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## Enhancing achievement with 7th and 8th grade at-risk female hispanics through support groups

Rosario Ramirez  
*San Jose State University*

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Enhancing Achievement With 7th and 8th Grade At-Risk  
Female Hispanics Through Support Groups.

Presented to the Faculty of the  
College of Social Work  
San Jose State University

In partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Social Work

by

Rosario Ramirez

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Dr. Fred Prochaska, Chairperson

Dick Evans, Field Faculty Liason

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this project was to provide an educational and support group for adolescent girls who were at-risk students and had low academic performance, self-esteem and high absences. The project was carried out at Lee Mathson Middle School, a school in the Alum Rock School District in San Jose, California. For the purpose of this project the term Hispanic is used to define all those people of Spanish language origin and/or of Spanish surnames. The study focused on 7th and 8th grade female Hispanics who had been referred by faculty, counselors and other staff members to the researcher to form a support group. However, the group was open to other ethnicities.

The population of Hispanics enrolled at Lee Mathson was the largest and for this reason the group was predominantly composed of female Hispanics. At the time of the project the school was also having more problems with the female Hispanic population. It was for this reason it was decided to have a support group for these young adolescent females instead of the male adolescents. However, the school also provided a group for the young males.

The group met for seven weeks on a weekly basis. Some of the topics discussed were life goal setting, communication skills, conflict management, study skills, problem solving and other topics that participants would

bring up in sessions. The intervention employed was an educational and support group in a group counseling format to improve participants' grade point average, self-esteem, and absentee record. There was also a pre/post test inventory scale on self-esteem given to the participants to determine the positive and negative changes of their self-esteem. The inventory scale was given to the participants at the first and last group session.

## 2. CONTEXT OF SERVICES

Lee Mathson Middle School is located on the East Side of San Jose. It is bounded by King Road on the west, Alum Rock Avenue on the north, Jackson Avenue on the east and Interstate 680 on the south. The campus has an enrollment of 740 students, with an ethnic breakdown as follows: Caucasian 2.5%, Hispanic 77.7%, Asian 13.3%, African-American 2.7%, Filipino/a 2.7% and other .94%. The school primarily absorbs students from its immediate community. For some people it is located on the "bad" side of town because of the poverty level and the presence of gangs. In the 1960's the community was considered a barrio called "Salsipuedes" meaning "get out if you can." This middle school is surrounded by a community that is mostly composed of low-income Hispanic families.

All students were given a school agenda which provided them with information such as the responsibilities of staff and students. The agenda also provided information about attendance, truancy and dress codes. The agenda also stated what the consequences would be if students are not responsible. Finally, in this agenda there was a parent/student/school contract that had to be signed by the student, parent and principal. The contract committed the student to be responsible for following school rules. By signing the parent were accepting responsibility for their children attending school and getting involved in their education. Lastly, the principal

and school provided students every opportunity to learn and make the school a positive and safe place.

Lee Mathson Middle School has an excellent staff to provide a variety of academic and counseling services to its students. There are twenty-four regular teachers, including one Resource teacher, four Special Education teachers, and five paraprofessionals. Lee Mathson Middle School is also staffed by a principal, vice-principal, receptionist, two part-time counselors (including the author), one attendance clerk and one traveling nurse. The remainder of the staff is made up of individuals who provide school based services and are on campus on a part-time basis. They include two mental-health therapist from Bascom Mental Health, one Mini-Corp student from San Jose State University, security guard after school from Breakout Ministries and one individual from the Migrant Education program.

To specifically address the number of students at risk of dropping out of school due to academic failure or truancy problems, the school employed a team that was composed of teachers, a principal, a resource teacher, a vice-principal and one counselor. The team met weekly and was in charge of developing and implementing systematic procedures to screen and process referrals made by teachers who had identified certain students with behaviors of concern. High-risk behaviors involve gang activity, poor academic performance, and poor school attendance. The

teams goals are as follows: (1) To reach as many students in need as possible, (2) to maintain regular and consistent contact with students, and (3) to help students develop strategies and practices that improve their lives, their relationships and their school behavior and performance. Referrals were also taken to present at the weekly multi-service team meetings. The multi-service team was composed of outside agencies and resources that worked together to address the special needs of all students, parents, and staff. The members of this team were: two mental-health workers, a drug and alcohol counselor, a probation officer and a school psychologist. After the team had finished discussing the referrals, the specific individual was assigned to the appropriate team member. Additionally, referrals were made to support groups, school based counseling/health resources, Student Study Team (S.S.T.), alternative school programs, and other off-site resources in the community.

