

End-of-year Report:

F. A.

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Social Work 275: Advanced Social Work Practice in Schools

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this end-of-year report is a follow to the school service plan that was implemented in the fall semester of 2011 meeting the requirements of PPS class. The school social work service plan was developed to address student unhealthy behaviors at Sanger Unified School District's Community Day School (CDS). The students participating in the intervention have demonstrated behavioral issues at school and in the community. Most of the students attending Pathways live in socioeconomically depressed neighborhoods, and are challenged with conforming to social norms such as following rules, respecting school staff, and valuing an education. There are approximately 62 students attending CDS are from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades where the goal is to recover credits and transfer to a school setting where they can graduate from. Ideally, students attend CDS and recover credits and return to Washington Academic Middle School or Sanger High School.

## **Overview of SSW Services Provided**

The purpose of the group was to advance the students' ethical quality of decision making, and thus strengthen character and lives. The framework is based on basic values called the "Six Pillars of Character" known as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Teaching the students' positive character will foster personal growth in the direction of earning academic and social success. Overall, the advantage of facilitating the group supported and strengthened educational environment by improving student behavior, improving student to teacher interactions, and peer relationships. The closed group met every Wednesday for 45 minutes and included seven 10<sup>th</sup> grade male students who learned about themselves by learning about past experiences, and problem solving. The closed group design influenced the

group to develop trusting relationships to the point where they were invested in the group process. The following illustrates this:

“I got to learn about more about trustworthiness, respecting others, and they are most important things in life.”

“I learned how to be more respectful and caring... this class helped me learn a lot. Thanks.”

“The (counselor) enlightened me about the (group) topics... because of him I see the topics in a whole different perspective.”

“I have learned to monitor and tame my impulses of cursing and (controlling) my anger outbursts. I have also learned to appreciate more things (in life).

“The (counselor) was cool and nice... very helpful and taught me a lot. (He) was very understanding.”

Developing the Character Building Group required one day (five hours) or preparation.

The preparation involved researching the pillars, locating age appropriate skill building activities, projecting weekly planning, and consulting with my field supervisor and school principal. The school social work intern invested approximately 84 hours at the CDS site (12 weeks of five hour days, and 7 weeks of two hours days). Intern invested approximately 74 hours with the students/families, and 10 hours consulting with the office manager, campus security, teachers, attendance clerk, and the school principal.

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### Outcomes of SSW Services

	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Interventions</b>	<b>Data Collection Methods</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<b>Individual</b>	1. To improve classroom pupil behavior for seven <b>10<sup>th</sup></b> graders who are currently struggling with conforming to social norms.	1. Provide weekly group sessions grounded in the Six Pillars of Character curriculum and decrease discipline reports by 10%.  2. Provide monthly individual sessions for each pupil.	Student behaviors will be monitored using school discipline reports and monthly discussions with teachers.	1. 7 out of 7 (100%) students with classroom behavioral problems decreased their number of discipline reports.
<b>Family</b>	1. Increase parental involvement of seven families from an empowerment and resiliency approach.	1. Contact each family through home visit or telephone to discuss pupil status (grades and behavior) twice per month.	1. Parent contact log.  2. Case notes indicating parental involvement and support.	1. 4 out of 7 (57%) families increased their involvement.
<b>Group</b>	1. To improve pupil behavior in group.	1. Pupils to attend 80% of group sessions.  2. Students have the option to self discharge from group.	1. Document group attendance from Jan. 2012 to Mar. 2012.  2. Assess group participation through <b>pre and post survey.</b>	6 out of 7 (85%) students attended at least 80% of group sessions. Zero students self-discharged.
<b>Organization (School grounds).</b>	1. To improve pupil behavior on school campus.	1. Meet with teachers, support staff, and school principal monthly to discuss the importance of character building group.	1. Monitor school discipline reports and study if there has been a decrease or increase in pupil behavior from <b>Jan. - April.</b>	7 out of 7 (100%) students behavior improved on campus.
<b>Community</b>	1. To improve pupil behavior in the community.	1. Pupils to attend 80% of the weekly group sessions.  2. Pupils to apply character building in their <b>community.</b>	1. Communicate with the <b>student &amp; family</b> regarding pupil in the school community ( <b>i.e. practice the Six Pillars).</b>	7 out of 7 (100%) students/family reported examples of how the students utilized the pillars.

The objectives, interventions, and data collection methods were revised per comments from initial school social work service plan. The bolded words indicate that they were updated from the original school service plan.

### **Summary**

The major finding in this brief school social work service plan was the youth who were at-risk of academic and social failure demonstrated personal growth. This was evident by their behavior in group. For example, after the third group session, when a member would break one of the group norms, other members would check them. This simple form of leadership demonstrated that the members increased their self awareness and decreased their impulsivity. Students' growth in the group setting was supported by the school staff in being aware of the topics that were being learned in the group. Staff supported the Six Pillars of Character and did their best to identify when students were utilizing the skills. The families also welcomed the fact that the school was providing the group intervention. The successful outcomes were possible because the administration at CDS was highly supportive and provided valuable input regarding how to utilize the group topics.

### **Recommendations**

First, developing and implementing this service plan was a wonderful learning experience. I look forward to working in the school system to where I can implement a similar intervention aimed at improving student development. Providing services with youth at-risk is very challenging and at the same time, very rewarding. It is challenging because the youth struggle to understand that someone actually cares about them as individuals. Most of this population is faced with multi risk factors which stunt their development. Thus, being able to intervene and teach them life skills is absolutely rewarding.

In providing this intervention, I would recommend the following. First, conduct a follow up group session in August to touch basis with the same students, and identify how they utilized the Six Pillars in their home and in the community. Facilitate a refresher group where the school social worker will review and welcome the students' impressions of how the pillars have helped them develop problem solving skills. After demonstrating their mastery of the pillars, reward them by identifying them as "Character Mentors." Second, use the first group of Six Pillars Group and utilize them to mentor other students at CDS. The school social worker should begin a second cohort of students to participate in the group. The Character Mentor can assist the school social worker by co-facilitating the group. Including them as co-facilitators will strengthen their character and provide hope for the new cohort that they can also improve their behavior. Third, it would also be effective to develop a school wide reward system such as a token economy. School staff would provide the students who are exhibiting the pillars with simple rewards such as an attending lunch 5 minutes early.

In closing, the school social work intern was motivated to guide the youth in developing more healthy coping skills so they can become successful in life. On occasion, they appeared to be not listening to the group discussion and disinterested. However, when they completed their post group survey, and it was compared to the post survey, the school social work intern was surprised to read their comments. All the youth actually learned specific concepts of behavior from the group, and didn't wasn't to reveal it publicly. Selected comments were presented in page three of this report.

Field Instructor Signature:

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