

## VIRTUAL TEACHER ADVISORS

### Holy Family Cyber High High Prairie, Alberta, Canada

All students enrolled in Holy Family Cyber High work out of their homes located throughout the province of Alberta. In order to facilitate school-family partnerships in a seventh through twelfth grade virtual school setting, the Action Team for Partnerships, with support from administration and staff, began a virtual teacher advisor program. The students check-in each morning with their teacher advisor (TA) through e-mail or by phone. The TA is the first point of contact for the family, providing them a person at the school with whom they can have a communicative relationship.

The practice supports the school goal of giving all students a positive school experience. Many Holy Family Cyber High students have had a negative experience with the traditional classroom. Ensuring that the students have a positive school experience will help to re-integrate them into the school system.

Holy Family Cyber High administration assigns all students within one family to the same teacher advisor. The family is introduced to the TA through an e-mail on the first day of school. Within a few days, the teacher advisor calls the family to follow up, get information on the background of the family, and help them with any school-related issues. The TA enters relevant information in a central database accessible by all of that student's teachers. The TA continues to contact

daily each assigned student to discuss each other's plans for the day. A copy of the student's plan for the day is also sent to the parents. It took about one term for all staff and students to implement the new practice.

The Action Team helped all members of our school understand the benefits of daily contact between families and teachers. Teachers feared more paperwork, and students worried that this would restrict their freedom. Staff concerns eased as they witnessed the immediate benefits this had on their students. Over time, most students were happy to have more interaction between their family and the school and enjoyed the closer relationship with their teacher advisor.

In a survey of students, 100% of respondents felt that the TA had a positive effect on their school experience. Teachers note that their students are more organized for their courses. Prior to the program, parents were mainly involved with the students in a home-schooling setting. Now, parents are more involved in the school, with the teachers, and in the learning of their children. One teacher best summed up the impact of this practice, "TA groups have helped to take the school to a whole new level."

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