

Introduction

In this chapter we describe groups for children and adolescents that are appropriate for school settings. The general group format described here can be applied in various other settings, including college and university counseling centers, private practice, and public and private clinics. Many of the ideas in this chapter also are useful for designing groups dealing with a variety of special needs of children, adolescents, and college students. This chapter alone will not provide you with enough information to conduct your own groups in a school setting. You will need to acquire and practice group facilitation skills and apply your knowledge of group process to any group you are planning. We encourage you to do further reading, attend specialized workshops, look for ways to cofacilitate groups with more experienced practitioners, and arrange for supervised field experience in facilitating groups.

Although the groups described here are in school settings, similar groups often are offered in community mental health agencies and in other settings. The roles and functions of school counselors differ from those of community mental health counselors, and the groups often have a different focus. Laws, regulations, policies, and the mission of the school or agency also may differ. Group practitioners need to be knowledgeable of these differences. There are no clear lines of demarcation for the many groups that are available in both school and community settings.

Group Counseling in the School Setting

Counseling groups in school settings cover a wide array of topics and formats. The group counseling services provided for children and adolescents in schools occupy a major place because of their efficacy in delivering information and treatment. Small groups have the potential to reach many students before they need remedial treatment for more serious mental health problems. School-based groups emphasize prevention and intervention strategies to support healthy student development and more effective ways of dealing with the tasks of daily living (Sink, Edwards, & Eppler, 2012). School-based counseling research confirms that small groups are of value for both the student participants and the school counselors; these programs influence the personal and social functioning of students and have been shown to improve academic performance (Sink et al., 2012; Steen, Bauman, & Smith, 2007). Groups play a key role in a comprehensive developmental school counseling program for children and adolescents because of their efficacy in delivering information and treatment (Steen, Henfield, & Booker, 2014).

Many school counseling groups focus on enhancing personal and social development and, at the same time, have a psychoeducational purpose (such as teaching study skills). Steen and colleagues (2014) describe a group counseling model designed to help K–12 school counselors integrate students' academic and personal-social development into their group work. Villalba (2007) examined the use of psychoeducational groups to address the social and academic