

BUILDING RESILIENCY IN CHILDREN THROUGH A SMALL GROUP  
COUNSELING INTERVENTION

by

KAREN GANNON GRIFFITH

(Under the Direction of Pam Paisley)

ABSTRACT

School counselors need effective interventions, both in terms of student change and counselor use of time. Student change needs to be tied to the overall mission of the school, as well as the affective domain. This study examined the effectiveness of a small group intervention designed around the traits of resiliency that addressed a variety of problems, facilitating effective time use. To maintain the connection to school goals, student change was measured in terms of academic grades, school behavior, and school-going behavior. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) measured change in students' emotionality, behavior, and social competence. A twelve-session group intervention was implemented by two professional school counselors with 59 students in fourth and fifth grades divided into ten small groups. Students were invited based on demonstrated problems with academic grades, discipline or conduct, or excessive school absences. The study was conducted in a large suburban elementary school in the southeast during the first semester of the school year. Based on a comparison of means, statistically significant changes were noted in school behavior, school attendance, and in

areas measured by the SDQ. In addition, practical significance was evident in grades for those students with academic concerns.

**INDEX WORDS:** resiliency, school counselors, small groups, school behavior, school attendance, school-going behavior, grades, academic progress, elementary students

BUILDING RESILIENCY IN CHILDREN THROUGH A SMALL GROUP  
COUNSELING INTERVENTION

by

KAREN GANNON GRIFFITH

B.S., Samford University, 1977

M.S., University of Tennessee, 1980

Ed.S., Georgia State University, 1994

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2011

© 2011

KAREN GANNON GRIFFITH

All Rights Reserved

BUILDING RESILIENCY IN CHILDREN THROUGH A SMALL GROUP  
COUNSELING INTERVENTION

by

KAREN GANNON GRIFFITH

|                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Major Professor: | Pam Paisley     |
| Committee:       | Diane Cooper    |
|                  | Annaliese Singh |

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
May 2011

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all professional school counselors striving to effect positive change and to all students, for whom those school counselors work. In particular, this is dedicated to the students who so willingly cooperated with the efforts of the researcher to measure the effectiveness of this one intervention and to the counselor who worked so hard to help this researcher deliver it.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am profoundly grateful to my committee who delivered the knowledge and skills needed while standing ever-ready to encourage me on the journey for this degree: Dr. Paisley, whose dream of this doctoral program made my dream possible; to Dr. Cooper, whose gentle spirit made the dream accessible; and, to Dr. Singh, who grounded the dream in authenticity.

I am also enormously indebted and grateful to those in my professional life who have always been both colleagues and friends: Dr. John Poidevant, who first introduced me to resiliency; Laura Marantz, my co-counselor who so willingly and expertly helped me refine and deliver this intervention while making sure we both did our ‘real’ jobs; and, to Kelly Cowart, who always listened and clarified my hopes and struggles.

I am especially thankful for my family who encouraged and supported me throughout this endeavor without ever complaining about what was left undone while I studied.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....                                       | v    |
| LIST OF TABLES .....   | ix   |
| LIST OF FIGURES .....  | x    |
| CHAPTER  |      |
| 1 INTRODUCTION .....   | 1    |
| Theoretical Framework .....                                  | 2    |
| Statement of Problem .....                                   | 4    |
| Research Questions .....                                     | 6    |
| Selected Literature Review .....                             | 6    |
| Methods .....  | 10   |
| Delimitations .....  | 11   |
| 2 SELECTED LITERATURE REVIEW .....                           | 12   |
| Counseling Groups in Schools .....                           | 13   |
| Resiliency Theory .....                                      | 21   |
| Linking Resiliency Skills and Traits to School Success ..... | 36   |
| Summary .....  | 48   |
| 3 METHODOLOGY .....  | 49   |
| Research Questions .....                                     | 49   |
| School Population and Climate .....                          | 49   |
| Target Population .....                                      | 52   |



|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Sampling Procedures .....                      | 54  |
| Variables .....                                | 55  |
| Instrumentation .....                          | 56  |
| Experimental Procedure.....                    | 58  |
| Threats to Validity .....                      | 59  |
| Intervention Plan.....                         | 62  |
| Data Collection .....                          | 65  |
| Data Analysis .....                            | 66  |
| Summary .....                                  | 67  |
| 4 RESULTS .....                                | 68  |
| Sample.....                                    | 69  |
| Research Questions.....                        | 74  |
| Results.....                                   | 75  |
| Summary .....                                  | 87  |
| 5 DISCUSSION .....                             | 90  |
| Research Questions.....                        | 91  |
| Impact on Grades .....                         | 92  |
| Impact on Behavior.....                        | 95  |
| Impact on School-Going Behavior .....          | 98  |
| Impact on Parent and Teacher Perceptions ..... | 102 |
| Implications.....                              | 111 |
| Recommendations.....                           | 117 |
| Limitations .....                              | 119 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Conclusions.....                             | 122 |
| REFERENCES .....                             | 123 |
| APPENDICES                                   |     |
| A Group Lesson Plans .....                   | 141 |
| B Support Materials for Group Sessions ..... | 157 |
| C Student Workbook .....                     | 160 |
| D Session Posters.....                       | 191 |

## LIST OF TABLES

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| Table 1: Traits of Resiliency .....  | 35   |
| Table 2: School Ethnicity.....   | 51   |
| Table 3: School's Program Enrollment.....  | 52   |
| Table 4: School Attendance 2009-2010.....  | 52   |
| Table 5: School Discipline 2009-2010 .....   | 52   |
| Table 6: Intervention Plan.....  | 64   |
| Table 7: Group Intervention Session Summary .....                                  | 65   |
| Table 8: Types of Data Collected .....   | 66   |
| Table 9: Identification of Targeted Sample .....                                   | 71   |
| Table10: Sample Population and Ethnicity.....                                      | 72   |
| Table11: Sample Population and Program Enrollment .....                            | 73   |
| Table 12: Sample Population and Reason for Inclusion.....                          | 74   |
| Table 13: <i>t</i> Test Analysis for Academic Grades – Pre-score Comparisons ..... | 80   |
| Table 14: <i>t</i> Test Analysis for Academic Grades – Quarter to Quarter.....     | 80   |
| Table 15: <i>t</i> Test Analysis for Behavior .....                                | 81   |
| Table 16: <i>t</i> Test Analysis for Attendance .....                              | 82   |
| Table 17: SDQ Mean (Standard Deviation) for American 8-10 Year Olds .....          | 83   |
| Table 18: Parent Pre and Post Means on SDQ .....                                   | 87   |
| Table 19: Teacher Pre and Post Means on SDQ.....                                   | 87   |
| Table 20: Comparison of Days Missed for Students with High Absences.....           | 99   |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|   | Page |
|---|------|
| Figure 1: Resiliency Wheel.....           | 29   |
| Figure 2: Resiliency Cycle.....           | 30   |
| Figure 3: Mean Reading Grades .....       | 76   |
| Figure 4: Mean Writing Grades .....       | 77   |
| Figure 5: Mean Math Grades .....          | 78   |
| Figure 6: Mean Science Grades .....       | 79   |
| Figure 7: Mean Social Studies Grades..... | 80   |

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Each school year, school counselors invite students to participate in groups in the hopes that the experience will make the student happier, calmer, acquire more friends, or make better grades. Teachers, principals, parents, and students expect it. Counselors have long valued the group process and operated them in the belief that they might produce all those happy, calm, friendly students who perform admirably in class (Steen, Bauman, & Smith, 2007). Yet, there is a lack of evidence that a specific group delivered in a particular way will command those results with any real confidence. Professional school counselors need some measure of assurance that many students who participate in such a group will begin to show some promise of those wished for ideals (Dimmitt, 2009; Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Whiston, 2002). There is a need for a small group plan that meets the needs of students experiencing school problems and generates a measurable positive result.

School counselors also need to command trust and support from their stakeholders as they seek to remove barriers to learning for their students who are encountering difficulties in their school experiences (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Dimmitt, 2009; Studer, Oberman, & Womack, 2006). With increased confidence in the potential for change from a counselor intervention, parents would be eager for their children to participate and teachers would become authentic collaborators in the process. Teachers as collaborators would offer greater access to students and encourage the transfer of skills learned in group settings to the classroom (Beesley, 2004; Tournaki, 2003). Principals,

too, would protect counselor time and tasks, make needed resources available, and advocate for their continued presence in the school (Leuwerke, Walker, & Qi, 2009; Studer et al., 2006). Perhaps even counselors would be changed by having this kind of belief in a group, perhaps gaining a renewed passion and hope for producing change.

This study offers one such group, designed to meet the needs of students experiencing various school problems, and validated by results that connect the group with the overall mission of every school to build superior students. It measures school-based outcomes for students who participate in a non-thematic group designed around the specific skills and traits of resiliency. Rather than attempting to resolve specific problems demonstrated, students explore those resiliency skills that have been linked with school success. When validated by positive changes in school-related behaviors, such a group has potential as a practical and compelling option for school counselors to employ.

### **Theoretical Framework**

School counselors occupy a unique position in the school, connecting mental health and therapeutic interventions with academic achievement. Maintaining allegiance to both psychotherapy and education can be challenging (Walley, Grothaus, & Craignem, 2009). School personnel and parents often ask counselors to provide a counseling service that produces an educational result. Professional school counselors must determine how their distinctive expertise can support the academic mission of the school (Bosworth & Walz, 2005). This, along with the current emphasis on accountability, means counselors must be able to prove some benefit of the services they provide (Dimmitt, 2009; Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Whiston, 2002). Claiming that counseling results are too nebulous to

quantify no longer remains an option. Simply reporting the number of students with whom the counselor has had contact is insufficient (Studer et al., 2006) and could reduce the counseling role to one of only amassing multitudes of interactions with no emphasis on impact. There must be some means through which professional school counselors identify and measure improvement.

Adopting a comprehensive perspective that best serves the school counselor and the students under his or her care could be an important step toward balancing psychology and achievement. Resiliency, a current theme among stories of academic and life success, offers such a perspective (Bosworth & Walz, 2005; Masten, Herbers, Cutuli, & Lafavor, 2008). Some researchers claimed the concept of resiliency as one of the most important advances of the social sciences as it provides a significant paradigm shift in how one views young people (Brown, D'Emidio-Caston, & Benard, 2001). Furthermore, these same researchers offered support for applying resilience to education as various fields of psychology have offered evidence that the individual traits of resilience impact learning. For example, developmental psychology asserted youth are capable of making thoughtful decisions when provided with necessary information. Physiological and educational psychology described the impact feelings have on learning, while educational psychology emphasized the value of intrinsic motivation for sustaining more meaningful learning (Brown et al., 2001). Siebert (2005) reported that resiliency psychology identified what strengths were needed and that almost anyone can develop them. School counselors hold the position, the knowledge, and the skills to help in that development.

## **Statement of Problem**

School counselors must now show strong connections between what they do and the school's overriding mission: academic growth in children (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Studer et al., 2006). How do the programs, activities, and interventions routinely offered by school counselors support that mission? In addition, because of the many demands placed on school counselors (Steen, et al., 2007), they need interventions that truly deliver. Resilience theory offers a positive perspective on students that focuses on individual strengths that links well with school success (Bosworth & Walz, 2005; Masten et al., 2008). Groups are an important part of most school counseling programs (Steen, et al., 2007). A blending of resiliency theory and group counseling intervention in the school offers a unique approach with a potential for significant impact on academic success.

Resiliency has been defined as the ability to handle challenges and then move forward (Shallcross, 2010). Considered by most to be a function of innate abilities, it might also depend on exposure to problem solving through modeling and instruction (Hass & Graydon, 2009). Krovetz (2008) emphasized the importance of teaching students about resiliency and how to personally foster it. School counselors are best suited for facilitating this instruction.

Bosworth, Orpinas, and Hein (2009) linked resiliency with a positive school climate that can prevent both mental and behavioral problems. They further claimed that such an environment was especially important for those students living in poverty or marginalized by sex, gender, or color. In this context, they called promotion of positive school climates a "social justice imperative" (p. 230). School counselors then become



agents for social justice as they “provide leadership and support for enhancing their school climate” (p. 243)

Beyond the personal benefits of resilience, there is a strong relationship between the associated healthy behaviors and academic success (WestEd, 2011). Resiliency programs can be effective in preventing high school drop-out by helping students develop the skills and relationships they need (*Resiliency Programs*, 2007). In fact, interventions that focus on social and emotional learning are strongly tied to student academic success, attitudes, school behavior, and school motivation (Merrell, 2010). Brown et al. (2001) offered guidelines for developing resilient education: engage students’ intrinsic motivation, provide opportunities for decision-making, help students create life goals, and encourage the exploration of emotions. Here is the link between what school counselors do and the school mission for developing capable students. Counselors emphasize a resilience perspective while explicitly teaching the associated skills of resilience, thereby contributing to academic success, positive attitudes, and improved behavior.

The thinking patterns, self-confidence, sense of personal efficacy, behaviors, and attitudes often associated with resiliency, can be acquired through teaching (Hall & Pearson, 2005; Masten, 2000; Neenan, 2009). Professional school counselors enjoy the best position for providing the instruction. This small group counseling program supplies one framework, teaching the specific skills most often associated with resiliency as a direct intervention for children of identified need. A non-thematic, strengths-based small group counseling approach that focuses on building resiliency consolidates the research into a potentially important intervention.

An intervention that focuses on resiliency could be ideal option for school counselors. It is increasingly important that school counselors possess therapeutic tools through which academic performance of students can be improved. A resiliency focus can be essential to removing barriers to learning (Bosworth & Walz, 2005). Through explicit teaching of the commonly recognized skills of resilient individuals, the counselor addresses a variety of concerns through a single process. The absence of a deficit focus reduces the chance of confirming the participant's negative belief about any presenting problems (Laursen & Oliver, 2003). Parents may feel less threatened and more willing to provide consent for their children's inclusion. Such an approach offers increased possibilities for success. Counselors, other school personnel, and parents all need to know the effectiveness of such a group.

### **Research Questions**

This study attempted to answer these two research questions:

1. Does participation in a resiliency group with the school counselor effect change in the participants' numeric grade averages for the core content areas, school attendance record, and behavior referrals as measured by the number of discipline referrals and teacher action plans?
2. Do parents and teachers perceive the students differently after the group experience?

### **Selected Literature Review**

School counselors include groups in their overall school guidance and counseling program (Corey & Corey, 2006; Steen et al., 2007; Tomori, 1995). However, counselors struggle with offering groups because of time constraints (Steen et al., 2007). There are

benefits to groups, including the trust and friendships that may be created outside of the group because of the group experience (Yalom, 2005). Unfortunately, groups may also actually work against change when they focus on problems (Laursen & Oliver, 2003).

Documenting the impact of counseling groups may emphasize their importance (Perusse, Goodnough, & Lee, 2009) but often proves difficult to accomplish. Nevertheless, groups in school settings remain common.

A variety of groups have been studied, but a brief scan of recent professional literature reveals the limits of those studies. Many have focused on particular populations (Bruce, Getch, & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009; Malott, Paone, Humphreys, & Martinez, 2010); unique circumstances (Lopez & Bhat, 2007; Rush & Akos, 2007; Ziffer, Crawford, & Penney-Wietor, 2007); specific problems (Sherrod, Getch, & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009; Stanbury, Bruce, Jain, & Stellern, 2009; Webb & Myrick, 2003); or programs (Froeschle, Smith, & Ricard, 2007; Luck & Webb, 2009; Sherrod et al., 2009). Some focused on specific populations within a particular program (Hall, Rushing, & Owens, 2009), while others concentrated on a certain problem within a population (Kruczek, Alexander, & Harris, 2005). The specificity restricts the applicability of the unique group intervention. There is a need for generic group interventions that could be more broadly implemented.

Many have called for the counselor to provide documentation of the efficacy of the school counselor's efforts (American School Counseling Association, 2005; Carey, Dimmitt, Hatch, Lapan, & Whitson, 2008; Dimmitt, 2009; Studer, Oberman, & Womack, 2006; and, Whiston, 2002). It is also important to tie those results directly to school related factors (Paisley & McMahon, 2001) beyond a simple report of student contacts (Dahir & Stone, 2009). Counselors who report results well can positively influence

school administrators (Leuwerke et al., 2009); teachers (Beesley, 2004; McMillan & Reed, 1994; Tournaki, 2003); and parents (Bloom, 2001; Haviland, 2003).

