

Running head: learning: the power of group work in facilitating student achievement

Learning: The Power of Group Work in Facilitating Student Achievement

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## Table of Contents

Table of Contents	4
Abstract	5
Review of the Literature	6
Method	35
Results	38
Tables	56
Discussion	65
References	70
Appendices	75

## List of Tables and Figures

Table I-VII. Grades	56-59
Table VIII. Youth Outcome Questionnaire Self-Report (YOQ-SR) results	59-61
Table IX. Youth Outcome Questionnaire Self-Report (YOQ-SR) subscale results	61-62
Table X. Parental reports	63
Table XI. Qualitative data	63-65

### Abstract

This paper focused on the American School Counseling Association National Standards requiring school counselors to serve all students. Focusing their activities, around three major areas, to help schools achieve their educational mission of student success. These three areas are academic achievement, personal/ social, and career development. In addition, it recommended implementing school counselors to student ratios at the ASCA recommended level or less.

It presented a graduate student thesis study on the efficacy of non-directive group counseling with middle and high school students. It illustrated the changes in academic grades, the pre and post results from the Youth Outcome Questionnaire Self-Report assessment, which measured therapeutic change. Also including, a qualitative reporting of a personal experience questionnaire of the sixty students, grades sixth through tenth. It attributed the outcomes to the social and interpersonal skills gained through group therapy, which brought improvements in student academics, behavior, and social skills and relationships (Romasz, Kantor, and Elias, 2004).

It proposed that these benefits positively affect all students' growth and development, and these effects are not limited to students who exhibit "at risk" behavior. This review attempted to provide justification for the implementation of a developmentally comprehensive group-counseling program, consisting of three group models, psycho-educational, counseling, and psychotherapy, as the most efficient and effective way to reach the goal of student success (Delucia-Waack, 2000; Shechtman, 2002; Shechtman, Freidman, Kashti, & Sharabany, 2002).

## Learning: The Power of Group Work in Facilitating Student Achievement

The objective of this literature review is to find supporting research on the efficacy of counseling groups for creating a comprehensive developmental group counseling curriculum for public education. The goal is to show that group counseling has a positive impact on improving student academics, behavior, and social skills and relationships as supported in the research by (Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Romasz, Kantor & Elias, 2004; Zins et al., 2004; Pascopella, 2004; Shechtman, 2002; Rones & Hoagwood, 2000; Hattie, Briggs & Purdie, 1996). Groups help students in a safe environment to work on personal growth and development in measurable ways such as academic achievement, personal and social functioning, and career development.

Two important and necessary parts to a successful group program is to have an adequate counselor to student ratio and clearly defined counselor roles. These two structures will be discussed in relation to how they help to foster the education and overall success of students' development and use of good skills. The impact and consequences of poor skill development on student achievement will follow the learning and use of these skills.

Group work invokes greater student development, and personal potential. The aim of counseling is to help all students reach their highest potential. The three approaches to working with students in a group format are psycho-educational, counseling groups, and psychotherapy. These three groups implemented into a comprehensive program address all the ways counselors can reach student's needs and achievement objectives.

Last discussed are the effects of a developmentally comprehensive group-counseling program kindergarten through high school. Followed up by how it is

necessary to meet learning standards and what comprises the instituting of such a program. Some research proven groups that meet these learning objectives will be included at the conclusion of the literature review.

Opening, this paper is the call of attention to the American School Counseling Associations National Counseling Program Model. Specifically, the counselor student ratio, and the role of school counselors to serve every student while focusing on the domains of academic, personal/ social, and career development. These three areas encompass the common mission of student success (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). These areas are most efficiently attend to by utilizing psycho-educational, counseling, and psychotherapy groups as the means to serve all students on a developmental level (Shechtman, 2002).

The problem is the current counselor to student ratio is out of proportion (Delucia-Waack, 2000). There are only three states within all of the United States, which actually meet, or are below the recommended ratio, as published by the Department of Education (ASCA, 2004). This leaves many students without the much needed interaction and service of their counselors.

How counselors fix this problem and meet these requirements is to set up a comprehensive developmental group-counseling program consisting of three types of groups as illustrated by Shechtman et al. (2002). The most effective and cost beneficial way to meet the goal of maximizing student achievement is through group work (Delucia-Waack, 2000). In addition, groups provide students with the necessary skills to better cope with the stresses of adolescence and development, to excel and find their higher potential in life (Krieg, Simpson, & Stanley, 2003; Romasz, Kantor, & Elias,

2004). Essentially, a comprehensive group program would become part of a developmentally comprehensive educational curriculum.

### *Serving All Students*

This section addresses the ASCA National Model mandate for counselors to serve all students and focus their activities on the three domain areas of academic, personal/social, and career skill development. These areas are in alignment with the national education standards to help schools achieve their educational mission- student success (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). It is necessary for school counselors to have clarity of roles and a proportionate counselor to student ratio to address the development of these specific skills. In addition, the consequences for not fulfilling these standards are presented in reference to Shechtman's (2002) study.

### *Skill Development*

#### *Academic skills.*

Student development from the counseling and educational standpoint is academic, personal/social and career development (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). Academic skills are important as they build the foundation for student learning. This allows students to grasp new material and reach higher levels of achievement in school (Krieg, Simpson, & Stanley, 2003). The previously mentioned researchers stated these academic skill sets are studying techniques, reading and comprehension, note taking, paraphrasing, abstract and critical thinking, problem solving, and memorization. These skills and techniques help students to maintain a strong foundation in academic learning and help them to develop their own interests and fully realize their academic potential. This allows students to fully develop their aspirations in light of having strong social and interpersonal skills.

*Social skills.*

Social and emotional development is key and a fundamental area to all students, and all other areas of growth, including academic achievement (Shechtman et al., 2002). Shechtman et al. (2002) recognized how the process of learning to function socially allows students to discover who they are, and help them to grow to who they want to become. Furthermore, personal development covers a wide area of information such as likes and dislikes limits and boundaries, values, choice, responsibility, judgment, personal interests, motivation, and understanding. With a greater personal understanding, students will be able to make better choices on how they want to be socially.

Brigman and Campbell (2004); Gladding (1995); Hoag and Burlingame (1997); Holmes and Sprenkle (1996); Romasz, Kantor, & Elias (2004), and Shechtman (2002) stated social development within groups helps students to function as individuals within society. This allows them to be able to be themselves within society without losing their autonomy, while still allowing them to be a contributing member. Some of the necessary social skills learned are interpersonal skills, listening and communication, building and maintaining trust, sharing, respect for self and others, empathy, building and maintaining relationships. Personal knowledge and understanding, and how to act in social situations gives student's greater self-confidence and accountability in the personal decisions they make.

NASP (2005) stated most children pick up positive social skills, gain self-esteem and learn personal responsibility through their everyday interactions with adults and peers. However, it is important that educators and parents reinforce this casual learning with direct and indirect instruction. We must also recognize that children pick up

behaviors that might be detrimental to their development or safety, and in the past, schools have relied exclusively on families to teach children important interpersonal and conflict resolution skills. Likewise, increased negative societal influences and demands on family life make it essential that schools partner with parents to assist in this social learning process of students (Garrett and Crutchfield, 1997). NASP (2005) stated this is particularly true today given the critical role that social skills play in fostering a positive school environment and reducing school violence.

NASP (2005) and Shechtman (2002) recognized that good social skills helped to create a positive school environment. In addition, students were more resilient in the face of adversity, and future crisis. Furthermore, students were more likely to seek out appropriate ways to handle anger and frustration, and readily took personal responsibility for their actions. With a full repertoire of social skills, students will have the ability to make social choices that will strengthen their interpersonal relationships and facilitate their continued positive development and growth.

Social skills promote positive behavior, influence academic success, and positively effect overall development (NASP, 2005). The NASP (2005) related good social skills as being directly related and critical to successful functioning in life. As well, these skills enable students to better know what to say, how to make better choices, and how to act in diverse situations. This directly correlates to the extent to which children and adolescents possess good social skills also influencing their academic performance, behavior, social and family relationships. In addition, these social skills link together the quality of life and the choices related to successful career development Romasz, Kantor, & Elias (2004).

*Career development skills.*

Career development is an important part of personal growth and life satisfaction. This growth occurs through the process of self-understanding when students begin to get an image of themselves in a personal and social context (Elliott, 2001). Students' higher potential unfolds with the realization of personal dreams, goals, purpose, and the fostering of a deeper meaning for their life (Romasz, Kantor, & Elias (2004). This knowledge helps students to establish a career path and direction for their academic endeavors, rounding out their personal growth and developmental.

The three areas academic, personal / social and career development are closely related and are intertwined with students' personal well being (Krieg, Simpson, and Stanley, 2003; Shechtman, 2002; Shechtman et al., 2002; Whiston and Sexton, 1998). Elias et al. (1997) and the above researchers stated, when the area of social and personal development is attended to systematically, students' academic achievement increases, the process of career development is enriched, the incidence of problem behaviors is decreased, improving the quality of social interactions. This developmental process allows students to become productive, responsible, contributing members of school and society, a goal that we all want. Having school counselors attend to these needs for every student is necessary for their well-being and success.

The ASCA model requires school counseling programs to help all students to become successful (Campbell and Brigman, 2005). These standards are based on the premise that all students can and should benefit from the activities and services of a comprehensive counseling program geared to facilitate academic, personal/ social and career development (Gysbers, 2001). Following this description counseling programs

must service all students and their individual needs, while not limiting their services to a small percentage of the student population. This idea of serving every student is reflective in the quote by Gysbers and Henderson (2000, p. 26).

“Although immediate and crisis needs of students are to be met, a major focus of a developmental program is to provide all students with experiences to help them grow and develop.”

This means that school counselors and schools work together to create a comprehensive counseling program that serves all students equally, regardless of crisis needs (Gysbers, 2001). This goal is obtainable by having the correct ratio of counselors to meet this role.

#### *Ratios and Roles*

In order to necessitate the requirement of serving all students equally, some changes need to be made within the school educational system and counseling programs. Pascopella (2004) expressed first, implementation and regulation of the recommended ASCA counselor to student ratio needs to occur. This would allow for the effective changes in our school systems desired by researchers, administration, and state education boards. The current United States average student to counselor ratio is 478 to 1, where the maximum recommended ratio is 250 to 1 by the ACA (2004). Already overburdened, this makes it impossible for counselors to make changes and implement new programs and services within their schools.

Whiston (2002) was concerned for students, because unrealistic caseloads keep school counselors from providing students with assistance. She further argued an argument consistent with the ASCA, for an increase in the number of school counselors within schools. Whiston also stated an increase would provide the resources to introduce

more effective counseling programs, which tend to be a more reliable than collaborative programs. She found that typically, a collaborative dissipates over time and they have been minimally effective compared with a comprehensive program that serves all students. This provides significant support in the accountability of school counselors' roles and the justification for hiring more counselors to fill these roles (Whiston and Sexton, 1998).