When students participated in counseling programs, parent permission forms had to be completed and signed. Also, if a student was going to be seen for on-going individual counseling, contact had to be made with the parents by the counselor regarding the case. Counselors had to obtain a parent's signature if he/she intended to take the student off campus for any reason. Regular attendance in school is mandatory. Absences would be verified by school officials. The only legal reasons



for students to be absent from school were: illness, dental appointments, quarantine or the funeral of a member of the student's immediate family (Education Code 45194). There was also the Education Code 35291, 48260, 48281, which discussed that students must be in their seat or at their station before the tardy bell begins to ring. Excessive tardiness would result in disciplinary action. Any student who would accumulate four or more tardies in a quarter would lose privileges of school-sponsored activities. If a student was late between classes, he/she had to accept the consequences of that teacher's disciplinary actions.

There is also the Education Code 35291, 48260-48273, which talks about truant students. It discusses that any student cutting or attempting to cut any part of the school day will be subject to disciplinary action. All work missed during a "cut" will receive a mark of "F." Additionally, if a student who is not in school or legally excused from school may be picked up by the San Jose Police Department (TABS). Thus, parents would be contacted by the Police Department regarding their child. The administration would then work with parents to assure that students attended school daily.

In having spoken with the principal of Lee Mathson Middle School, Lina Limon, stated that there were pieces of information routinely gathered regarding the attendance and grade performance of the students. In the 1996-1997

academic year the attendance information showed that thirty-eight students of Lee Mathson Middle School fell below a rate of 80% attendance. Out of these thirty-eight students with attendance problems, twenty-three were eighth graders. These thirty-eight students ranged from having a 30 to 70% of attendance. Many of these students had 13 to 44 days absent in a quarter. Therefore the information gathered by the attendance clerk enabled the school to notice that there was an attendance problem. The academic information gathering was done each quarter by the principal and vice-principal who received progress reports from teachers. When the principal and vice-principal received the progress reports, these reports were discussed and then parent conferences were held. Information was gathered for the entire academic school year. Lee Mathson Middle School maintains a commitment to ensuring that quality is sustained in the areas of attendance and grade performance.

### 3. Description of Target Population

The target population was seventh and eighth grade female Hispanic pre-adolescents who were not performing well academically and who had low attendance followed by issues related to low self-esteem. The group members were referred to the researcher by teachers, the principal, the vice- principal and counselor. Five eighth and seventh graders were interviewed for the project but only seven attended the group sessions. In the last session only four eighth graders attended.

The students in the group had several commonalities. The group participants had poor family relationships. Communication patterns between them, their parents and/or siblings were not effective. The participants also lacked positive role models. Only one participant shared that she saw her mother as a positive role model. Most of the participants had siblings or parents who did not graduate from either middle or high school. Many also had siblings or family members who were at one time or are still involved in gangs. All of the participants had difficulty doing their homework at home because they did not have a quiet place. The participants would do their homework either at school or not complete it at all. The participants' G.P.A's in the first quarter were 2.5, 2.1, 2.6, 1.4. Most of them received either D's or F's in their first quarter.

An illustrative case of a typical participant is a fourteen year old, eighth-grade Hispanic female. She would have a G.P.A which dropped from 1.2 in seventh grade to .666 in the eighth grade and had a high number of absences, such as 20 days out of school in the first quarter.

#### 4. Theoretical Foundations and Literature Review

The attendance and grade performance of a student has been documented as a problem of cause and effect. Attendance for students is usually defined as being present for the five to six hours of class time (Bamber, 1979). Attendance is a very important factor because if the student has too many absences academic performance is likely to decrease. Public schools have certain expectations for the regular attendance of students and teachers. When these expectations are not met, classroom performance suffers. Sometimes there are occasional absences that indeed cause some learning disruption, but frequent absences of students or a teacher can severely reduce academic progress (Bamber, 1979).

In discussing the students' absenteeism there are also other reasons that can explain their absences from school. They can be traced to the student's own personal and family life, his or her social and economic environment, and the atmosphere found at school (Porwoll, 1977). If the student has a problem with attendance and low grade performance, then the young adolescent becomes at-risk of dropping out. Numerous definitions of dropouts appear in the educational literature. For example, Barber and McClellan (1987), described a dropout as "a student who has poor attitude toward school, low G.P.A, failing grades and being behind credits" (p. 264). Another definition of a dropout, by the federal government, is

"a student who leaves a school, for any reasons except death,...who has been in membership during the regular school term, and who withdraws...before graduating...or completing an equivalent program of studies" (Barber & McClellan, 1987, p. 264).

Since the definitions vary, estimates of the number of dropouts also vary. However, generally speaking, a dropout can be an individual whose progression in school has been interrupted. It is the length of this interruption and the reasons for it that create the problem for the young adolescent (Strother, 1986). Although there is no set definition, dropouts do share some common characteristics. Quinn (1991), discusses three general factors of dropping out of school. The first factor is that of low socioeconomic status and higher dropout rates. The second set would be associated with personal problems that are independent of social class and family background. These problems include, but are not limited to, substance abuse, pregnancy, trauma from divorce, and even mental or physical health problems. Finally, the last group of factors associated with dropping out are: retention in grade points, course failure and suspensions.

