The Use of Group Guidance and Group Counseling at the Elementary School Level

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THE USE OF GROUP GUIDANCE AND GROUP COUNSELING AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

Joan Adrienne Fron

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Arts

June 1969
LIFE

Joan Adrienne Fron was born in Chicago, Illinois, on January 8, 1942. She received her education in the Chicago Public Schools and was graduated from Farragut High School in 1959.

She received her Bachelor of Arts in Education from Roosevelt University in 1963, and began work on her Master of Arts degree at Loyola University in the summer of 1966.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to Mr. Verne Orton and his staff in Evergreen Park School District 124; Mr. Charles Arnold of Deerfield School District 110; Mrs. Nancy Collar of Elmwood Park School District 85; and Mr. Mike Arceniega of La Grange Park School District 102 for their cooperation and assistance in preparing a summary of elementary school guidance services in their respective districts.
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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION

In the elementary schools both a need and a place for group approaches in meeting the goals and objectives of the guidance program exists. This is not to imply that individual approaches are no longer valuable, or that group approaches can take the place of individual procedures, but that each can implement and supplement the other, rendering it more effective. Since an organized study of the possibilities of group procedures, at the elementary school level has not been compiled, it is not known to what extent they should be used, or what their place is in pupil personnel services.

Group guidance and group counseling are two current approaches of interest.

General consensus in recent writings defines group guidance as a process concerned with the study of interpersonal and intergroup relations, personal and social adjustment, educational and vocational planning, and orientation to school. Group guidance involves teaching and informational processes which help students grow towards goals considered worthwhile.¹

Counseling groups are smaller in size than guidance groups (usually five to eight members). Cohn and his associates have defined group counseling as 'a dynamic, interpersonal process through which individuals within the normal range of adjustment work within a peer group and with a professionally trained counselor, exploring problems

and feelings in an attempt to modify their attitudes so that they are better able to deal with developmental problems.¹

In short, group counseling is used for clarifying feelings and attitudes of members. The problems dealt with are normally openly expressed by group members. Emphasis is placed on development rather than on treatment and cure. Elementary pupils may be helped through group counseling in matters of intense peer or sibling rivalry; interpersonal relationships; or attitudinal-emotional conflicts such as depression, marked fears, shyness, timidity, and the like.²

Group guidance and group counseling have been successfully used by Broedel, Fisher, Ohlsen, Kranzler, Lodato³ and others. These, however, are isolated experiments, and although they serve as an impetus to the movement they do not truly represent what is currently being tried on our metropolitan school systems. An investigation of the success of these methods must be made in typical school situations to determine their merit and practicality.


³Several studies have been made in the past decade on the effects of group approaches in assisting elementary school children. Among those reported are the following:


F. J. Lodato, "Group Counseling as a Method of Modifying Attitudes in Slow Learners," The School Counselor, XII (December, 1964), pp. 27-33.
Four Chicago area school districts -- La Grange Park, Elmwood Park, Evergreen Park, and Deerfield -- are typical of the school systems utilizing small group approaches to guidance at the elementary school level. Through personal interviews with the counselors involved and in charge of these services it has been found that group procedures are indeed useful and practical tools of guidance. In each district it was felt that group procedures were well on their way to becoming a permanent part of the total guidance program.

This paper investigates the methods of group guidance and group counseling in selected elementary school guidance programs and current trends in their use. Chapter II discusses the rationale underlying the use of group approaches in guidance. It explains how groups function as part of the school's guidance services and through the study of content and process distinguishes group techniques in guidance from effective classroom teaching.

Chapters III and IV give descriptive accounts of the nature of group guidance and group counseling methods as they can be used in the elementary schools.

Chapter V investigates the current use of these techniques as they are being practiced in four metropolitan school districts. The elementary school guidance services in La Grange Park, Elmwood Park, Evergreen Park, and Deerfield are outlined with special consideration given to group methods.

The last chapter is a statement of summary with recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER II

THE PLACE OF GROUP PROCEDURES IN GUIDANCE

The guidance movement developed out of a desire to help individuals meet their own specific problems. Three or four decades ago guidance programs were remedial in nature. Introduced to assist individuals with special problems, such as behavior difficulties, poor scholarship or occupational maladjustments, these early efforts with special groups led to an awareness of possibilities for helping to prevent maladjustments through services to all students. In this preventive stage, as it is commonly called, group approaches began to enter the picture, though much of the effort was carried on through expanded counseling services. A differentiation was made between the teacher, who instructed the individual, and the counselor, who studied or advised the student. The third major stage in the development of the guidance program is frequently referred to as the developmental stage, and is still gaining momentum. It is based upon the recognition that the total educational program, including the curriculum, the extracurriculum, and guidance, serves the purposes of helping individuals to learn and mature. Within guidance this learning and maturing process relates to self-understanding, self-direction in choosing experiences, planning ahead, and
working out harmonious adjustments in all phases of living.\(^4\)

Concern is directed not only toward the prevention of personal difficulties but toward the positive development of the self. Obviously, these newer and broader goals cannot be achieved through a few counseling interviews alone. Many phases of the group approach to guidance have developed in response to these newly formulated objectives.

The Educational Policies Commission expressed in 1961, concern for the individual pupil in American education:

The school must be guided in all things by a recognition of human individuality. Each pupil is unique. He is different in background, in interests, moods, and tastes. This uniqueness deeply effects his learning, for he can react to the school only in terms of the person he is. No two pupils necessarily learn the same thing from a common learning experience. The schools must not only recognize differences among pupils; it must deal with each pupil as an individual.\(^5\)

The need for elementary school guidance services has been noted since developmental guidance and its goals have been understood. The elementary school child, at this important stage in his development, is engaged in establishing an identity, formulating a self-concept, developing adequate social relationships, and meeting the challenges in the area of educational achievement. During this period of development attitudes toward school, peers, and society in general are formed.\(^6\)


The guidance function now focuses attention upon the individual in his present role as well as in any future role he might fulfill as an adult. Guidance personnel now acknowledge that there are certain immediate needs that must be met by the elementary school pupil personnel services:

(a) The need to mature in self acceptance — in an understanding of one's self, assets, and liabilities — and to develop a more realistic self-evaluation; (b) The need to mature in social relationships, to belong, and to identify; (c) The need to develop independence, to take responsibility, to make choices, and be responsible for them. The child should come to accept the consequences of his actions; (d) The need to mature in understanding the role of work in life as it first appears in educational achievement; then to understand opportunity in the environment as related to self. This necessitates a realistic self-appraisal of capacities, aptitudes, interests, and attitudes. Each child needs to mature in his ability to plan; and (e) The need to meet appropriate developmental tasks and developmental needs.7

The use of groups in meeting pupil needs is traditional; elementary school teachers work regularly with groups in the instructional process. Guidance, too, is basically a learning process for both the guidance worker and the individual, and this learning occurs both through interviews and group procedures. In this respect effective education and guidance are almost synonymous.

Group and individual procedures in guidance implement each other in many ways. A counselor who devotes all of his time to interview has almost no opportunity to observe his counselees in action in a group. A classroom teacher who must deal with many personalities has little opportunity to know each one in depth. A person combining both of these functions with a given group, is much better able to understand their needs and develop a program adapted to

7 Ibid., pp. 11-12.
these needs. This means that the guidance worker must be adept at understanding developing personalities, group dynamics, and human relations. Through skillful group leadership he can make aware to several individuals at once the fact that their problems are common human problems; thus, fostering knowledge about self and others — a learning aspect of group work.\footnote{Bennett, op. cit., 19.} Effective guidance becomes an educational process through which the experiences of the child take on personal meaning.

Ten years ago the American School Counselor Association identified the following unique aspects of elementary school guidance:

\begin{itemize}
\item early identification on special needs; child study; close relationship with parents and home; a developmental program with prevention of pupil problems centered in the early years of school; more guidance in the classroom; more attention to remedial work; more emphasis on personality development and work with small groups; and instructional programs geared to help each child develop his interests and strengths and overcome his weaknesses.\footnote{American School Counselor Association, "Elementary School Guidance," Personal and Guidance Journal XLV (March, 1968), p. 52.}
\end{itemize}

Group procedures are recognized as a particular aspect of elementary school guidance and are completely in harmony with the general purposes of guidance programs, namely, to contribute to the individual's understanding of himself; his attitudes, interests and abilities, his physical, mental and social maturity, and life adjustment.\footnote{Bennett, op. cit., 22.}
If used skillfully, group techniques will foster the personal development of each individual and in no way stifle his individuality or creativity. The group is created for the purpose of serving its members, not for manipulating them to meet some predetermined goal; how the group can help the individual is the basic issue.