Whiston (2002) expressed a concern regarding the substantiation and clarification of school counselor roles, because there is not a clear definition of what these roles are. Whiston and Sexton (1998) elaborated on the many different accountable roles school counselors play. A reality is that school counselors fill a substantial number of other functions out side of counseling. With the current situation, changes and improvements needed to pin point and substantiate counseling roles are unachievable. Therefore, leaving many students without the resources and interaction with the school counselor, further diminishing students potential for success and ability to deal with challenges as illustrated by Romasz, Kantor, and Elias (2004).

The role of school counselors working with students at the basic levels of social interactions and skill development has been most beneficial to student development. The N.Y. State Department of Education stated the need for students to pass state examinations is well and known, but more relevantly there needs to be an increase in the humanistic approach with students in schools. Adults within schools need to connect with students on a human level to remove the emotional barriers that exist and hinder student learning. Pascopella (2004) stated utilizing counselors is an effective and efficient way to address the need for a humanistic approach.

*Education and Success**Positive skill development.*

Schools wanting to fulfill their mandates to educate children recognize the importance of counseling services as necessary to the school mission, and the children's success (Romasz, Kantor, & Elias, 2004; Shechtman et al., 2002). Romasz, Kantor, & Elias (2004), and the Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group (1999) elaborated on individual child with unresolved personal concerns having a diminished capacity to learn. Therefore, making it necessary to address students emotional, behavioral, and social needs first, before they can benefit from an education. It is in the best interest of schools to provide services, to facilitate students social and emotional functioning in order to reach academic goals.

*Lack of skill development.*

If children did not have access to these services, it could have severe implications. With the present issues, children are dealing with Ronas and Hoagwood (2000) stated students run the risk of developing emotional, behavioral, or developmental disorders. Shechtman (2002) reported more students are exhibiting adjustment problems within schools. These problems are due to the stressful events in children's lives, in addition to the developmental stages children go through. These situations create an added difficult emotional and social challenge for those students and others around them to adjust to creating a stressful atmosphere.

Ronas and Hoagwood (2000) reported that reports make it clear that children and adolescents today must cope with a more complex set of social issues than a generation ago. These issues include substance use and abuse, sexual risks, sexually transmitted

diseases, suicide and self-mutilating behaviors, school community, domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse, eating disorders, and homelessness (Nastasi 1998). Romasz, Kantor, & Elias, (2004) stated only students with strong social and emotional skills will be able to manage the demands of our current society successfully.

They found that children dealing with personal issues tend to have trouble functioning within school and society in general. This disadvantage is due to a deficiency in social and interpersonal skills, and a lack of their knowledge. Some of these difficulties to perform a skill are observable in student's behaviors as described by NASP (2005), such as acquisition deficits due to lack of knowledge, such as a child not knowing the skills or not discerning when a skill is appropriate. For example, a child grabs a pencil from a peer in class when she needs one because she does not know how to appropriately ask to borrow it.

Secondly, a performance deficit despite having the knowledge, a child knows how to perform the skills but fails to do so consistently or at an acceptable level of competence. In this example, although the child understand that he should raise his hand to speak in class, and does so much of the time, he will sometimes blurt out a comment without raising his hand. In addition, fluency deficits to a sufficient degree or level of strength, a child knows how to perform skill and is motivated to perform, but demonstrates inadequate performance due to lack of practice or adequate feedback. In this example, a student has learned what to say and do when confronted with bullying behavior, but her responses are not yet strong enough to be successful.

Lastly, due to competing skill deficits or behaviors, internal or external factors interfere with the child demonstrating a learned skill appropriately. For example,

depression, anxiety, hyperactivity, or negative motivation can interfere with demonstration of appropriate conflict resolution skills, even after learning these skills.

Failure to address basic social and interpersonal skills for functioning in the educational process is to leave out an entire necessary skill set for lifelong challenges. Challenges such as, family break ups, parental neglect and abuse, death, war, and disasters, which all effect how children function. These challenges in addition to anxiety, school failure, social isolation or rejection, and bullying have deeper implications. Without these services, students are at a clear and unmistakable disadvantage (Rones and Hoagwood, 2000; Romasz, Kantor, and Elias, 2003).

Shechtman (2002), and Garrett, & Crutchfield (1997) stated these challenges are reflective in students' behaviors of withdrawal, depression, suicidal behavior, eating disorders, aggression, violence and delinquency. They discussed how normal developmental tasks and school issues become a burden rather than a source of accomplishment and growth for students. In addition, how this lack of social skills can lead to later maladjustment such as delinquency, dropping out of school, low academic achievement, anti-social behavior, alcoholism, and adult psychoses.

The NASP (2005) illustrated some of the consequences of poor social skills, stating students have trouble in interpersonal relationships with parents, teachers, and peers. Students evoke highly negative responses from others that lead to high levels of peer rejection. The peer rejection has been linked on several occasions to instances of school violence. Also, stating that students have further reaching problems leading to behaviors of depression, aggression and anxiety. Additionally, as adults, these students have a higher incidence of involvement in the criminal justice system. Garrett, &

Crutchfield (1997) stated what changes this is the development of skills, development of a positive self-concept and a sense of identity through close and personal relationships.

(Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Shechtman, Freidman, Kashti, & Sharabany, 2002; Shechtman, 2002; Romasz, Kantor & Elias, 2004; Zins et al., 2004) stated counseling groups built on the premise of encouraging close relationships, sharing private information, and giving and receiving support and feedback, helped students to develop skills extremely important to supporting their well-being that are highly connected with their academic performance. Research by Shechtman (2002) indicated that peer relationships are a crucial aspect of childhood development. Research has supported the further implementation and research of groups as a viable and reliable source of support for students' academic and social success. Gladding (1995) emphasized the usefulness of the group setting in helping children feel less isolated, connect with and learn from others, receive peer validation and support, and normalize experiences.

As Shechtman (2002) pointed out, children who are low performing or having difficulty need to resolve certain social and emotional concerns, and therefore may have their needs better addressed through counseling groups. School based treatment has been very effective and supported by the results of the Prout & Prout (1998) meta-analysis study. Kazdin and Johnson (1994) emphasized the effectiveness of school-based therapy and interventions, stating that services within schools need to be increased. In addition, that students benefit most from the direct access to services within the school settings. Hoagwood and Erwin (1997) reported from the largest study on the children's use of services, that 75% of students receiving mental health services received them within schools.

Without these services within schools, these students would have not received services. The importance of school counselors as a first line of intervention for students has been substantiated (Pascopella, 2004). Some states mandate school counselors because there is a push in getting legislative agencies to recognize the role of counselors within schools. Until that time, school counselors can most benefit students with the most efficient use of their time and expertise, which would be group work as, described by Delucia-Waack (2000). She states all students' benefit the same from group work; it does not matter if they are well adjusted, adjusted, or mal-adjusted. The goal is to serve and maximize all students' fullest potential through group work (Prout & Prout, 1998).

### *Three Group Counseling Approaches*

Shechtman (2002), Gazda (1989), and Gladding (1995) described three different groups formats to facilitate group work with students, psycho-educational, counseling, and psychotherapy. The difference between these interventions is their individual approach and desired results and outcomes. Utilizing the most recent research, these group formats are discussed in relation to how they facilitate students' growth. There will be specific emphasis on the benefits of psycho-educational and counseling groups. Concluding with the relevant skills learned within the groups that make them facilitative to student's academic, personal/ social, and career development.

Psycho-educational groups help teach students skill sets. Counseling groups helps students to acquire personal knowledge along with integrating learned skill sets from educational groups. Psychotherapy groups are for deeper personality growth and change (Shechtman et al., 2002). The purpose of psycho-educational groups is to give students' a foundation for academic and personal growth and development.

*Psycho-educational Groups*

Educational group work is for instructional purposes that address issues important to all students' academic and personal/ social and career development. The desired goal is skill training, knowledge, and acquisition (Campbell and Brigman, 2005). Having a classroom-based educational group program provides a base from which to focus on skill building. Classroom teaching combined with school wide interventions, such as counseling groups, provides a clear coherent sequence for skill development. This combination of learning provides a progressive system model that everyone can follow and is familiar with (Romasz, Kantor & Elias, 2004).

Interventions as described by the NASP (2005) stated effective skills development programs are comprised of two essential elements: a teaching process (that uses a behavioral/social learning approach), and a universal language or set of steps (that facilitates the learning of new behavior). Also, these interventions can be implemented at a school-wide, specific setting, classroom, or individual level, but at all levels the emphasis is on teaching the desired skill, not punishing negative behaviors.

Some beneficial factors and activities important to the process of fostering the development of student's positive social skills as illustrated by the NASP (2005) are to facilitate learning through normal activities. In addition, teachers and parents must take advantage of incidental learning, in which naturally occurring behaviors or events are used to teach and reinforce appropriate social behavior. Secondly, to address environmental factors, the school or home environment can affect a child's ability to learn and perform good social skills. If a child is experiencing difficulty demonstrating a particular skill, it is best to first evaluate the environment to determine what might

interfere with the child's appropriate acquisition of that skill. Lastly, address individual factors, some children need more intensive, personalized training because of individual factors, such as a disability.

*Academic skills.*

Educational groups use a structured format, and emphasize cognitive learning, and skill development specific to certain formats and lessons (Shechtman, 2002). These lessons are for preventative measures, and establish the foundation for group work within schools. In addition, educational group curriculums provide students an instructional setting to learn skills such as goal setting, progress monitoring, and memorization along with other important academic and social skills. These skills are most critical to student academic success as described by Campbell and Brigman (2005). These groups are important for building the foundation of skills important for positive interpersonal development (Shechtman, 2002).

*Social Skills.*

The foundation of social skills is very important, as described by NASP (2005), however there are hundreds of important social skills for students to learn. Therefore, they organize them into skill areas to make it easier to identify and determine appropriate interventions. For example, the "Stop and Think" program by Knoff and Batsche (NASP, 2005) organizes skills into four areas: First, are survival skills (e.g., listening, following directions, ignoring distractions, using nice or brave talk, rewarding yourself). Second are interpersonal skills (e.g., sharing, asking for permission, joining an activity, waiting your turn). Third are problem-solving skills (e.g., asking for help, apologizing, accepting

consequences, deciding what to do). Fourth are conflict resolution skills (e.g., dealing with teasing, losing, accusations, being left out, and peer pressure).

However important these skills are, instruction alone is not sufficient. They need to be utilized and understood in a counseling group experience to fully learn what they are and how to use them effectively (Brigman and Campbell, 2003). The educational group process although different from counseling groups begins to bring students together into a circular group format. This process orients students to facing each other and dealing with each other face to face. These groups use a limited open discussion format, which is the beginning experience for students dealing with others interpersonally. This aspect prepares students to use learned skills, and can be expected to improve classroom behavior, school performance, peer relations, and further career development (Shechtman, 2002).