Students who have been suspended from school, often begin to see themselves as incapable of succeeding in an academic environment, and the school itself affirms this perception with each new suspension (Jordan, Lara, & McPartland, 1996). There has been numerous research

done on prevention and intervention methods to reduce dropout rates. Some of the successful dropout prevention measures are: 1) social and life skills training focusing on competency, decision making, and assertive skills, 2) early intervention at the pre-school level, 3) and a social system that can encourage positive bonding to school (Blum & Jones, 1993). Schools that are effective in educating at-risk youth not only match intervention strategies in response to differences in students needs, but also recognize some basic psychological needs. One need that all youth have, particularly those at risk, is to be part of a supportive peer group (Quinn, 1991).

If one considers the cultural context of different race-ethnic groups in the United States, there is reason to believe that the dropout process may be experienced differently by many people. Cultural and linguistic traditions of racial and ethnic minority families sometimes do not fit well with the social interaction styles of middle-class teachers in many of their children's schools. Hispanic students who have limited English proficiency may be perceived erroneously by their teachers as slow learners or low ability students (Jordan, Lara, & McPartland, 1996). Other barriers for some poor and minority students may be outside responsibilities that interfere with their school attendance and academic progress. The need to care for family members or to remain employed are factors that may distract adolescents from

school. Some Hispanic girls are forced to accept the responsibility of caring for younger siblings or parents that are ill (Jordan, Lara & McPartland, 1996). This has brought barriers for many female minorities. Schools need to link such students with services that can help with the care of their extended families. "It is not uncommon for adolescents in poverty to be expected to transition rapidly to adult roles-as worker or caretaker-to ease the financial strain on the family" (Jordan, Lara & McPartland, 1996, p. 66).

Junior high age is a time of major amusement on the road to growing older. Besides the obvious changes in size and shape, teens are faced with a big challenge in the way they feel about themselves. Their self-esteem is greatly affected. Arbetter (1996), states that the overwhelming majority of young people get through adolescence with no major problems like: depression, suicide attempts, or chronic drug use. Nevertheless, with all the changes they face, many teens need reassurance that they are accepted in the eyes of their parents, friends, and teachers. "The family, neighborhood peer group, community organizations, and religious, legal, and health institutions often play a critical role in the stability and development of the adolescent" (Jordan, Lara, & McPartland, 1996, p. 64). In discussing the development of the adolescent, individual's have stated that the self-esteem is affected by his/her interpersonal



relationships (Reasoner, 1982). The adolescent's social environment has had an impact on the individual's self-worth. Besides their home environment, the school system is the second major social system impacting youth. Academic institutions play an important role in the student's self development. Thus, teachers and other school employees must attempt to understand the system and assist staff in creating a comfortable and safe environment for the students to explore and express their feelings openly. Indeed, if one establishes an environment that is consistent in nurturing and honoring the special worth and value of each youngster, then one can make a difference in a person's development. A teenager needs to feel good about him/herself before they can interact comfortably with the environment around them.

Shulman (1992) has conducted extensive research in the area of group work. Groups are beneficial in that they allow practitioners with large caseloads and limited funding to reach more individuals in need. He also notes that "it is often helpful for a client to have both individual and group work available so that both experiences can be used productively" (p. 282). Groups provide participants with a safe place to express their feelings as well as to interact with others. That is why more than 500,000 support groups have been developed across the United States in the past several years as people strive to cope with the stress and hardships of

life (Knight-Rider, 1995). Support groups serve different purposes for every individual, but their main purpose is to make people realize that they are not alone. Groups give people a sense of belonging and a sense of validation. Once a person feels comfortable with other group members the process of sharing their personal problems can begin. Within a positive group, the members will feel free to discuss what is on their minds. Support groups should work to maintain a trusting, non-judgmental atmosphere. Shulman (1992), states that the group process is also developed as a "mutual aid system," in which the practitioner helps the participants help each other" (p. 273). According to Shulman (1992), there are also several processes which are involved in the mutual aid system. These processes include "sharing data (experiences), the dialectical process (exchange of ideas), addressing taboo issues, the all in-the-same-boat phenomenon, developing a universal perspective, mutual support (empathizing with group members), mutual demand (members confront each other), individual problem solving, rehearsal (a new way to try out ideas or skills), and the strength-in-numbers phenomenon" (p. 282). Groups can be a positive experience for students who have a history of low academic achievement, self-esteem, and high absenteeism.

Research has also showed that people in supportive social environments were in better health, faced less

future depression, would adapt easier, and would have a higher sense of personal control (Reyes & Jason, 1991). That is why teachers and peers can function as a social support network in helping students remain in school. A support group helps students take responsibility for themselves and focus on what is happening in their lives.