There is a great deal of literature available on resiliency and how it might be utilized in the school setting. Henderson and Milstein (2003) offered ways to build resiliency and minimize risk factors. The qualities of a resilient classroom (Doll, Zucker, & Brehm, 2004) and those of an academically resilient student (Martin & Marsh, 2006; Morales, 2008; Wong, 1997) have been identified. Understanding these provide the foundation for designing an intervention to kindle that resiliency in students who might not be exhibiting positive school actions.

Another key issue in resilience psychology relates to protective factors. Schools provide the source for some of these factors, including a positive relationship with at least one caring adult (Masten, 2000; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1990). Specifically, the teacher-student relationship is essential to resiliency (Santa, 2006). Schools also provide another important protective factor by providing opportunities for meaningful involvement in important activities (Search Institute, 1997).

Many researchers identified the traits of resilience (Benard, 1991; Goldstein & Brooks, 2002; Krovetz, 2008; Neenan, 2009; Siebert, 2005; Ungar, 2006; Wolin & Wolin, 1993). Some of these researchers use similar terminology to explain a common concept. Some prefer more global terms, while others prefer to be very specific. When compiled, the identified traits offer the school counselor specific skills to teach students.

This researcher selected eight traits or skills from those commonly associated with resiliency for the school counselor to teach, each of which can be tied to school success. The first centers on being healthy and includes three primary components, each

of which has supporting research linking it to school success: adequate diet (Clark, Slate, & Viglietti, 2009; Florence, Asbridge & Veugelers, 2008); sleep (Amschler & McKenzie, 2005; Epstein & Mardon, 2007); and exercise (Stevens, To, Stevenson, & Lochbaum, 2008). Goal setting and a positive orientation have been included on many researchers' lists of resiliency traits and have significant links to success in school (Bandura, 1986; Benard, 1991; 2004; Krovetz, 2008; McTigue, Washburn, & Liew, 2009; Mornane, 2009; Ruth, 1996; Schunk, 2003; Siebert, 2005; Stroh & Sink, 2002; Ungar, 2006). Several models have been proposed for facilitating the process with students (Rader, 2005; Szente, 2007). Of additional importance is the concept of self-handicapping and how it impacts goal setting (Leondari & Gonida, 2007). Problem solving is another commonly identified skill of resilience (Benard, 1991; 2004; Krovetz, 2008; Neenan, 2009; Siebert, 2005; Ungar, 2006) and several models are available for teaching it (Kolb & Stuart, 2005; Prupas & Downing, 1994; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). Additionally, school success has been tied to emotional knowledge, yet another resiliency skill, (Graziano, Reavis, Keane, & Calkins, 2007; Izard et al., 2001; Leerkes, Paradise, O'Brien, Calkins & Lange, 2008; Trentacosta, Izard, Mostow, & Fine, 2006; Zambo & Brem, 2004), along with a related skill of stress management (Dubow & Tisak, 1989; Pincus & Friedman, 2004). Self-efficacy, another trait of resilient individuals, reflects a belief in one's own abilities and it, too, has a strong relationship with school success (Bandura, 1997; Dembo & Seli, 2004; McTigue et al., 2009; Mornane, 2009; Pajares, 1995; Pajares, Miller, & Johnson, 1999; Schunk, 2003; Usher & Pajares, 2006). The ability to make and keep friends, or social competence, also a component of resiliency, has been shown to impact academic success. (Han & Kemple, 2006; Meier, DiPerna, &

Oster, 2006; Wentzel, 1993). Researchers have provided successful models for teaching social skills (Choi & Kim, 2003; McArthur, 2002). Finally, resiliency includes a positive sense of the future or optimism, and it, too, can be linked with positive outcomes in school (Mornane, 2009; Sagor, 2008). Interestingly, optimism has also been linked to social competence (Deptula, Cohen, Phillipsen, & Ey, 2006), increasing its importance.

## **Methods**

This study was implemented in a large suburban school within a large public school system. Two professional school counselors, both of whom have earned an Ed. S. in School Counseling, conducted small groups for targeted students in the fourth and fifth grades. Students were identified based on school attendance, school behavior, and school grades. The group was designed around the eight traits and skills of resiliency, as identified by the researcher and met for twelve sessions during the first semester of the school year. Each group had five to eight members.

The impact of the group experience was measured using a pretest/posttest design on the Strengths and Difficulties Scale (Youth in Mind), completed by parents and teachers on each group participant. In addition, the number of school absences, grades earned in the core content areas, and behavioral incidents reported was compared against the same information from the previous year for each student.

The study followed a pre-experiment design using a single sample group and intervention. A repeated measures design was used to compare the data collected using paired samples T tests.

**Delimitations**

The researcher established parameters for this study. The possibility for inclusion in the group intervention was limited to students who had exhibited attendance, behavior, or academic concerns but who were not receiving any other services within the school. A delimitation, therefore, was the exclusion of students with disabilities and English language learners. In addition, only fourth and fifth grade students were invited to participate, another delimitation to the study.

In addition, it is impossible to control for all influences that may shape the group participants' experience, including the developmental stages of each group member before and during the intervention as well as possible family and classroom influences on the students. Furthermore, two professional school counselors provided the groups independently, perhaps creating concerns for fidelity of treatment. Independent groups, even though conducted based on the same plan, may be experienced differently by the group members and the school counselors. Finally, the constructs on which the group design was based may not actually produce resiliency or academic resiliency. These factors contributed to potential limits with the study.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Selected Literature Review**

The topics of resiliency and small group counseling have both been extensively explored in the professional literature. When attempting to integrate the two, consideration must be given to both bodies of knowledge. Therefore, a selected review of the literature was conducted regarding counseling groups, especially those that occur in the school setting, along with an overview of resiliency, with a focus on the related skills and traits of resiliency and how they might relate to educational experiences. A synthesis of this literature review provides the foundation for this study. The purpose of this study was to test the theoretical idea that participation in a counseling group designed around the broad concepts of resiliency contributes to improved school outcomes, including students' school attendance, school behavior, grade averages, and perceptions of the students by parents and teachers. Specifically, this study attempted to answer two research questions:

1. Does participation in a resiliency group with the school counselor effect change in the participants' numeric grade averages for the core content areas, school attendance, and school behavior?
2. Do parents and teachers perceive the students differently before and after the group experience?

A non-thematic, strengths-based small group counseling approach that focuses on building resiliency consolidates the research into a potentially important intervention. Through explicit teaching of the commonly recognized skills of resilient individuals, the



counselor addresses a variety of concerns through a single process. The absence of a deficit focus reduces the chance of confirming the participant's negative belief about any presenting problems. Parents may feel less threatened and more willing to provide consent for their children's inclusion. Such an approach offers increased possibilities for success. Counselors, other school personnel, and parents all need to know the effectiveness of such a group.

### **Counseling Groups in Schools**

School counselors routinely use group counseling as the preferred response for students experiencing problems. Both the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and practitioners include group counseling as an essential component of a comprehensive program (Steen et al., 2007). Corey and Corey (2006) stated that more groups for children occur in schools than any other setting. Tomori (1995) claimed groups as an integral part of a balanced program at the elementary level and that a prevention focus is preferable to intervention. A focus on resilience could offer that prevention focus.

Over 800 members of ASCA completed an online survey on how and why professional school counselors implement groups (Steen et al., 2007). Along with other findings, group work was identified by many to be a critical part of their school counseling role. Students across school settings participate in groups designed to address family changes, family problems, behavioral concerns, and poor academic performance. Unfortunately, students' placement in the group may validate the implied reason for whatever problem surfaces in the school. Students making poor choices in the classroom believe they have serious behavior problems once placed in a small group for improving

behavior. Parents may refuse their child's participation in a group based on the negative connotations of the group's focus.

A brief review of recent studies of groups in the school settings illustrates the limits of researched-based interventions available to professional school counselors. Many studies focused only on specific populations, including African American students (Bradley, 2001; Bruce et al., 2009; Muller, 2002; White & Rayle, 2007); Mexican American students (Malott et al., 2010; Ramirez, Jain, Flores-Torres, Perez, & Carlson, 2009); Latina/o students (Villalba, Ivers, & Ohlms, 2010); or students with disabilities (McEachern & Kenny, 2007). Other studies attempted to document groups delivered for students in special circumstances, for example, students whose parents had been deployed (Rush & Akos, 2007); incarcerated (Lopez & Bhat, 2007); or divorced (Ziffer et al., 2007); or who were alcoholics (Arman, 2000). Still others targeted their studies toward certain problems, like bullying (Stanbury et al., 2009), attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (Webb & Myrick, 2003), discipline problems (Sherrod et al., 2009), and depression (Young, Mufson, & Davies, 2006). Another set of studies sought to validate various programs, including Student Success Skills (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brigman, Webb, & Campbell, 2007; Luck & Webb, 2009; Miranda, Webb, Brigman, & Peluso, 2007; Webb, Brigman, & Campbell, 2005); the SAM program (Froeschle et al., 2007); and the Positive Behavior Support program (Sherrod et al., 2009). A focus on particular methods utilized within groups can also be found in the literature, including cuento therapy (Ramirez et al., 2009; Villalba et al., 2010); group activity therapy (Paone, Malott, & Maldonado, 2008); creative arts (Skudrzyk, Zera, McMahon, Schmidt, Boyne, & Spannaus, 2009); and virtual environments (Baker, Parks-

Savage, & Rehfuss, 2009). Finally, some scholars considered populations within a particular program, as with Perepiczka's (2009) look at elementary students in alternative discipline programs, while others contemplated problems within a targeted population, including African American boys with anger problems (Hall et al., 2009) and at-risk middle school students with transition problems (Kruczek et al., 2005). While it is important to document these interventions, each study offers a distinctive intervention targeting an exclusive group of students with limited application.

**Benefits of counseling groups in school settings.** Most researchers acknowledge the power of relationships to build resiliency in children. Rutter (1979) identified the school as a source for protective factors for children when caring, attentive teachers are present. Masten (2000) stated that children benefit most from a strong bond with a competent and caring adult. Werner and Smith (1990) claimed that positive relationships with caring adults had a more profound and positive impact on children than any risk factor. In fact, a review of the literature reveals a recurring theme on adult-child relationships and mentoring and how it facilitates the development of resiliency.

The need for positive relationships is effectively addressed in small group counseling. The nurturing and supportive environment as well as the relationships within the group setting may then transfer to increased trust and friendships for the group member beyond the group setting (Yalom, 2005). School counselors can also establish that important bond with students in the small group experience while teaching the specific skills most often associated with resiliency.

**Problems with counseling groups in school settings.** The overwhelming demands of the job require school counselors to be judicious in their use of time. When

questioned, counselors reported time constraints as being a primary deterrent for offering the types and number of groups they want (Steen et al., 2007). A group that allows for heterogeneous grouping while still producing positive student results means less need for separate, topical groups. Scheduling group sessions in the school is far easier when students do not have to be grouped by need. Less time spent on scheduling could mean more time spent on interventions. A non-thematic, non-deficit focused group based on resiliency offers such opportunity.

According to Laursen and Oliver (2003), the traditional group that emphasized what went wrong, although often perceived as supportive, actually worked against natural change processes. Affixing that deficit-focused label also reinforced hopelessness and helplessness. In contrast, the group that focused on members' strengths instilled hope. These scholars claimed, "it is easier and more profitable to construct solutions than to dissolve problems; and it is easier to repeat successful behaviors than it is to stop or change existing problematic behavior" (Laursen & Oliver, 2003, p. 46). Focusing on student strengths may also contribute to the instillation of hope, a critical therapeutic factor that can help keep the student engaged in the group as well as enhance the effectiveness of the intervention (Yalom, 2005). Maintaining a focus on solutions and personal strengths when contrasted against the more traditional focus on correcting identified problems can also be viewed as a function of social justice.

A resiliency approach adopts a more current and healthier strengths-based perspective. Resiliency theory is a positive focus on developing resiliency strengths that exists in direct contradiction to the traditional mental illness approach (Siebert, 2005, p. viii). Students who are invited to participate in a small group for improving behavior

may have their negative self-perception validated (Laursen & Oliver, 2003). A generic group carries no stigmatized or deficit-laden label. Parents may more readily grant permission for participation in a group positively stated, giving more children an opportunity to participate. This area of study could produce a more positive view of the small group experience, enhance academic achievement for a greater number of students, and provide more effective time use for counselors. These are impressive possibilities worth the exploration.

**Informing stakeholders about counseling groups in school settings.** Multiple authorities, including school administrators, district leaders, and professional organizations like the American School Counseling Association, want, perhaps demand, school documentation that what counselors do has educational impact. Determining academic improvement following a counseling group provides counselors with important data for accountability as well as for continued practice. Many researchers (Carey et al., 2008) considered the need for counselors to use researched-based practices and to document the results critically important. In addition, important stakeholders want those results to be tied to grades, attendance, and behavioral referrals (Paisley & McMahon, 2001).

Other researchers (Studer et al., 2006) insisted that counselors have a duty to show how their programs, activities, and interventions affect students. They stated that a report on the number of students involved in those programs is insufficient; counselors need to produce specific data that indicated programs were successful and effective (Studer et al., 2006). Dahir and Stone (2009) also emphasized the importance for counselors to move beyond an account of numbers of students involved to a higher level

of accountability that included information on how students were different after involvement. These researchers believed that school counselors must show the impact that the school counseling program has on student achievement (2009). Furthermore, some asserted that counselors who fail to provide this important information contribute to the loss of counseling personnel, counseling programs, and the assignment of non-counseling duties to remaining counselors (Studer et al., 2006). Others maintained that this level of accountability is a professional and ethical duty (Dimmitt, 2009). Counselors must be able to show that what they do is effective and that their work provides a significant contribution toward making student success possible (Dimmitt, 2009; Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Whiston, 2002).

***Informing administrators about counseling groups.*** School principals viewed specific tasks as important when those tasks supported the school's overall mission (Leuwerke et al., 2009). In addition, the principals' perceptions of task importance impacted recommendations on how school counselors should spend their time (Leuwerke et al.). Documented results for a counseling group, especially when those results are directly linked to student achievement, could therefore lead to increased administrative support for counselors' direct services to students, including the implementation of counseling small groups.

***Informing teachers about counseling groups.*** Talking with teachers about students before and after participation in small groups with the counselor could reveal important information, guiding the counselor toward more effective interventions. Tournaki (2003) and Beesley (2004) acknowledged the impact of teacher perceptions on student success and supported the collaboration between teachers and counselors for

optimal student service. McMillan and Reed (1994) also reported on teachers' role in the success of students. Teachers' perceptions of changes in students and the consequential outcome of those changes can be used to determine group efficacy.

Beesley (2004) identified teachers as valuable resources "in a unique position to provide insight and meaningful feedback to school counselors" who "must be utilized as an integral part of the guidance process" (p. 261).

Individual interviews with teachers regarding the specific characteristics of resiliency as evidenced by group participants may provide important insight into the group's effectiveness. Specifically, teachers might be asked: (1) What changes have you noticed in this student since participating in the small group on resiliency? (2) What impact on the student's learning have you noticed since participation in the resiliency group? Santa (2006) emphasized the need for counselors to identify what works well for a child and teacher interviews may focus attention on any positive changes that have occurred following the group. Of course, that same attentiveness may reveal problems and concerns, but provides needed information for determining group efficacy.

***Informing parents about counseling groups.*** Parents struggle with school encounters, especially those in which problems with their child's learning experience are dissected. Bloom (2001) conducted interviews with mothers receiving welfare support who reported feelings of powerlessness, disrespect, and confrontation, with many describing school meetings as a battleground where they were outnumbered. In those same interviews, the mothers believed that the schools did not want their opinions or insights into their children's school experience. In addition, interviews with parents who had previously served in significant leadership roles in one school's parent association

revealed that they wanted to be viewed as equal collaborators with the school staff (Haviland, 2003). However, parents who have not attended college may see the school staff as acting with an air of superiority (Haviland, 2003). When such feelings are present, it is no surprise that parents enter the school primed to defend themselves and their children, making communication and collaboration especially challenging.