Groups, then, are but a tool for use in guidance. Group procedures can assist in the learning process by creating an atmosphere of security where it is possible to consider new ideas and new behaviors. Furthermore, group decisions can act as powerful forces that provide the motivation for change.

In those institutions which provide group programs, children, young people, and adults can receive the following benefits through participation in them:

1. Information that will assist them in adjusting to their various areas of experience, including:
   a. educational progress
   b. occupational opportunities and vocational preparation
   c. leisure-time activities
   d. social and civic conditions
2. Experience in cooperative living leading to the development of:
   a. initiative
   b. good sportsmanship
   c. consideration of others
   d. self- and social understanding
3. Development of individual abilities and interests through:
   a. participation in group projects
   b. organization of pupil-initiated activities
   c. special services and programs in and out of school.

More specifically, peer groups can help a child meet such needs as developing a self-image; developing a sense of mutuality; understanding the

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role of authority; and developing a sense of respect for feeling in himself and others.12

Guidance in groups is therefore not to be misconstrued as simply the most economical approach to assisting individuals. Several other advantages and practical values justify the development and expansion of group procedures. First, they increase the level of readiness of the individual for personal counseling. In a group guidance or counseling situation the individual may learn facts about himself that may later enable him to profit more from individual counseling. The interaction that takes place in a group of individuals, each having what he feels to be serious problems, results in a greater understanding of the range of problems and the alternative behaviors for solving them.

A second value arises from the fact that there are some problems that can be better resolved in a group setting than in an individual interview setting. These problems are generally those in which there seems to be some benefit from strong positive reinforcement factors. A mutual therapeutic benefit seems to accrue to members of the group as they realize that their problems are not unique, but are the same kinds of problems that others must also face and resolve.13

Groups can provide the opportunity to discuss mutual problems and learn


the responsibilities of citizenship and group membership. Groups are important in the development of attitudes and values; in addition to providing an effective means of pooling information, ideas, and opinions, group activities may contribute to the growth and maturity of individual members. Group activities are also more efficient for certain purposes; for example, they provide opportunities for learning that are essential for self-direction in educational, vocational and personal-social aspects of life. Further, group work provides educators with an excellent way of determining a student's level of maturity, his socio-economic background, his value system and attitudes, and his basic inter-personal behavior. Learning to be an adequate member of a group can be considered a major developmental task for the individual. 15

Group methods in guidance are differentiated from teaching both in their content and in the process by which the content is handled. The failure of some guidance programs at the homeroom level might be attributed to the fact that their only difference from subject matter classes was in the content. Leo Goldman, while serving as an Associate Professor, Department of Education, at Brooklyn College in Brooklyn, New York, developed a table to illustrate the relationship between content and process. 16

The figure graphically depicts the relationship between the levels of

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process which are shown along the top of the chart and the types of content, as shown along the left margin. Moving across the top, from left to right, one notices that the process becomes less structured and more reflective of individual needs. Downward movement in the left margin depicts content of an increasingly more personal nature. The chart is read diagonally from the upper-left to the lower-right; from teaching to group guidance, to group counseling, to group therapy. Cell 1 would represent teaching, especially the formal lecture type found in colleges and secondary schools. Cell 9, at the other extreme, would represent group therapy activities. Somewhere around cell 5 would be typical group guidance activities; cells 6 and 8 represent group counseling activities.

It is possible for good teachers to utilize Level II and Level III processes and guidance workers to sometimes utilize Level I processes; Goldman simply tried to make a distinction between the major functions of teachers and of guidance workers in today’s schools. He also notes that group guidance and group counseling may have gone wrong because they have been cell 2 and 3 kinds of operations in which Type B and Type C contents were approached through the Level I process. Thus, the process is interrelated with the content and must be adapted accordingly for guidance programs. Although guidance activities have their basis in educational and psychological constructs they are not to be considered as another academic subject.

All guidance services within the schools should be a part of a planned and organized program designed to facilitate optimum growth of each individual. Group procedures and individual counseling are guidance tools created to achieve this goal; used wisely they can implement and supplement each other.
TABLE 1
Interaction of Content and Process in Group Guidance, Group Counseling, and Group Therapy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level I</th>
<th>Level II</th>
<th>Level III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader plans topics</td>
<td>Leader and group members collaborate in planning topics</td>
<td>Topics originate with group members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture and recitation</td>
<td>Discussions, projects, panels, visits</td>
<td>Free discussion, role-playing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facts and skills emphasized</td>
<td>Attitudes and opinions emphasized</td>
<td>Feelings and needs emphasized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units in regular classes</td>
<td>Separate guidance groups meet on schedule</td>
<td>Groups organized as needed, meet as needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Type A**
Usual school subject matter: mathematics, English, etc.  

**Type B**
School related topics: the world of work, choosing a college, how to study, etc.

**Type C**
Non school-related topics: dating behavior, parent-child relations, handling frustrations, etc.

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This chapter has pointed out the shifting emphasis from crisis-centered counseling to developmental counseling as a practical and philosophical approach to elementary school guidance. This change in emphasis reflects the feeling that elementary school guidance programs are necessarily different from secondary school programs, due to the nature of the growing child.

Elementary school children must master developmental tasks of establishing an identity, formulating a self-concept, developing adequate social relationships, and meeting the challenges of educational achievement. The guidance services focus on the immediate needs of the individual, as well as on future needs.

Group procedures as well as individual procedures are employed for the benefits that accrue to the participants. Group members share and develop information necessary for wise choices in the tasks of daily living; they benefit from the experience of cooperative living; they have an opportunity to develop individual interests and abilities within the framework of the group.

Group practices implement individual counseling services by: increasing the student's level of readiness for individual counseling; providing a more effective setting for the solution of certain problems; enabling the counselor to get a more complete picture of the child while also increasing the number of children he can assist.

Group guidance and group counseling procedures differ from effective teaching in both content and process. The content becomes more personal as the process becomes more flexible, feeling oriented and group controlled.

The following two chapters will explain more thoroughly the methods of group guidance and group counseling as they are being conceived of in the educational field.
CHAPTER III

THE GROUP GUIDANCE METHOD

Group guidance is a facet of the guidance services which provides youth with opportunities to share ideas and experiences with peers within an organized setting and under the direction of a qualified counselor. The ultimate goal, of course, is to help each individual grow as a person.

Guiding children in groups helps them to achieve self-direction through cooperation with the group. As each child develops a wide and expanding range of social contacts he also experiences increased social sensitivity and a cooperative attitude which help him to adapt to group living situations.

Being a member of a group can also provide therapeutic benefits for those children who are somewhat shy and submissive or over-aggressive and hostile, as long as their hostilities are not so acute as to destroy the atmosphere of acceptance or freedom of expression that is the essence of group guidance.

As in individual guidance, the values of group guidance may be divided into (a) developmental, (b) diagnostic, and (c) therapeutic. Included in


(a) would be the building of good social habits such as: responsibility; initiative; self-reliance; honesty. Representative of (b) would be attitudes of tolerance, respect, sympathy, and good will. Characteristic of (c) would be feelings of acceptance, being needed, liked and helpful. These values develop together in a group situation and provide the participants with effective skills of cooperation which are so necessary to our way of life. They do not develop accidentally, but reflect a definite set of objectives for the group guidance program. A typical list of objectives is this one, organized by Margaret Bennett:

(1) To provide opportunities for learning essentials for self-direction with respect to educational, vocational, and personal-social aspects of life through
   a) orientation in new school situations
   b) group study of problems of inter-personal relationships
   c) group study of problems of growing up, mental health
   d) group study and application of sound methods of self-appraisal of attitudes, interests, abilities, etc.
   e) group study and efficient learning methods
   f) group study of occupations, life adjustments, and progress
   g) assistance through groups in planning for long range goals (vocational)
   h) assistance through groups in planning for long range educational goals
   i) assistance in developing values and a philosophy of life.

(2) To provide opportunities for the therapeutic effects of group procedures through
   a) perspectives gained of common human problems
   b) release of emotional tensions, insights into personality dynamics.

(3) To achieve some of the objectives of guidance more economically and more effectively.

(4) To implement individual counseling.

20 Ibid., p. 284.
In every instance emphasis is placed on the individual and on the benefits he will receive as a participant in the group process. To achieve the above goals (or at least similar goals) many schools have assembled instructional units to provide experiences which further the understanding of such things as the self-concept, the world of work, and the place of the self in the world of work and learning.