## 5. Design of the Evaluation Study

The intervention employed in this project involved an educational support group, to provide students with a supportive environment. The group primarily dealt with issues related to low academic performance, attendance and self-esteem. The group was conducted in a counseling format to improve participants' academic performance and their self-esteem. The importance of the participant's self-esteem was mentioned in every session during discussion about different topics. Rewards were given at the end of each session to thank members for their participation and to encourage their attendance.

Students' academic performance was observed in the participants' grades. There was monitoring of grades and a strong collaboration with teachers of each participant's achievement. Attendance also determined participants' achievement in how many assignments had not been turned in. The practitioner discussed grade performance with each participant and provided encouragement. Self-esteem can be defined as a person's self-worth and satisfaction with who they are. It is noted that when one's self-esteem is enhanced, one tends to feel a greater sense of empowerment and accomplishment.

Each group session was facilitated by the researcher and a mental-health worker. The mental-health worker volunteered her time to co-facilitate with the researcher because she wanted to experience having an all-girls group.

However, her primary interest was working with the at-risk population.

The beginning phase of the group involved introductions. Participants were paired off and then introduced to one another. This was done so that participants would not feel uncomfortable when talking individually. There was also the signing of confidentiality agreements. It was at this time that the pre-test was administered. The participants were invited to set life goals for themselves. There was a discussion about higher education and how this can contribute to the attainment of one's goals. Participants were provided with realistic anecdotes of people who once were failing the educational system, but accomplished their educational goals. The goal was for the participants to be motivated by the experience of these people.

The second session focused on communication skills. There was discussion about effective communication skills, such as active listening. Examples of assertive, passive and aggressive communication was then role played by participants who formed groups of two. Afterward, there was discussion about how everyone felt regarding certain kinds of communication. The goal was for participants to think of daily experiences when one of these communication skills was used by the individual. The group concluded by discussing how important it was to have good communication skills.

The third and fourth session focused on problem-solving and conflict management. Problem-solving skills involve the ability to identify the problem, find solutions, and make a decision as to how it can be worked out. Conflict management was also part of finding alternatives to help an individual make a better decision in resolving their problems. The participants volunteered to share one of their problems with the group. The objective was for participants to analyze their locus of control and become aware of their areas of personal strengths and weaknesses.

The fifth session involved the topic of study skills. Study skills consisted of using appropriate time management skills, good note taking skills, and adequate test preparation. The topic was covered by discussing how well each participant had mastered good studying abilities. If students', as a group, needed assistance in study skills, suggestions were given on how to organize study time.

The final two sessions were left open in regard to the topics that would be covered. The practitioner chose to do this so that the members would have an opportunity to explore issues that were of importance and interest to them. The practitioner also allowed participants to help in co-facilitating the group so that participants would feel empowered. During the last two sessions, there was sharing of feelings about how each individual felt

as a participant of the group and how beneficial it had been for them. Finally, the post-test was administered during the last group session.

The Desired Outcome for the group was that the participants would show greater school performance through increased G.P.A, decreased absenteeism, and higher level of self-esteem.

The intervention ran for seven weeks from January 10 to February 28, 1997. The group met on a weekly basis for about 55 minutes every Friday.

The data collected for the project came directly from the school records. The academic and attendance information was obtained from the attendance secretary who retrieved it from the school's computer data base. Students' transcripts were also obtained from the school. Attendance and grade reports were collected from the first and third quarter of the school year. At the end of the group sessions, the participants' third quarter attendance and grade performance was compared with the first quarter to determine if there was any improvement in the participants' academic progress and attendance.

The scale utilized for this project was The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale. "The Way I Feel About Myself" (Piers & Harris, 1969). The scale was developed by Ellen V. Piers, Ph.D. and Dale B. Harris, Ph.D. This scale was used as both a pre/post test. The pre-test was given prior to the intervention and the

post-test was conducted in the seventh week when the intervention was terminated.

The Piers-Harris scale can be used for children from ages 8-18. The scale was designed primarily for research on the development of children's attitude towards themselves. The scale is composed of 80 positive and negative statements which require yes/no responses. Some of the statements include, "I am often sad", "I am smart", and "In school I am a dreamer." The participant completing the scale can score anywhere between 0 and 80. It should also be mentioned that the Piers-Harris scale has been tested for validity and reliability.

The interpretation of scoring and guidelines are as follows. According to the key in the Piers-Harris scale manual, a low score indicates low self-esteem and a high score represents high self-esteem. However, in addition to testing the individual's overall self-esteem, the scale also measures several different factors such as: behavior, intellectual status, school status, physical appearance, attributes, anxiety, popularity, happiness, and satisfaction. The scale has no time constraints, and it generally takes 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

A multiple single-subject design was utilized for this project. The AB design consisted of a baseline phase followed by a treatment phase. The treatment effectiveness was determined by comparing the client's conditions during treatment with that of the baseline.