A focus on resiliency demands that attention be given to individual strengths and assets. The focus changes from what is wrong to what is right with the child. Such a focus inevitably aligns the parent and school, furthering the possibility for a more effective partnership between home and school. Upon reviewing the outline for the counseling group, parents may discover they need not be afraid of what might be uncovered or taught. Even the title of the group, Building Resiliency, lends itself to an absence of negative labeling, something parents may fear or resent.

Furthermore, parents legitimately ask for some indication of the impact school counseling might have on their children, a request that most counselors find difficult to answer in concrete terms. It would be powerful indeed to offer well-documented, positive reasons for the counselor's intrusion into the school life of the child. A proven claim of general effectiveness not only encourages participation, but also may contribute to the overall effect of the group (Yalom, 2005). Certainly, the counselor who satisfactorily explains the treatment and its potential outcome gains credibility as a change agent. This assessment offers a possible foundation for establishing the counselor's authority and reliability for effecting change in student success by way of this small group.



## **Resiliency Theory**

Differences exist among the various psychological and philosophical traditions as to how resilience is understood. Singh (2010) defined resilience in terms of learned behaviors and interpersonal relationships that come before the ability to cope with adversity. The researcher further calls attention to the tendency to explore resilience as an individual process, a distinctly Western, White perspective while other traditions seek to understand relational resilience, a perspective that may be of particular importance to historically marginalized groups. For the purpose of this study, the researcher focused on the more western viewpoint and the traits and skills commonly used to describe a resilient individual.

Werner and Smith (1990) provided the foundation for resiliency theory. They studied the lives of over 600 individuals from birth to their early thirties. They reported that the majority of those children developed into healthy, successful adults in spite of the high risk environments into which they were born. The factors associated with resilience predicted future success more accurately than the deficits. Moreover, Siebert (2005) considered resiliency psychology as a way to show individuals what strengths to acquire and how to develop them. Resilience also can be viewed as a set of flexible cognitive, behavioral, and emotional responses that can be learned by anyone through the teaching of improved attitudes and skills (Neenan, 2009).

**Resiliency and counseling approaches, practices, techniques.** Many specific counseling techniques blend well with a resiliency perspective. An ecological approach includes asset mapping that clearly focuses on strengths rather than deficits, a critical concept of resiliency theory. Narrative therapy and inquiry provide opportunities for

individuals to tell their own stories, offering insight into their own strengths and resiliency. Structured writing interventions similarly allow for personal story-telling. Cognitive Behavioral Theory emphasizes the influence of one's own individual's own thoughts over feelings and actions. When linked to resiliency, it limits the importance of problems and concerns, but rather focuses on the individual's beliefs. Solution-focused therapy also focuses on the strengths of the individual, taking time to reveal how one has already effectively managed previous adversity. In addition, it has been successfully applied to the group format.

***Ecological approach.*** Edwards, Mumford, Shillingford, and Serra-Roldan (2007) emphasized the importance of an ecological model and the potential benefits of asset building. An ecological perspective facilitates contextual comprehension of the student's behavior and concerns as the student is viewed in varied environments. The researchers' more positive concept of asset mapping replaced the idea of conducting needs assessments. Drawing an ecological model centered on the individual child, existing assets are clearly identified and mapped. In creating this map, important resources, including parents, teachers, and students identify the various supports or assets available to the student in a variety of settings, enabling school personnel to use and build on those assets more intentionally.

***Narrative approach.*** Narrative therapy offers individuals an opportunity to develop a different frame and invites different ways of perceiving experiences:

Since the stories that persons have about their lives determine both the ascription of meaning to experience and the selection of those aspects of experience that are given expression, these stories are constitutive of shaping the persons' lives. The

lives and relationships of persons evolve as they live through or perform these stories. (White & Epstein, 1990, p. 40)

Eppler (2008) explored a narrative intervention for identifying potential themes of resiliency among students who lost a parent. The analysis of the children's stories for themes of resilience provided specific implications for school counselors. Children wanted to have their strengths recognized and acknowledged by others. Incorporating this technique, group participants working with a school counselor can be encouraged to tell personal stories that reveal their own resilience.

***Narrative inquiry.*** Narrative inquiry offers another route for discovering personal resiliency. Five ninth grade females enrolled at an alternative school were interviewed (Washington, 2008). Analysis revealed several concrete examples of resilience narratives, emphasizing the importance of perspective and context in understanding someone's story. Washington (2008) advocated for narrative inquiry, parallel stories, and making mosaics. Three specific techniques enrich the methodology of the school counselor who emphasizes resiliency. Broadening, the first technique, occurs when the counselor recalls an event, making some generalized comment about the student's character, values, or way of life. The next technique of burrowing focuses in on the emotional qualities associated with the story and explores reasons why the feelings might be associated with the event. Finally, in re-storying, the event is reconstructed with meaning, creating a new story. A counselor skilled in these techniques could help able students create more meaningful stories while revealing more explicitly the students' own strengths and resilience.

***Writing intervention.*** Lewis (1999) presented a structured narrative writing intervention for fostering resiliency during the transition to high school. It incorporates a Structure-Relationship Model for Fostering Resiliency along with the structured narrative. In this model, students take control of their own personal narratives through structured writing experiences. For example, in one lesson students were directed to write a letter to their worst teacher, an exercise that revealed the students' previous experiences, their perceptions of support from school personnel, as well as their fears regarding the school experience. Through the writing, the students acquired some control of their own story. Writing, then, offers another opportunity for students to explore their personal resilience, an additional technique useful for school counselors.

***Cognitive based therapy.*** Neenan (2009) specifically linked the techniques of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to developing resilience. He focuses on managing negative emotions, accurately identifying what is within one's control, learning from the past, becoming tolerant of frustration, and the constant work required to maintain a resilient perspective. The traditional CBT model demonstrates how your own thinking about events influences how you feel and what you do. When applied to resiliency, it becomes A = adversity, B = belief about adversity, and C = consequences, emotional and behavior. Changing one's thinking about B, beliefs about adversity, leads to different consequences, C. The problem is simply the problem and power over it lies within the person, a central idea of resiliency theory.

***Solution focused.*** Solution-focused counseling links well with resiliency as it emphasizes what individuals are doing well and then builds on those strengths. It focuses on the beliefs an individual may hold regarding change and problems and then works

toward creating solutions. LaFountain (1996) successfully applied solution-focused counseling to the group setting as well. Solution-oriented talk permeated the entire group process and helped students replace their helpless language. Each session ended with encouragement and a homework task designed to construct change. Benefits of the group included increased self-esteem, higher self-perception regarding introspective feelings and attitudes, and more appropriate coping behavior with emotions.

**Resiliency and a strengths-based approach.** Current research indicates a steady shift in counseling practices from a risk-based perspective to one that focuses on strengths and assets in individuals (Lewis & Hatch, 2008). A traditional problem-focused approach typically involves identifying the risk factors present followed by a search for the resources or programs to address them. It is a reactive process that attempts to repair children as if they were simply broken. Conversely, a strengths-based approach seeks to identify what is right and build on those traits. In his book, *Strengths-Based Counseling with At-Risk Youth*, Ungar (2006) offered a quote by Michael White that places appropriate emphasis on whatever might be creating barriers. “It is not the person who is the problem. Rather, it is the problem that is the problem” (p. 1).

This focus on deficits sustains unjust attitudes and actions toward entire groups of people, especially those who have been traditionally marginalized. Labels applied in the schools direct attention to a perceived problem, whether educational, as in learning classifications, behavioral, based on teacher perceptions and comments, some form of classism as evidenced by assumptions regarding learning potential for certain socioeconomic groups, or discriminatory via biased beliefs regarding ethnic groups. Labels perpetuate barriers to social justice. Krovetz (2008) stated:

These labels become self-fulfilling prophecies for far too many of our children.

Too often children see the labels as a deterrent to try. Too often, teachers use the labels as an excuse to not challenge anyone but the most motivated to use their minds and hearts well. ... It is common for children of color and of poverty to be labeled as needy and at risk, for them to be placed in remedial and special education classrooms year after year; for academic expectations to be low, and for few students to graduate from high school and attend college. (p. 91)

Rink and Tricker (2003) said that a “focus on protective factors and assets presents a cup ‘half full’ view of how resiliency can be conditioned, taught, acquired, and socialized to promote healthy adolescent behavior ” (p. 4). Akos (2003) supported the preventive approach “to help students build skills and to enhance the asset-building capacity of the school environment” (p. 8) and argued for a move away from traditional counseling practices that focus on risks toward those that incorporate resiliency, competence, and optimal development.

Building resiliency compels a constructive and encouraging position, emphasizing abilities, skills, strengths, and assets. Counselors influence the attitudes and beliefs of others in the school, challenging them to look for abilities and expect high achievement (Bosworth & Walz, 2005). Therefore, the counselor with a resiliency perspective not only adopts a proactive stance that uses strengths to generate success, but also functions as a social justice advocate.

By focusing on studies that relate to cognitive abilities, diversity, and resilience, Kitano and Lewis (2005) examined resilience through a multicultural lens, revealing valuable sources and influences unique to culture. They further suggested that resiliency

approaches may enhance the educational successes of students, especially those students who might be overlooked or underserved in gifted programs, yet another way to advocate for social justice.

Benard (n.d.) summarized the need for this shift in perspective.

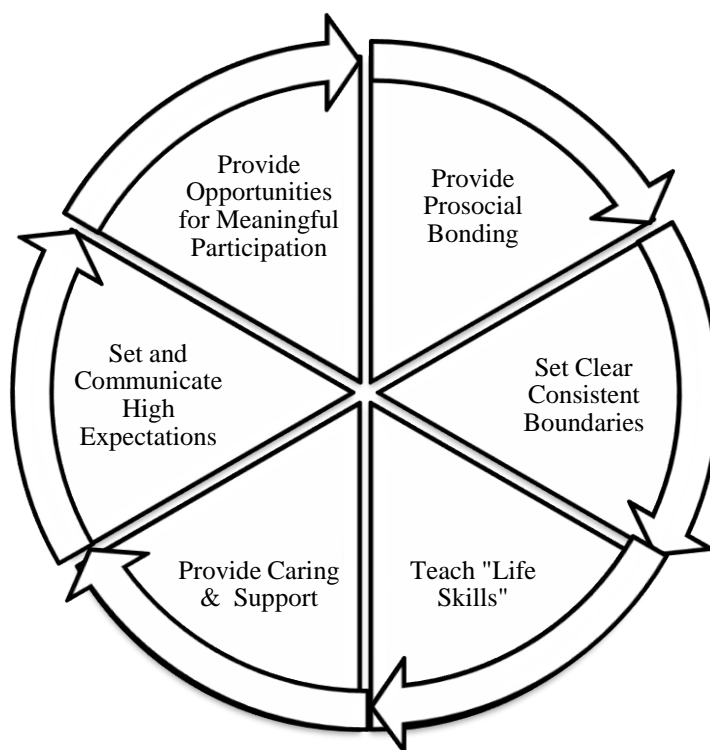
Policymakers, politicians, the media, and often researchers themselves have personalized “at-riskness,” locating it in youth, their families, and their cultures. Even when well-intentioned, such as the desire to get needed services to children and families, research has shown this approach has not had this desired effect. . . .Most dangerous of all, this deficit approach has encouraged teachers and other helping professionals to see, identify, and name children and families only through a deficit lens. This “glass-as-half-full” perspective blocks our vision to see capacity and strength, to see the whole person and hear the “real story,” thus creating stereotypes or “myths” about who people really are. (§1-2)

Brendtro and Longhurst (2005) blended the knowledge of brain research with resilience and offered strategies for reaching challenging students. They identified resilience as a natural human trait that combined inner strength with external supports. From this perspective, problems represent opportunities to use one’s strengths and abilities. “The brain finds problem-solving to be a rewarding activity” (p. 55). The authors identified a resilience code as present in all human brains: attachment, achievement, autonomy, and altruism. Meeting needs in these areas develops resilience. They offered practical strategies for fostering resilience that centered on removing oneself from destructive conflict and establishing positive bonds with children and youth.

**Resiliency in the school setting.** Masten et al. (2008) provided an overview of the major findings in the resilience literature on children, specifically related to schools and school counseling. They offered a resilience-based framework for counseling practice and included several good arguments for assuming a resiliency approach along with the importance of early intervention. Furthermore, Bosworth and Walz (2005) claimed that school counselors were integral to building resiliency in the school. Counselors are uniquely trained and positioned to work against possible barriers that may exist within the school. They connect families to services and resources. In addition, school counselors as leaders in the building can affect changes in the school environment. These authors advocated linking resiliency with the total school counseling program. Resilience can become a focus or a foundation for those services offered to all students as well as those offered to selected students who need additional or more intensive services.

Henderson and Milstein (2003) offered a segmented wheel as a model for understanding six steps to fostering resiliency. A circle is divided into six equal segments. Three segments on the right side identify ways in which to mitigate risk factors: increase social bonding, set clear, consistent boundaries, and teach life skills. The three segments on the left build resiliency by providing opportunities for meaningful participation, setting and communicating high expectations, and providing caring and support. This wheel can be used to create profiles of individual students, identifying specific strengths and needs in each section. It also provides some direction for creating comprehensive programs based on resiliency.





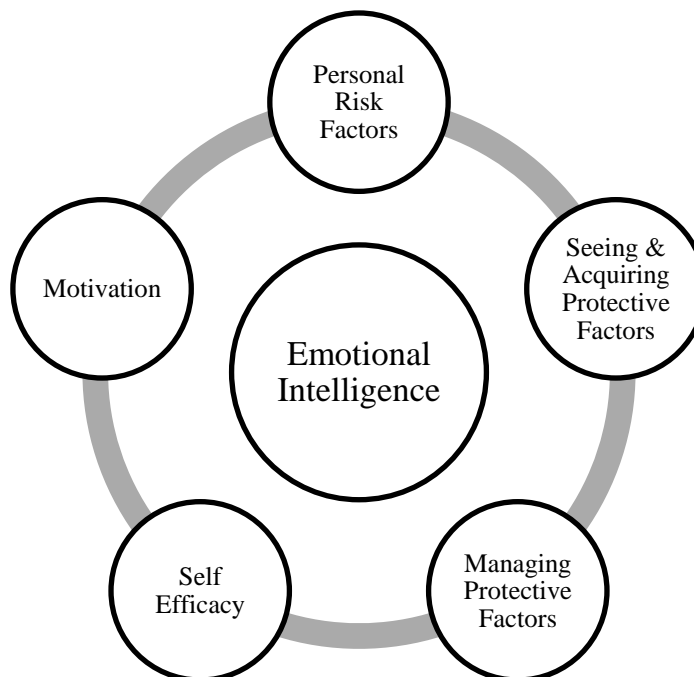
*Figure 1:* Resiliency Wheel shows three segments on the right side that mitigate risk factors, while those on the left side build resiliency.

**Academic resilience.** Others applied the relevant research of resiliency specifically to education. Brown et al. (2001) offered a few guiding principles for resilience education. Strategies must engage the students' intrinsic motivations. Students need to be able to practice decision-making in safe environments. Adults can help students establish goals or dreams that are personally important or significant. Finally, students need opportunities to explore emotions related to the problems they may face.

Doll, Zucker, and Brehm (2004) identified six characteristics of a resilient classroom: students view themselves as competent learners, students set and work toward personal goals, students maintain appropriate behavior with minimal adult intervention, relationships between teachers and students are authentic and positive, students have

positive peer relationships, and families are aware of and support learning.

Morales (2008) proposed yet another framework. Fifty college students, ethnic minorities who demonstrated academic resilience, were interviewed over several years. Based on those interviews, the author proposed a resiliency cycle. Emotional intelligence is centered at the hub of the cycle. Five spokes radiate from this hub, each of which is labeled. Spoke 1 represents the individual's ability to realistically recognize personal risk factors. Spoke 2 addresses the individual's attempts to seek and acquire protective factors. The ability to manage the protective factors in order to move forward is the third spoke. Spoke 4 refers to self-efficacy, defined as the ability to assess, refine, and use protective factors. The last spoke is motivation, as the skills of the fourth spoke become habit and sustain academic achievement.