These units are typically built around questions such as: How do I react to other people and how do others react to me? What are my main interests, hopes, goals, and abilities? What is a work day like? How do I go about getting a job? What can I expect to gain from my education? The list of questions and sub-topics is not exhaustive, but only illustrative of the kind of concerns that young people have about themselves and their world of rapidly expanding perceptions. Implicit in these suggestions is the belief that adaptability and independence as a student (and growing person) are related to acceptance of self in the present life of work and learning. In addition, it is held that these concepts are frequently best developed in the group context.

The Chicago Public schools have for the past twelve years recognized the need for organized group guidance services at the seventh and eighth grade levels. The four units that are presented in the Group Guidance for Upper Elementary Grades curriculum guide are simply entitled: "Getting the Most out of School," "Getting to Know Ourselves and Others," "Discovering More About Ourselves," and "Discovering Opportunities for Self-Development."

Sessions are conducted during one forty minute period each week by specially
That Chicago cannot provide enough counselors to conduct group guidance sessions is unfortunate, for frequently the classroom teacher must manipulate the content and 35 or 40 students in an attempt to provide this group activity. The content is certainly vital to student growth and development, and it is relevant to their interests and concerns, but in dealing with so large a group the tendency is to treat group guidance as another subject in the curriculum. In so large a group it is almost impossible to create the desired atmosphere of freedom and stimulate participation by all group members.

In 1965-6, 1966-7, and 1967-8 ESEA funds were made available to Chicago for After School Group Guidance classes of 10-20 students in certain schools in the inner city. Perhaps, at some time in the future, smaller groups of students will be the standard and group guidance sessions will be made available to a greater range of students in the Chicago Public Schools.

These programs, however, are typical of the growing interest in elementary school guidance across the country. As of February, 1968, 3,837 counselors were at work in 48 states, the majority of whom were former elementary school teachers. Over 70 per cent of them were supported in part by federal funds.  

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To meet the growing demands of schools for guidance materials, firms such as SRA have developed a wide variety of student and professional materials for use at every level of education between kindergarten through college. 24

Ideally, instructional groups and group guidance activities should be made available to all students in the school. Through these media they would learn of the other guidance services available, including group counseling, individual counseling, and other possible activity groups. Movement through any phase of the program should be possible whenever the student feels the need or desire for assistance.

Guidance groups may be initiated and formed in any number of ways, but no group will function effectively unless its members decide on the purpose of the group and the objectives to be undertaken and completed.

One way to initiate groups is to make a general announcement stating time, purposes, etc., and allow the interested pupils to participate by free choice. Another common way is for counselors to interview students to ascertain potential members alike in their problems or focus of attention. Again, participation is ultimately determined by the individual's desire to participate, for in group guidance the pupil is his own subject of study; the program depends on his active participation in the process. For this reason, assemblies, even of the career conference type, cannot be considered a true group guidance activity.

To determine whether an activity may be rightfully deemed as bona fide group guidance, Downing has outlined these following criteria:

(1) Individual growth is the major objective. Although group members combine efforts in a common enterprise, each must profit individually from the experience.

(2) Interaction between and among group members is essential. There is some independence of individual expression but also a dependence upon other group members. Unless this condition exists, the activity is not group guidance.

(3) Useability and practicality are necessary. Functional possibilities must be present and new knowledge applied to a practical situation.

(4) The potential for improvement and change must exist within each individual and within the group setting, and changes must eventually occur, even if accurate predictions are not made as to the nature or extent of personal growth to be realized by each group member.

(5) A commonality of purpose must prevail. High-level involvement takes place as efforts are combined to gain information and as problems common to all are attacked.

(6) Homogeneity of participants and concerns mark an effective group. The participants should possess personal characteristics to some degree common to all, and the focus of interaction should be on problems of mutual interest and concern.

(7) Competent, qualified leadership must exist. Some structuring, organizing, and initiating are necessary. Considerable freedom exists within each group as it begins to function, but competent leadership is a primary requisite.

(8) Organization as to time, place, topics, and information is essential.25

Group procedures permit and encourage active involvement by each student in the process; the smaller the group, the more participation possible. In small group guidance sessions, which are unlike either class discussions or individual counseling, the student experiences some degree of growth from his efforts to adjust, adapt, and contribute to the group.

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25 Downing, op. cit., p. 222.
As is the case in any emerging field of thought, there exists some uncertainty as to the real advantages and limitations of group guidance procedures. Peters as his associates have summarized them in this manner:

Advantages

1. Group procedures provide realistic and life-like social processes useful for modifying personal habits, attitudes, and judgements of group members.
2. Students are more often willing to become involved in relationships with their peers and will discuss problems that they find difficult to talk about in personal interviews.
3. Group methods provide situations for more adequate problem-solving activities.
4. There is the possibility that students will become deeply involved in social interaction and less expectant of advice or direction from the counselor.
5. By studying his counselees in an intimate and fairly realistic setting, the counselor can develop a background of related information which will improve counseling ... and identify those in need of help through individual counseling.

Limitations

1. The inability of some students to relate to the common element, or problem, thus never really to feel a part of the group.
2. The need that some individuals have to identify more directly and more closely with one person (presumably the counselor) than to be able to relate to or interact comfortably with a group of persons.
3. The probability that there is less warmth or closeness of relationship between the counselor and individual group members.
4. A danger that the relative safety or anonymity of the group, and the expressions of group members, may lead some individuals to experience catharsis or disturbing insights too much or too rapidly to be adequately dealt with in that particular session.26

Only time and further research into group procedures and their effects will determine which elements are the most important to consider in planning

the total school guidance program.

Group guidance represents the attempts of school counselor's to assist normal children with normal concerns in the normal process of development. The general program of group guidance includes those learnings which will lead to increased self-understanding, better problem solving techniques, the ability to set realistic goals and achieve them, and the development of satisfying personal relationships.

Group activities are part of an organized program of guidance services and are intended to implement and complement individual counseling techniques. They lend themselves well to the school situation where grouping for learning is both traditional and necessary for optimum human development.

Group activities are successful where an atmosphere of security and freedom exists, where participation is by personal choice, and where there is greatest opportunity for interaction between individuals having a common recognized concern.

To achieve the objectives of the guidance program units of study are frequently compiled which provide a framework for understanding the self and the place of the self in the world of work and learning. These instructional units are not meant to be handled as class content but rather as a guide for developing areas of common concern.

Ideally, group guidance activities should be made available to all students in the school. Some counselors initiate guidance groups by making a general announcement stating time, purposes, etc., and allow students to
participate by personal choice. The decision to join such a group must be made by each individual as he is his own subject of study and the success of the program depends on his active participation in the process.

All group activities, however, are not to be considered as attempts at group guidance. Some basic characteristics of bona fide group guidance include: a commonality of purpose; the ultimate goal of individual growth; high-level involvement on the part of the participants; dynamic, interpersonal relationships; the assistance of a competent and qualified counselor in the total process.

The failure of homeroom guidance programs can often be traced to a lack of the above characteristics, as well as to over-sized groups and the treatment of content as an academic area of study.

Group guidance is an informal instructional process which depends heavily in the discussion of personally relevant material. It is an especially effective way of handling school related topics and current adjustment problems that are not of a deeply personal nature. It uses to great advantage satisfying social relationships, peer group influence and motivation, and the background experiences of the participants.

Further experimentation is needed to determine what part group guidance activities should play in the total program of school guidance services.
CHAPTER IV

THE GROUP COUNSELING METHOD

Group counseling is a dynamic, interpersonal process through which individuals within the normal range of adjustment work together with a professionally trained counselor, exploring problems and feelings in an attempt to modify their attitudes so that they can better deal with developmental problems, conducted primarily in an educational setting. 27

Individuals tend to learn and adapt best through a process of interaction, which provides opportunity to live through personal experiences and to find personal meanings. It is this interaction of individual with individual which gives group counseling its dynamic aspect, and which makes it truly meaningful to the individuals who are participating. 28

Group counseling is not a labor saving device. The counselor uses group processes because children seem to be able to communicate, to reflect, and to clarify feelings and attitudes for each other more effectively than in a child-adult interpersonal relationship. 29

Children learn from each other, not only ways to solve their own immediate problems, but also ways to cope with a wide variety of problems expressed by the group.