The participants were selected according to the number of courses they had failed or were failing in the past and how low their G.P.A was in previous quarters. There was initially interviews with the participants to determine if they were interested in attending the support group. The participants were available for interviews on the first or second call. The interview was designed to determine if they were interested in the group. Thirteen girls were interviewed and it was expected that the group only be composed of 6-8 participants.

A baseline was established by the first quarter and third quarter for students' G.P.A's for determining improvement immediately after intervention. The absenteeism rate is the ratio of the number of days absent to the number of days enrolled for each student in the sample. To address the issue of classroom absenteeism, a full six hours was considered a school day. There was a table calculated with the average of absenteeism rates taken from the beginning of the school year up to the first session of intervention compared to that of the seven-week of group intervention. The pre/post test scores will be displayed on these tables. The results were obtained when calculations had been completed and analyzed to know if there were any positive, or negative changes or unchanged scores.

There was very little risk to the participants in this project. The potential risk to other group members

was also minimal. Parental consent was given and the practitioner's supervisor was aware of the project. Confidentiality agreements were signed by the participants and confidentiality issues were explained to them in each group session. Students were instructed not to disclose the identities of the group members or any personal information shared by them during group discussions. There was no need for a Humans Subjects approval form.

## 6. Results

The results in this study were gathered and examined by utilizing the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. The key used for scoring was provided in the Piers-Harris Self Concept Manual. The practitioner only measured and examined the Client's overall self-esteem. The tables will illustrate both sets of scores of the pre/post tests. There are separate tables for each client who was part of this project.

The academic performance was measured by reviewing the first and third quarter grade reports. The practitioner obtained clients' cumulative folders and collected the first and third quarter report cards. The data was then compared to the information provided by the report cards. The third quarter grades were collected after the group had ended because third quarter finished towards the second week of April 1997. The data will be displayed in tables for each participant of the group.

Attendance was measured by reviewing their absences from the beginning of the school year until the last session of group. The practitioner collected clients' attendance records, calculated in percentages, and compared attendance before and after intervention. The data will be displayed with all four clients' attendance performance.

---

Table 1  
Pre-test/Post-test for Client #1  
The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale

1. Pre-test	21
2. Post-test	28

---

As indicated in Table 1, Client #1 scored a 21 on the pre-test. On the post-test, which was administered six weeks later, she scored a 28. The seven point difference shows a slight improvement in her self-esteem.

---

Table 2  
Pre-test/Post-test for Client #2  
The Piers-Harris Self Children's Self Concept Scale

1. Pre-test	19
2. Post-test	38

---

The above table titled Table 2 suggests that Client #2 received a score 19 on her pre-test. On the post-test, she scored a 38. This represents an 19 point increase from her baseline score. The significant increase represents an improvement in the client's self-esteem.

---

Table 3  
Pre-test/Post-test for Client #3  
The Piers-Harris Self Children's Self Concept Scale

1. Pre-test	24
2. Post-test	24

---

The above Table #3 states, Client #3 scored a 24 on the pre-test. On the post-test, which was administered at the last session of the group, she scored a 24. This represents that her improvement in her self-esteem maintained the same. There was a unchanged score.

---

Table 4  
Pre-test/Post-test for Client #4  
The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale

1. Pre-test	45
2. Post-test	47

---

As indicated in Table 4, Client #4 scored a 45 on the pre-test. On the post-test, she scored a 47. The two point difference represents a minimal increase in her self-esteem.

---

Table 5  
First and Third quarter report grades  
Client #1

---

	1st Quarter	3rd Quarter
Math	F	F
English	D-	F
Reading	D-	F
Physical Ed.	B-	D
Social Studies	F	F
Science	D-	D

---

This table represents the data on grades collected for Client #1. At the beginning of group, the participant was receiving two F's, by the end of the seven weeks, she made no improvement. The table indicates that she was failing more than two classes at the end of group.



---

Table 6  
First and Third quarter report grades  
Client #2

---

	1st Quarter	3rd Quarter
Math	D-	C
English	C-	B
Reading	D-	C
Physical Ed.	A	B
Social Studies	B	C
Science	C-	B

---

The table above shows the grades obtained for Client #2. In her first quarter her weaknesses were in Math and Reading and by the end of the seven weeks, she made a significant improvement in four of her classes. She improved four of her grades by a whole grade.

---

Table 7  
First and Third quarter report grades  
Client #3

---

	1st Quarter	3rd Quarter
Math	C+	C
English	D	F
Reading	D	D
Physical Ed.	B-	B
Social Studies	B-	D
Science	D	D

---

Table 7 above reflects the grade data obtained for Client #3. At the onset of group, she was receiving two D's in the area of English and Reading. However, there was no improvement made in Reading, English and Science. She improved only one grade by receiving a strong B.