*Figure 2: Resiliency Cycle illustrates the process of academic resilience.*

Wong (1997) presented an overview of the traits of resilient students through a unique framework. Resilient students are “imagineers” of their own destiny, utilizing visualization and self-talk. They also present what Wong (2007) called a tough cookie attitude. This persona is multifaceted and includes: being persistent, anticipating and solving problems, believing in the potential of effort over ability, willing to take risks academically, displaying a positive attitude in the present and toward the future, and honest self appraisal. Resilient students play the school game by being prepared, volunteering, engaging with teachers, asking for help, studying daily, and continually working for improvement. They also engage in regular renewal, including the physical, spiritual, mental, social/emotional dimensions. Finally, Wong (2007) said that resilient students are involved in caring relationships.

Martin and Marsh (2006) identified five factors that contributed to academic resilience: self-efficacy, planning, control, low anxiety, and persistence. Further, these researchers suggested that students be provided with opportunities to succeed in important tasks and encouraging students to have positive beliefs about their own abilities while helping them plan and set goals (Martin & Marsh, 2006).

***Protective factors at school.*** Many researchers believe in the power of relationships to build resiliency in children. Rutter (1979) identified the school as a source for protective factors for children when caring, attentive teachers are present. Masten (2000) stated that children benefitted most from a strong bond with a competent and caring adult. Werner and Smith (1990) claimed that positive relationships with caring adults had a more profound and positive impact on children than any risk factor. In fact, a review of the literature reveals a recurring theme on adult-child relationships

and mentoring and how it facilitates the development of resiliency. School offers multiple opportunities for establishing those relationships and counselors are best positioned to facilitate them.

In addition, the family, school, and community can serve as key protective factors. A child who believes that at least one adult cares for the child experiences a caring environment. A second key is maintaining positive expectations of the child, clearly stated and supported. Lastly, a child needs opportunities for meaningful involvement and participation. These key factors are also supported by work done by the Search Institute and related to many of the Forty Developmental Assets (Search Institute, 1997).

Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller (1992) identified protective factors when studying substance abuse. Family support, along with strong attachments and conventional norms offer some protection. Support from other adults who serve as role models and mentors provide another layer of protection. At the individual level, the child's temperament, sense of self-efficacy, belief in success, and social problem-solving skills are important.

Santa (2006) targeted the teacher-student relationship and offered tips to teachers for building resiliency in their students. She stressed the importance of a secure attachment, fostering the child's confidence that his or her actions are important, and the development of a sense of competence in the child. In particular, she advocated for counselors to continually focus the attention of others on what is going well for each child.

**Defining traits of resiliency.** The specific traits of resilience appear in various forms and with many synonyms (see Table 1). Problem solving skills tend to be included

as a critical piece of resilience by many (APA; Benard, 1991; Krovetz, 2008; Neenan, 2009; Siebert, 2005; Ungar, 2006). Other commonly referenced traits include: social competence (Benard, 1991; Krovetz, 2008; Ungar, 2006; Wolin & Wolin, 1993); autonomy (Benard, 1991; Krovetz, 2008; Ungar, 2006; Wolin & Wolin, 1993); positive belief about self (APA; Goldstein & Brooks, 2002; Neenan, 2009; Siebert, 2005); and a sense of purpose and the future (Benard, 1991; Krovetz, 2008; Siebert, 2005; Ungar, 2006).

Different words have been used to convey similar concepts in resiliency. For example, Neenan (2009) referenced emotional control while the American Psychological Association (APA) identified feelings management, but both represented an individual's ability to identify, label, and effectively express personal feelings. Having a high frustration tolerance was identified by Neenan (2009), while Goldstein and Brooks (2002) mentioned stress management. Although the two concepts may not be identical, they certainly overlap in their definitions.

Other terms may vary slightly in specific definitions but denote the same broad concept. Krovetz (2008) described autonomy as having a sense of personal identity and a belief in one's ability to impact change. Benard (1991, 2004) also included personal identify as part of autonomy, but added an internal locus of control, adaptive distancing resistance, self awareness, and humor. The APA mentioned the ability to make realistic plans and act on them, while Wolin and Wolin (1993) talked about initiative, strongly related concepts.

Some terms are so specific that they appear less frequently. However, even with these terms there is commonality. Both the APA and Goldstein and Brooks (2002)

specifically mentioned communication skills. Similarly, behavioral management (APA; Goldstein & Brooks, 2002) and humor (Neenan, 2009; Wolin & Wolin, 1993) are traits identified by more than one scholar. Still other traits are proposed by only one scholar. Neenan (2009) added interests, meaning-making, curiosity, support from others, and the ability to keep things in perspective as important to resilience. Wolin and Wolin (1993) included insight, creativity, and morality on the list. Though these traits may not appear to have the significance of those that are identified by numerous researchers, they are still important enough to consider when assuming a resilience position.

Table 1

*Traits of Resiliency*

|   | APA | Benard (1991, 2004) | Goldstein & Brooks (2002) | Krovetz (2008) | Neenan (2009) | Siebert (2005) | Ungar (2006) | Wolin & Wolin (1993) |
|---|-----|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Autonomy  |     | ✓                   |                           | ✓              |               |                | ✓            | ✓                    |
| Problem Solving Skills<br>(Planning,<br>Flexibility/Adaptability,<br>Resourcefulness, Critical<br>Thinking) | ✓   | ✓                   |                           | ✓              | ✓             | ✓              | ✓            |                      |
| Communication Skills  | ✓   |                     | ✓                         |                |               |                |              |                      |
| Social Competence   |     | ✓                   |                           | ✓              |               |                | ✓            | ✓                    |
| Health and Well-Being   |     |                     |                           |                |               | ✓              |              |                      |
| Positive Belief about Self  | ✓   |                     | ✓                         |                | ✓             | ✓              |              |                      |
| Make and Act on Plans   | ✓   |                     |                           |                |               |                |              | ✓                    |
| Behavioral Management   | ✓   |                     | ✓                         |                |               |                |              |                      |
| Feelings Management/Emotional<br>Control  | ✓   |                     |                           |                | ✓             |                |              |                      |
| High Frustration  |     |                     |                           |                |               |                |              |                      |
| Tolerance/Stress Management   |     |                     | ✓                         |                | ✓             |                |              |                      |
| Humor   |     |                     |                           |                | ✓             |                |              | ✓                    |
| Sense of Purpose and Future<br>(Goal Setting and Hopefulness)   |     | ✓                   |                           | ✓              |               | ✓              | ✓            |                      |
| Keeping Things in Perspective   |     |                     |                           |                | ✓             |                |              |                      |
| Support from Others   |     |                     |                           |                | ✓             |                |              |                      |
| Curiosity   |     |                     |                           |                | ✓             |                |              |                      |
| Absorbing Interests   |     |                     |                           |                | ✓             |                |              |                      |
| Insight   |     |                     |                           |                |               |                |              | ✓                    |
| Creativity  |     |                     |                           |                |               |                |              | ✓                    |
| Morality  |     |                     |                           |                |               |                |              | ✓                    |
| Finding Meaning   |     |                     |                           |                | ✓             |                |              |                      |

### **Linking Resiliency Skills and Traits to School Success**

This researcher identified eight basic skills or traits commonly associated with resiliency. Although different authors may use different terminology and may even add other attributes, these traits seem to be universally present in the literature. It is on these eight traits that the small group intervention focuses:

- health, including diet, exercise, and rest;
- goal setting;
- problem solving;
- emotional knowledge;
- stress management;
- self-efficacy;
- social competence; and
- a positive outlook.

A selected review of literature surrounding each trait reveals an overlapping pattern of association and relationship among them. In fact, they might best be represented by a rather complex Venn diagram, each sharing skills and characteristics with others. The dynamic nature also suggests that as one circle develops, others also increase.

**Health.** Good health was specifically identified by Siebert (2005) as central to resilience. It enables more positive moods, provides energy for tasks, and reduces concern regarding possible physical complaints. In addressing healthy habits with students, this researcher emphasizes three specific areas: diet, exercise, and rest. Research revealed links between these three areas and academic achievement.



***Healthy diet and school success.*** One study with students in Texas found that overweight students tended to have lower academic and conduct grades (Clark et al., 2009). Florence et al. (2008) found that diet quality related to academic achievement. Their study revealed a link between overall diet quality, primarily the variety of foods in the diet and adequacy of intake and nutrients, with academic performance on a standardized reading and writing test. In addition, students who ate more fruits and vegetables and less fat were less likely to fail the test. Therefore, since students with better diets demonstrate enhanced learning counselor time is wisely spent on teaching good nutrition.

***Exercise and school success.*** Exercise has also been found to impact achievement. In one study, children's reading and math scores from first, third, and fifth grades were compared to parental reports of children's physical activity (Stevens et al., 2008) as well as participation in school-based physical education classes. The parental reports of physical activity positively influenced reading and math achievement, based on standardized test scores. Participation in physical education appeared to have neither positive nor negative impact on achievement scores. The researchers further suggested that physical education classes tend to offer limited time for actual physical activity, thereby reducing the potential for positive impact. Children who, according to parent reports, regularly engaged in some kind of aerobic exercise, whether play-based or sport-related, performed better on the reading and math tests.

***Sleep and school success.*** Rest is another significant component of good health. Lawrence Epstein and Steven Mardon, authors of *The Harvard Medical School Guide to a Good Night's Sleep*, published an article directed at parents of teens in *Newsweek*

(Epstein & Mardon, 2007). They emphasized the need for sleep by linking poor sleep habits to problems with learning, health, behavior, and mood, sometimes even leading to incorrect diagnoses of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). For adults, they report that lack of sleep is associated with diabetes, heart disease, obesity, depression, and shortened life span. Clearly, sleep matters.

Amschler and McKenzie (2005) conducted a study regarding the sleep habits of elementary students. A majority of children reported sleep problems, possibly contributing to decreased concentration, lower academic performance, increased behavior problems, and reduced reaction time resulting in accidents or injury. Many students reported too little sleep, sleep disruption, trouble awakening, and feeling sleepy during the day. Teachers reported students yawning, exhibiting high levels of activity, complaining of sleep needs, and falling asleep during the day. Tired students simply cannot sufficiently engage in the required learning activities of the classroom.

Epstein and Mardon (2007) offered suggestions such as beginning school later or at least avoiding those very early start times. Some schools changed start times for adolescents and reported positive results. In addition, parents needed to explain sleep requirements to children and help establish routines and lifestyle practices that facilitate sufficient sleep.

**Goal setting.** An orientation toward the future frequently appears as a characteristic of resilient individuals (Benard, 1991, 2004; Krovetz, 2008; Siebert, 2005; Ungar, 2006). Believing that effort will result in a desired outcome yields a sense of personal control over what will happen. Certainly, goal setting is a part of these beliefs (Benard, 1991, 2004; Krovetz, 2008). The link between goal setting and academic

achievement is well documented in the literature. Setting goals encouraged personal investment and motivation in the student while individualizing the learning and assessment process (Stroh & Sink, 2002). Goal setting allowed students to focus their efforts toward a specific purpose, encouraged greater effort, affected persistence, and can be an effective self-regulatory tool when consistently used (Mornane, 2009). Ruth (1996) found that goal setting and behavior contracting work together to increase motivation for students. Furthermore, teachers and students benefit from individual discussions on student goals and connecting current learning with future goals (Mornane, 2009).

McTigue, Washburn, and Liew (2009) identified goal setting as a key principal for promoting students' own beliefs in their abilities. Schunk (2003) indicated that goals are important to learning and motivation, in particular, the goal components of specificity, proximity, and difficulty. Specific goals facilitate progress monitoring and provide opportunities for adult encouragement, sustaining student motivation (Szente, 2007). Short-term goals, addressing the issue of proximity, provide greater motivation. The level of difficulty is also critical. Goals that are perceived as moderately difficult enhance motivation, since those that are too easy lack value and those that seem impossible are not attempted. The link between goal work and motivation is also supported by Bandura's (1986) work.

Various models are available for teaching students how to set goals (Rader, 2005; Szente, 2007). Students need to establish concrete, realistic, achievable goals along with specific steps to achieve it (Szente, 2007). Charting progress toward the goal is another important component (Rader, 2005). Visualization (Rader, 2005) and even creating posters that illustrate goal achievement (Szente, 2007) further support the process.

Finally, commitment to the goal can be strengthened by providing encouragement, feedback, and inspirational stories (Rader, 2005).

School counselors also need to be aware of self-handicapping, a self-protection strategy employed by students that explains away failures or strengthens successes that occur in spite of perceived obstacles. Academic self-handicapping and goal setting have been found to be related and may even lead to a cycle of academic underachievement and a withdrawal of effort (Leondari & Gonida, 2007). The practice of self-handicapping is most often associated with social goals, based on the desire to please others, and performance goals, based on the wish to prove ability or hide a lack of ability (Leondari & Gonida, 2007). Task or mastery goals, goals that relate to a desire to improve a skill or gain understanding, are less often associated with self-handicapping (Leondari & Gonida, 2007), suggesting that students may experience more success when guided toward this type of goal.

School counselors are well suited to teach goal-setting and the group setting seems perfectly suited. Counselors provide guidance to appropriate goal selection and planning and offer encouragement as students work toward their goals. As students experience success in achieving goals under the counselor's tutelage, motivation and achievement increases. That success then generates potential for future success, another reason to include goal setting in the small group experience.

This proposed group includes a continuous goal-setting component, requiring daily one-to-one interaction between the group member and the teacher. This process might facilitate an enhanced relationship between the student and teacher. The ongoing conversations regarding the group sessions and resulting behavioral changes foster

stronger bonds between student and teacher. Positive relationships with adults in the school foster increased success. The movement toward greater achievement facilitates additional bonds with other significant adults expanding the cycle of success.

**Problem solving.** The ability to problem solve is the most commonly identified trait of resilience (APA; Benard, 1991, 2004; Krovetz, 2008; Neenan, 2009; Siebert, 2005; Ungar, 2006). Problem solving as described by Benard (1991, 2004) includes the ability to plan, flexibility, resourcefulness, and critical thinking. Its importance to resilience and its relationship to school success firmly establish the need for school counselors to teach it.

Numerous models are available for teaching problem solving, including the Active Problem Solving (APS) model (Kolb & Stuart, 2005), using an advice column format for a student newsletter (Prupas & Downing, 1994), and the Turnbull Empowerment Framework (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). Explicit instruction on a problem-solving model is important (Kolb & Stuart, 2005) and, therefore, is an important component of the group experience.

In particular, the APS model (Kolb & Stuart, 2005) delineates five steps for problem solving in the group environment: identifying the problem, generating possible solutions, evaluating the solutions and choosing one best option, acting on the chosen solution, and, finally, reporting results for a group discussion on what did and did not work. This particular model resulted in perceptions of teachers and parents that the students had improved their problem solving skills. Most importantly, it was specifically used in a group format, making it an ideal approach for small group counseling.

**Emotional knowledge.** Resilient students display an understanding of emotions, whether by recognizing feelings in others or managing their own. Children's academic success, productivity in the classroom, teacher-student relationships and behavior problems are all impacted by the ability to control one's emotions (Graziano et al., 2007; Izard et al., 2001; Leerkes et al., 2008; Trentacosta et al., 2006; Zambo & Brem, 2004). Evidence of the relationship between emotions and academic success underscores the importance of helping children better understand and manage their feelings. Helping children manage their emotions must be part of the learning process (Zambo & Brem, 2004) since those who have difficulty controlling their emotions become more frustrated with new tasks, may struggle with attention, learning, and performance (Graziano et al., 2007). Others supported the idea that children's emotional competence is linked with attentional competence, and added links with increased happiness and less anger (Trentacosta et al., 2006). In addition, students with greater emotional control have demonstrated better relationships with their teachers and have fewer behavioral problems (Graziano et al., 2007). In fact, one student indicated that "emotional control and understanding were more strongly linked to indicators of early social and academic competence than were cognitive processes" (Leerkes et al., 2008, p. 117).

Thus, greater understanding of emotions leads to more focused students who are more able to complete school tasks, thereby achieving more. It also yields happier children who develop more positive relationships with peers and teachers and display fewer behavioral problems. All are convincing reasons for counselors to include instruction and practice of feelings identification and expression with group members. The link to resiliency only augments its importance to the group plan.

**Stress management.** Children encounter multiple stressors in their lives and in the school setting. Possessing a variety of coping strategies can serve as a protector against the potential negative outcomes made possible by those stressors. In fact, “the ability to deal purposefully and effectively with the wide-ranging demands and stressors that are part of everyday life is a critical skill for healthy functioning” (Pincus & Friedman, 2004, p. 223).