#### *Career skills.*

Another use of psycho-educational groups is career development. Elliot (2001) emphasized that personal awareness and knowledge allows students to find their personal interests and values, and then compare and contrast them regarding different career options. In addition to personal awareness, career exploration information gives students knowledge of job fields, requirements, educational demands, pay, and current employment needs, which students need to make good educated decisions towards their future goals. Additionally, exploration provides students with information on college and alternative education options and their requirements, scholarship and financing, and other important issues related to furthering education. Delucia-Waack (2000) further supported

the use of group work, stating it has been effective in promoting career exploration and development amongst students of all ages.

All these aspects of academic, personal / social and career development are educational in nature and can be conducted in a classroom setting. This allows all students to receive the foundation of skills and knowledge from which to build a strong competent, successful education. The next step is having students integrate the learned knowledge and skills; this is the beginning of understanding how to make use of these skills in counseling groups.

### *Counseling Groups*

Bergin (1993) stated the processes of counseling groups create an atmosphere where students can explore and develop important skills to functioning. Counseling groups ensure that all students receive a minimum amount of social skills training and integration (Shechtman, 2002; Shechtman et al., 2002). In addition, this process empowers students to take personal responsibility for their own development, and how this growth leads them to a deeper sense of personal potential. Shechtman et al. (2002) further stated training ensures students will reach a level of social functioning that will allow them to handle future developmental tasks and challenges in a positive manor.

### *Training.*

The process of group counseling is a dynamic interpersonal process focusing on conscious thought and behavior. This process is involved in the therapy functions of catharsis, mutual caring and trust, acceptance of self and others, and mutual support and benefit (Bergin, 1993). In a group setting, Bergin (1993) stated these therapy functions create and nurture the act of sharing personal concerns and issues with others. Further

helping students to utilize the group interactions to increase understanding and acceptance of values and goals, and to learn or unlearn certain personal attitudes and behaviors. This type of an experience helps students to reach a deeper level of personal knowledge and understanding. In addition to this, students and adolescents are better equipped with a whole host of integrated skills that will help them in making and following through with their personal decisions and choices (Bergin, 1993).

*Integration.*

In counseling groups students learn the use of and the effective integration of interpersonal skills such as active listening, effective communication, self disclosure and self awareness, developing and maintaining trust, verbal and nonverbal self expression, conflict resolution, stress and anger management, building relationships with diverse individuals, empathy, teamwork, and barriers to interpersonal effectiveness (Johnson, 2003; Campbell and Brigman, 2005). Campbell and Brigman (2005) stated skills most critical to student's success out of groups are self-management skills such as managing attention, motivation, and anger. Because of these skills, students tend to have a more positive attitude towards working together, and a higher quality of social interactions as outcomes as described from the most recent research (2004 Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Hattie, Briggs & Purdie, 1996; Holmes and Sprenkle, 1996; Pascopella, 2004; Romasz, Kantor & Elias, 2004; Rones & Hoagwood, 2000; Zins et al., 2004). The supportive environment of counseling groups allows students the comfort to fully develop and utilize their interpersonal skills to reach a higher potential (Shechtman, 2002; Shechtman et al., 2002).

*Potential and Social functioning.*

The purpose of a counseling group is to create an atmosphere where an individual's potential and skills can be discovered, explored, developed and tested...as defined by Bergin (1993). Students begin to discover and explore personal interests and goals, behaviors, personal needs, likes and dislikes. Hoag and Burlingame (1997) illustrated how groups help students in a safe environment to work on personal growth and development by measuring behavior change. Students developed new ways of functioning and behaving by testing out alternative behaviors through out the group. Shechtman, bar-El, & Hadar (1997) found the three most prevalent factors to changes in adolescent behavior during group were catharsis, interpersonal learning, and social skill learning.

These factors were most important, and relevant to students' development of better behavior and creating a better school atmosphere (Shechtman et al., 1997). These skills had a positive impact on school safety as described by NASP (2005), and due to the demonstrated relationship between social skills and school safety, schools are increasingly seeking ways to help students develop positive social skills, both in school and in the community. Through group work students have the chance to interact with one another and open up and work together, more so than in typical student interactions. These interactions lead to more positive changes and outcomes for all students.

These group interactions help students explore personal boundaries with others, which produce positive outcomes. Positive social interactions and skills development benefit students and betters their chances for success more efficiently and effectively than any other school-based intervention (Campbell and Brigman, 2005, Shechtman, 2002). The experiential learning process in counseling groups has the potential to develop a

social competency amongst all students, which results in a more positive outlook, and higher potential for students (Romasz, Kantor & Elias, 2004). Research provides significant support on the efficacy of counseling groups positively influencing student academics, behavior, social skills and relationships.

Through the process of taking personal accountability in the process of learning social skills, students grow to see their higher potential as supported by (Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Hattie, Briggs & Purdie, 1996; Pascopella, 2004; Romasz, Kantor & Elias, 2004; Ronas & Hoagwood, 2000; Shechtman, 2002; Zins et al., 2004). This empowerment drives student's personal growth and development, allowing a greater potential to be actualized by finding a connection to a more congruent, deeper, truer self. This process accomplishes the greater objective of counseling, and counseling groups, which is to help our students reach their highest potential in life (Romasz, Kantor & Elias, 2004).

Learning and integrating interpersonal skills that address the personal and social development of students as described in the ASCA national school-counseling model, produce improvements in all of the three main areas related to student success, academic achievement, personal/social, and career development (Romasz, Kantor & Elias, 2004; Zins et al., 2004). This allows students to become an active participant in their own development and success, helping them to reach their fullest potential. However, when individual students have greater deficits and more needs, they may require individualized services. Psychotherapy groups adequately meet personalized client specific goals and developmental needs of students.

### *Psychotherapy Groups*

An important issue for schools is providing services, and collaboration of services for students in need of personality growth and change beyond typical student developmental concerns. Psychotherapy groups, are best suited for this population, they offer students with special needs the most effective use of school counselors and other school professionals Prout and Prout (1998).

Psychotherapy groups are important in addressing the needs of all students; Hoagwood and Erwin (1997) emphasized the positive effect psychotherapy groups had on reducing behavior symptoms, based on their meta-analytic review. They also expressed the need for further research to address comparing and compiling results based on the reduction of identifiable problems and behaviors. In addition, emphasizing the identification of psychotherapy groups based on their effective diagnosis, for which symptoms, what populations, and what specific models of intervention. Adding, that these services need to be integrated into a comprehensive intervention package, and measured for their combined effectiveness.

Hoagwood and Erwin (1997) stated these groups are important, and school counselors should facilitate these groups in conjunction with other wrap around services. NASP (2005) stated children with disabilities might need adaptive curriculum and learning strategies. For students who require special services avoid a "one size fits all" approach and adapt the intervention to meet the individuals or particular group needs (Sink and Stroh, (2003). Most students with special needs will require a combination of different strategies matched to particular deficits and backgrounds. These alternative services meet the individual needs of students and their families. These services take a

more intensive looking at the home atmosphere, connecting with community services, and case management Hoagwood and Erwin (1997).

Even though, these are not traditional roles performed by a school counselor, these alternative services or the connection to these services should be available within schools. Hoag and Burlingame (1997) provided evidence in their meta-analytic review that psychotherapy groups are an effective intervention with children and adolescence. In addition, groups and individual therapies do not differ in their overall effectiveness, further substantiating the use and implementation of psychotherapy and group work within schools.

Shechtman (1996) demonstrated in his research that 75 percent of participating students receiving low grades improved, in comparison to a control group, which did not improve. In addition, the student's improvements remained upon later examination, further supporting the correlation between academic achievement and symptom reduction for improvements in behavior and social skills. The success of these groups is significant in the areas of academics and behavior as shown in the research done by (Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Zins et al., 2004; Prout & Prout, 1998; Elias et al., 1997; Weisz, Weersing, & Valeri, 1997; Hoag & Burlingame, 1997).

These positive changes in student behavior and academics, validates the use and implementation of group counseling within schools, to meet the needs of all students. Group therapy has been proven to be an effective and sometimes more effective treatment than individual counseling (Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Shechtman, 2002; Prout & Prout, 1998; Weisz et al., 1995; Prout & DeMartino, 1986). Prout & Prout (1998) showed that group treatments were more effective .93 to .39, and treatment

students improved almost one standard deviation when compared to students who did not receive treatment. The improvements came in the areas of grades or test performance, behavioral observations, and by variable type. Examples of these variables are depression, self-esteem, anxiety, social skills, attitude, and performance.

Shechtman, bar-El, & Hadar (1997) found academic achievement to be dependent upon interpersonal and social skill learning. Accordingly, these skills directly correlated to student's development, learning, and over all achievement. Groups have been broken into three different types as described by Shechtman (2002), Gazda (1989), and Gladding (1995), (psycho educational) Guidance/educational; (counseling) Counseling/interpersonal problem solving; and (psychotherapy) psychotherapy/ personality reconstruction. Comprehensively these interventions produce specific results and outcomes related to student academic achievement, personal/social, and career development (Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Hattie, Briggs & Purdie, 1996; Pascopella, 2004; Romasz, Kantor & Elias, 2004; Rones & Hoagwood, 2000; Shechtman, 2002; Zins et al., 2004).

#### *Need for a Developmentally Comprehensive Group Counseling Program*

First, establish the specific needs of a school in order to set up an appropriate program. The next step should be to set goals to meet the needs of the students and education standards. This will direct the program towards working on the expected and desired outcomes. Finally, allow for re-evaluation and change in the development of a program. These steps combined attempt to find the most effective and efficient use of schools resources (Sink and Stroh, 2003).

Initially getting started requires setting the goals of a group-counseling program. When planning programs, schools should include parents and other caregivers. They should also focus on the deficits and the developmental needs of that school. The needs of individual schools are different, but the goals are the same. These goals are to increase self-esteem, to increase self-responsibility, and to improve academic and interpersonal skills of students. Groups are established and members are chosen regarding to their levels of achievement, adjustment, socialization, and verbalization, in order to represent a cross section of the entire student population. This is to establish a program designed to benefit all types of students, not merely children at risk of failing. To this extent, each group includes high academic/low academic, well adjusted/behaviorally problematic, extroverted/introverted, and verbal/non-verbal adolescents as illustrated by (Sink and Stroh, 2003).

Once the groups are established, they should follow the goals set for meeting student and educational standards. In addition, skills training should follow some basic guidelines as set down by (Campbell & Brigman, 2005; NASP 2005; Romasz, Kantor & Elias, 2004; Rones & Hoagwood, 2000; Shechtman, 2002; and Sink and Stroh, 2003).

