

THEY'RE MIDDLE OR SENIOR SCHOOL TEACHERS. THEY MAY COACH OR OVERSEE A CLUB OR ACTIVITY. THEY'RE GOOD LISTENERS, CAN BE A STUDENT ADVOCATE, AND SOMETIMES ACT AS A SURROGATE PARENT. THEY WEAR MANY HATS, AND THEY GET TO KNOW THE WHOLE STUDENT.

MEET THE LCC ADVISOR.

ADVISORS: A Special Role at LCC

By Suzanne Bowness, Writer

Advisors play a special role in a student's life, providing support and counselling on a variety of issues related to academics, co-curriculars or social and personal concerns. It is a significant relationship, one which helps to ensure the well-being of students.

A total of 40 advisors are assigned 10 to 14 students each, meeting them twice daily at recess and lunch. At the senior level there is also a weekly advisory period, while Middle School students meet for this period but less frequently. Senior students stay with their same advisor from grade 9 to 11 for continuity.

Advisories provide a sense of belonging.



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Michele Owen, grade 7 English teacher and director of student life, currently manages the advisory system from grades 7 through 11. “The main role of advisors is to advocate for students, and help in terms of organization, planning and getting involved,” she says. “If an advisor notices that a student isn’t eating or feels overly stressed, for example, they will communicate with teachers, the grade coordinator, the school counsellors or the parents.”

The check-ins don’t need to be formal: when Ms. Owen was an advisor she had students gather in a circle to say how their day was going, and report back on their sports events and co-curricular activities. Sean O’Connell, grade 10 English teacher and advisor to grade 9 students, takes the same approach. “Because I’m their advisor and not their teacher, they seem much more relaxed,” he says. “Sometimes they play music. We can joke around. They can take off their student hat and just be themselves.”

Ms. Owen says particular challenges arise in different grades. As an advisor, she helped students navigate the transition between dependence on parents and teachers and management of their own schedules. “Even if they

disliked that planning, they knew I had their best interest at heart. They felt supported knowing that someone had their back,” she says.

In Senior School, Mr. O’Connell says students often ask for advice on their plans past grade 11. “I give them my perspective and direct them to professionals in the school who are best placed to help them,” he says.

Julie Poirier, French teacher and advisor to grade 9 students, says the role allows her to get to know the students on a deeper level. “The advisory system is invaluable for mentoring students and being more in tune with their experiences,” she says.

Constance McGuire, director of academics, arrived at LCC in August 2017 and says the advisory system is more robust than what she has seen at other schools. “The amount of time that advisors spend with the students is quite remarkable,” she says, adding that advisors even have lunch in their advisories.

“This is a real differentiator at LCC,” she says. “When we break bread together we build relationships.” ■



Advocates for students

(L TO R) MICHELE OWEN, CONSTANCE MCGUIRE, JULIE POIRIER, SEAN O’CONNELL



In Junior School, homeroom teachers serve as the liaison with parents and see to the overall well-being of the students. They are the point of contact for parents who can discuss any concerns they might have. Students start and end their day with their homeroom teacher.