28 Ibid., p. 356.
29 Weeks, op. cit., p. 111.
Group counseling’s major therapeutic effect stems from the recognition of the fact that most problems are basically social or interpersonal in nature. Group work helps the child to interact effectively within a group by providing him with direct experiences in social interaction. What the child cannot express verbally can often be expressed through a group technique such as role playing, which involves both himself and others in a problem situation. How others handle the same situation and how others react to him provides a basis for understanding and personal growth.30

For the students this process offers an opportunity; (a) to express themselves both verbally and actively on any number of topics without the usual limitations set by school or society; (b) to test reality by trying out new methods of handling situations without fear of punishment from authority figures; (c) to help others and discuss common feelings without losing their individual identity; and (d) to investigate and evaluate their past experiences in light of their present behavior so that they can make the decision for change in a positive direction.31

Although the dynamics of group counseling can be simply stated, it does not imply that the actual process is simple or uncomplicated. The counselor must use all of the skills of individual counseling plus additional skills related to group dynamics. The child must also be very personally involved, for the demands placed on him are much greater than in a group guidance situation. Group counseling requires that the group members experience some anxiety about a problem that they wish to resolve and that they have the will-


The atmosphere must be secure enough so that the child can feel free
to express his thoughts and feelings to his peers. The adult counselor
must be perceived as a helpful, non-judgemental, and non-threatening adult;
in other words, he must be a completely new kind of person in the eyes of
the child. Ideally, this approach should provide the chance for each child
to develop "a feeling of equality, confidence, courage and adequacy; to re-
lease negative feelings; to work out role identities; and to be loved."\(^{33}\)

In working with elementary school children the counselor will have to
adapt his techniques to the social and emotional maturity levels of the
clients, to their previous experiences in groups, and to the adequacy of their
communication skills. A Professor of Educational Psychology at the University
of Illinois, Merle Ohlsen, had observed in his own counseling experiences that
(a) children in grades four through eight needed a more structured and clearly
defined counseling situation than did older high school students; (b) effect-
ive counseling required more active participation on the part of the coun-
selor; and (c) the children needed more than just verbal interchange to ex-
press and cope with their problems.\(^{34}\)

\(^{32}\)Ibid., p. 133.

\(^{33}\)Dinkmeyer, \textit{Guidance and Counseling}, p. 272.

\(^{34}\)Merle M. Ohlsen, "Counseling Children in Groups," \textit{Elementary School
How much the group can help the individual depends on the level of maturity of each group member. Understanding another person's problem is a fairly sophisticated skill which implies a similar experience in the background of the observer, and understanding is a basic goal of counseling.

Exactly how the counselor is to function within a group is largely a reflection of professional orientation. Some feel that it is the counselor's responsibility to capture the speaker's feeling, help him to tell his story, set the stage for a desirable learning experience, and communicate his feelings of acceptance and understanding.35

Dinkmeyer, however, emphasizes a less directive approach:

Basically, the leader's initial job is to help the members of the group learn to direct their attention on each other rather than on a leader. He achieves this by continually focusing on:
1. The meaning of an idea to the group.
2. The issues that the group seems to be in disagreement over and that they need to resolve.
3. The feelings that they are expressing through their behavior rather than their spoken words.
4. The ways they are forcing others into roles or behaviors.
5. The actions or problems which the group raises and needs to solve.
6. The continuity between group sessions and themes raised.36

In determining which approach will be most effective in meeting the goals of the counseling program one must always bear in mind that counseling is a tool to aid individuals, and since individuals are unique so will each group be unique. Groups will differ in objectives and ways of attaining these goals. They will differ in tempo, in degree of personal involvement, in reflected

35 Shertzer, op. cit., p. 67.
36 Dinkmeyer, Guidance and Counseling, pp. 117-118.
judgements, perspectives and values. Each group will create its own social climate and social structure, even to the point of assigning membership roles. Because of this element of uniqueness, individuals may participate in more than one counseling group during the school year without becoming bored by repetition or frozen in a particular role.

The elementary school counselor must have at least three specialized capacities which are unique in type or degree from those expected of the secondary school counselor. (a) He must be able to communicate in a nonverbal manner such as observations of play tasks because the younger child may lack the words necessary to express feelings about himself and others. (b) He must be able to work skillfully in the area of reading diagnosis and of emotional problems that may accompany poor reading. The emotional involvement that is frequently associated with poor reading may be either cause or effect, but the relationship between the two requires an essential kind of understanding upon the part of the elementary school counselor. (c) He must be able to work skillfully with parents, both as a counselor and as a small group leader, since the parent-child relationship is of extreme importance to the elementary school child and to his school development.

Group counseling can be looked upon as a two way situation, where the counselor uses his skills and knowledge to facilitate the growth of each member as they constantly provide him with keener insights into their emerging personalities and personal needs.

The group counseling situation passes through four stages as it progresses. The first stage is one of establishing a relationship between the individual members and the counselor and the group. The second phase builds understanding of expressed concerns. The third phase is interpretation, in which the child sees himself in others and sees himself as others see him. The insights and understandings gained here make possible the fourth stage,

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reorientation, at which time the child tests his new perceptions and attitudes before the group.\textsuperscript{38}

The goals of developmental counseling, in contrast to adjustment, or crisis counseling, are not always problem-oriented in terms of assuming that the child has some difficult problem. Instead, the goals include the development of self-understanding, awareness of one's potentialities, and methods of utilizing one's capacity.\textsuperscript{39}

Children who seem to profit most from group counseling include shy children, those who want to make friends, those who have greater ability than their performance indicates, and those children who do not relate well to authority figures and rules.\textsuperscript{40}

Ohlsen (Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Illinois) and Gazda (Associate Professor of Education at the University of Georgia) conducted a study counseling bright underachieving fifth graders and noted an improvement in general behavior and a decrease of such psychosomatic ailments as asthma and stomach aches. The greatest gains involved increased congruence between perception of self and the ideal self and acceptance of peers.\textsuperscript{41}

At the School of Education at Indiana University, Kranzler made a study

\begin{itemize}
\item[Dinkmeyer, Guidance and Counseling, p. 275.]
\item[Dinkmeyer, Guidance and Counseling, p. 263.]
\item[Weeks, \textsuperscript{op. cit.}, p. 112.]
\item[Ohlsen and Gazda, \textsuperscript{op. cit.}, pp. 78-81.]
\end{itemize}
Benjamin Cohn, Counseling Consultant, and A. Mead Sniffen, a Counselor in the Guidance Center, Board of Cooperative Educational Services, in Bedford Hills, New York, worked for four months with seven eighth grade boys who manifested acting-out behavior indicating a low degree of self esteem and a general disinterest in school. Although there was an improvement in attitudes toward school and self, the authors felt that the number of sessions was not adequate to solve their many problems. 45

These sample studies are indications of the growing interest in group procedures as a part of the elementary school guidance program. Of course, the samples are too small to show conclusive evidence as to the benefits of group counseling, but they are promising, and there is no reason to believe that future studies will be any less successful. As a matter of fact, as more knowledge is continually being gained regarding group dynamics and successful group techniques, the chances for successful studies are also increasing.

Future studies may seek to determine what age levels are best served by group techniques, what specific counseling techniques are most effective with these groups, and how best to appraise and evaluate individual growth as a result of group procedures. School counselors must be willing and able to donate some of their time to expanding the amount of knowledge in the general area of group procedures. It is the professional responsibility of guidance personnel to keep abreast of current findings in their field as well as to contribute to these findings by conducting experimental studies and reporting

45 Cohn, op. cit., pp. 133-138.
them to fellow professionals through various guidance publications such as the Personnel and Guidance Journal and The School Counselor.

Perhaps institutions of higher learning will recognize this professional responsibility by preparing guidance and counseling personnel with a background of research methods that will enable them to approach their problems in a scientific manner, thus enhancing the value of their efforts.

Melville Shaw has these criticisms to make about research approaches in the area of group procedures:

Four major factors have weakened many studies of group counseling. The first major weakness noted was the selection of subjects for the study. Inadequate sample size, inadequate information on the clients prior to experimental treatment and inadequate time for appraisal of client growth were noted. A second major weakness is found in the appraisal of client growth with inadequate instruments for appraising growth, failure to follow-up to determine whether growth has been maintained, and failure to obtain systematic critical descriptions of client's behavior. The third major weakness lies in the treatment process itself. Included here are failure to describe adequately the treatment provided and failure to report on the qualifications of the counselor or group leader. The final common liability noted was the research personnel used in a particular study. Too many people doing research in this particular area, while competent counselors are not competent as research workers. 16

Although these criticisms are indeed valid, they will not prevent further work from being carried on in the field. Far more advantages are gained in favor of group counseling. A summary of advantages is as follows:

1. In dealing with several students simultaneously, it spreads the effect of the counselor and at the same time preserves his effectiveness.

group; the more mature the group the less structure and direction will be necessary from the counselor. As leadership develops from within the group and the discussions gather momentum, the counselor will become more of a participant-observer and less of a director. His skill in spotting relationships and summarizing progress may be all that is needed in working with older children.