Focus on facilitating the desirable behavior as well as eliminating the undesirable behavior. Emphasize the learning, performance, generalization, and maintenance of appropriate behaviors through modeling, coaching, and role-playing. Also crucial is providing students with immediate performance feedback. Employ primarily positive strategies and add punitive strategies only if the positive approach is unsuccessful. Provide training and practice opportunities in a wide range of settings with different groups and individuals in order to encourage students to generalize new skills to multiple,

real life situations. Look to enhance social skills by increasing the frequency of an appropriate behavior in a particular situation. These guidelines are necessary to set up a format that allows students to take an active role, and personal responsibility in the group goals, and their personal development and learning NASP (2000).

Learning in groups, is an ideal environment specific to the developmental needs of students as Shechtman (2002), and Gazda (1989) suggested. The group processes, and therapeutic factors help student's adjustment through the stages of life. To properly address all of the developmental stages of children Hoagwood and Erwin (1997) noted the need to have empirically validated interventions combined into comprehensive programs. Bergin (1993) supported the need for comprehensive programs, which address the developmental needs of students, and emphasized that these services should be available to students throughout their entire school careers from start to finish. Groups combined with a K-12 developmental plan, cover all the needs of children, and create a comprehensive group program as described by Shechtman (2002).

The main purpose of a comprehensive counseling program is to meet or exceed the National Standards for school counseling programs goal, and to help all students to be successful (Campbell & Brigman, 2005). Bergin (1993) stated groups are ideally suited to the needs of elementary, middle school, and secondary school students. These needs are the skills necessary for successful functioning in schools, society and life. DeLucia-Waack (2000) expressed the need for the essential knowledge of, and the implementation of group work in the school setting by school counselors. She argued that group work benefits a greater number of students, and this meets more of their individual needs and

addresses more of their relevant issues than any other measure from a financial standpoint.

The most frequently identified issues with students in counseling by Prout and Prout (1998) were family problems and school issues such as underachievement, learning problems, and motivation. Roanes and Hoagwood (2000) emphasized the need for anxiety prevention and intervention services, as anxiety disorders are the most common disorder among children and adolescents. Further stating these, concerns are indicative of entire student populations. The developmental change students go through, regarding personal and social, growth and learning are representative of a whole entire education, kindergarten through high school. Developmentally students lack the knowledge and skills to deal with the challenges of growing up.

Students are encouraged to focus on thoughts and feelings, troublesome life situations, and other concerns group members may express. Within the confidential group setting, students have a forum to discuss problems and social issues not appropriately aired in the classroom. Topics originated by group members include academic pressures, personal inadequacies, family concerns, substance abuse, suicide, rejection, peer pressure, and relationships. These are some of the most important ways students conduct and work on relevant issues in counseling groups as described by (Sink and Stroh, 2003) that produce growth.

### *Outcomes*

Student growth presented in the post-testing by Sink and Stroh (2003) indicated that 63% of students with severe and recurrent behavior problems showed improvement. Parents and teachers stated that over 83% of students altered their behavior in a positive

direction. Group members reported that 75% felt better toward themselves, 74% exhibited better peer relations, and 67% had improved attitudes toward their parents. Most dramatic is the statistic that 79% of the adolescents credit the group-counseling program as having influencing favorably on these positive changes.

According to a recent review of group prevention literature Kulic, Horne & Dagley (2001), stated 40 percent of group interventions are psycho educational, 50 percent are counseling, and less than 10 percent are psychotherapy groups. Groups play an important role in the school setting, combined they offer an approach that has been proven effective and efficient. Pascopella (2004) stated research shows children from all levels in the same school multiple years using a well-implemented comprehensive program will have higher achievement test scores than the students who attend schools without whole school counseling programs. Shechtman (2002) addressed the importance of these kinds of programs, and the current lack in the school setting. DeLucia-Waack, (2000) stated re-evaluating group programs can help to ensure the efficient, effective use of counselors. In addition, to supporting the role of counselors in schools and the use of group work.

#### *Re-evaluate, Adjust, and Change*

The basic tenet of this proposal is, there is a need within schools to have counseling expanded to reach the entire population, the most beneficial and productive way to do this is to have group counseling. In isolation, social skills are not sufficient to ensure school safety; interventions should not be limited to student instruction and training. Change in the school culture should be facilitated by infusing social skills and academic skills training into a comprehensive system of school safety and discipline

policies, emphasizing relationship-building between students and faculty (teachers and administrators) and between schools and families, and providing effective behavior management and academic instruction (NASP, 2005). This process of change will lead to the further success of our schools to provide students with the necessary skills to navigate the ever-changing global community.

*Road Blocks and Where Do We Go From Here*

Prout and Brown (1999) stated educators agree that personal, social, emotional, academic, and vocational aspects of a student's development are intertwined and focus on educating children as a whole person. In addition, that school counseling programs have an integral part in the educational system and that group counseling is one of its primary components.

Director of programs at ASCA, Jill Cook was quoted as having said in Pascopella (2004), "Counseling is a K-12 developmental program, and kids need information on emotional and developmental levels to be successful in school and life." The importance of school counselors is well known. However, the lack of research and support calls for the need for more accountability in schools. This data will in turn increase the support for school counselors as stated by Campbell & Brigman (2005).

With the data collected from the already implemented school programs and the new, counselors will be able to answer some of the questions raised by researchers. Campbell & Brigman (2005), Shechtman (2002), Shechtman, Freidman, Kashti, & Sharabany, 2002, Hoagwood and Erwin (1997), and Bergin, (1993) are asking for increased data on the effectiveness of group work with students, which type of group is best for which specific problem. In addition, to calling for post testing on the outcomes of

these interventions. The posttest as stated by Shechtman, Freidman, Kashti, & Sharabany, (2002) is the litmus test to the success of groups and future support for a comprehensive program.

A mandatory developmental school group-counseling program of psycho-educational, counseling, and psychotherapy groups, grade K-12 is the most effective and efficient way to address the successful development of students. This can be achieved by mandating school counselors, kindergarten through high school, to meet the American School Counseling Association requirements for student/counselor population ratios, and standards. Evidence has shown a direct correlation between improving children's social-emotional skills and their overall life success (Zins et al., 2004). Now it is in the hands of educators to give students the support to continue to meet their fullest potential in the face of developmental changes, and life challenges.

Some examples of evidence-based social skills programs from the NASP website, [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org), are the "Stop and Think" Social Skills Program Part of Project ACHIEVE, which demonstrates success in reducing student discipline referrals to the principal's office, school suspensions, and expulsions; fostering positive school climates and pro-social interactions; increasing students' on-task behavior; and improving academic performance.

Another is the Primary Mental Health Project, which targets children K-3 and addresses social and emotional problems that interfere with effective learning. It has improved learning and social skills, reducing acting, shyness and anxious behaviors, and increase frustration tolerances. Another is the EQUIP Program, which offers a three-part intervention method for working with antisocial or behavior disordered adolescents. The

approach includes training in moral judgment, anger management/correction of thinking errors, and pro-social skills.

The last two are the PREPARE Curriculum, which presents a series of 10 course-length interventions, grouped into three areas: reducing aggression, reducing stress, and reducing prejudice. It is designed for use with middle school and high school students but can be adapted for use with younger students. Then the ACCEPTS Program offers a complete curriculum for teaching effective social skills to students at middle and high school levels. The program teaches peer-to-peer skills, skills for relating to adults, and self-management skills.

#### Method

There were a total number of thirty participants; the age range was eleven through fifteen. There was a mix of female and male students, from a rural northeast middle and high school. All of the participants were Caucasian, one student was European/Hispanic, and another was Eastern European. The socio-economic status of the participants was poor to middle class status. The director of the counseling center within the schools did the selection process for the students. Students were chosen to fit a wide array of students based on academic achievement, social skill development, and appropriate / inappropriate behavior.

Students were prearranged into groups by their schedule convenience and grade level. Each student met individually with the counselor for screening of eligibility, to get their verbal agreement to participate in a group, and to inform them of the group norms. Screening was based on the counselor intern's personal judgment of students' individual interpersonal functioning level. Students were excluded if they were not able to show

basic levels of interpersonal skills such as listening, sharing in a conversation, and any severe difficulties with interacting with the counselor. The students were told the groups would be open discussion format, and that certain rules applied.

The rules of the group were discussed with the students before the first meeting and during the first meeting. Specifically regarding confidentiality, one person speaking at a time, addressing each other by first name, no teasing or name calling, a commitment for the twelve week duration of the group, speaking directly to others and not about them. Then all students were brought together for their first group meeting.

During the first meeting, the group met and setup norms for the rest of the semester. Then there was an initial self-introductory exercise to familiarize the students with each other. The icebreaker exercise was to break into dyads to ask certain questions, and then come back into a group and present your partners responses. The activity required asking your partner questions about them (Name, grade, where you live, goals for school year, favorite activities). The group began immediately after the icebreaker exercise.

The group leader role modeled behaviors by interacting with the students based on observations and personal reactions to others statements, and related to what was happening in the group. The group leader would make comments regarding the process of the group, and the temperature of the group interactions. As the students began to interact with one another, the group leader would interact less and observe the group, and individuals. The group leader would direct and redirect the group when necessary by role modeling a response to an individual or the group as a whole. This tool was used to keep

the group on task and in present attention. Outside of that, the group facilitated itself with the topics of discussion and progress.

At the end of each group session, there were five-minute discussions regarding the group progress. The groups followed this format for the first three meetings. The rest of the group sessions were open discussion format with five minutes of processing at the end of each meeting. Group sessions ran from 30 to 60 minutes in length depending on the amount of time in the period students meet in their respective groups. The structure of the group was an open discussion the topics of discussion ranged in issues related to school work, sex, religion, God, abortion, drugs and alcohol, family problems, personal issues (cutting, suicide, ADHD, anxiety, stress), and other relevant concerns.

The students related to one another through their concerns and issues. In addition, students addressed disagreement and discomfort with others and topics. The students worked up to and through some of the processes of a group. The groups did not always have continuous participation or attendance by all members, due to student arrest, hospitalization, suspension, early termination, and parents asking for student's withdrawal from the group. Those that remained in the groups gained the experience and personal knowledge of self and others, and how to effectively apply themselves within the social environment of a group context (i.e.: Personal Skills Integration). The students used their interpersonal skills to go through the group processes of intimacy, power, conflict, cohesion, and termination (Johnson, 2003).

Students had some struggles relating with each other and themselves during the processes in the group. In between, the second and the twelfth group meetings students were administered the Youth Outcome Questionnaire Self Report. This was to measure

the therapeutic change in behavior and social skill development through the group, by using the 60-item questionnaire by Burlingame, Wells & Lambert (1999).

Youth outcome questionnaire® self-report 2.0 has a very high reliability with an internal consistency of .96 using the Chronbach's alpha test of reliability. The total cut off score is forty-seven, for the following subscales, the cutoff scores are seventeen for Interpersonal Distress, Interpersonal Relations is three, Social Problems is three, Behavioral Dysfunction is eleven. The reliability change index is eighteen for total score, nine for Interpersonal Distress, six for Interpersonal Relations, five for Social Problems, and twelve for Behavioral Dysfunction, but these scores needs to be re-adjusted to each individual client base. Normative scores for clients in a community setting had a mean score of 34.21, (BD) of 8.4, (ID) of 14, (IR) of .1, (SP) of 1.2. For clients from an outpatient setting had a mean score of 67.07, (BD) of 14, (ID) of 20.3, (IR) of 8.3, (SP) of 8.5. These scores were indicated in the administration and scoring manual by Burlingame, Wells & Lambert (1999).

