

The Power of Group Work

—Connecting Faculty, Staff, Students, and Parents

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Group work is a powerful catalyst in addressing goals related to issues, questions, or concerns in the school community. There are four types of group specializations: (Gladding, p.2)

1. Task/work
2. Psychoeducational
3. Counseling
4. Psychotherapy

A good definition of *group*, as related to counseling is printed below:

Group –“A collection of two or more individuals who meet face to face or virtually in an interactive, interdependent way, with an awareness that each belongs to the group and for the purpose of achieving mutually agreed-on goals.” (Adapted and modified from Johnson & Johnson, 2013).

In the school setting, two group venues which connect faculty, staff, students and parents are the following:

1. School Counseling Advisory Council
2. School-wide Group Counseling Programs for Students

School Counseling Advisory Council

An Advisory Council is a representative group of persons appointed to serve as a support system to assist counselors within a school. Advisory Council membership reflects the community’s diversity. It should include representative stakeholders of the school counseling program: students, parents or guardians, teachers, counselors, administrators, school board members, business and community members.

Advisory Council functions can vary. The area of specialization, number of years an educational program has been in existence, program size, community needs and other important items all affect the Advisory Council functions. School counselors use data to analyze overall program effectiveness and to make decisions regarding changes in program content and delivery. The Advisory Council members, using their background and expertise, provide support, input, and recommendations for program development and improvement. The Advisory Council, therefore, can be an effective tool to help build an excellent school counseling program.

(paraphrased from THE ASCA NATIONAL MODEL, 3rd edition)

Necessary Steps Needed to Create an Advisory Council:

1. Forming the group
2. Including and inviting all parents
3. Selecting an appropriate time for meeting
 - Freshmen Orientation: (January/February – prior to Fall start)
 - Evening program
4. Setting the size
 - Minimum of eight
 - Maximum of 20 (ASCA National Model, 2012)
5. Seeking broad representation
 - Include parents, students, teachers, school counselors, administrators, school board members, business and community members.
6. Suggesting number of meetings – ASCA recommends at least two per school year (Monthly meetings are more productive and workable)

School-wide Group Counseling Program for Students

A School-wide Counseling Program includes a variety of groups which help students address specific issues in order to be successful in school. These groups usually meet once a week, rotating periods 1-8 for a set number of weeks. Each group addresses assigned outcomes and goals.

The program must be introduced to the entire school community. Each student completes a *Needs Survey*. Counselors meet in small groups and then do follow-up interviews individually.

References

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Studer, J. R. (Ed.) (2016). *A guide to practicum and internship for school counselors-in-training*. NY: Routledge Publishing.

Always, remember:

SCHOOL COUNSELORS

C_{all}

A_{ll}

R_{each}

E_{ach}

Anna Marie Yates (April 2017)