health

BY JANE MCCAULEY

News Editor

It's been eight months since the most recent suicide at Creek. With hope to stabilize the mental atmosphere, administration implemented the new advisory period.

But the majority of both students and teachers feel that although it is helpful academically, advisory isn't making the intended impact – to provide emotional support in a comfortable and safe space for students.

"I do feel that in light of what happened last year we needed to take some real steps towards trying to address those concerns," social studies teacher Matthew Buddington said. "I've got to say, I do applaud the school for taking positive steps to try to build a sense of community and support for students."

By providing a solution so quickly, there is always the possibility that new problems arise. Many believe it was just a quick fix to a much bigger problem.

"I think the main thing to keep in mind is that we've done something that Creek doesn't usually do, and that is jumping in and inventing as we go. The Creek way traditionally has been, 'plan it out, sort it out, vet it, research it out, suss it out, and then make a move,'" English Department Faculty Senator Loreen Hughes said. "That's a part of where some of the difficulties are coming from because we are kind of inventing this as we go."

Many upperclassmen believe that by putting a group of random students with a teacher with little to no knowledge of their history together, relationships built on trust

and closeness aren't possible.

"Advisory, as admirable as the effort is, can't succeed in what it wants to do which is create a sense of community when it throws two dozen students who barely know each other together for half an hour each week," junior Sarah Bian said. "I appreciate the effort to try to help support us, but right now, it is a give and take situation."

According to a poll of 486 Creek students, 58% of the student body approves of advisory's intentions, but 65% feel that it has no impact on their mental health at all. If advisory is to stay within the schedule, it seems that more students need to see an impact on their overall well-being.

Many students are appreciative of the

time advisory provides to complete homework and other assignments though. Aside from getting time to finish work, most students believe that the time spent on actually teaching or talking about the students' mental health hasn't progressed.

"The discussions and TedTalks shown during the period always end up being the jokes of the day," senior Austin McBride said.

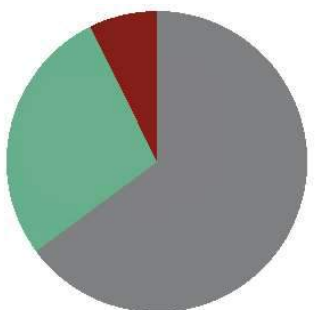
And it isn't just the students who feel that advisory was a rushed solution. There are also difficulties due to the short amount of time teachers and faculty were able to prepare for teaching the period. The only training teachers received was one Sources of Strength meeting at the beginning of the year about what advisory was, what it would look like, and how to talk to the students.

But many students don't feel that even the limited amount of teacher's training is reflected in the classroom, but some, like senior Vida Elekovic, understand why that is.

"[The teachers] don't really know what they're doing quite yet, and I feel like my teacher doesn't really know what he's doing quite yet. That's totally fine because it's the first year. People are trying to learn about it and see how to help kids," Elekovic said.

With this year being the first to have the advisory period, sudden changes like this are bound to need more time to take effect and make noticeable changes, especially at a school with over 3,700 students.

How has Advisory influenced your mental health?



POLL OF 486

- 65% - Not at all
- 28% - Positively
- 7% - Negatively

"I don't know what it's going to look like two years from now or five years from now," video production teacher David Gamelin said. "We're just learning what to do with that class period. [With] something this new, it takes a little time to figure out how to wisely use that time. I know that there's potential here. But what that is, I'm not sure."

Advisory has especially proven difficult to convince seniors that it will make an impact on them.

"I think that advisory might be helpful for [underclassmen] since they will be staying with the class for multiple years, but having the class for the first time as a senior is kind of useless. In our advisory they make us play name games and talk about our men-

tal health, but it's stupid. We are graduating," senior Armando Guadiana said. "We either already know these people or we don't care because we are leaving soon. I could be using the time more effectively by working on college applications, but we don't get to do that."

Some students wonder if it is even possible for advisory to work. Part of the problem for some students seems to be the forced feeling of the period, which would keep students from actually opening up.

"I don't think that if kids are struggling, they're really going to speak up in that kind of environment considering they don't know most people. We don't know each other's names, and nobody asks," Elekovic

said.

Advisory is not going anywhere, and at the beginning of next year, all five of the traditional high schools in the Cherry Creek District will have the advisory period. Yet students remain hopeful that it will still make an impact.

"The concept of Advisory has good intentions, and I think it is good to have a safe space built into your school community to express whatever emotions may be bugging you and to foster positivity among ourselves. However, I think when it goes into practice, the system starts to fall apart. The system is still in its infancy, and a lot of its kinks seem like they need to be worked out before any good can really come of it," senior Ava Palicki said.

For

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"Along with it being a good time to finish some last minute homework, I see the point in [advisory], and I think if students gave it a chance, then it will be great for what it's there for. I feel like if students gave a little bit more effort into Advisory, then they could have a community of people they wouldn't expect to have. Strangers are just friends you haven't met yet."

-senior Mackenzie Opp

Against

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"If we look at advisory for its real purpose, it feels more like a quick fix. If advisory is going to be better in the long run, there needs to be a conversation about what's going at Creek. What are the causes of all the mental health issues going on at Creek and what can we do as a community to change it for the better? Ignoring the issues and just saying, 'oh, you can talk to a trusted adult at school,' is like patching up a gaping wound with a band aid."

-senior Kevin Nguyen

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"It gives us the opportunity to take some time and reflect on our mental health. I think it is a great idea because it is the staff and school community showing their support and care for the students."

*-freshman
Sawyer Billingsen*

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"Advisory is not preventing any student from committing suicide. If anything, it seems to be increasing stress among students. Advisory is another class taking more time from our day as students. Teachers need more time. Students need more time. Advisory is attempting to force students to connect with teachers. I want to have natural connections and feel as if I can talk to trusted adults on my own terms."

-junior Shayla Patton