One group of researchers identified two categories of coping strategies, problem-focused and emotion-focused, and the efficacy of each category. Problem-focused coping refers to efforts to modify the source of the stress, while attempts to regulate the negative emotions associated with the stressor represent emotion-focused strategies. The effective use of either strategy depends on the individual’s assessment regarding whether or not the situation can be changed or influenced. Students as young as third and fourth grade can be taught to do both (Pincus & Friedman, 2004). Therefore, learning to identify and effectively manage stress is a key component of being resilient.

Dubow and Tisak (1989) found that social support and social problem solving might serve protective roles, moderating possible negative effects of stressful events. In addition, esteem support along with problem solving might reduce the frustration, threat, and harm posed by stressors. Social support informs the child that he or she is loved and valued. It includes perceived support, social embeddedness, and enacted support. Perceived support is the extent to which the individual believes the environment is helpful. Social embeddedness refers to the quantity and identity of individuals in one’s network. Enacted support includes those supportive behaviors such as advice, material aid, and esteem support.

The effective counselor then begins by teaching students to correctly identify the stressor and the level of control or emotion associated with it. Brainstorming possible responses that address either the stressing circumstance or the emotion experienced comes next. All of this occurs within a safe and caring environment, established by the counselor, effectively communicating to the child his or her worth. As children learn to more effectively manage stress, resilience is enhanced.

**Self efficacy.** Several researchers explored the relationship between a student's academic resiliency and self-efficacy (Dembo & Seli, 2004; McTigue et al., 2009; Mornane, 2009; Pajares, 1995; Pajares et al., 1999; Schunk, 2003). Academic resiliency provides the impetus to keep trying when faced with challenging tasks or repeated failures. Personal beliefs about one's ability to produce a desired goal via effort define self-efficacy. What students believe about their abilities to bring about a desired goal via their own efforts, or self-efficacy, contributes to their academic resiliency and, ultimately, their achievement (Mornane, 2009; Pajares, 1995). Specifically, self-efficacy has been linked to reading achievement (McTigue et al., 2009) and writing (Pajares et al., 1999). One scholar claimed that "perceived self-efficacy or students' personal beliefs about their capabilities to learn or perform behaviors at designated levels, plays an important role in their motivation and learning. ...Self-efficacy affects choice of tasks, effort, persistence, and achievement" (Schunk, 2003, p.159).

Self-efficacy beliefs may be formed as students interpret mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasions, and emotional and physiological indexes. Mastery experiences are those previous attempts at tasks that may raise confidence if the individual is successful or lesson confidence if unsuccessful. Vicarious experiences



come from observing others attempt tasks. Seeing someone else succeed or fail may result in changing one's own perceptions of ability. Encouragement and judgments from others are social persuasions. Individuals also evaluate their own performances and link these to the various physiological states and emotional reactions personally experienced (Bandura, 1997). In addition, invitations, or the positive and negative messages that individuals send themselves and others, provide another possible source for self-efficacy beliefs (Usher & Pajares, 2006). The importance of the social persuasion and invitations sent by significant others in the lives of children highlights the care teachers must take in the messages they send to students as "these messages might well turn into the very messages students send themselves" (Usher & Pajares, 2006, p. 15).

Therefore, the school counselor must help students develop their own sense of personal competence. Since previous experiences influence self-efficacy beliefs, the counselor helps students recognize and acknowledge previous successes and worthy attempts at difficult tasks. The counselor then guides students in focusing on the emotions experienced with those successes. Students may be encouraged to search for peer examples of success. Counselors serve as important conduits of encouragement, providing positive examples of invitations that the students then internalize. As these experiences facilitate self-efficacy, students should begin to choose engagement with school tasks, exerting sufficient and persistent effort. That should lead to greater achievement, again creating a mastery experience that may then trigger a cycle of success. Once again, resiliency is enhanced.

**Social competence.** Resilient students demonstrate social competencies, including making and keeping friends. Prosocial skills have been associated with higher

standardized test scores, higher grade point averages (Wentzel, 1993), acceptance by peers, general well-being, and achievement (Choi & Kim, 2003). Moreover, teachers tend to value cooperation and self-control skills as most important (Meier et al., 2006). Good social skills may also enhance the teacher-student relationship that is well documented as a component of achievement.

Han and Kemple (2006) defined social competence as effective and appropriate human interactions and relationships and identified six categories of competence within social competence: self-regulation, interpersonal knowledge and skills, positive self-identity, cultural competence, social values, and planning and decision-making skills. These researchers also suggested that coaching and training strategies are effective strategies for enhancing social competence (Han & Kemple, 2006). Other strategies for fostering social competence supported by research include teachers as role models; role plays; and mentoring programs (McArthur, 2002); and explicit teaching of skills through puppet vignettes, video clips, and stories (Choi & Kim, 2003).

Counselors traditionally accept the importance of teaching of social skills. The small group setting provides the best milieu, as the skills learned can be immediately practiced. Counselors can validate this instruction as doing far more than simply helping children have friends since the research connects social skills to achievement and resiliency.

**Positive outlook.** Optimism is that tendency to believe that good things will happen. Optimism also facilitates victory over adversity by providing energy to continue the struggle. When future success is not foreseeable, goals tend to be abandoned. Optimism has been correlated with positive attitudes toward school, social competence,

self-concept, attribution patterns, and lower levels of depression and anxiety, motivation (Deptula et al., 2006; Sagor, 2008).

Indeed, motivation requires optimism (Sagor, 2008). Using as proof the dramatic stories of Jaime Escalante and Erin Gruwell, outstanding teachers who changed the lives of their underachieving students, Sagor believed that optimism could be taught and learned. Mornane (2009) also supported the concept that an orientation toward the future, referred to as a possible self, was critical for motivating action.

Sagor (2008) identified two components of optimism: faith in the future and personal efficacy. Belief in the future allows one to delay gratification for some potential benefit. This belief, whether negative or positive, often comes from what children observe around them, especially the experiences of adults in their family and community. A positive belief in one's own abilities, or efficacy, provides the strength to continue working toward a challenging goal. The examples provided were compelling: a parent-teacher conference led by a four-year old, an experiential space simulation, middle school students investigating and ultimately reforming their school, and the quirky student whose persistence leads him to a school that embraces his unique strengths. The recurring theme is the instillation of optimism and Sagor challenged all to develop ways to nurture it.

Others explored the relationship between optimism and children's social competence (Deptula et al., 2006). Peer optimism was measured by children's responses to statements related to peer group entry, making and keeping friends, being chosen for activities by peers, and general peer interaction expectations. The general findings indicated that girls with higher peer optimism scores reported fewer feelings of

loneliness. Boys with high peer optimism tended to have more friendships, be perceived more favorably by peers, and experienced less rejection, victimization, and loneliness. Although no causation can be claimed, it is evident that optimistic perceptions of peer interactions play an important role in social competence.

Helping students develop a sense of optimism falls within the school counselor's role. Students need hope in order to risk challenging tasks, to keep trying in the face of failure, and to maintain positive relationships. All of these are necessary components for academic achievement and resiliency. Indeed, who could sustain the energy and motivation necessary for school success when there is no belief in a favorable future? Counselors need to instill hope and optimism in students, thereby facilitating resiliency.

### **Summary**

These eight traits and skills relate both to resiliency and school success, adding significance to their inclusion to the group experience. The focus on those traits also removes the need for any negative labels that further augments the potential for the intervention. Without the label, the group membership can then be constructed based on attributes other than difficulties the members might be exhibiting, linking the approach to social justice advocacy. A small group intervention based on the positive perspective of resilience, designed to develop the specific traits of resilient individuals offers a respectful and useful experience for students and an encouraging, practical adaptation in what school counselors can do.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Methodology**

This study of effectiveness of a resiliency-based counseling group intervention will be implemented at a large suburban elementary school outside a major southeastern city in the United States. Students will be identified for possible inclusion based on grade level, school attendance, school behavior, and academic grades. The groups will be delivered by the two professional school counselors who currently serve the school, with each group consisting of five to eight students and meeting for twelve sessions. Results will be based on assessments administered before and after the group experience.

#### **Research Questions**

1. Does participation in a resiliency group with the school counselor effect change in the participants' numeric grade averages for the core content areas, school attendance record, and behavior referrals as measured by the number of discipline referrals and teacher action plans?
2. Do parents and teachers perceive the students differently after the group experience?

#### **School Population and Climate**

The school serves 1114 students of varying ethnicities, abilities, and family resources. The students are served by one principal, two assistant principals, two counselors, 110 certified staff, and 50 support staff. There are eight to ten homeroom classes for each grade level from kindergarten to fifth grade and two self-contained special education classes. First through fifth grades also have at least one classroom

designated as an inclusion class, in which students with identified disabilities are mainstreamed.

The counselors at this school enjoy exceptional credibility and support from school personnel. Earning RAMP (Recognized ASCA Model Program) status in 2009, the counseling department delivers services aligned with the American School Counseling Association's concept of a comprehensive, developmental program. In fact, the two counselors now serve as evaluators of other school counseling programs as readers of RAMP applications. In addition, both counselors hold advanced degrees and have been honored by various professional associations as outstanding counselors. Finally, school administrators, along with the school faculty and staff, actively support both the counselors and the counseling programs. This support for and belief in the services offered by the counselors contributes to the potential for success of those services.

Just over one-third of the students at this school identify themselves as Hispanic (37.5%), comprising a largest subgroup of ethnicities, followed by whites (23.7%), who represent almost one-fourth of the total student population. The remaining population includes African-Americans (22%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (13%), Native American/Alaskans (.3%), and Multi-racial students (3.6%). Of these students, 8% (94) are enrolled in the gifted program, 9% (96) are in special education programs, and 34% (372) receive services from the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program. Over half (60%) of the students participate in the free/reduced lunch program based on eligibility set by the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, which states that children from families with incomes at or below

185% of the poverty level are eligible to participate.

Of the 1100 students at this school, 27 were referred for significant disciplinary offenses during the 2009-2010 school year, for a total of 44 incidents. In addition, individual teachers at this school use individual action plans to document less critical behavioral problems that occur throughout the school year. Finally, the average daily attendance for students in this school is just above 96%. On average, students tend to miss 4.9 days of school with only 88 students missing 11-15 days and 25 students missing 16 or more days of school.

Table 2

*School Ethnicity*

|                       | White | Black | Hispanic | Asian/<br>Pacific<br>Islander | Multi-<br>racial | Native<br>American/<br>Alaskan |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|----------|-------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| School<br>Percentage  |       |       |          |                               |                  |                                |
| 2009-2010             | 24    | 21. 2 | 36       | 14                            | 3. 5             | . 5                            |
| 2010-2011             | 23.7  | 22    | 37.5     | 12.9                          | 3.6              | .3                             |
| Number of<br>Students |       |       |          |                               |                  |                                |
| 2009-2010             | 269   | 233   | 399      | 154                           | 38               | 6                              |
| 2010-2011             | 265   | 243   | 416      | 144                           | 40               | 3                              |

*Note:* Total Student Enrollment = 1091(2009) 1114 (2010)

Table 3

*School's Program Enrollment*

|                       | Gifted<br>Program | Special<br>Education | English<br>Language<br>Learners | Free/Reduced<br>Lunch Program |
|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| School<br>Percentage  |                   |                      |                                 |                               |
| 2009-2010             | 13                | 11                   | 31                              | 57                            |
| 2010-2011             | 8                 | 9                    | 33                              | 60                            |
| Number of<br>Students |                   |                      |                                 |                               |
| 2009-2010             | 141               | 124                  | 336                             | 622                           |
| 2010-2011             | 94                | 96                   | 372                             | 663                           |

*Note:* Total Student Enrollment = 1091(2009) 1114 (2010)

Table 4

*School Attendance 2009 - 2010*

|                       | Students Absent<br>0-5 Days | Students Absent<br>6-10 Days | Students Absent<br>11-15 Days | Students Absent<br>16+ Days |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| School<br>Percentage  | 60                          | 28                           | 9                             | 3                           |
| Number of<br>Students | 653                         | 302                          | 99                            | 37                          |

Table 5

*School Discipline 2009 - 2010*

|                    | Students<br>with Action Plans | Students<br>with Office Referrals |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| School Percentage  | 5                             | 2                                 |
| Number of Students | 53                            | 27                                |

**Target Population**

This intervention was designed to impact the school experience for fourth and fifth grade students with academic, behavioral, and/or attendance concerns who do not



have other possible contributing factors including documented disabilities, language acquisition issues, or reasonable explanations for higher than expected school absence. Participants were selected from the fourth and fifth grades based on report card grades, school attendance, and behavioral information from the academic school year of 2009-2010. An initial pool of possible participants was created based on based on report card grades, school attendance, and behavioral records. A list was then created that included third and fourth grade students who earned two or more grades below C for any of the core subjects during the third and fourth quarters. A second list included all students who received a D or U in conduct on report cards or had an official discipline referral. The final list included all students who missed ten or more days of school during the previous school year. These three lists were examined, modified, and prioritized to establish a population from which a stratified sample was drawn for inclusion in the intervention.

The academic performance list was pared down by eliminating students who received other academic support services, including special education and ESOL. Participation in special education and receipt of ESOL services established that the students had identified disabilities or documented reasons for lower academic performance. These students were eliminated from the study in order to limit potentially influencing variables on the school experiences of participants in the group intervention.

In addition, the list identifying students with higher than average absences was examined to determine whether or not valid reasons existed for the higher than average absences. For example, it is known that one student with a high number of absences was identified as medically fragile and another experienced a significant hospital stay resulting in prolonged school absences. Still another student missed an unusual amount

of days due to family trip out of the country for a unique cultural event. These were viewed as understandable explanations for missing school or anomalies that were unique to the single school year that did not reflect typical attendance patterns for those students. These students, therefore, were removed from the list for possible participation.

Finally, the list of students with less than satisfactory conduct grades or with official disciplinary offenses was studied. Students with documented emotional behavioral disabilities were eliminated because of the services they receive through special education. Eligibility for such services means these students have well-documented reasons for behavioral problems requiring significant interventions, beyond the scope of this study. Those students were removed from the participant pool.

The modified lists of students with attendance, behavioral, or academic performance concerns was then compared in order to create a priority ranking of students. The researcher established three levels of priority for students who might benefit from the group intervention. Of highest priority were those students, whose names appeared on all three lists, suggesting concerns with attendance, behavior, and academic performance. The next priority was given to students who appeared on two of the lists, evidencing attendance/academic, attendance/behavior, or behavior/academic concerns. Students on only one of the lists constituted the lowest priority. This created a pool of targeted third and fourth students with assigned priorities for possible inclusion in this intervention during the next school year.

### **Sampling Procedures**

A stratified sample was selected from among the targeted group of students enrolled in the school at which the researcher works as a school counselor. All students

on the priority lists who returned to the school at the beginning of the following school year were invited to participate in the intervention study. Those for whom parent participation was secured were offered the small group intervention.

Eliminating those students with other explanatory factors such as disabilities, language acquisition, or illness limits the possible influence those factors might have over the students' school success. In addition, the students in the final sample were those who did not receive other services through the school, suggesting that any results may be more attributable to the group intervention.

### **Variables**

The independent variable for this study was participation in the small group counseling experience designed based on eight common traits and skills of resiliency. The importance of each of these eight traits and skills and how each is linked to school success was identified in the literature review. Researchers have identified links between school success and being healthy, goal setting and problem solving skills, emotional knowledge, stress management, a sense of personal competency, social skills, and an optimistic perspective. This psychoeducational group experience conducted by professional school counselors attempted to address those eight broad concepts for targeted students who demonstrated no other identified handicaps in the hope that it would translate into improved school success and personal growth.

The dependent variables included school attendance, school behavior, numeric grade averages, and scores on the SDQ. Numeric averages in the core subjects from the final report card of the previous school year was compared to numeric averages in the same subject areas during the first two report card periods of the implementation year.

The core subjects include: reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies.

School attendance improvement was measured by comparing the number of days absent during the first semester of the previous year with the number of absences during the first semester of the implementation year. School behavior was assessed through comparing the number of discipline referrals and action plans during the first semesters of the previous and current years as well as a comparison of report grades in conduct during those same periods.