Even though his direct influence on the group may seem minimal, the elementary school counselor must have well developed skills in interpreting non-verbal behavior, in understanding the relationships between emotional problems and learning difficulties, and in working effectively with both parents and teachers.

Group activities make use of natural social settings and supportive inter-personal relationships to develop increased self-understandings, greater awareness of personal potential, and fuller utilization of individual talents. In an atmosphere of freedom and security the child has the opportunity to consider alternative behaviors, feel a genuine sense of belonging, and develop social interests. The adult counselor is experienced as being non-threatening and non-judgemental, as well as helpful and supporting.

Group counseling has proved to be an effective means to reaching the end: it helps individuals to help themselves. Taking into account the fact that at least some of man's problems are social or interpersonal in nature, it provides the participants of the group with direct experience in social interaction. The child benefits from the corrective influences and encouragement of the group.
More research needs to be done on the use of group procedures before any honest evaluation can be made of the effectiveness of group counseling in the schools. It appears to be a promising method of assisting young people and deserves further consideration and use.

The next chapter of this paper will review how four metropolitan school districts are incorporating group procedures into their elementary school guidance programs.
CHAPTER V

THE USE OF GROUP PROCEDURES IN TYPICAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Chapters I through IV have examined group guidance and group counseling procedures as a valuable asset to elementary school guidance programs. A review of current findings was presented, pointing out both the advantages and limitations of group approaches as they have been recognized by professional counselors and guidance personnel educators. To expand this knowledge about the effectiveness and practicality of group procedures at the elementary school level counselors from four suburban Chicago school districts were asked to explain how group activities fit into their regular program of guidance services and what special benefits seemed to accrue to the students who participated in these activities.

The guidance programs of the following schools or school districts are described in this section:

   District 124, Evergreen Park, Illinois
   District 110, Deerfield, Illinois
   District 85, Elmwood Park, Illinois
   District 102, La Grange Park, Illinois

The four schools or school districts represented will vary greatly in the manner in which they have organized and administered their program of guidance services. Each description of a guidance program is preceded by a
brief description of the school and community in order that the environmental factors which have helped to mold the guidance program may be understood.

The programs will be depicted as they actually exist at the present time. Taken into consideration are such factors as community size and wealth; population of school districts; number of qualified counselors employed at the elementary school level; length of existence of elementary guidance services; and the size and facilities of the schools. Emphasis is placed on the current trends in the use of group guidance and group counseling at the elementary school level.

Evergreen Park is a suburban community of 25,000 people located 1 1/2 miles from Chicago's loop, adjacent to Chicago on the North, South and East and bounded by Oak Lawn on the West. It is an all white, middle income community that is served by one high school, one junior high school, and four elementary schools with grades K-6. The district serves approximately 2000 students.

The junior high school building also houses the administration center for the district. This includes the Office of the Superintendent, the Guidance Director, and the Curriculum Center which is a combination professional library and audio-visual center.

A full time faculty of twenty teachers serves 450 students in the junior high school. In addition to this regular staff are specialists in the areas of art, music, home economics, and guidance who divide their time between the junior high school and the four elementary schools in the district.

Evergreen Park has a strong program of guidance services, including orientation, counseling, teacher workshops, testing, and parent interviews.
The three counselors each have private offices in the junior high school, complete with desks, chairs, and steel filing cabinets. The outer counseling office has a table display of student teaching materials on guidance related subjects and a sign-up sheet for appointments. Students are made to feel welcome and they take advantage of this service as naturally as they would any other school service. The "problem" child and the "normal" child feel equally at home in seeking advice or assistance on any number of topics.

As a matter of general procedure the following tests are administered each year in the elementary grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>Gates Oral Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Gates Oral Reading, Kuhlmann-Anderson Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Gates Oral Reading, Iowa Test of Basic Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Kuhlmann-Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>Iowa Test of Basic Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>Iowa Test of Basic Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and in the junior high school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>Differential Aptitude Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth</td>
<td>An achievement test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exact tests are subject to change but the pattern remains basically the same. The DAT is being used experimentally right now to determine its value.

Group achievement tests are administered by the classroom teacher and scored either by machine or by the guidance staff; group intelligence tests are administered by the guidance staff with the assistance of the classroom teacher. Individual tests are given by the guidance department whenever the need arises. Traditional report card grades are replaced by an evaluation
of the child's progress (working Above Grade Level, At Grade Level, or Below Grade Level) and some indication of the child's efforts. These are used in conjunction with parent interviews.

The Director of the Guidance Department is a member of the Principal's Advisory Committee and receives a salary comparable to that of the school principal. He handles individual counseling activities in the junior high school, organizes the guidance program for the district, acts as a clearing house for special referrals, coordinates and supervises the testing program, conducts weekly meetings with his staff of 2 full time counselors, meets with parents, and arranges for periodic in-service meetings for the faculty of the junior high school.

The guidance department, in existence for 12 years, is well received by the community, the staff, and the students. The Guidance Director works in the junior high school 5 days a week; the other counselors work there 3 days a week and spend 2 days in each of the district's four elementary schools.

Since Evergreen Park is a well established and stable community, having the same counselors serve both the elementary schools and the junior high school is advantageous; guidance services are continuous and follow-up work with individual students is readily available.

District 124 believes that the attention of every staff member should be focused upon the individual needs of the children. They implement this goal by (a) directing a yearly achievement test program in all grades, (b) making a special study of individual children when it is advisable, (c) offering individual and group counseling to all students, and (d) working with parents and teachers towards a better understanding of each child.
In the elementary grades counseling is usually initiated by a teacher referral. In addition to teacher referrals in the junior high school there is an open door policy whereby students can schedule their own appointments, either singly or in groups. The success of this approach is indicated by the high percentage of self-referrals and the enthusiasm of both faculty and students towards the services of the guidance department.

In 1966, a third counselor was added to the department thus making it possible to experiment with various combinations of individual and group counseling procedures. Group counseling is being used this year more extensively than before. It has been found to be so successful that one counselor alone is currently working with four groups in grades 3, 4, 5, and 8 for 30 to 40 minute periods each week. Individual counseling interviews frequently accompany group sessions and occasionally continue after the group has disbanded.

Groups are initiated in any number of ways. They frequently are formed spontaneously, as several friends present themselves with a common problem; or sometimes individuals with common concerns are grouped together by the counselor for the sake of expediency. Sometimes they are the result of a desire expressed by an individual in a counseling interview. Often, in these cases, the classroom teacher and the counselor work together in selecting other possible candidates who would be willing and effective group members.

Groups of this "structured" nature are most often used when one child is experiencing great problems of adjustment in the area of interpersonal relationships and needs to learn better ways of relating to his peers. The counselor's feel that much can be accomplished by the awkward, the rebellious,
or the shy child in a controlled social setting where he can establish a successful mode of interaction with two or three of his peers. Counseling groups are used at any level (generally no lower than third grade) but never consist of more than 3 to 5 members. They continue to meet as long as the need exists and progress is being made; in some cases they continue through the school year.

In the experience of the counseling staff, children seem to be more open in expressing their concerns and opinions to their peers than they are with an adult. They are also more concerned with the reactions of their peers than they are with the reactions of an adult and tend to alter their behaviors more readily under peer influence. Group work is one way of bridging the generation gap that is unavoidable in an educational setting.

The counselors work closely with the teachers of these children when it seems advisable and even with the parents when it is necessary. Sometimes small groups of parents are involved in the counseling process when their children share common problems of adjustment relating to the home situation or requiring greater understanding by the parents and family. In this community there seems to be no stigma attached to school counseling and parents are generally cooperative in matters concerning the development or social adjustments of their children.

Teachers, too, are sensitive to the needs of individual children and may seek the services of the guidance department in finding ways to meet the special needs of certain children. There is much free communication between the teacher and the counselor in order to understand and assist the child in his development.
Group guidance is not conducted as a class, but the goals of self-understanding and personal growth are included in all phases of the curriculum, especially in the health classes and in social studies units which emphasize positive human relations.

In-service meetings or workshops on guidance are conducted at least three times each year and usually contain presentations by guest speakers who are currently active in the field. These help to keep the staff well informed on current trends in the field, increase their skill in dealing with developmental problems of children, and maintain a high degree of enthusiasm for guidance and counseling services.