---

Table 8  
First and Third quarter report grades  
Client #4

---

	1st Quarter	3rd Quarter
Math	B	B
English	D-	C
Reading	C-	C
Physical Ed.	B+	A
Social Studies	B+	C
Science	D	C

---

The above table suggests that Client #4 had a weakness on English and Science. However, in the 3rd quarter she improved in four of her classes and three of her grades by a whole grade.

Table 9

% of School Attendance from Aug 28-Feb 28 of 4 Clients

---

	Before intervention Aug.28-Jan. 9 82 days taught	After intervention Jan.10-Feb.28 36 days taught
1	75%	94%
2	95%	97%
3	81%	86%
4	93%	100%

---

The above Table 9 indicates that before intervention three out of four had an average of good attendance. Client #1 was the only one who had a low percentage of 75% school attendance. Apparently after intervention all four clients had a great improvement in their attendance.

## 7. Discussion

The data analysis presented in Chapter 6 indicated that there was no average scores considered among three out of the four participants. There was Client #4 who only scored at an average score of 47, placing her in the 33 percentile. Her pre-test score was 45, ranking her at a 29 percentile.

According to the Piers-Harris manual, the average scores are usually considered to be those between the 31st and 70th percentile or between raw scores of 46 to 60.

Client #1 scored a 21, which placed her in the 2nd percentile. Her post-test score of 28 indicated a slight improvement in her self-esteem. However, it still places her well below an average score. It should be noted that during the intervention, she had seen a mental health therapist. Client #1 was shy and did not speak much in the support group. She was occasionally absent from group sessions. Therefore, she did not have the opportunity to bond with other group members. Client # 2 scored a 19 on her pre-test. This placed her in the 2nd percentile. Her post-test score was a 38. Client #2's 19 point increase represents a significant improvement in her self-esteem, but does not put her in the average scores indicated in the manual. Client #2's pre-test fell below the average scores of 46 to 60. Her post-test score of 38 did not help her reach the average score of the

Piers-Harris self-esteem survey.

Finally Client #3 received a score of 24, placing her in the 4th percentile. She also scored 24 in her post-test. The scores indicated that she had a unchanged score. However there are several explanations as to the poor scores of self-esteem. One reason for the decline or insufficient change in level of self-esteem is due to the shortness of the project duration. The members were also inconsistent in coming to the group sessions. All of the group members were absent at least once or twice from the sessions. There was not enough time to make a strong peer support network within the group. Although the participants were encouraged to participate in discussion, time for social bonding and feedback was minimum. The duration of the intervention was too short. Forty to fifty minutes a session each week for seven weeks hardly provided enough time to bond with one another.

Academic performance showed that the four participants had a difficult time in the area of English and Reading. The grades for these two areas were either D's or C's. It was clear to observe that the four participants' primary language was Spanish and maybe this was a contribution in having a difficult time in English and Reading. One may also conclude that despite their personal problems, the participants did improve in some of their classes. The practitioner had established a positive and healthy working relationship. As the group sessions were ending,

the participants were becoming more attached to the group setting. In each group session the practitioner would constantly express the importance of respecting other people's ideas and opinions and attempt to create a safe place for the participants to share their feelings. Throughout the group session, the practitioner provided positive reinforcement, support, and encouragement to stay in school.

The clients' overall attendance performance from the beginning of the intervention was satisfactory. When the participants were referred by administrators they thought that the clients had an attendance problem because of their grades. Despite the clients having good attendance, their grades were still lacking in some particular subjects. Therefore, the researcher was not given the appropriate participants with attendance problems, which this affected the data results regarding attendance problems. It was too late in the group to change participants because group sessions already had begun. Participants were already told about the group and were still willing to attend. The practitioner recommended that Lee Mathson Middle School continue to offer group work. The reason being is because most adolescents work well in groups. Conducting groups also allow group leaders to reach a larger number of students in need. The practitioner also found that taking trips to conferences at universities encouraged participants

to belong in a support or educational group. Lee Mathson Middle School should also have more programs offered during lunch for the students. For example, having group sessions during lunch or starting educational clubs. It is also recommended to form incentive programs for attendance and grade performance. Students can be provided with positive reinforcements such as rewards, student of the month, vouchers, and theater tickets. There was only one part-time counselor and the school would benefit to hire a full-time counselor so that the needs of the students are met.



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## Appendices

A PEOPLE PLACE



MATHSON

COMMUNITY SCHOOL

2050 Kammerer Avenue

San Jose, CA 95116

(408) 251-3232

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your child \_\_\_\_\_ has been recommended for counseling by a teacher, an administrative staff person, or by him/herself for academic, behavioral, or personal reasons. The counseling program available at Lee Mathson this year allows for group and individual counseling to be conducted on a limited (short-term) basis. If your child attends a counseling session, (s)he may have the opportunity to explore and overcome barriers that might be slowing or blocking your child's academic success and personal development.