Finally, the SDQ was completed by the teachers and parents of students participating in the group intervention. Teachers and parents also responded to the SDQ follow-up questions. Individual scores on the SDQ were compared to determine levels of change among the participants.

### **Instrumentation**

The researcher used an alpha level of .05 to determine significance of change in the participants as measured through a variety of assessments. Each student's school attendance during the first half of the school year was compared to the attendance during that same period of the previous school year. Academic performance was measured through report card grades for the core subjects during the first two quarters of the school year. Student behavior was assessed during the intervention through teacher reports on weekly goal sheets, action plans written, any office discipline referrals as well as the final report card grades for first and second quarters of school. Finally, overall changes in students will be assessed using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) administered before and after the group intervention.

The Strengths and Difficulties Scale is a behavioral screening questionnaire appropriate for use with children age 3-16 years which yields scores in six areas: total difficulties score, emotional symptoms score, conduct problems score, hyperactivity-inattention score, peer problems score, prosocial score, and impact score (Youth in Mind). It includes 25 items on psychological attributes that are grouped into five scales: emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behavior. The subscales of conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, and peer relationship problems are added together to produce a total difficulties score. The questionnaire includes versions that are appropriate for use by teachers and parents. Additional information is available by using the extended versions that solicit the respondent's opinion regarding whether or not the child has a problem. Two follow-up questions focus on the respondent's opinions regarding the effectiveness of the intervention for reducing problems or making problems more bearable within the most recent month. These questions are especially useful for evaluating the group intervention.

The SDQ has been found to possess test-retest stability, interrater reliability, and internal consistency (Lane, Kalberg, Parks, & Carter, 2008) with middle and high-school students. When completed by parents or teachers of elementary aged children, the scores on the SDQ were strongly correlated with scores on the Rutter questionnaires (Goodman, 1997) and the Achenbach/Child Behavior Checklist (Goodman & Scott, 1999). In addition, it has been validated as a useful outcome measure (Mathai, Anderson, & Bourne, 2003).

## **Experimental Procedure**

This intervention followed a pre-experiment design, using a single sample group and intervention. This design allowed the researcher to attempt a quantitative validation of one specific counseling group designed around the broad concepts of resiliency. A quantitative approach seems particularly useful as a way of communicating school counseling intervention results to school administrators who typically rely on quantitative data to make important school decisions. Indeed, one study indicated that principals tended to view as important those tasks that linked to the school's overall mission (Leuwerke et al., 2009). The choice of areas for measurement reflect a desire to link a school counseling intervention to increased student success in school, specifically improved school attendance, school behavior, and academic performance. Leuwerke and others (2009) also found that locally-generated counseling research impacted principals' perceptions of how counselors should spend their time. That potential link between a counseling intervention and specific school results for students offers a powerful validation of the importance of the school counselor to students, and ultimately school success.

A repeated measures design was used to compare the participants' progress in school attendance, school behavior, academic performance, and SDQ scores. Pre and post assessments on the SDQ and the comparisons of previous and current school records for each student provided important information regarding the overall effectiveness of the group intervention.

The first research question seeks to determine changes in students who participate in a group intervention designed around resiliency and conducted by the school

counselor. Paired sample T tests allowed the researcher to consider possible change over time in the dependent variables. For the purpose of this study, the single group was comprised of students who participated in a resiliency-based group. The first dependent variable was the numeric grade averages for those students before and after the group experience. The second dependent variable was the students' school attendance, specifically looking at the number of days absent from school during the first semester the year before and during the intervention.

The second research question centered on parents' and teachers' perceptions of the students. The third dependent variable was the individual subtest scores for students in the group on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire before and after the group was implemented. The follow-up questions available for this questionnaire provided additional data useful for determining the effectiveness of any treatment. Before and after scores on the SDA were compared for each group participant. A simple dependent samples t test was used to determine whether two means on the scores differed significantly.

### **Threats to Validity**

Potential threats to validity exist. Internal threats included the experimental procedure, the fidelity of treatment, and the varying experiences of participants. It is impossible to isolate and control all possible influences that may exist. There may be factors for each student with the potential to enhance or limit the measured progress. Perhaps some as yet unidentified disability existed for a student that prohibited or limited progress or restricted change. Some developmental leap that increased maturity, motivation, or willingness to engage in school tasks may have occurred for a student,

producing only its result without ever revealing its source. Those unknown influences might have impacted the student outside of the awareness of the student or the researcher, thereby threatening the validity of any connections drawn between the intervention and the results.

Fidelity of treatment presented another possible threat to the validity of the study. The small group experience was delivered by two professional school counselors, one of whom is the researcher. Two group leaders increased the possibility of the groups being delivered in different ways. Whether the differences in delivery are large or small, they may not be inconsequential. Although specific measures were taken to minimize those differences, the possible impact remains, again threatening the conclusions drawn.

Based on the response to invitations to participate in the group, ten different groups were created. Each group encompassed its own unique dynamics based on its unique composition and the interactions among and between members. It is possible that the group composition was a determining influence of the success or lack of success of the members. Again, such an influence might have existed beyond the awareness of the researcher and again threaten the validity of the findings.

Group members experienced not only the group intervention but also a new grade level, with new classmates, and a new teacher. These changes represented still more threats to the validity of the researcher's findings. A student's teacher during the year of the intervention might be significantly different from the teacher under whom the student evidenced the targeted characteristics of behavior problems, lower grades, or absenteeism. The current teacher might have quite different expectations, might represent a much more or less positive relationship, or may be less or more able to



engage the student in learning than the previous teacher. The new classroom environment, including classmates, rules, routines, and the physical set up of the room, might also differ in important ways from last year's setting. Moving from one grade level to the next might also change a student's school persona suggesting another risk to the findings.

An important external threat to the validity of this study might occur in the inferences drawn from the sample data. While the students were drawn from a very specific targeted population, only those whose parents granted permission were included in the intervention. Might they then be dissimilar from those whose parents did not allow inclusion? Perhaps parents who agreed to the intervention differ from those who denied participation in some way that makes their children's school experience disparate. Are they more involved or more supportive and therefore more willing to experiment with an intervention? Perhaps they are less involved or supportive than the other parents and simply want an undemanding answer for making school success more attainable for their children. If, somehow, the families of the students who participate in the group are atypical of the population, the inferences drawn from the sample may lack validity.

Finally, the constructs behind the design of the group intervention might be invalid. Has the researcher defined resiliency adequately? Although the traits and skills around which the group sessions are built are commonly referenced in the resiliency literature, those eight constructs may or may not add up to resiliency. This most fundamental question presents a significant threat to the validity of the entire intervention.

## **Intervention Plan**

Parents of the students on the final potential sample list were contacted by the researcher at the beginning of school year to explain the study, the reason their children were included, and the planned group intervention. A few students who were new to the school and met the established criteria were also invited to participate. Their parents were contacted at the same time. The researcher was available to talk individually and specifically with any parents in order to assure they had sufficient information for making their decisions regarding participation. Additional print material regarding the group design, a letter from the researcher, the SDQ, and the permission form was provided to the parents of targeted student. Parents were asked to sign the permission letter indicating their preference regarding inclusion in the group. Those that agreed to inclusion were also asked to complete the SDQ for their child and return it along with the permission form. A small incentive of one coupon for an ice cream with lunch was given to students who return the permission forms, regardless of whether or not they would be participating in the group. Parents who did not return the permission forms within the first week of school received an additional phone call from the counselors.

Students with parent permission to participate met with the counselors in order to secure their assent to be in the group. The counselor briefly explained why the student was invited to be in the group, the general plan for the group, and the overall goal for the group experience. Perhaps because group experiences are common in this setting, the majority of students will agreed to be involved. Students were also given the option of dropping out of the group at any time during the intervention.

The researcher and co-counselor met with the teachers of students who would be participating in the intervention to explain the intervention and what would be needed from them. Teachers had an opportunity to give or refuse permission to participate. All teachers agreed to participate in and support the group intervention. The researcher explained the group design and the specific role of the teacher, including completing the weekly goal sheets and the various assessments before and after the group. Finally, each grade level decided with the researcher on the time of day and day of the week for the group to meet.

The researcher, a professional school counselor, and another professional school counselor at the school delivered the group intervention for this study. The two counselors met weekly to discuss the intervention as it was being implemented, any concerns that developed, and to plan for the upcoming group session. All materials and plans were provided by the researcher. Each counselor delivered the group sessions to the grade level to which that counselor is assigned. Therefore, one counselor conducted all the groups for the targeted fifth grade students and the other conducted the groups for the fourth grade students. Each group met once each week for twelve thirty to forty minute sessions. The specific plans for each session may be found in the appendix. A general outline is also available in Table 7.

To facilitate group attendance, notes were delivered to the students' teachers on the morning of each group day. These notes were delivered by the safety patrols with whom the counselors meet each morning. Delivery of counselor notes by patrols each morning was a usual procedure at this school. The notes served as a reminder to the teacher that the group would be meeting that day, that the goal sheet should be sent to the

counselors, and also provided the necessary hall pass for the students to come to the counseling group. An additional incentive point was added to each student's individual graph if they arrived at group promptly with all needed materials.

Table 6

*Intervention Plan*

| Timeline  | Steps   |
|---|---|
| Prior to<br>Conducting<br>Group<br>Intervention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify students for participation &amp; invite to resiliency group</li> <li>• Meet with parents of student participants               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Permission forms</li> <li>– Resiliency questionnaire</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Meet with students whose parents granted permission to gain assent</li> <li>• Meet with teachers of students participating in resiliency group               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Explain intervention and expectations for teachers</li> <li>– Secure assent for teacher involvement</li> <li>– Teachers complete resiliency questionnaire and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Meet with co-counselor to review group design and session plans</li> <li>• Create student notebook</li> </ul> |
| Implementation<br>of Resiliency<br>Group        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet weekly with co-counselor to discuss group plans</li> <li>• Meet weekly with students following resiliency group plan</li> <li>• Beginning in third week of group, distribute student goal sheets to teachers</li> <li>• General group session design               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Feelings check-in</li> <li>– Review of previous session &amp; discussion of experiences</li> <li>– Topical learning activity</li> <li>– Monitor goal progress and award points (beginning fourth session)</li> <li>– Closing motivational quote</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |
| After Group<br>Intervention                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and analyze all data               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– SDQ scores</li> <li>– Numeric averages in core subjects</li> <li>– School attendance</li> <li>– School behavior reports (action plans &amp; discipline referrals)</li> <li>– Resiliency quiz scores</li> <li>– Individual student point graphs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |

Table 7

*Group Intervention Session Summary*

| <b>Session</b> | <b>Session Focus</b>  | <b>Session Activity</b>   |
|----------------|-----------------------|---|
| 1              | Explaining Resiliency | Discussion; Quotes; Resiliency Quiz   |
| 2              | Being Healthy         | Information on Exercise, Sleep, and Diet<br>Setting Personal Health Goals   |
| 3              | Goal Setting          | Information on Goal Setting & Identifying Goals   |
| 4              | Goal Setting          | Vision Board Creation   |
| 5              | Problem Solving       | Understanding Problem Solving   |
| 6              | Problem Solving       | Practice with Nursery Rhymes  |
| 7              | Emotional Knowledge   | Building Feelings Vocabulary<br>Identifying Feelings and Feelings Expression<br>Understanding Varying Intensities of Feelings |
| 8              | Stress Management     | Identifying Stressors<br>Identifying Healthy Ways to Handle Stressors   |
| 9              | Self-Efficacy         | Creating Personal Portfolios  |
| 10             | Social Competency     | Identifying Friendly Behaviors<br>Friendship Pledge   |
| 11             | Positive Outlook      | Interpreting Events<br>Benefits of Positive Perspective   |
| 12             | Wrap-Up               | Review of Resiliency Concepts<br>Post-Assessment Administered and Celebration   |

**Data Collection**

School data for each participant was collected and compared based on the same time periods from one school year to the next, with the second school year including the group intervention. All were analyzed using a dependent t test. Attendance from August to December from the two years was compared, as was grades in the core subject areas and behavioral records, including discipline referrals and action plans. The attendance data, numeric grade averages, and discipline referrals was secured by the researcher from the student records data base of the school system. Action plan information was be provided by the classroom teachers.

Students will also maintain weekly goal sheets during the group experience.

These goal sheets were created during the third session of the group intervention and reflected the unique goals of each participant. The goal and at least four identified steps that will move the student toward his or her goal were evaluated each week by the student and the teacher. The students graphed their own points as a way of visually representing their own individual progress.

In the week after the group, teachers of students who participated were asked to complete the SDQ follow-up questionnaire. The researcher collected final data on each participant's school attendance, school behavior, and academic numeric averages.

Table 8

*Types of Data Collected*

| <b>Type</b>             | <b>Source</b>  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Grade Average           | Numeric Average of Quarterly Report Card Grades            |
| School Behavior         | Action Plans and Discipline Referrals                      |
| School Attendance       | Number of Days Absent                                      |
| SDQ Scores              | Completed by Parent – before and after group intervention  |
| SDQ Scores              | Completed by Teacher – before and after group intervention |
| SDQ Follow-Up Questions | Completed by Teacher – after group intervention            |

**Data Analysis**

The data collected on grades, behavior, school attendance and SDQ scores will be analyzed using a dependent *t* test. An alpha level of .05 will be used to determine significance.

**Summary**

This intervention was designed to build specific resilience traits in order to enhance school success for students who are currently exhibiting various school problems. Students were placed in small groups of four to eight, which then met with the school counselors during the first semester of the school year to foster the eight resiliency traits. The data used for determining the impact of the small group intervention was selected specifically because of its quantitative nature. School counselors need to be able to communicate results to administrators, teachers, and parents in terms that are more easily understood and directly relevant to the educational setting. This intervention study sought to measure the usefulness of a resiliency-based group and facilitate reporting counselor impact on student success.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

School counselors need strategies that are broadly useful, grounded in theory, and demonstrated to be effective. This study attempts to validate one intervention that meets those requirements. The researcher sought to discover the impact of a small group intervention designed around specific traits linked to resilience. Selected students in fourth and fifth grades participated in twelve sessions with professional school counselors during the first half of the school year. The sessions were designed to teach students about resiliency and eight skills commonly associated with being resilient. Those eight skills included: being healthy, setting goals, solving problems, understanding feelings, managing stress, believing in your own capabilities, having and being a friend, and being positive.

The research questions were:

1. Does participation in a resiliency group with the school counselor effect change in the participants' numeric grade averages for the core content areas, school attendance record, and behavior referrals as measured by the number of discipline referrals and teacher action plans?
2. Do parents and teachers perceive the students differently after the group experience?

Fifty-nine students participated in a twelve-session small group with school counselors. Dependent samples *t* tests were used to determine the significance of differences in scores obtained before and after the group intervention for several variables



that focused on school attendance, school behavior, academic progress, as well as teacher and parent perceptions of members of the sample group. School records provided the information on attendance, behavior and academic progress. Parent and teacher perceptions of group participants were ascertained through the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) which yields scores for overall stress, emotional distress, behavioral difficulties, hyperactivity and attentional difficulties, difficulties getting along with other children, and kind and helpful behavior. A .05 level of significance was used.

### **Sample**

A stratified sampling technique was used to determine the participation pool for inclusion in the group intervention. This allowed the researcher to select students based on specific characteristics, including behavior, academic performance, and school attendance. The targeted population included current fourth and fifth grade students who had evidenced grades of D or U in one or more of the core content areas during the previous spring, demonstrated unacceptable behavior at school based on teacher action plans and administrative discipline referrals or had more than 10 absences during the previous school year. All students who had a documented disability and were receiving direct services through special education or ELL (English Language Learner) programs for language acquisition were removed from the list. Forty-four fourth grade students and 60 fifth grade students were identified. From that list, 32 fifth-grade and 14 fourth-grade students were removed because they transferred to other schools; had already participated in a similar group; or had reasonable explanations for the grades, attendance, or behavior.

Two fourth grade students were determined to have no need for inclusion based on unique circumstances that accounted for their attendance and behavioral concerns. One student had 15 absences during the previous year because of a trip out of the country for an unusual family event. The student's school history indicated that fewer than five absences had been incurred during other school years. Therefore, it was determined that the number of absences that had resulted in inclusion in this group was a unique circumstance and not in need of intervention. The other student was identified due to behavioral problems from the previous school year. Over the summer, the student was evaluated and determined eligible for special education services and was therefore removed from the list.