The guidance program has functioned successfully for some 12 years and has expanded its services until it has established a program that is sound, relevant, and effective. Much of its success has been due to its attempts to involve the children, the parents, and the teaching staff in its operation. It is staffed by well qualified and enthusiastic personnel who are up to date in their approach and optimistic about its future.

Just north of Chicago there is the suburban community of Deerfield. It is an upper-middle class area of 17,200 people, all white and conservative in their views. School District 110 has 4 elementary schools (K-6) plus one under construction, a junior high school and one community high school.

Information on the Evergreen Park School District was made available to me in a personal interview with the Guidance Director, Mr. Verne Orton, and his two qualified counselors.
There are 3 full-time counselors for 1800 students in grades Kindergarten through Eight, and one paraprofessional who is basically in charge of clerical work, records, test scoring and reports. Each counselor has a small private office and phone off of a reception room that is equipped with round tables and chairs for group meetings and a secretary to assist in the operation of the program.

The present Guidance Director has received extensive training in Adlerian psychology and therefore the guidance services take special interest in the social needs and social development of the individual. In general terms, the goal of the guidance program is to prevent maladjustments in young people by helping them to develop their strong points and adjust to their weaknesses.

The junior high school has a formal Group Guidance program in the 8th grade which does not operate under a set curriculum but rather focuses upon the three major adjustments of all people; adjustment to family and school; adjustment to career demands; and adjustments to members of the opposite sex. Printed and audio-visual materials are used as needed to stimulate group discussions, heighten awareness to universal human needs, and provide background information.

This year the Kider Preference Record was administered in the Group Guidance classes and the results were discussed at a later date as part of the preparation for high school registration. The counselors help each graduating student to plan his first semester program and to tentatively plan his classes for his complete high school career. A large per cent of these children will
eventually go on to college and the group sessions try to present occupational and vocational information to help each child set realistic goals for the future. Individual interviews accompany these classes whenever there is a felt need for them.

Most of the counselor's time is spent in counseling activities, occasionally in groups, but primarily with individual students. These sessions may be initiated by student self-referral or teacher referral. The latter is most common, especially in the Kindergarten through sixth grades. Whenever group approaches are used they are also accompanied by individual interviews on a 30 minute per week basis. Group counseling is generally used whenever the child's problem involves his relationships with his peers. The teacher and the counselor work together to select the other two members of the group who are usually considered to be among the best adjusted pupils in the room, in the likelihood that these persons will also be the most accepting and tolerant of a peer having social adjustment problems. Every attempt is then made to work closely with the teacher and the parents of the child until a positive change in behavior takes place.

Parent counseling or "Child Development" groups meet with the Guidance Director every Monday morning to discuss common problems and concerns. In general, there is much pressure placed on the child to achieve and many problems arise involving parent aspirations and student abilities. Unfortunately, in this affluent community there seems to be somewhat of an onus attached to counseling services, which is a major stumbling block in parent involvement and total participation. Perhaps a "parent orientation" campaign could be developed in order to make them more aware of the goals of school guidance
and the services it offers to all individuals. A better understanding of program might eliminate some of their negative feelings, especially if their views and comments are encouraged and thoughtfully considered.

The counseling staff feels that much can be done to help the child develop his potential and mature as a successful individual, but also recognizes the role of parent expectations and the necessity for cooperation from the home in correcting certain student problems which center around the child's feelings about himself. 50

Just north and west of Chicago is the suburb of Elmwood Park. It is an all white, upper-middle class community of 23,900 people. Elmwood Park has three elementary schools, grades Kindergarten through eight, serving 2,000 pupils and a community high school. The Director of Pupil Personnel Services administers and coordinates the guidance services for both the elementary and high schools. This is a relatively new function since the elementary school guidance program has only formally been in existence since 1967, and is therefore still in the experimental stages of its development.

The elementary school guidance services began with one full time counselor who worked solely with the seventh and eighth grade pupils on problems relating to school adjustment and high school preparation. The district was sufficiently satisfied with the results to hire a second full time elementary school counselor and broaden the scope of its services to include all grades.

50 Information concerning Deerfield School District 110 guidance services was provided by Mr. Charles Arnold, Director of Elementary School Guidance Services.
Because the community, the teaching staff and the students have all been recep-
tive to the program the addition of more guidance personnel is anticipated in
the near future.

Under the present plan of organization one counselor works daily in the
district's largest elementary school and the second counselor divides her time
between the two smaller elementary schools. In every school the counselor is
provided with a private office equipped for small group sessions, pupil per-
sonnel files and professional resource materials.

One very important aspect of the guidance program is the testing program.
An achievement battery and a group intelligence test is given to all children
in grades one, three, five, and seven. The counselor meets individually with
every seventh grade student to discuss test scores and with the entire grade
level to discuss interpretation of test scores, presented in stanines. A
parent assembly is also scheduled in order to explain student test scores,
again in terms of stanines, and their usefulness as predictors of future
school success. Parents are then invited to make individual appointments
with the counselor for further discussion of their child's academic or social
progress, and many of them do so some time during the school year.

At the beginning of the school year the counselors met with every class
to explain their services and their goal of offering assistance to every child
who really wanted assistance with a school of personal problem. Children were
told how to make an appointment with a counselor and what to expect from the
counseling interview. They were invited to come in and get acquainted if they
have never met with the counselor before. As a result of this friendly and
open approach there is a high per cent of self-referrals with a wide variety
of problems or concerns; children with normal problems of development as well as children with deeper problems ask for appointments with the school counselor.

The classroom teacher can make referrals also, which is usually the case with younger children, and occasionally parents will request counseling services for their son or daughter. With the child's consent individual counseling is then initiated on a weekly basis. The counselor then determines which children have similar problems or compatible personalities and makes preparations for grouping.

The grouping is always very flexible; it may be of all one sex, mixed, or even across grade levels, depending on the needs and development of each child; it may range in size from three to six individuals; it may meet for a few weeks or for the entire school year; children are free to drop out at any time but because continuity is important additions to the group are rarely made once the group has been established.

Children who participate in group counseling also receive individual counseling on a weekly basis. These interviews may well continue even after the group has disbanded, depending on the needs of the child. Occasionally, the child will gain enough from the group situation that individual counseling will not be necessary; correlating counseling services to student needs is what makes the program effective.

Last year more than 36 children were involved in group counseling and at the end of the year they were asked to evaluate their experience. Reactions, in general, were favorable as most of the students felt that in helping others they had helped themselves, and that through understanding
others better they had understood themselves better. About one-tenth of the children felt that they were freer in expressing themselves in a one-to-one counseling situation and that the group had not helped them significantly. This could be a reflection of hostility on the part of participants from one experimentally structured group which included girls from two rival social clubs. Since the evaluation forms were not signed, proof of this explanation cannot be given, but other observations would strongly indicate that this interpretation was correct.

Since these individual differences exist, children are grouped only after several individual interviews with the counselor have taken place, and the counselor has developed some understanding of the child's personality. Also, children are allowed to withdraw from group counseling at any time; in order for group counseling to be beneficial, participation must be wholehearted and by personal choice.

The counselor felt that certain problems were more suited for group work than others; namely, those problems that were social in nature. Unsatisfactory peer group relations, inability to adjust to classroom procedures, faulty perceptions of self, extreme competitiveness, and feelings of inferiority are typical student concerns that can be expressed in a group and worked out through small group interactions. The bonds of mutuality and confidentiality seem to unite the group and provide enough security so that personal feelings and concerns can be brought out and evaluated. The reactions of the other group members provide the impetus for change and positive growth.

The least successful groups were those that were primarily concerned with academic problems or composed of several close friends. The counselor felt
that the first group could probably have gained as much benefit from classroom instruction in developing good study habits, and that close out of school relationships between members of the second group interfered with their freedom of expression within the group.

The most successful groups have involved children with compatible personalities, even though their problems may have been only very loosely related. Chronological age or grade level placement are not sufficient criteria for participation in a group since human development is a highly individual process; one group is being formed right now for three boys in grades 3, 7, and 8. Because of the maturity and intelligence of the youngest boy the three are expected to be able to work together will in developing insights into their own problems and the problems of others.

The counselors are using group techniques because they have been found to be most useful in changing the attitudes and behaviors of the participants. Better methods of evaluation are also being formulated in order to improve the understanding of successful group procedures. Group procedures will continue to be used as long as they are successful in helping individuals to help themselves.

La Grange Park is a community of 16,200 low-to-upper-middle income people, located south and west of Chicago. School District 102 is integrated and has 4 elementary schools that feed into Lyons Township High School, which is one of the top schools in the state as rated by National Merit Scholarship winners.