Please sign in the space below and return this form to the school office if you agree to have your son/daughter participate in counseling. If you have any questions or concerns about these services, please contact Ms. Ramirez, counselor, at 251-3232.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rosario D. Ramirez  
School Counselor, MSW Intern

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### Permission Slip

I give my permission for my son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ to attend conseling at Lee Mathson Middle School and for him/her to be assessed in relation to the conseling process as deemed necessary.

Parent's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

A PEOPLE PLACE



MATHSON

COMMUNITY SCHOOL

2050 Kammerer Avenue

San Jose, CA 95116

(408) 251-3232

Estimados padres:

Su hijo/a, \_\_\_\_\_ ha sido recomendado/a para recibir servicios consejeros por un/a maestro/a, una persona administrativa, o por si mismo/a por razones academicas, de comportamiento, o razones personales. El programa de servicios consejeros disponible en la Escuela Lee Mathson este año permite que los servicios para grupos o individuos se lleven a cabo por tiempo limitado (corta-duración). Si su hijo/a asiste a una sesión de consejos, él/ella quizá tenga oportunidad para explorar o vencer barreras que estén haciendo mas despacio o deteniendo su éxito académico y desarrollo personal.

Por favor firme usted en el espacio proporcionado abajo y regrese esta forma a la oficina de la escuela si esta usted de acuerdo para que su hijo/a participe en servicios consejeros. Si usted tiene preguntas o preocupaciones referente a los servicios consejeros, por favor de llamar a Ms. Ramirez, consejera, al 251-3232. Gracias por su consideración.

Sinceramente,

Rosario D. Ramirez  
Consejera Escolar, MSW Intern

Permiso

Doy permiso para que mi hijo/a \_\_\_\_\_ asista a servicios consejeros en la Escuela Lee Mathson Middle School y para que sea avaluado/a en relacion al proceso de consejos segun sea necesario.

Nombre de uno de los

Padres: \_\_\_\_\_ Firma: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

A PEOPLE PLACE



MATHSON

COMMUNITY SCHOOL

2050 Kammerer Avenue

San Jose, CA 95116

(408) 251-3232

Dear Teacher:

This letter is to inform you that \_\_\_\_\_ will be participating in a Student Support Group in Room A4, during lunch.

Your student has been referred to participate in a small support group. The purpose for the support group is to improve attendance, school performance and to help students address issues related to the theme of the group in a safe and supportive atmosphere. This support group will last six weeks. The group will be meeting once a week on Fridays, out of these six weeks. Group will be starting on the week of ~~Jan 10~~ Feb. 28. The cover topics will be such as:

- \*academic responsibility
- \*effective communication
- \*how to handle peer pressure
- \*conflict management
- \*how to make appropriate and responsible choices
- \*setting positive goals/accomplishing goals
- \*other topics which will assist your student with a
- \*successful social/academic school year

Since group will be held during lunch I am requesting if possible to let student leave couple of minutes early and send them to A4 . So that she can get her lunch early and be at group on time. Since time is limited.

Your student understands that she is responsible for completing all missed assignments ( if she leaves early to lunch). See student (contract agreement) below.

Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Rosario Ramirez, School Social Worker, MSW Intern

\_\_\_\_\_

I understand that I am responsible for making up all work and assignments missed during my early leave from class.

Signature of Student \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## GROUP CONTRACT

In order to participate in the group, I agree to the following ground rules:

1. Confidentiality - I will keep all issues discussed in the group confidential -- what is said there stays there!
2. Reporting laws - I understand that if I disclose information in the group about any of the following items, the adults are required by law to report it to authorities and/or my parents:
  - Thoughts about killing myself
  - Thoughts about killing others
  - Any person under 18 who is being physically, sexually, or emotionally abused (including me)
  - My involvement in crimes against others
3. Attendance - I agree to attend all the group meetings unless I am sick. I will report directly to the meeting room at the assigned time.

-----  
Signature

-----  
Date

Here are a set of statements. Some of them are true of you and so you will circle the yes. Some are not true of you and so you will circle the no. Answer every question even if some are hard to **decide**, but do not circle both yes and no. Remember, circle the yes if the statement is **generally** like you, or circle the no if the statement is generally not like you. **There are no right or wrong answers.** Only you can tell us how you feel about yourself, so we hope you will mark the way you really feel inside.