Twenty-five students were removed from the participant pool due to school transfer. Eleven fourth grade students and 14 fifth grade students on the initial list moved over the summer and did not return. Another 14 fifth grade students had participated in a building resiliency group while in the fourth grade and were removed. Corrections to the initial list of potential participants thus narrowed the participant pool to 31 fourth-grade and thirty-two fifth-grade students. Two fourth grade students and three fifth grade students new to the school were added to the targeted list based on school records.

Thirty-three fourth grade students and 35 students in fifth grade were invited to participate in the group intervention. Thirty-two students in fourth and 31 in fifth returned parental permissions indicating consent. All 63 students also provided assent for participation. During the fall semester in which the group intervention was implemented, two fourth grade students and two in fifth moved out of district and transferred to other schools.

The number of positive responses to the invitation to participate seems important. Of the 65 permissions distributed, four parents did not return the permission and one returned it refusing participation. While this might be attributed to the positive perceptions of the counselors and counseling program in this school, it might also be linked to the group's focus on strengths and assets. The possible negative feelings of parents toward school personnel as identified by some researchers (Bloom, 2001; Haviland, 2003) did not appear to be present for these students.

Table 9

*Identification of Targeted Sample*

|   | <u>Number of Students</u> |       |
|---|---------------------------|-------|
|   | Fourth                    | Fifth |
| Initial Identification of Potential Group Participants          | 44                        | 60    |
| Removed Due to School Transfer over Summer                      | - 11                      | - 14  |
| Removed Due to Unique Circumstance Producing Problems Exhibited | - 2                       | - 0   |
| Removed Due to Previous Participation in Similar Group          | - 0                       | - 14  |
| Added Students New to School Based on School Records            | + 2                       | + 3   |
| Final Number Invited for Inclusion                              | 33                        | 35    |
| Number of Non-Response  | 0                         | - 4   |
| Number of Parent Refusals                                       | - 1                       | 0     |
| Number of Parent Consents                                       | 32                        | 31    |
| Number of Student Assents                                       | 32                        | 31    |

The final sample was comprised of 63 students. Four students transferred out of the school during the group implementation, leaving 59 students in the final sample. Ten small groups were formed based on scheduling and the availability of students. The researcher worked with the five groups of fourth grade students while the researcher's co-counselor on site led another five groups with the fifth grade students in the sample. All 10 groups generally met once each week for a period of 30 minutes per session.

The sample population was almost equal in participants from fifth (29) and fourth (30) grades. The sample included a higher percentage of Hispanic students (49%) than represented in the school's general population (37.5%). Whites (19%) and Asian/Pacific Islanders (5%) were slightly underrepresented in the sample while students who identified as multi-racial (5%) were slightly over-represented. There was also a greater portion of the sample (81%) that qualified for the free/reduced lunch program than in the school's general student population (60%). Students receiving special education services were intentionally omitted from the sample. Only a specific subgroup of those who qualify as English Language Learners (ELL), those who were designated as being monitored only, were included in the sample. The sample population was intentionally limited by special need and language acquisition to control for other variables that might impact school performance. The sample did include a higher percentage of gifted students (10%) than in the total student population (8%).

Table 10

*Sample Population and Ethnicity*

|                       | White | Black | Hispanic | Asian/<br>Pacific<br>Islander | Multi-<br>racial | Native<br>American/<br>Alaskan |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|----------|-------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Percentages           |       |       |          |                               |                  |                                |
| School                | 23.7  | 22    | 37.5     | 12.9                          | 3.6              | .3                             |
| Group                 | 19    | 22    | 49       | 5                             | 5                | 0                              |
| Number of<br>Students |       |       |          |                               |                  |                                |
| School                | 265   | 243   | 416      | 144                           | 40               | 3                              |
| Group                 | 11    | 13    | 28       | 3                             | 3                | 0                              |

Table 11

*Sample Population and Program Enrollment*

|                    |        | Gifted Program | Special Education | English Language Learners | Free/Reduced Lunch Program |
|--------------------|--------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Percentage         | School | 8              | 9                 | 33                        | 60                         |
|                    | Group  | 10             | 0*                | 32**                      | 81                         |
| Number of Students | School | 94             | 96                | 372                       | 663                        |
|                    | Group  | 6              | 0*                | 19**                      | 48                         |

*Note:* As part of the design, no students receiving services through special education were included and only students with ELL/Monitored status were included in the population.

About half of the students (51%) in the sample were included due to academic concerns. Twelve students (20%) were included for behavioral reasons, having evidenced problems through teacher action plans or administrative discipline referrals during the previous school year, while six students (10%) in the sample had demonstrated a tendency to have higher than expected absences from school. Eleven of the students in the sample were included for multiple reasons, either a combination of academic/behavior (3), attendance/behavior (6), or academic/attendance (2) concerns.

Table 12

*Sample Population and Reason for Inclusion*

|       | Academic<br>Concerns | Behaviora<br>l Concerns | Attendance<br>Concerns | <u>Multiple Concerns</u> |          |         |
|-------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|----------|---------|
|       |                      |                         |                        | Acad/Beh                 | Acad/Att | Att/Beh |
| Grade |                      |                         |                        |                          |          |         |
| 4     | 14 (47%)             | 8 (27%)                 | 4 (13%)                | 3 (10%)                  | 0        | 1 (3%)  |
| 5     | 16 (55%)             | 4 (14%)                 | 2 (7%)                 | 4 (14%)                  | 2 (7%)   | 0       |
| Total | 30 (51%)             | 12 (20%)                | 6 (10%)                | 7 (12%)                  | 2 (3%)   | 1(1%)   |

*Note:* Students in the sample were included for academic, behavior, attendance or some combination of those three areas, based on information from the previous school year.

**Research Questions**

This study was conducted in order to determine the effectiveness of one small group intervention designed around eight traits associated with resiliency. In order to link effectiveness to the school's overall mission, specific school-related data was examined before and after the intervention. To maintain the counseling perspective, data that focused on emotionality, feelings, stress, and social skills was also investigated. These two perspectives, school-based and counseling-based, were reflected in the two research questions.

1. Does participation in a resiliency group with the school counselor effect change in the participants' numeric grade averages for the core content areas, school attendance record, and behavior referrals as measured by the number of discipline referrals and teacher action plans?
2. Do parents and teachers perceive the students differently after the group experience?

## Results

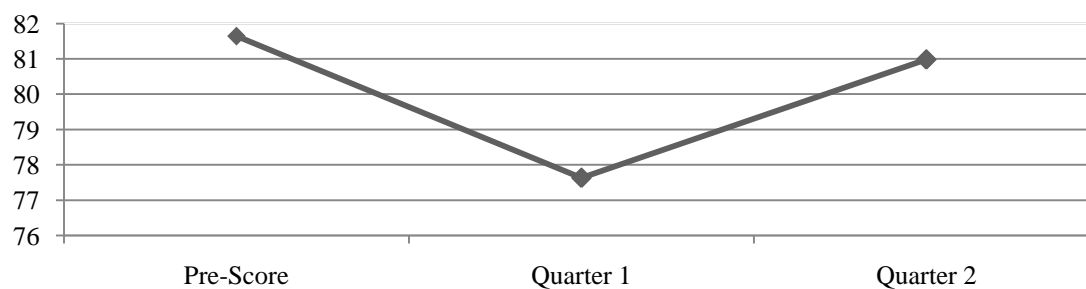
Results were determined by comparing mean differences on each dependent variable based on scores earned before and after the group intervention. A  $p$  value less than .05 was used to establish statistical significance.

The first research question focused on specific school behaviors that tend to be most important to school personnel: academic performance, behavior of students, and student attendance. Each of the three areas mentioned in this question was addressed separately in the research results. An examination of report card grades, behavior reports, and school attendance records was used to answer these questions. The second research question focused on a more counseling-specific area of interest, the well-being of students based on teacher and parent perceptions. Completion of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) before and after the counseling group intervention was used to measure those perceptions.

**Impact on grades.** Perhaps the most salient of changes that might occur as a result of a counselor intervention centers on academic performance. To answer this question, the researcher conducted  $t$  tests to examine the mean differences between report card grades earned in the core content areas on the final report card from the previous school year and the grades earned on quarterly report cards during the semester of the group intervention. The core content areas included reading, writing, math, social studies, and science. The previous year's grade was compared to each quarterly grade, resulting in two correlations for each content area.

**Reading.** The researcher conducted  $t$  tests to examine the mean differences between report card grades earned in reading from the final quarter of the previous school

year, called the reading pre-score, and the first two quarters of the school year during which the intervention was implemented. In general, reading grades for the sample students declined significantly during the first quarter, then rebounded during the second. Students earned significantly higher grades, on average, in reading on the reading pre-score ( $M = 81.64$ ,  $SD = 7.796$ ) when compared to the first quarter report card ( $M = 77.63$ ,  $SD = 9.931$ ),  $t(58) = 3.768$ ,  $p < .001$ . There was no statistical difference between the reading pre-score ( $M = 81.64$ ,  $SD = 7.796$ ) and the second quarter report card ( $M = 80.98$ ,  $SD = 9.243$ ),  $t(58) = .627$ ,  $p > .05$ . A comparison of the means did indicate a significant improvement, on average, in reading from first quarter ( $M = 77.63$ ,  $SD = 9.931$ ), to second quarter reading ( $M = 80.98$ ,  $SD = 9.243$ ),  $t(58) = -4.349$ ,  $p < .001$ .

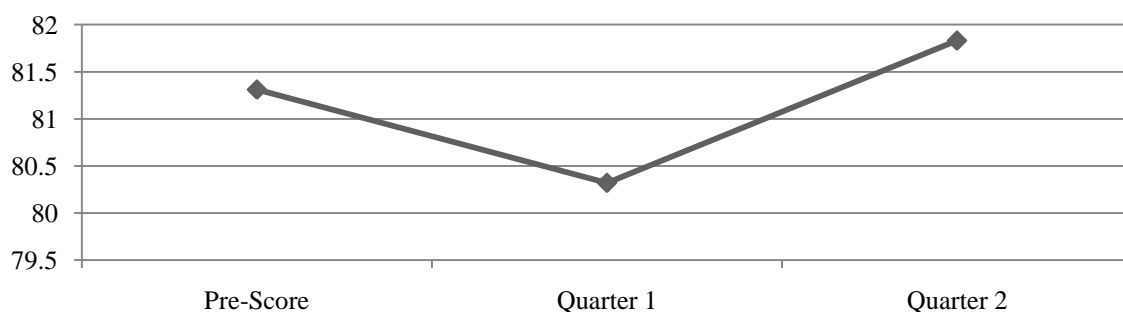


*Figure 3: Mean Reading Grades on report cards of students in the sample from the end of the previous school year to first and second quarter of the year of implementation.*

**Writing.** The researcher conducted  $t$  tests to examine the mean differences between writing report card grades from the final quarter of the previous school year, referred to as the writing pre-score, and the first two quarters of the school year during which the group intervention was conducted. Students showed no statistical significance in writing scores on the first quarter report card ( $M = 80.32$ ,  $SD = 7.169$ ) when compared to the writing pre-score ( $M = 81.31$ ,  $SD = 8.320$ ),  $t(58) = 1.109$ ,  $p > .05$ . There was also

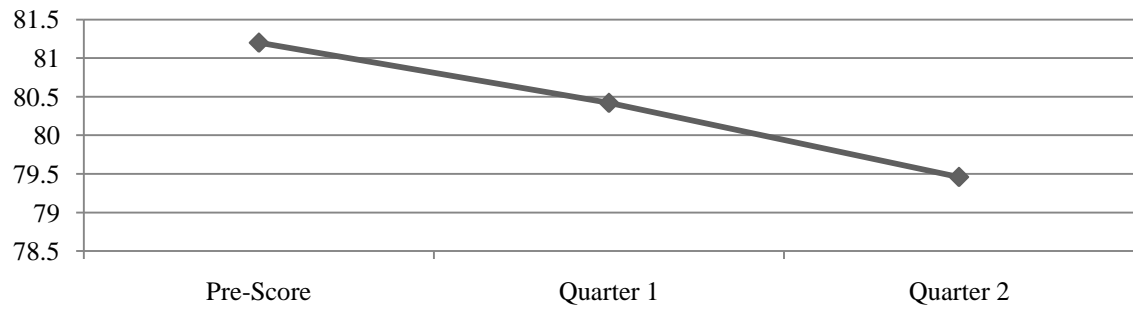


no statistical significance in the difference between the mean scores on the second quarter report card ( $M = 81.83$ ,  $SD = 8.742$ ) than on the writing pre-score ( $M = 81.31$ ,  $SD = 8.320$ ),  $t(58) = -.555$ ,  $p > .05$ .



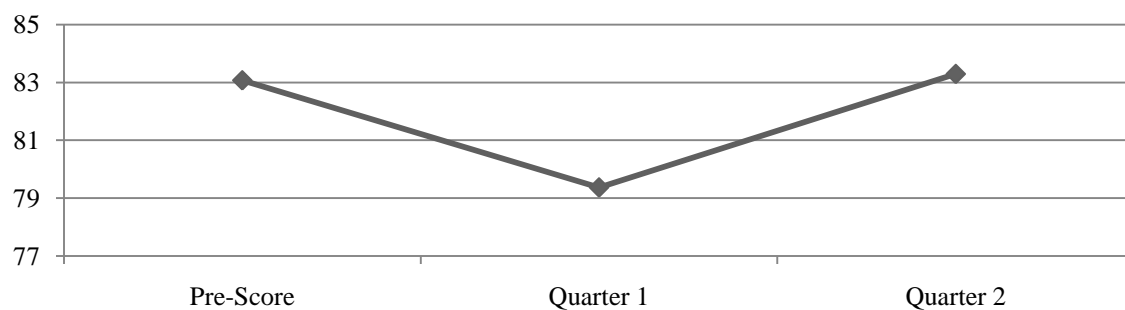
*Figure 4:* Mean Writing Grades on report cards of students in the sample from the end of the previous school year to first and second quarter of the year of implementation.

**Math.** The researcher conducted  $t$  tests to examine the mean differences between math report card grades during the first two quarters of the school year the group intervention was delivered with the final report card grade in math from the previous school year, called the math pre-score. Math scores, on average, revealed a slight decline, but not of statistical significance, from the math pre-score ( $M = 81.20$ ,  $SD = 8.741$ ) to the first quarter grades ( $M = 80.42$ ,  $SD = 9.369$ ),  $t(58) = .647$ ,  $p > .05$ . The math scores also declined, on average, from the pre-score ( $M = 81.20$ ,  $SD = 8.741$ ) to the second quarter grades ( $M = 79.46$ ,  $SD = 11.299$ ),  $t(58) = 1.225$ ,  $p > .05$ . The decline in math scores continued to be evident in the comparison of means between first ( $M = 80.42$ ,  $SD = 9.369$ ) and second quarters ( $M = 79.46$ ,  $SD = 11.299$ ),  $t(58) = 1.050$ ,  $p > .05$ , grades during the year of the intervention. It is important to note that none of these mean differences were statistically significant.



*Figure 5:* Mean Math Grades on report cards of students in the sample from the end of the previous school year to first and second quarter of the year of implementation.

**Science.** The researcher conducted *t* tests to examine the mean differences between the science grades earned at the end of the previous school year, referred to as the science pre-score, and the first two quarters of the year the group was implemented. Students scored, on average, higher on science pre-score ( $M = 83.07$ ,  $SD = 7.425$ ) and the first quarter report card grade in science ( $M = 79.37$ ,  $SD = 8.998$ ),  $t(58) = 3.057$ ,  $p < .01$ . There was no statistical difference in the mean scores for the science pre-score ( $M = 83.07$ ,  $SD = 7.425$ ) and the second quarter report card grade ( $M = 83.29$ ,  $SD = 8.728$ ),  $t(58) = -.191$ ,  $p > .05$ . Students scored significantly higher, on average, in science on the second quarter report card ( $M = 83.29$ ,  $SD = 8.728$ ) than on the first quarter report card ( $M = 79.37$ ,  $SD = 8.998$ ),  $t(58) = -4.798$ ,  $p < .01$ .