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51 Information on the elementary school guidance program in Elmwood Park was provided by Mrs. Nancy Collar, the elementary school counselor.
The elementary schools have grades Kindergarten through five plus the middle school grades six through eight. The middle school is a concept that embraces what many other school districts term the junior high school.

La Grange Park has a program of pupil personnel services dating back to the 1940's, but a new concept of guidance services is emerging, completely in line with the principles of developmental guidance. Guidance services are made available to each and every pupil in grades K-5; developmental guidance is an attempt to assist normal children with normal problems of development, in contrast to what is sometimes referred to as crisis-centered counseling.

School District 102 is one of the three districts in the state of Illinois that is a demonstration center of guidance and counseling activities. There is a special counseling room that allows observation in an anteroom through a one-way window and listening through special microphones. This school was chosen by the state as a demonstration center because of the quality of the guidance program currently in use.

At the Cossitt Avenue Elementary School there is one counselor for 500 Kindergarten through Fifth grade students; he works with each student before the school year closes. This is achieved by first working very closely with the teaching staff, both individually and in groups. The first few weeks of the school year were spent in surveying the pupil's needs and teacher's expectations concerning guidance activities and the work of the counselor. Much work is done in grade level meetings to establish the goals of the guidance program and coordinate the efforts of the teachers and the counselor.52

52 Information on the guidance program in La Grange Park School District 102 was provided by Mr. Mike Arceniega, the elementary school counselor at the Cossitt Avenue Elementary School Demonstration Center.
When a mutuality of purpose is developed then the counselor and the teachers begin to experiment with various guidance techniques. The optimum development of each child is the basic principle underlying all guidance related activities, whether they are carried on informally by the classroom teacher or formally by the school counselor. To a large extent the success of the program is due to the spirit of cooperation shown by the administration, the teaching staff, and the school counselor and the support of the community towards guidance activities.

Through the use of sociometric techniques and individual pupil evaluations carried on in the classroom the counselor is able to form groups of six or seven children from each room to work with once a week for a 45 minute period over a total of four weeks. The children participating in these groups also meet individually with the counselor during this time for approximately 20 minutes each week. Every child in the elementary grades has this experience as new groups are being formed every four weeks.

The program is kept flexible so that a group may continue to meet beyond the four week suggested time limit if it is advantageous to the persons involved. Or a child will work with several groups during the school year, depending on how much benefit he is getting from these activities.

The length of each weekly session is dependent upon the maturity and attention span of the individuals involved. Younger, primary children will work in smaller groups for shorter periods of time, perhaps only 10 to 15 minutes each session. Older, more mature individuals may form into larger groups of nine or ten, and still be able to carry on effective discussions for 40 to 45 minutes. Sometimes the counselor will visit the classroom and
work with all of the children and the teacher on some topic related to personal growth and knowledge. Such activities help to integrate the counselor into the total school program so that guidance services become a natural and part of the child's formal education. They also involve the teacher in the goals of the guidance program for they recognize her importance in the healthy and total development of young personalities.

A variety of published materials are used by the counselor to increase the child's perceptions about himself and others. The content covers a wide variety of topics relating to normal concerns of the child, such as making friends, gearing along with adults, the world of work, and understanding our behavior. Teachers, even of young children, have noted an increased sensitivity towards the feelings of others as one result of this program.

The counselor will use a variety of techniques to develop problem solving skills and will often use an unfinished story to evaluate growth in this area by presenting the same story at the beginning and at the end of the small group counseling experience and comparing the results. Almost without exception, the child's second response will show a greater variety of solutions and deeper insight into the problem presented.

The classroom teacher will also complete an evaluation form of the child's behavior patterns before and after his counseling experience as a measure of personal growth. All of these records become part of the child's permanent file which is kept up to date by the school counselor.

In addition to these subjective measures of personal growth, standardized achievement tests are given at regular intervals to determine the academic growth of the child, thus rounding out the total picture of each individu-
Counseling groups are used so frequently because the setting is so natural to the child. Once a group gets started the counselor becomes more of an observer and less of a participant; the group will find its own leader and set its own pace. This gives the counselor the additional advantage of being able to study how various individuals function in an inter-personal setting and how they relate to each other. Further work throughout the year will be done to develop leadership abilities and eliminate social weaknesses such as shyness or hesitancy to participate in a group setting.

Another advantage of using groups lies in the fact that children understand each other more readily than some adults do. They are very frank in expressing their opinions and very sincere in their desire to help others. Being together in school and out they also know each other quite intimately and can often bring to the situation information and comments that present a more complete understanding of the problems that come up for discussion. They are also quick to perceive the common elements in the concerns of their peers and themselves, thus deepening their understanding of a wide variety of problems.

When it seems advisable, parents are brought in for a conference with the counselor. On some occasions the classroom teacher is also conferred with or even brought into the group counseling session, especially when the group is working on problems relating to classroom adjustments. In this way, every person in the school setting works to help and understand the other and good human relations develop between teachers and students which facilitate the learning process.
Sometimes parent groups are formed to discuss common developmental problems that all children experience, thus enabling them to constructively assist their own children in matters of personal concern. The counselor addresses parents at PTA meetings and speaks before local organizations in order to awaken the community to the need for elementary school guidance services and explain the goals of the existing guidance program. It is hoped that understanding of existing goals and objectives will act as a positive influence in passing more referendums so that the program can be expanded.

These four school districts in Evergreen Park, Deerfield, Elmwood Park, and La Grange Park are representative of the dynamic approach to handling pupil personnel services.

They all have successful guidance or counseling programs that utilize group procedures in meeting the goals of their respective programs. Group approaches are gaining increasing popularity in these districts because (a) they are a natural peer group setting, (b) they present the most effective means for dealing with problems of a social nature, (c) they utilize peer group influence to modify behavior or facilitate adjustment, (d) they encourage freedom of expression, (e) they allow the counselor to observe the individual's role is a social experience, (f) they foster an attitude of personal concern for another's feelings and a respect for self and others, and (g) they help develop happier individuals by increasing understanding of self and others.

The guidance services in these districts rely upon the cooperation of the child, the parent, and the teacher with the efforts of the school counselor.
The schools with the most successful guidance programs seem to have the greatest degree of involvement on the part of parents and staff. Parent meetings, PTA meetings, parent conference groups, in-service meetings and workshops for teachers are all attempts to involve the school and community in the functions of pupil personnel services.

In no instance was group guidance or group counseling used as a substitute for individual counseling or as a means of reaching the greatest number of students. As a matter of fact, in most cases individual counseling was carried on simultaneously with group activities. In this sense the counselor's work load was not lightened; group procedures were used because, when combined with individual counseling, it was the most effective means of assisting children with both normal problems of development and deeper adjustment problems.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle faced by these school districts is a lack of funds necessary to increase guidance services in the elementary schools and needed to hire more personnel. They are all optimistic, though, that as the success of their programs become more noticeable in terms of better pupil adjustment and higher achievement additional funds will be spent on elementary school guidance services. Until such time comes, counselors and teachers will continue to utilize what is known about the socialization process of the child in the natural social setting of the school to increase each child's ability to adjust to normal developmental tasks of youth and to foster healthy personality development in all children.
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

In the elementary schools there is both a need and a place for group procedures in meeting the goals and objectives of the guidance program. Guidance services, in general, are an attempt to assist young people with problems of growth and adjustment. Problem-centered guidance concerns itself mainly with those individuals who already are exhibiting signs of maladjustment and are generally ineffective in meeting the academic and social demands placed upon them by the school. Developmental guidance is concerned with assisting the normal individual with normal developmental problems. Although the emphasis is different in these two broad approaches to guidance the goal is fundamentally the same — helping the individual to become a satisfied, well-adjusted, productive person.

Group approaches have been experimentally used in educational settings for the past few decades. Among the results were increased personal achievements, better adjustments in inter-personal relations, and changes in attitudes regarding self. The guidance function now focuses attention upon the individual in his present role as well as in any future role he might fulfill as an adult. Group procedures in no way stifle the creativity or uniqueness of individuals but assist them in their total development.
Group activities are most successful where an atmosphere of security and freedom exists, where participation is by personal choice, and where there is greatest opportunity for interaction between individuals having a common recognized problem.

Schools have incorporated group guidance and group counseling techniques into their total guidance programs for the advantages that they offer both students and counselors. Group Guidance classes are generally learning situations where the subject of study is the individual himself. The classes would ideally contain from fifteen to eighteen students in order to allow for plenty of discussion and personal involvement.