### Results

These results will illustrate the power of group work in facilitating student academic achievement and social / personal development of students as illustrated by Campbell & Brigman, (2005). Social and interpersonal skills gained through group therapy, brought improvements in student academics, behavior, and social skills and relationships (Romasz, Kantor, and Elias, 2004). Providing support for psycho-educational and counseling groups, as the most efficient and effective way to reach the goal of student success (Delucia-Waack, 2000; Shechtman, 2002; Shechtman, Freidman, Kashti, & Sharabany, 2002). This evidence further supports the role of school counselors

and the effective implementation of a proportional counselor to student ratios to foster this work (Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Zins et al., 2004; Pascopella, 2004; Rones & Hoagwood, 2000; Hattie, Briggs & Purdie, 1996).

The first seven tables are of all the individual groups, with the measure of change in the student's grades pre and post group. Table eight is of all the groups combined together into one table, with the Youth Outcome Questionnaire-Self Report calculated differences pre and post group. Table nine is of all the groups combined together into one table, and the YOQ-SR Subscales pre and post, with differences. Table ten is the YOQ-Parental Reports, and Table eleven is of all the groups combined together into one table and their individual responses to a Qualitative assessment of their personal group experience, which were coded to find common themes in student's experiences.

#### *Tables I-VII*

These are all the individual groups themselves, with the corresponding amount of participants. Within each table are the changes in academic scores for all of the four subject areas of English, Math, Science, and Social Studies, from the beginning of group to termination. Included is the ratio of the individual student's attendance out of the total available meetings, in parentheses. Each group member's rank numbering is the same throughout all tables.

In table one; student one attended eleven out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased thirty-four points by termination. Student two attended eleven out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores decreased eleven points by termination. Student three attended eleven out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased forty points by termination.

In table two; student four attended all twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased nine points by termination. Student five attended all twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased twelve points by termination. Student six attended all twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased five points by termination. Student seven attended all twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased fifteen points by termination.

In table three, student eight attended all twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased twenty-eight points by termination. Student nine attended six out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased six points by termination. Student ten attended ten out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased one point by termination. Student eleven went through a separation and divorce of their parents, attended all twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased twenty-five points by termination.

In table four, student twelve terminated early, attended nine out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores did not increase by termination. Student thirteen attended all twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased thirty points by termination. Student fourteen was arrested and suspended out of school, attended four out of twelve possible meetings, and their academic scores decreased sixty-seven points by termination. Student fifteen was arrested and suspended out of school, attended ten out of twelve possible meetings, and their academic scores increased nineteen points by termination.

In table five, student sixteen attended eight out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased twenty-two points by termination. Student seventeen

attended nine out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased fifty-six points by termination. Student eighteen terminated early and then returned, attended six out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased six points by termination. Student nineteen terminated early and then returned, attended three out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores decreased twenty points by termination.

In table six, student twenty attended nine out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased one point by termination. Student twenty-one attended seven out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased twenty-four points by termination. Student twenty-two was diagnosed with ADHD and given medication; they attended ten out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased twenty points by termination. Student twenty-three attended ten out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased three points by termination. Student twenty-four attended ten out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased thirty-seven points by termination. Student twenty-five terminated early and attended three out of twelve possible meetings; their academic scores increased five points by termination. Student twenty-six attended eleven out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased eighteen points by termination. Student twenty-seven terminated early and attended five out of twelve possible meetings; their academic scores increased sixteen points by termination.

In table seven, all students terminated from the group early. However, student twenty-eight attended eight out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased thirty-one points by termination. Student twenty-nine terminated early and

attended six out of twelve possible meetings, their academic scores decreased six points by termination. Student thirty attended eight out of twelve possible meetings and their academic scores increased twenty-three points by termination.

### *Results for Grades*

During the duration of the groups, students who participated in all twelve meetings had a seventeen point average increase in grades for all subject areas ( $n = 7/30$ ), (range = 5, 30). Students who attended at least seventy five percent of the meetings, nine out of twelve, had an eighteen point average increase in grades for all subject areas ( $n = 12/30$ ), (range = -11, 56). Students who attended at least fifty percent of the meetings, six out of twelve, had a sixteen point average increase in grades for all subject areas ( $n = 7/30$ ), (range = -6, 34). For all participants ( $n = 30$ ), (range = -67, 56) the average increase in grades was twelve points.

These results demonstrate the power of group work in facilitating the academic achievement of students as illustrated by Campbell & Brigman, (2005). Students who attended all twelve of the group meetings had forty-six percent (46%) higher increase in grades than those that did not attend all of the meetings. Looking at the difference in grades, regarding the individual groups and their members, there was a collective average increase in grades of thirteen points (13.4) in the four subjects of Math, Science, English, and History for all groups ( $n=30$ ), and an increase of twenty (20.35) points without students who terminated early ( $n=23$ ). Social and interpersonal skills gained through group therapy, brought improvements in student academics (Romasz, Kantor, and Elias, 2004).

### *Table VIII*

This table illustrates the differences in behavior pre and post group by the use of the Youth Outcome Questionnaire-Self Report. The scores represent changes in behavior. The higher the number the more positive of a change, a negative number represents a regression of personal function and/or behavior, at the time of the test administration.

In table eight, student one missed the pre-assessment; their behavior score was thirty-six points at termination. Student two pre-tested sixty-three, their post score was forty, and their change in behavior score was twenty-three points at termination. Student three pre-tested thirty-seven, their post score was thirty-six, and their change in behavior score was one point at termination.

Student four pre-tested ten, their post score was three, and their change in behavior score was seven points at termination. Student five gave false and inaccurate responses to the questions on the questionnaire, pre-tested negative eleven, their post score was negative two, and their change in behavior score was inconsistent from the assessment. Student six pre-tested thirty-six, their post score was twenty-one, and their change in behavior score was fifteen points at termination. Student seven pre-tested thirty-seven, their post score was twenty-one, and their change in behavior score was sixteen points at termination.

Student eight pre-tested fifty-seven, their post score was twenty, and their change in behavior score was thirty-seven points at termination. Student nine pre-tested forty-nine, their post score was negative three, and their change in behavior score was fifty-two points at termination. Student ten pre-tested twenty-one, their post score was thirteen, and their change in behavior score was eight points at termination. Student eleven went through a separation and divorce of their parents, pre-tested seventy-seven, their post

score was ninety, and their change in behavior score was negative thirteen points at termination.

Student twelve terminated early, pre-tested seventy-seven, their post score was sixty-six, and their change in behavior score was eleven points at termination. Student thirteen pre-tested one hundred and fourteen, their post score was eighty-five, and their change in behavior score was twenty-nine points at termination. Student fourteen was arrested and suspended out of school, pre-tested sixty-two, their post score was forty-six, and their change in behavior score was sixteen points at termination. Student fifteen was arrested and suspended out of school, pre-tested seventy-nine, their post score was eighty-five, and their change in behavior score was negative six points at termination.

Student sixteen missed the pre-assessment, their post score was eighteen at termination of the group. Student seventeen pre-tested twenty-one, their post score was thirteen, and their change in behavior score was eight points at termination. Student eighteen terminated early and then returned, pre-tested eighty-three, their post score was one hundred and seventeen, and their change in behavior score was negative thirty-four points at termination. Student nineteen terminated early and then returned, pre-tested one hundred and twenty-four, their post score was forty-three, and their change in behavior score was eighty-one points at termination.

Student twenty gave false and inaccurate responses to the questions on the questionnaire, pre-tested one hundred and thirty eight, their post score was one hundred and fifty four, and their change in behavior score was inconsistent from the assessment. Student twenty-one gave false and inaccurate responses to the questions on the questionnaire, pre-tested seventy-three, their post score was ninety-eight, and their

change in behavior score was inconsistent from the assessment. Student twenty-two was diagnosed with ADHD and given medication, pre-tested sixty-five, their post score was seventy-two, and their change in behavior score was negative seven points at termination. Student twenty-three missed the pre-assessment, their post score was ninety-one at termination of the group. Student twenty-four missed the pre-assessment, their post score was sixty-three at termination of the group. Student twenty-five terminated early, and missed both the pre and post assessments. Student twenty-six pre-tested thirty-seven, their post score was eleven, and their change in behavior score was twenty-six points at termination. Student twenty-seven terminated early and missed both the pre and post group assessment.

Student twenty-eight pre-tested fifty-six, their post score was fifty, and their change in behavior score was six points at termination. Student twenty-nine terminated early, pre-tested sixty-three, their post score was thirty-one, and their change in behavior score was thirty-two points at termination. Student thirty gave false and inaccurate responses to the questions on the questionnaire, pre-tested sixty-four, their post score was zero, and their change in behavior score was inconsistent.

#### *Results for Behavior Change*

The manual stated the total cut off score is forty-seven. The reliability change index is eighteen for total score, but these scores have been re-adjusted to this studies individual client base as instructed by the manual. The total cutoff score was left at forty-seven to represent the mean or normative population behavioral functioning as found by the researchers. However, the reliability change score became eleven. Normative scores for clients in a community setting had a mean score of 34.21. For clients from an

outpatient setting a mean score is 67.07. These scores were indicated in the administration and scoring manual by Burlingame, Wells & Lambert (1999).

Eighteen out of thirty students had taken both the pre and post assessment. Of these eighteen students ten had a significant change in behavior score of eleven or higher with a range of eleven to eighty-one ( $r= 11,81$ ). The mean was a thirty-three (33) point positive change in behavior. This showed that fifty percent (55%) out of the 18 students had significant behavior change scores. For students who attended all twelve meetings and completed both assessments, nine out of fourteen students, sixty-four percent (64%) had significant changes in behavior scores. The mean change was twenty-six (26) points, with a range of eleven and fifty-two ( $r= 11,52$ ).

This demonstrates the power of group work in facilitating the social / personal growth of students as illustrated by Campbell & Brigman (2005). Social and interpersonal skills gained through group therapy, bring about these improvements in student behavior, and social skills and relationships, in the next section we will look at which behavior areas are most significantly impacted (Romasz, Kantor, and Elias, 2004).

This further supports the use of psycho-educational and counseling groups, as the most efficient and effective way to reach the goal of student success (Delucia-Waack, 2000; Shechtman, 2002; Shechtman, Freidman, Kashti, & Sharabany, 2002). This evidence further supports the role of school counselors and the effective implementation of a proportional counselor to student ratios to foster this work (Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Zins et al., 2004; Pascopella, 2004; Rones & Hoagwood, 2000; Hattie, Briggs & Purdie, 1996).