1. My classmates make fun of me . . . . . yes no
2. I am a happy person . . . . . yes no
3. It is hard for me to make friends . . . . . yes no
4. I am often sad . . . . . yes no
5. I am smart . . . . . yes no
6. I am shy . . . . . yes no
7. I get nervous when the teacher calls on me . . . . . yes no
8. My looks bother me . . . . . yes no
9. When I grow up, I will be an important person . . . . . yes no
10. I get worried when we have tests in school. . . . . yes no
11. I am unpopular . . . . . yes no
12. I am well behaved in school . . . . . yes no
13. It is usually my fault when something goes wrong . . . . . yes no
14. I cause trouble to my family . . . . . yes no
15. I am strong . . . . . yes no
16. I have good ideas . . . . . yes no
17. I am an important member of my family . . . . . yes no
18. I usually want my own way . . . . . yes no
19. I am good at making things with my hands . . . . . yes no
20. I give up easily . . . . . yes no



41. I have nice hair . . . . . yes no
42. I often volunteer in school . . . . . yes no
43. I wish I were different . . . . . yes no
44. I sleep well at night . . . . . yes no
45. I hate school . . . . . yes no
46. I am among the last to be chosen for games . . . . . yes no
47. I am sick a lot . . . . . yes no
48. I am often mean to other people . . . . . yes no
49. My classmates in school think I have good ideas . . . . . yes no
50. I am unhappy . . . . . yes no
51. I have many friends . . . . . yes no
52. I am cheerful . . . . . yes no
53. I am dumb about most things . . . . . yes no
54. I am good looking . . . . . yes no
55. I have lots of pep . . . . . yes no
56. I get into a lot of fights . . . . . yes no
57. I am popular with boys . . . . . yes no
58. People pick on me . . . . . yes no
59. My family is disappointed in me . . . . . yes no
60. I have a pleasant face . . . . . yes no

## Activity/Icebreaker

My Favorite animal is: \_\_\_\_\_

It's name is: \_\_\_\_\_

Its age is: \_\_\_\_\_

It has \_\_\_\_\_ sisters and \_\_\_\_\_ brothers

It lives with \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite color is \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite food is \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite thing to do \_\_\_\_\_

## **Identifying Behavior**

Group members will identify passive, aggressive, and assertive behaviors

**Passive** - people who demonstrate passive behaviors:

1. often say "yes" when they want to say "no"
2. seem afraid to share real feelings or thoughts
3. have little or no eye contact with others
4. speak softly and infrequently
5. often slouch and shrug their shoulders

**Aggressive** - People who behave aggressively:

1. make statements without consideration for the feelings of others
2. often appear to be angry when really feeling hurt, embarrassed, sad, left out, frustrated, inadequate, or other emotion
3. frequently abuse others physically and/or verbally
4. behave in a manner that is loud, threatening, insulting, and/or manipulative.

**Assertive** - People who demonstrate assertive behaviors:

1. are honest and direct
2. choose to tell others what they like or dislike, want or don't want
3. speak in a calm, firm voice
4. look at others while speaking
5. accept responsibility for the choices they make

SITUATIONAL QUESTION

Sue's friend told her that Sally is trying to steal her boy-friend. She told Sue that she saw Sally send him a note. Sally denies that she likes the boy. Sue does not believe her.

IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM:

BRAINSTORM SOLUTIONS:

IDENTIFY CONSEQUENCES OF EACH:

SELECT BEST SOLUTION:

SELECT LEAST EFFECTIVE SOLUTION:

Name of group \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Group Evaluation

Overall, being in this group was:

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Very helpful

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Helpful

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. O.K.

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Not helpful

The first time I met with this group, I felt \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I learned \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The most helpful part of this group was \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Something I would change is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

A goal I have set for myself is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Would you recommend this group to your friends? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## San José State University College of Social Work

### Field Agency's Approval of Research Project Prospectus

**Instructions:** This form must be completed by all students participating in university related research projects, including S.W. 298 projects. The form should be completed and submitted to the student's S.W. 298 instructor or faculty sponsor. All students are expected to advise their agencies of the content of their research projects as well as plans related to their proposed methodology, data collection, and data analysis activities. Completion of this form does not remove the obligations of students to complete other college, university, or agency research review and approval procedures/policies.

If significant changes are made in the project a new form must be completed and submitted. All S.W. 298 students must complete and submit this form prior to commencing their actual research work with data collection or clients; and in any event before the end of their first semester of study.

The field instructor's or other agency representative's signature certifies that the student has discussed and shared their plans with the agency, and that the agency is not in opposition to the project. The S.W. 298 instructor and/or other college officials should be contacted if there are any concerns, questions, or objections.

Name of Student Rosario Ramirez Name of Agency Lee Matheson Middle School  
 Field Instructor's Name Wm Owens F.I.'s Telephone # (510) 490-1338  
 SJSU Instructor's Name Fred Prochaska, Ph.D., MSW, MPH Semester(s) Fall 96-Spring 97  
 Proposed Topic Enhancing achievement with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade at-risk. Female thymatics support groups  
 Brief Description of Project - Including Timelines, Sample/Subjects, and Methodology:

Signature of Student Rosario Ramirez Date 12-18-96  
 Signature of Field Inst./Agency Rep. Lina Lamin Date 12-18-96  
 Signature of 298 Instructor/College Rep. Fred Prochaska Date 12/19/96