The general program of group guidance activities include those learnings which will lead to increased self-understanding, better problem solving techniques, the ability to set realistic goals and achieve them, and the development of satisfying personal relationships. These areas of growth are usually blocked into units of study so that there is an organizational pattern to be developed during the school year. Adjustments in content and variations in time limits reflect the needs of the group. Group Guidance classes meet once each week for a thirty or forty minute period, depending on the regular school schedule of classes.

Group Guidance is most commonly used in the upper elementary grades where high school preparation, vocational interests, and boy-girl relationships begin to become important subjects for discussion. Published materials and audio-visual materials are frequently used to provide information and stimulate discussions.

Group counseling, on the other hand, may be used successfully with even
primary grade children. It involves a smaller number of individuals, usually three to five children, in an intimate social relationship. The broad goals of group counseling include a deeper understanding of self and others, and increased problem solving abilities.

The counselor uses group processes in counseling because children seem to be able to communicate, to reflect, and to clarify feelings and attitudes for each other more effectively than it can be done in a child–adult relationship. Children can learn from each other ways to solve their own immediate problems as well as ways to cope with the wider variety of problems expressed by the group.

Both approaches have in common a group size small enough to allow intensive personal interaction, the common goal of self understanding, the use of peer group influence on developing behavior patterns, and a relationship to the broad goals of the elementary school guidance program.

Most frequently, group procedures are used in conjunction with individual interviews, not as a replacement for them. This concentrated effort seems to be most effective in bringing about better personal adjustments in a relatively short period of time. It also allows the counselor to study the student both as an individual and as a member of a social group, thus giving him a more complete picture of the person he is working with. Concern is directed not only toward the prevention and remediation of personal difficulties but also toward the positive development of self.

Groups may be initiated as a result of (a) teacher referrals, (b) self-referrals, (c) a student desire expressed during individual interviews, or (d) the counselor's recognition of common concerns between persons with compatible
personalities. Groups may be spontaneously formed or carefully planned depending on the counselor's personal preference and the purpose for which the group is being formed. They may be composed of children from the same room or the same grade or may go across several grade levels, depending on the maturity of the individuals involved.

Children who seem to profit most from group counseling include shy children, those who want to make friends, those who have greater ability than their performance indicates, and those children who do not relate well to authority figures and rules. In other words, whenever the problem centers around social concerns a group setting has the greatest effect.

Counseling sessions may last from fifteen to forty-five minutes, depending on the age and maturity level of the group members. The group meets weekly as long as the experience is profitable to those involved. One important aspect of group counseling is that any child may drop out of the group whenever he feels threatened or otherwise unable to participate freely in the discussions. The group is but a tool of guidance, constructed for the sole purpose of assisting the individual.

Parents and teachers are being drawn more and more into the guidance process. Some schools are carrying on a kind of group counseling with parents who are concerned about the growth and development of their children. Because of the strong influence of the home situation on a child's adjustment to school and his relationship with friends, counselors are spending more time with the parents of elementary school children, involving them in the guidance process.

Teachers, too, are getting more attention from the guidance department as
the mutual concern for progress of the child necessitates cooperation between all those adults who work with him in the learning process. In many cases, teachers are encouraged to carry on guidance activities in the classroom to supplement or reinforce the work of the counselor. They are asked to evaluate the child's social growth and adjustment to school and participate in the guidance process by assisting the counselor with up to date records. They are consultants to the counselor and sometimes students of the counselor, as both try new techniques to encourage the optimum development of each individual.

In this thesis the guidance practices of four Chicagoland school systems are explained, with emphasis on their group guidance and group counseling procedures. Each district has used group approaches in guidance for at least two years, and plans to continue this practice and even extend its use. All attempts at group work have not been successful, but enough of them were to warrant its continuation.

The reasons for using group approaches are in accordance with those expressed earlier in this paper. Basically, it is because group settings are natural to children; many problems are social in nature and are best worked out in a social situation; children relate better to their peers than they do to adults, thus facilitating communication and understanding.

Group guidance is a relatively formal learning situation in which personal opinions and feelings are stresses. It has been successfully used with mature upper grade children who have developed discussion skills and can exercise leadership qualities in a democratic manner. The subject matter is relevant to the students and is chosen to enrich their understandings of themselves, their relationships with others, and their control over their future through
long range and short term planning. Group guidance increases the awareness of each individual to factors that influence his total development and presents to him new possibilities in terms of behavior and solutions to personal problems. It is designed to develop individual potential and prevent maladjustments that would require more intensive individual counseling. Only one of the four schools studied used Group Guidance as a regular class. Two schools incorporated the general goals of group guidance into homeroom and classroom activities mostly because of a lack of sufficient guidance personnel to handle a regular program of guidance activities.

Each of the metropolitan school districts utilized group counseling as a regular facet of their guidance program. No schools used it for reasons of efficiency in handling greater numbers of students or as a replacement for individual counseling. In all cases, group counseling and individual counseling were offered to the student simultaneously for maximum advantage in personal growth and behavior change. The combined effort seemed to bring about a noticeable change in behavior and attitudes in a shorter period of time than individual counseling alone could achieve. Subsequent follow-ups indicated that the changes were carrying over into new situations, thus attesting to the impact of the group on perceptions of self and modifications of behavior.

Each counselor using group procedures recognized the importance of personal choice in participation as a prerequisite for successful group experiences and respected the individual's preference on this matter. All groups were formed with the understanding that each person must be willing to discuss his problems, that confidentiality would be maintained outside the group,
and that a respect for other group members must be shown at all times. Once these ground rules were laid and the group established a spirit of cooperation and mutuality the counselor took a less active role in participation even to the point of becoming more of an observer than a leader. The exact nature of the counselor's role varied in each situation, as different groups required different degrees of structuring and clarification.

The counselors all seemed to feel that evaluation of individual and group success was the most difficult aspect of group work. Expressed personal satisfaction, teacher evaluation, and counselor opinions were the measures of growth and/or improvement most commonly used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Because elementary school children must function in home and school situations that are structured and supervised by individuals other than themselves, school counselors spend much time working with parents and teachers to bring about changes in environment that will foster healthy adjustments in the children. The counselors in each of the four school districts have conducted some form of parent-group counseling sessions during the school year and have judged the approach to be equally as successful as individual conferences.

Teachers, too, are becoming more involved in the guidance process. One of the regular guidance services in the elementary school is teacher workshops or in-service meetings relating to guidance techniques and child development. In some schools teachers were asked to fill out printed evaluation forms to indicate pupil growth and progress before and after counseling had taken place. The trend seems to be toward the involvement of parents and teachers
in the guidance process.

In the past few years, an increasing number of suburban school districts have recognized the need for comprehensive elementary school guidance services and have hired personnel to organize the program. One of the most effective tools of guidance is the use of groups as a regular part of the guidance program. More research has to be done to determine the effectiveness of group procedures and situations in which they can be most profitably used.

It is my opinion that counselors who are actively engaged in working with elementary school pupils are in the best position to develop tools of evaluation, to be used before and after the counseling experience, in order to measure the success of the techniques used and to identify those general problems of youth that can be best resolved through cooperative group efforts.

It is yet uncertain as to whether the counselor is most effective in working with school children by assuming a directive or a non-directive counseling approach. Research needs to be done to determine the advantages and limitations of both approaches so that attempts at future group activities will be less experimental in nature, and that a higher level of success will be assured.

On the basis of the evidence presented in the text of this paper, I conclude that group procedures will be used more extensively in future elementary school guidance programs; however, a more comprehensive study needs to be undertaken to substantiate this trend.

Future investigation of the use of published materials applicable to group guidance procedures also needs to be conducted. Books, films, and pamphlets for student use are increasing in number and variety in order to
meet the demands of rapidly developing school guidance services. It is assumed that such materials will be used with greater frequency in the future, but my limited study could not embrace the importance of such materials in achieving the goals and objectives of the guidance program.

Above all, I encourage all professional counselors to share the findings of their experiences with other educators, and with the public in general, for it is only through open communication that understanding, progress, and support for the guidance movement can be achieved.

In a rapidly changing and complex society school administrators, teachers, and guidance personnel need to devise increasingly more effective ways of helping young people develop fully their human potential. The use of group procedures in guidance may bring us one step closer toward achieving our goal of helping others help themselves in leading lives that are productive, rich in meaning and personally satisfying.
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Books


Periodicals


Other


APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Joan Adrienne Fron has been read and approved by the director of the thesis. Furthermore, the final copies have been examined by the director and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Date: June 26, 1969

Signature of Advisor: [Signature]