*Table IX*

Illustrates all the groups combined into one table; the students' rank is equivalent to their previous numbering in the first eight tables. These calculations represent the YOQ-SR Subscales differences in behavior pre and post group. Youth Outcome Questionnaire Self-Report (YOQ-SR) subscale changes in score are representative of Interpersonal Distress, Interpersonal Relations, Social Problems, and Behavioral Dysfunction. Positive numbers represent a positive change in behavior and interpersonal functioning at the time of the test administration; Negative numbers represent a regression in behavior and interpersonal functioning at the time of the test administration.

Interpersonal Distress (ID) - Assess the amount of emotional distress in the adolescent. Anxiety, depression, fearfulness, hopelessness, and self-harm are aspects measured by the ID scale. Interpersonal Relations (IR) - Assess issues relevant to the adolescent's relationships with parents/caretakers, other adults, and peers. Attitude towards others, communication, and interaction with family and friends, cooperativeness, aggressiveness, arguing, and defiance are questioned.

Social Problems (SP) - Assess problematic behaviors that are socially related but of a more severe nature than those in the IR subscale. This subscale measures multiple behaviors such as truancy, sexual problems, running away, vandalism, and substance abuse. Behavioral Dysfunction (BD) - This subscale describes change in the adolescent's ability to organize, complete, and concentrate on tasks; it also assesses task-related frustration, inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity, and tracking these behavior changes.

In table nine, student one missed the pre-assessment; their behavior sub scores were inconsistent at termination. Student two's change in sub-score in Interpersonal

Distress was five, Interpersonal Relations was three, Social Problems was zero, and Behavioral dysfunction was negative five at termination. Student three's change in sub-scores in Interpersonal Distress was negative three, Interpersonal Relations was zero, Social Problems was three, and Behavioral dysfunction was three at termination.

Student four's changes in sub-scores in Interpersonal Distress was four, Interpersonal Relations was three, Social Problems was three, Behavioral dysfunction was negative four at termination. Student five gave false and inaccurate responses to the questions on the questionnaire sub-score changes in behavior were inconsistent from the assessment. Student six's change in sub-score in Interpersonal Distress was twelve, Interpersonal Relations was negative four, Social Problems was one, and Behavioral dysfunction was two at termination. Student seven's changes in sub-scores in Interpersonal Distress was negative one, Interpersonal Relations was three, Social Problems was negative one, Behavioral dysfunction was negative eleven at termination.

Student eight's change in sub-score in Interpersonal Distress was eighteen, Interpersonal Relations was negative one, Social Problems was seven, and Behavioral dysfunction was negative five at termination. Student nine's changes in sub-scores in Interpersonal Distress was thirteen, Interpersonal Relations was four, Social Problems was ten, Behavioral dysfunction was fifteen at termination. Student ten's change in sub-score in Interpersonal Distress was one, Interpersonal Relations was four, Social Problems was two, and Behavioral dysfunction was negative three at termination. Student eleven went through a separation and divorce of their parents, 's changes in sub-scores in Interpersonal Distress was negative three, Interpersonal Relations was negative

five, Social Problems was zero, and Behavioral dysfunction was negative three at termination.

Student twelve terminated early, change in sub-score in Interpersonal Distress was negative one, Interpersonal Relations was four, Social Problems was two, and Behavioral dysfunction was one at termination. Student thirteen's change in sub-score in Interpersonal Distress was fourteen, Interpersonal Relations was negative three, Social Problems was ten, and Behavioral dysfunction was three at termination. Student fourteen was arrested and suspended out of school, change in sub-score in Interpersonal Distress was one, Interpersonal Relations was negative six, Social Problems was six, and Behavioral dysfunction was four at termination. Student fifteen was arrested and suspended out of school, change in sub-score in Interpersonal Distress was negative eleven, Interpersonal Relations was five, Social Problems was five, and Behavioral dysfunction was two at termination.

Student sixteen missed the pre-assessment, post sub-scores in Interpersonal Distress was four, Interpersonal Relations was negative one, Social Problems was ten, and Behavioral dysfunction was three at termination. Student seventeen's change in sub-score in Interpersonal Distress was negative one, Interpersonal Relations was two, Social Problems was one, and Behavioral dysfunction was negative five at termination. Student eighteen terminated early and then returned, changes in sub-scores in Interpersonal Distress was negative twenty-one, Interpersonal Relations was four, Social Problems was three, Behavioral dysfunction was negative five at termination. Student nineteen terminated early and then returned, changes in sub-scores in Interpersonal Distress was

twelve, Interpersonal Relations was ten, Social Problems was twelve, Behavioral dysfunction was twenty-one at termination.

Student twenty gave false and inaccurate responses to the questions on the questionnaire; behavior sub-scores were inconsistent at termination. Student twenty-one gave false and inaccurate responses to the questions on the questionnaire; behavior sub-scores were inconsistent at termination. Student twenty-two was diagnosed with ADHD and given medication, changes in sub-scores in Interpersonal Distress was five, Interpersonal Relations was negative six, Social Problems was zero, and Behavioral dysfunction was negative ten at termination. Student twenty-three missed the pre-assessment, their post sub-score's in Interpersonal Distress was twenty-nine, Interpersonal Relations was twelve, Social Problems was four, and Behavioral dysfunction was negative twenty-two at termination. Student twenty-four missed the pre-assessment, sub-scores in Interpersonal Distress was seventeen, Interpersonal Relations was five, Social Problems was six, and Behavioral dysfunction was eleven at termination. Student twenty-five terminated early, and missed both the pre and post assessments. Student twenty-six 's changes in sub-scores in Interpersonal Distress was seven, Interpersonal Relations was nine, Social Problems was two, and Behavioral dysfunction was eight at termination. Student twenty-seven terminated early and missed both the pre and post group assessment.

Student twenty-eight 's changes in sub-scores in Interpersonal Distress was four, Interpersonal Relations was six, Social Problems was negative two, and Behavioral dysfunction was negative six at termination. Student twenty-nine terminated early, changes in sub-scores in Interpersonal Distress was fourteen, Interpersonal Relations was

six, Social Problems was one, and Behavioral dysfunction was negative one at termination. Student thirty gave false and inaccurate responses to the questions on the questionnaire; behavior sub-scores were inconsistent at termination.

#### *Behavior Subscale Change*

Looking at the entire population of students who participated in the counseling groups, twenty-four out of thirty students completed both the Pre and Termination YOQ. These students scored thirteen (13) points on average in the direction of a positive behavior change. The range of these changes in scores were negative thirty-four and eighty-one (range = -34, 81); and the median point change was seven (7).

Thirteen out of thirty students who participated in the counseling group completed both the Pre and Termination YOQ, without early termination, with continued participation. These students scored thirty-two (32) points on average in the direction of a positive behavior change. The range of these changes in scores were zero and fifty-two (range = 0, 52); and the median point change was fifteen (15). Those students who attended a counseling group and all twelve meetings scored sixty-one percent (61%) higher on average, in the direction of positive behavior changes, than those who did not attend all of the meetings or the counseling group at all.

Twenty-three out of thirty students who participated in the counseling group completed both the Pre and Termination YOQ. These students scored four (3.8) points on average in the direction of a positive Interpersonal Distress (ID) behavior change. Thirteen out of thirty students who participated in the counseling group completed both the Pre and Termination YOQ, without early termination, with continued participation. These students scored nineteen (19.35) points on average in the direction of a positive

Interpersonal Distress (ID) behavior change. The change in subscale score was measuring the amount of emotional distress in the adolescent, representative of anxiety, depression, fearfulness, hopelessness, and self-harm. Students who attended a counseling group and all twelve meetings scored eighty percent (80%) higher on average, in the direction of positive Interpersonal Distress (ID) behavior change, than those who did not attend all of the meetings or the counseling group at all.

Twenty-three out of thirty students who participated in the counseling group completed both the Pre and Termination YOQ. These students scored one (1.3) points on average in the direction of a positive Interpersonal Relations (IR) behavior change. Thirteen out of thirty students who participated in the counseling group completed both the Pre and Termination YOQ, without early termination, with continued participation. These students scored three (3) points on average in the direction of a positive change in Interpersonal Relations (IR). The change in subscale score was measuring the issues relevant to the adolescent's relationships with parents/ caretakers, other adults, and peers; consisting of attitude towards others, communication, and interaction with family and friends, cooperativeness, aggressiveness, arguing, and defiance. Students who attended a counseling group and all twelve meetings scored fifty-eight percent (58%) higher on average, in the direction of positive Interpersonal Relations (IR) behavior change, than those who did not attend all of the meetings or the counseling group at all.

Twenty-three out of thirty students who participated in the counseling group completed both the Pre and Termination YOQ. These students scored two (2.3) points on average in the elimination of Social Problems (SP). Thirteen out of thirty students who participated in the counseling group completed both the Pre and Termination YOQ,

without early termination, with continued participation. These students scored three (2.85) points on average in the elimination of Social Problems (SP). The change in subscale score was measuring the issues relevant to problematic behaviors that are socially related, but of a more severe nature than those in the IR subscale. This subscale measures multiple behaviors such as truancy, sexual problems, running away, vandalism, and substance abuse. Students who attended the counseling group and all twelve meetings scored twenty percent (20%) higher on average, in the elimination of Social Problems (SP), than those who did not attend all of the meetings or a counseling group at all.

Twenty-three out of thirty students who participated in the counseling group completed both the Pre and Termination YOQ. These students scored one (1.4) point on average in the elimination of Behavioral Dysfunction (BD). Thirteen out of thirty students who participated in the counseling group completed both the Pre and Termination YOQ, without early termination, with continued participation. These students scored two (1.91) points on average in the elimination of Behavioral Dysfunction (BD). The change in subscale score was measuring the issues relevant to change in the adolescent's ability to organize, complete, and concentrate on tasks; it also assesses task-related frustration, inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. Students who attended the counseling group and all twelve meetings scored twenty-eight percent (28%) higher on average, in the elimination of Behavioral Dysfunction (BD), than those who did not attend all of the meetings or the counseling group at all.

The reliability change index score is, four point five for Interpersonal Distress, three for Interpersonal Relations, two point five for Social Problems, and six for

Behavioral Dysfunction, but these scores were adjusted to fit this specific client base.

These scores were established from the reliability change index scores in the administration and scoring manual by Burlingame, Wells & Lambert (1999).

Of these sub-score results, fifty-seven percent (57%) of the students had significant change scores in (ID), sixty-four percent (64%) had significant change scores in (IR), forty-three percent (43%) had significant change scores in (SP), and twenty-one percent (21%) had significant change scores in (BD).

These results demonstrate the power of group work in facilitating the social / personal development of students as illustrated by Campbell & Brigman, (2005). Social and interpersonal skills gained through group therapy, bring about improvements in student behavior, and social skills and relationships (Romasz, Kantor, and Elias, 2004). This supports the use of psycho-educational and counseling groups, as the most efficient and effective way to reach the goal of student success (Delucia-Waack, 2000; Shechtman, 2002; Shechtman, Freidman, Kashti, & Sharabany, 2002). This evidence further supports the role of school counselors and the effective implementation of a proportional counselor to student ratios to foster this work (Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Zins et al., 2004; Pascopella, 2004; Rones & Hoagwood, 2000; Hattie, Briggs & Purdie, 1996).

#### *Table X*

Is the YOQ-Parental Reports; there were only ten of the thirty students parents who returned a parent evaluation of their child's behavior. Of the ten assessments, no pre and post comparisons for the same students were returned. So, the parental observations of student's changes in behavior were omitted from the research due to the lack of parental response.

*Table XI*

Table eleven is a table of all the groups combined together. It analyses individual responses to a Qualitative assessment regarding their personal experience, which have been coded to find common themes. The answers were coded for the first four questions as follows. (0) Nothing or Irrelevant, (1) Social interactions 2) Uncomfortable with ambiguity, (3) Sharing personal information and trust (4) Self image and esteem, personal identity (5) Personal awareness (6) Leave group (7) Time restraints (8) Conflict and resolution, and (9) Rules of the group.

The first question asked what the students liked most about the groups. The second question asked what the students liked the least about the group experience. The third question asked, “What is the most important thing you are taking from the group experience?” The fourth question asked, “What was the most important thing you learned about yourself.”

The fifth question was regarding interest in another group, individual counseling, or neither. This was coded as, (1) for yes, (2) for no, and (*I*) for Individual Counseling. In the sixth question students identified important topics they thought needed to be covered in group counseling. The responses coded as (1) personal/social skills, (2) academic skills, (3) personal/social issues, and (4) personal interests.

Fifteen out of thirty responses to what the students liked most about the groups was the sharing of personal information and establishing trusting relationships. The second most prominent response, ten out of thirty students chose social and interpersonal interactions as most important. For the second question, what students liked the least about the group experience; Fourteen out of thirty chose nothing. The second most

common, six out of thirty students responded with ambiguity being what they liked least. The third question asked what was the most important thing they were taking from the group experience, ten out of thirty responded with sharing personal information and building trusting relationships. The second most common response four out of thirty students' responded self-image and self-esteem was the most important thing they were taking from the group. Ten students did not respond to the third question. The fourth question asked what was the most important thing they learned about themselves the most frequent responses, ten out of thirty, was personal awareness and no response. The second most frequent response, four out of thirty, was self-image and esteem.

The most frequent response to the fifth question regarding interest in another group, individual counseling, or neither, was twenty-one out of thirty said yes to continued counseling. Seven stated no or not at his time. The sixth question asked what important things they thought needed to be in the group discussions. Nine out of thirty students equally said social skills, and personal and social issues.

Tables

*Table I.*

Grades for group one

Student #	Beginning	Termination	Point change
1	73,40,82,65	76,69,74,75	34 (11/12)
2	97,90,98,96	92,86,91,90	-11 (11/12)
3	80,61,77,75	82,81,87,83	40 (11/12)

Table II.

Grades for group two

Student #	Beginning	Termination	Point change
4	71,79,69, 69	77,65,80,75	9 (12/12)
5	76,80,71,66	83, 66,82,74	12 (12/12)
6	85,80,81,82	80,78,93,82	5 (12/12)
7	70,85,73,71	86,70,89,70	15 (12/12)

Table III.

Grades for group three

Student #	Beginning	Termination	Point change
8	73,67,77,65	72,82,79,77	28 (12/12)
9	70,71,76,60	73,72,66,72	6 (8/12)
10	76,72,75,65	77,58,86,62	1 (10/12)
11	76,79,65,72	80,82,85,70	25 (12/12) b

Table IV.

Grades for group four

Student #	Beginning	Termination	Point change
12	60,69,41	60,76,34	0 (9/12) a
13	52,55,55	50,77,65	30 (12/12)
14	22,50,50	4,24,27	-67 (4/12) a, b
15	45,50,62,78,58	35,65,88,71,53	19 (10/12) b

Table V.

Grades for group five

Student #	Beginning	Termination	Point change
16	72,37	73,58	22 (8/12)
17	35,75,41	65,65,77	56 (9/12)
18	65,75,60,83	60,80,64,85	6 (6/12) a
19	70,66,64,65	65,60,73,46	-20 (3/12) a

Table VI.

Grades for group six

Student #	Beginning	Termination	Point change
20	70,56,74,70	44,69,86,72	1 (9/12)
21	56,80,83,77	92,78,96,88	34 (7/12)
22	71,57,71,52	78,55,81,57	20 (10/12) b
23	93,97,85,88	96,90,90,90	3 (10/12)
24	77,56,77,60	80,69,87,71	37 (10/12)
25	84,76,95,74	87,87,86,74	5 (3/12) a
26	65,85,85,66	70,91,83,75	18 (11/12)
27	85,80,65,75	87,77,79,78	16 (5/12) a

Table VII.

Grades for group seven

Student #	Beginning	Termination	Point change
28	80,74,71,60	85,92,69,70	31 (8/12) a

29	90,79,89,60	93,67,83,72	-6 (6/12) a
30	59,50,50,50	77,26,55,74	23 (8/12) a

Note:

- a. Student withdrew early from the group, or a significant number of absences from meetings.
- b. These are students who left the group early due to significant stressors.

*Table VIII.*

Youth Outcome Questionnaire Self-Report (YOQ-SR) Results

Changes in score represent changes in behavior. The higher the number the more positive of a change, a negative number represents a regression of personal function and/or behavior, at the time of the test administration.

Student #	Pre	Termination	Changes in behavior
1	(a)	36	(a)
2	63	40	23
3	37	36	1
4	10	3	7
5	-11	-2	(b)
6	36	21	15
7	37	21	16
8	57	20	37
9	49	-3	52
10	21	13	8
11	77	90	-13 ©

12	77	66	11
13	114	85	29
14	62	46	16 ©
15	79	85	-6 ©
16	(a)	18	(a)
17	13	13	0
18	83	117	-34 ©
19	124	43	81 ©
20	138	154	(b)
21	73	98	(b)
22	65	72	-7 ©
23	(a)	91	(a)
24	(a)	63	(a)
25	(a)	(a)	(a)
26	37	11	26
27	(a)	(a)	(a)
28	56	50	6
29	63	31	32
30	64	0	(b)
Total	1424	1110	314

Note:

a. Missed test

b. Student gave false/inaccurate responses to questions to try to make results more or less favorable.

c. These are students who left the group early due to significant stressors.

*Table IX.*

Youth Outcome Questionnaire Self-Report (YOQ-SR) Subscale Results

Changes in score represent changes in Interpersonal Distress (ID), Interpersonal Relations (IR), Social Problems (SP), and Behavioral Dysfunction (BD). The higher the number the more positive of a change, a negative number represents a regression of personal function and/or behavior, at the time of the test administration.

	Pre	Termination	ID	IR	SP	BD
1	a	14,3, -1,15	a	a	a	a
2	21,3, -2,7	16,0, -2,2	5	3	0	-5
3	7,4,5,6	10,4,2,9	-3	0	3	3
4	3,1,3,0	-1, -2,0,4	4	3	3	-4
5 b	a	a	a	a	a	a
6	19, -2,0,8	7,2, -1,6	12	-4	1	2
7	4,3,3,17	5,0,4,6	-1	3	-1	11
8	20,6,12,10	2, 7,5,5	18	-1	7	5
9	11,1,10,15	-2, -3,0,0	13	4	10	15
10	4,5,0,7	3, 1, -2,10	1	4	2	-3
11c	22,8,8,20	25,13,8,23	-3	-5	0	-3
12	24,11,8,13	25,7,6,12	-1	4	2	1
13	45,11,16,20	31,14,6,17	14	-3	10	3

14c	10,4,14,16	9,10,8,12	1	-6	6	4
15c	19,13,14,23	30,8,9,21	-11	5	5	2
16	a	4, -1,10,3	a	a	a	a
17	4, -4,6,0	5, -2,5,5	-1	2	1	-5
18c	16,5,14,12	37,1,11,17	-21	4	3	-5
19c	24,19,15,28	12,9,3,7	12	10	12	21
20 b	37,20,19,26	37,30,22,29	0	-10	-3	-3
21 b	26,9,13,17	26,10,20,19	0	-1	-7	-2
22c	13,4,3,17	8,10,3,27	5	-6	0	-10
23	a	29,12,4,22	a	a	a	a
24	a	17,5,6,11	a	a	a	a
25	a	a	a	a	a	a
26	10,5,0,13	3, -4, -2,5	7	9	2	8
27	a	a	a	a	a	a
28	13,12,7,7	9,6,9,13	4	6	-2	-6
29	25,3,0,11	11, -3, -1,12	14	6	1	-1
30 b	23,7,3,12	11,5,2,6	22	2	1	6

Note:

a. Missed test

b. Student gave false/inaccurate responses to questions to try to make results more or less favorable.

c. These are students who left the group early due to significant stressors.

*X. Parental Reports-*

Omitted due to lack of response.

*XI. Qualitative Data-*

Responses from Students Regarding Their Personal Experience

The answers were coded for the first four questions as follows. (0) Nothing or Irrelevant, (1) Social Interactions 2) Uncomfortable with ambiguity, (3) Sharing personal information and trust (4) Self image and esteem, personal identity (5) Personal awareness (6) Leave group (7) Time restraints (8) Conflict and resolution (9) Rules of the group.

The first question asked what the students liked most about the groups. The second question asked what did the students like least about the group experience. The third question asked what was the most important thing they were taking from the group experience. The fourth question asked what was the most important thing they learned about themselves.

The fifth question was regarding interest in another group, individual counseling, or neither. This was coded as, (1) for yes, (2) for no, and (*I*) for Individual Counseling. The sixth question asked what were important things they thought needed to be in the group discussions. The responses coded as (1) personal/social skills, (2) academic skills, (3) personal/social issues, and (4) personal interests.

Student	Q.1	Q.2	Q.3	Q.4	Q.5	Q.6
1	1	6	1	5	1	2
2	1	0	3	0	<i>I</i>	2
3	3	0	3	0	1	1
4	1	0	0	1	1	3

5	3	0	4	0	1	3
6	1	0	0	5	1	3
7	1	0	3	0	1	3
8	3	0	0	0	1	1
9	3	2	0	4	1	4
10	3	0	0	4	1	1
11	1	0	0	0	1	3
12	3	7	1	1	2	3
13	3	0	1	3	1	3
14	3	1	0	0	2	3
15	3	2	3	4	1	1
16	3	2	5	0	2	7
17	3	3	0	0	1	4
18	1	2	3	5	<b>I</b>	1
19	3	2	0	3	2	<b>I</b>
20	8	9	3	5	1	1
21	1	8	3	5	1	1
22	1	0	3	4	1	1
23	1	8	3	5	1	3
24	3	0	4	5	1	1
25	a	a	a	a	a	a
26	3	0	1	0	2	0

27	a	a	a	a	a	a
28	0	7	0	5	2	0
29	3	3	3	5	1	4
30	3	2	5	5	2	4
Most frequent	<b>15 (3)</b>	14 (0)	<b>10 (3)</b>	<b>10 (5), (0)</b>	<b>19 (1)</b>	<b>9 (1), (3)</b>
To	<b>10 (1)</b>	<b>6 (2)</b>	<b>4 (1)</b>	<b>4 (4)</b>	<b>7 (2)</b>	<b>4 (4)</b>
Least		2 (7)	2 (5)	2 (1)	2 ( <b>I</b> )	2 (2), (0)
Frequent	1 (0)	2 (3), (8)	2 (4)	2 (3)		1 (7), ( <b>I</b> )
Responses	1 (8)	1 (6), (9)	10 (0)			

Note:

a. Missed test

### Discussion

The current research supports the efficacy of counseling groups in helping children with their developmental and educational needs. The combination of the three different groups psycho-educational, counseling and psychotherapy, and the three main areas addressed by school counselors academic, social-personal, and career make a comprehensive group program. This discussion will cover the changes in academic and personal / social domains of student development, regarding this project and study.

To make it a developmentally comprehensive program we add the educational standards set out in the ASCA standards for grades K-12. These standards cover the developmental tasks and skill students need to learn in class and in general to pass onto the next level. The problem is no one is teaching children the general academic skills,

social and personal skills in the public school system in a consistent manner. The roles of school counselors are undefined, and the ratios of students to counselors far out number the resources of time. To fix this we need to restructure the profession, which is currently under way.

To establish these roles and ratios the ASCA has set out national standards for all school counselors and schools. In addition, the appropriate ratio and roles a school counselor plays in facilitating student growth. The next step is to set up the educational systems to follow with these standards. These standards are straight from the already implemented NCLB act. Therefore, it is the individual responsibility of each school counselor to push for their accountability in the role of educating children grades K-12.

Group counseling has a positive impact on improving student academics, behavior, and social skills and relationships (Campbell & Brigman, 2005). Together educational and counseling groups cover the developmental needs of children. It is the responsibility of the school counselor to meet with every student and to cover the three areas of academic, social personal, and career development. At least to make sure schools are implementing some type of setting for the attainment of these basic functioning skills. Students without the basic fundamental skills addressed within the ASCA standards students are at a clear and present deficit.

A developmentally comprehensive group-counseling program kindergarten through high school will guarantee the successful completion of schools mission of student achievement. Combination of the three different groups (psycho-educational, counseling, and psychotherapy), covering the ASCA developmental needs (academic, social emotional, and career) of students K-12 each academic year. In addition, to an

acceptable ratio of counselors to students to facilitate a group counseling program and the clarifying of counselors' roles within schools will provide the foundation for the accomplishment of the mission of helping students reach their highest potential.

The latest research is calling for the use of group counseling to meet the educational (academic grades) and social-personal (behavior) needs of students. The counseling group used in this project used a non-directive approach and a process format. Its goal is to bring personal awareness and growth, by building interpersonal skills, through present attention of self and others regarding personal and other group member's interactions.

#### *Educational/ Grades*

Students who attended all twelve of the group meetings had forty-six percent (46%) higher increase in grades than those that did not attend all of the meetings. Looking at the difference in grades, regarding the individual groups and their members, there was a collective average increase in grades of thirteen points (13.4) in the four subjects of math, science, English, and history for all groups (n=30), and an increase of twenty (20.35) points without students who terminated early (n=23). Therefore, regarding the changes in grades any student who participates in group counseling and will perform up to forty-six percent (46%) better in core classes than some one who does not attend all of the meetings, or participate at all. These results are comparative with the academic achievement results of students as illustrated by Campbell & Brigman, (2005); Romasz, Kantor, and Elias, (2004); and Shechtman, (2002).

*Social-Personal / Behavior*

It is clear in the findings that those students who attended a counseling group and attended all twelve meetings on average scored sixty-one percent (61%) higher in the direction of positive behavior changes than those who did not attend all of the meetings or did not attend the counseling group at all.

On average these students scored eighty percent (80%) higher in the resolution of Interpersonal Distress (ID) subscale. In addition, scoring fifty-eight percent (58%) higher in the direction of positive Interpersonal Relations (IR) change. As well as, twenty percent (20%) higher in the elimination of Social Problems (SP), and twenty-eight percent (28%) higher in the elimination of Behavioral Dysfunction (BD), than those who did not attend all of the meetings or did not attend the counseling group at all.

These results in light of academic and personal/social growth are statistically significant in the positive development of students' higher potential as similar to the Romasz, Kantor, and Elias, (2004) and the Shechtman, Freidman, Kashti, & Sharabany, (2002) research. In addition students found counseling groups to be beneficial in being able to express themselves, share personal concerns, and relate to others with their concerns, build trusting relationships, gain personal insight and awareness, a sense of personal identity and self-esteem as Pascopella, (2004) had expressed the need for this type of connection with students. In addition, more than sixty-five percent of these students requested continued counseling at the termination of their group meetings furthering the argument by Campbell & Brigman, (2005) that these services are important for student development. Social and interpersonal skills gained through group therapy, brought improvements in student academics, behavior, and social skills and relationships.

Providing support for psycho-educational and counseling groups, as the most efficient and effective way to reach the goal of student success (Delucia-Waack, 2000). This evidence further supports the role of school counselors and the effective implementation of a proportional counselor to student ratios to foster group work.

### *Shortcomings*

A shortcoming of this study was lack of a control group. Yet, some significant changes have occurred in light of not having a comparison group. The results may have more statistical weight if compared against the rest of the student population or a control group. In addition, there was a lack of parental support and cooperation; there were only a small percentage of the parents returning the YOQ parental reports. More than that some parents would call and ask to have their child taken out of the group, after previously giving their permission.

There was a significant lack of institutional and administrative support, cooperation, and interest to look into non-traditional ways to improve student's achievement. School Administrators were reluctant to talk in depth regarding the currently implemented programs and ways to improve them or make them more productive. There needs to be more teamwork between the administration and school counselors to facilitate changes and re-evaluation of programs. This responsibility will fall upon the school counselor since, the initiative is coming from our need to substantiate our role and contributions to helping administrators and schools reach the common mission of student achievement.

*Where from Here*

With the benefit of this study school counselors can make the clear connection between the efficacy of counseling groups and academic and social / personal achievement and growth within schools for the entire student population. It would be suggested for further research to do a research project utilizing a non-directive process group, a separate group based on a proven research model, and a separate non-directive group which also participates in a social skills development group (psycho-educational group) to see the differences compared to a control group or the rest of the student population.

Further implications for counseling practice, is that group counseling works and is effective. Next, researchers and future counselors would benefit from applying the effective and efficient use of this information to all student populations. This will make relevant use of this evidence and benefit future research in setting up State, and National developmentally comprehensive group counseling curriculums to be implemented within all public schools around the nation K-12.

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Appendixes

Appendix I.

**CALEDONIA-MUMFORD CENTRAL SCHOOL**

**COUNSELING CENTER**

**99 NORTH STREET**

**Caledonia, N.Y. 14423**

**(585) 538-3445 - FAX (585) 538-3430**

**CONSENT TO TAPE RECORD**

**COUNSELING SESSIONS**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby give consent to Mr. Chad Scott,

(Please print your name)

a counselor intern, to audio/video tape counseling sessions with my son/daughter

\_\_\_\_\_.

(Please print son/daughter's name)

I understand the school counselors at Caledonia-Mumford Central School or the counseling faculty at the S.U.N.Y. College at Brockport will only review the tapes. I understand the sole purpose of taping the counseling sessions is for the professional supervision of the intern. The focus of the tape review will be on the professional development of the intern, and for the pursuit of the highest quality of counseling, by the intern, for my son/daughter.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix II.

**CALEDONIA-MUMFORD CENTRAL SCHOOL**

**COUNSELING CENTER**

**99 NORTH STREET**

**Caledonia, N.Y. 14423**

**(585) 538-3445 - FAX (585) 538-3430**

February 14, 2005

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Hello! My name is Mr. Chad Scott, and I will be working as an intern in the counseling department at Caledonia-Mumford Middle and High School during the 2005 school year. As a graduate student in the Counselor Education program at SUNY Brockport, I have spent the past two years building my skills and knowledge in the area of school counseling. I am excited to have the opportunity to work under the supervision of Melanie Rogers, school counselor at Caledonia-Mumford, as I begin counseling middle and high school students.

I would like to take this opportunity to let you know that I will be working primarily with students to assist them with their successful transition to the next grade level. My first task as an intern will be to meet with students in small group settings in order to introduce myself and get them acquainted with the Counseling Center. I look forward to my continued work with students; during these times, students will not be pulled from any core classes. Additionally, your son or daughter may meet with me on an individual basis, or within a group as needed.

The consent form, which is enclosed with this letter, is to allow me to tape my work with the students. These tapes will be used for the evaluation of my work, and will be reviewed only by Melanie Rogers and my S.U.N.Y. Brockport faculty supervisor. To assist with this please read and sign the enclosed "Consent to Tape Record" form, which gives me permission to audio/video tape group and individual meetings with your son or daughter. The signed form should be returned to the Counseling Center (Rm.104) as soon as possible. Please feel free to contact me at 538-3413 if you have any questions or concerns.

I look forward to working for you and your son or daughter during the school year.

Sincerely,  
Chad E. Scott  
Counselor Intern

Appendix III.

**CALEDONIA-MUMFORD CENTRAL SCHOOL**

**COUNSELING CENTER**

**99 NORTH STREET**

**Caledonia, N.Y. 14423**

**(585) 538-3445 - FAX (585) 538-3430**

May 18, 2005

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Hello! My name is Mr. Chad Scott, and I have been working as an intern in the counseling department at Caledonia-Mumford Middle and High School during the 2005 school year. I have been meeting with students in small group settings as part of my work; during these times, students were not pulled from any core classes.

During the past several months, your son or daughter has participated in a group. As part of an educational initiative, we are collecting information on the progress of students provided with these services. This information will be kept confidential, and will be used solely for the purpose of documenting the advancement in student academic and social skills.

We ask you to read the directions for the Youth Outcome Questionnaire (Parental Report), fill it out completely except for the questions crossed out, and return it the Caledonia-Mumford Counseling Center in the self-addressed/stamped envelope. These surveys will show changes in student's academic and social progress so we ask that you fill them out as the directions imply. If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire or the groups, I can be reached at the Caledonia-Mumford Counseling Center, at 538-3413, Monday through Wednesday.

Sincerely,  
Chad E. Scott

Counselor Intern



Appendix V.

Appendix VI.