*Figure 6:* Mean Science Grades on report cards of students in the sample from the end of the previous school year to first and second quarter of the year of implementation.

**Social Studies.** The researcher conducted *t* tests to examine the mean differences between the social studies grades earned on report cards for the final quarter of the previous school year and the first two quarters of the year during which students participated in the small group intervention. Although not statistically significant, students exhibited, on average, somewhat higher grades during the first quarter ( $M = 83.12$ ,  $SD = 8.921$ ) than before the intervention on the final report card of the previous school year ( $M = 81.54$ ,  $SD = 8.482$ ),  $t(58) = -1.352$ ,  $p > .05$ . However, the following second quarter grades ( $M = 78.12$ ,  $SD = 9.642$ ) were significantly lower, on average, from the end of the previous school year ( $M = 81.54$ ,  $SD = 8.482$ ),  $t(58) = 2.906$ ,  $p < .01$ . The drop in report card grades in social studies, on average, from first quarter ( $M = 83.12$ ,  $SD = 8.921$ ) to second quarter ( $M = 78.12$ ,  $SD = 9.642$ ),  $t(59) = 4.309$ ,  $p < .01$  was even more significant.

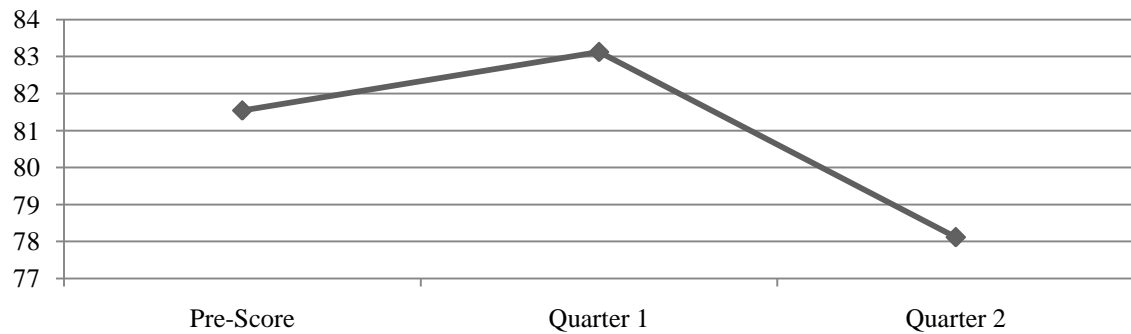


Figure 7: Mean Social Studies Grades on report cards of students in the sample from the end of the previous school year to first and second quarter of the year of implementation.

Table 13

*t Test Analysis for Academic Grades – Pre-Score Comparisons.*

|                   | Pre-Score<br>(4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter<br>2009-2010) |           | 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter<br>2010-2011 |           |          | 2nd Quarter<br>2010-2011 |           |          |
|-------------------|---|-----------|--------------------------------------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|-----------|----------|
| Measure           | <i>M</i>  | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>                             | <i>SD</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>M</i>                 | <i>SD</i> | <i>t</i> |
| Reading           | 81.64   | 7.796     | 77.63                                | 9.931     | 3.768*   | 77.63                    | 9.931     | .627     |
| Writing           | 81.31   | 8.320     | 80.32                                | 7.169     | 1.109    | 81.83                    | 8.742     | -.555    |
| Math              | 81.20   | 8.741     | 80.42                                | 9.369     | .647     | 79.46                    | 11.299    | 1.225    |
| Science           | 83.07   | 7.425     | 79.37                                | 8.998     | 3.057*   | 83.29                    | 8.728     | -.191    |
| Social<br>Studies | 81.54   | 8.482     | 83.12                                | 8.921     | -1.352   | 78.12                    | 9.624     | 2.906*   |

\* $p < .01$

Table 14

*t Test Analysis for Academic Grades – Quarter to Quarter Comparisons.*

|                | 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter<br>2010-2011 |           | 2nd Quarter<br>2010-2011 |           |          |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------|----------|
|                | <i>M</i>                             | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>                 | <i>SD</i> | <i>t</i> |
| Reading        | 77.63                                | 9.931     | 77.63                    | 9.931     | -4.349*  |
| Writing        | 80.32                                | 7.169     |                          |           |          |
| Math           | 80.42                                | 9.368     | 79.46                    | 11.299    | 1.050    |
| Science        | 79.37                                | 8.998     | 83.29                    | 8.728     | -4.798*  |
| Social Studies | 83.12                                | 8.921     | 78.12                    | 9.624     | 4.309 *  |

\*\* $p < .01$

**Impact on behavior.** A second area of importance to school personnel is the behavior of students. The school counselor may use this as another important measure of counseling intervention effectiveness. The researcher conducted *t* tests to examine the mean differences between the total number of behavior reports documented for each student in the sample during the fall semester of the previous school year and the fall semester of group implementation as well as comparing student conduct grades during the two semesters. There was no statistically difference between conduct grades students earned on report cards during the previous year ( $M = 3.24$ ,  $SD = .503$ ), than during the group intervention ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = .527$ ),  $t(58) = -.725$ ,  $p > .05$ . However, the number of behavior reports, including teacher action plans and administrative discipline referrals, declined significantly, on average, during the semester of the group intervention ( $M = .03$ ,  $SD = .183$ ) from the same period of the previous school year ( $M = .53$ ,  $SD = 1.194$ ),  $t(58) = 3.468$ ,  $p < .01$ .

Table 15

*t Test Analysis for Behavior.*

| Measure          | Fall Semester 2009-2010 |           | Fall Semester 2010-2011 |           | <i>t</i> |
|------------------|-------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|----------|
|                  | <i>M</i>                | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>                | <i>SD</i> |          |
| Conduct Grades   | 3.24                    | .503      | 3.29                    | .527      | -.725    |
| Behavior Reports | .53                     | 1.194     | .03                     | .183      | 3.468*   |

\* $p_s < .01$

**Impact on school-going behavior.** Finally, school personnel often focus on the attendance of students. The school counselor may also use this as a tool for measuring students' school engagement. The researcher conducted paired samples *t* tests to examine the mean differences between the total number of attendance entries each student accumulated during the fall semester of the previous school year and the total

number of attendance entries accrued during the current fall semester. Students exhibited, on average, significantly fewer absences during the first half of the current school year ( $M = 1.22$ ,  $SD = 1.439$ ) than the first half of the previous school year ( $M = 3.39$ ,  $SD = 3.296$ ),  $t(58) = 5.342$ ,  $p < .01$ . Students may have had slightly fewer late arrivals to school, but with no statistical significance, during the current year ( $M = .97$ ,  $SD = 1.742$ ) than in the previous year ( $M = 1.25$ ,  $SD = 2.279$ ),  $t(58) = 1.014$ ,  $p > .05$ . Students also had statistically fewer early check-outs, on average, the current year ( $M = .90$ ,  $SD = 1.348$ ) and the previous year ( $M = 1.44$ ,  $SD = 1.784$ ),  $t(58) = 2.107$ ,  $p < .05$ . The total number of attendance entries, including absences, late arrivals, and early check-outs, on average, significantly declined during the fall semester of the group implementation ( $M = 2.29$ ,  $SD = 2.575$ ) compared to the preceding fall semester ( $M = 6.10$ ,  $SD = 4.071$ ),  $t(58) = 7.185$ ,  $p < .01$ .

Table 16

*t Test Analysis for Attendance.*

|                                    | Fall Semester 2009-2010 |           | Fall Semester 2010-2011 |           |          |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|----------|
| Measure                            | <i>M</i>                | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>                | <i>SD</i> | <i>t</i> |
| Number of Absences                 | 3.39                    | 3.296     | 1.22                    | 1.439     | 5.352**  |
| Number of Late Arrivals            | 1.25                    | 2.279     | .97                     | 1.742     | 1.014    |
| Number of Early Check-Outs         | 1.44                    | 1.784     | .90                     | 1.348     | 2.107*   |
| Total Number of Attendance Entries | 6.10                    | 4.071     | 2.92                    | 2.575     | 7.185**  |

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

**Impact on parent and teacher perceptions.** The researcher conducted *t* tests to examine the mean differences between scores on the SDQ completed by parents and teachers of students in the sample. Teachers of all 59 members of the sample completed

both pre-and post-tests. Parents of 52 of the 59 members of the sample completed the questionnaire before and after the group. Teachers and parents indicated a significant reduction in the total difficulties score, emotional symptoms, and difficulties with hyperactivity and attention. Parents also reported a significant reduction in conduct problems and peer problems, along with a significant increase in prosocial behaviors.

**SDQ.** The SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) is a brief behavioral screening questionnaire. The SDQ include five scales, including: emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity-inattention, peer problems, and prosocial behavior. A total difficulties score is obtained based on first four scales. Twenty-five items call for a continuous scale response of not true, somewhat true, or certainly true. Normative data for the SDQ was most recently obtained in 2001 when it was included in the National Health Interview Survey conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A sample of the parental responses for 9,878 children between the ages of 4 and 17 were analyzed. The means and standard deviations for American 8-10 year old children are provided.

Table 17

*SDQ Mean (Standard Deviation) for American 8-10 year olds*

| SDQ score                 | All<br>(N=2064) | Female<br>(N=1038) | Male<br>(N=1026) |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Total Difficulties        | 7.2 (5.8)       | 6.4 (5.1)          | 7.9 (6.4)        |
| Emotional symptoms        | 1.5 (1.9)       | 1.5 (1.8)          | 1.5 (1.9)        |
| Conduct Problems          | 1.3 (1.7)       | 1.1 (1.4)          | 1.5 (1.9)        |
| Hyperactivity-Inattention | 2.9 (2.6)       | 2.4 (2.3)          | 3.3 (2.9)        |
| Peer problems             | 1.5 (1.6)       | 1.4 (1.5)          | 1.5 (1.6)        |

<http://www.sdqinfo.org/norms/USNorm1.pdf>

In a study specifically examining the usefulness of the SDQ as an outcome measure, researchers found that it was an effective tool for measuring change and evaluating specific interventions (Mathai et al., 2003). It was also positively correlated with the Rutter questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) the Child Behavior Checklist/Achenbach (Goodman & Scott, 1999), and the Health of the Nation Outcome Scales for Children and Adolescents (HoNOSCA) (Mathai et al., 2003).

The questionnaire yields six scores. The scores for emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity-inattention, peer problems and prosocial behavior are reported between 0 and 10. The total difficulties scores combines the all of the scales except for prosocial behavior and can range from 0-40. These scores may also be classified as normal, borderline, and abnormal, with about 80% of scores from a population falling in the normal range, with 10% in the abnormal category and another 10% in the borderline group.

*Total difficulties score.* This score relates to overall stress and utilizes scores from all but the prosocial scale. Scores can range from 0 to 40, with normal scores falling within 0-13 when completed by parents or 0-11 when completed by teachers. Parent and teacher ratings demonstrated a reduction overall stress for students in the sample. Parent ratings were, on average, significantly higher on the pre-test ( $M = 10.90$ ,  $SD = 6.578$ ) than on the post-test ( $M = 8.29$ ,  $SD = 6.554$ ),  $t(51) = 4.042$ ,  $p < .01$ . Teachers also rated the students higher, on average, on the pre-test ( $M = 10.95$ ,  $SD = 6.511$ ) than on the post-test ( $M = 8.31$ ,  $SD = 5.565$ ),  $t(58) = 4.123$ ,  $p < .01$ .

*Emotional symptoms scale.* The emotional symptoms scale is based on five items that ask the rater about the child's somatic complaints, worries, unhappiness,



nervousness, and fears. Scores within the normal range for parent reports are 0-3 and for teachers, 0-4. A reduction in emotional distress was revealed by the completed SDQ scores of both parents and teachers. Parent ratings on the pre-test ( $M = 2.58$ ,  $SD = 2.396$ ) were significantly higher, on average, than those on the post-test ( $M = 2.02$ ,  $SD = 2.288$ ),  $t(51) = 2.113$ ,  $p < .05$ . Teacher ratings showed a similar reduction between pre-test ratings ( $M = 2.27$ ,  $SD = 2.075$ ) and post-test scores ( $M = 1.31$ ,  $SD = 1.715$ )  $t(58) = 4.778$ ,  $p < .01$ .

*Conduct problems scale.* This scale addresses behavioral difficulties that may be evident in the child. These five items address the child's obedience, anger management, fighting or bullying, and dishonesty, as evidenced by lying, cheating, or stealing. Normal scores fall within 0-2 for both teacher and parent reports. Only the ratings by parents demonstrated a significant reduction for behavioral difficulties in the comparison of means in pre-tests ( $M = 2.15$ ,  $SD = 1.974$ ) and post-tests ( $M = 1.46$ ,  $SD = 1.527$ )  $t(51) = 2.827$ ,  $p < .01$ . Teacher ratings before the group ( $M = 1.76$ ,  $SD = 2.095$ ) and after ( $M = 1.41$ ,  $SD = 1.662$ )  $t(58) = 1.489$ ,  $p > .05$ , did not suggest any statistical differences. It may be important to note that the mean for parents was outside the normal range on the pre-test, while the teacher average was within the normal range on both assessments.

*Hyperactivity-inattention scale.* Items within this scale address levels of activity, concentration, impulsivity, and task completion. It includes descriptors like restless, fidgeting, squirming, and distracted. The normal band for both parent and teacher scores is 0-5. Scores of both parents and teachers reveal a significant reduction, on average, in hyperactivity and attentional problems. Pre-test parent scores ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 2.586$ ) and post-test parent scores ( $M = 3.13$ ,  $SD = 2.249$ )  $t(51) = 3.437$ ,  $p < .01$ , reveal a

significant difference. Although the means are higher than those of parents, the teacher pre-test scores ( $M = 5.36$ ,  $SD = 4.31$ ) and pos-test scores ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 3.024$ )  $t(58) = 3.070$ ,  $p < .01$ , also show a significant reduction in problems.

*Peer problems scale.* This scale focuses on difficulties demonstrated in getting along with other children. It asks the rater to respond to items that address peer relationships, including: solitary play, the presence of at least one good friend, whether liked or bullied by others, and if there is a preference for adults over children. Parental scores of 0-2 and teacher scores of 0-3 are considered normal. Teachers did not provide evidence of any significant decline in social problems in the before ( $M = 1.56$ ,  $SD = 1.896$ ) and after ( $M = 1.29$ ,  $SD = 1.509$ )  $t(58) = 1.197$ ,  $p > .05$ . Parents did exhibit, on average, significantly lower scores on the pre- ( $M = 2.19$ ,  $SD = 2.068$ ) and post-tests ( $M = 1.69$ ,  $SD = 1.895$ ),  $t(51) = 2.095$ ,  $p < .05$ . It may important to note that the teacher scores were on average lower than those of the parents both before and after the group, perhaps suggesting a more positive perception, on average, of the sample group's peer relationships. Additionally, the initial parent mean falls outside the normal band, possibly suggesting some concerns for friendship.

*Prosocial scale.* This scale differs from the others on the SDQ since an increase in scores suggests positive change in kind and helpful behaviors. These five items address sharing and helping behaviors along with kindness and a willingness to volunteer. The normal range for this scale is 6-10 for both parents and teachers. Parents expressed significant positive change in before ( $M = 7.54$ ,  $SD = 2.091$ ) and after scores ( $M = 8.44$ ,  $SD = 1.539$ )  $t(51) = -3.304$ ,  $p < .01$ . Teachers scores still provided some

evidence for positive change in this area before ( $M = 6.53$ ,  $SD = 2.521$ ) and after ( $M = 7.22$ ,  $SD = 2.492$ )  $t(58) = -1.982$ ,  $p > .05$ , but not statistically significant.

Table 18

*Parent Pre and Post Means on SDQ*

| Measure  | Parent Pre |       | Parent Post |       | <i>t</i> |
|--|------------|-------|-------------|-------|----------|
|  | M          | SD    | M           | SD    |          |
| Overall Stress                                 | 10.90      | 6.578 | 8.28        | 6.554 | 4.042*   |
| Emotional Distress                             | 2.58       | 2.396 | 2.02        | 2.288 | 2.113**  |
| Behavioral Difficulties                        | 2.15       | 1.974 | 1.46        | 1.527 | 2.827*   |
| Hyperactivity & Attentional Difficulties       | 3.98       | 2.586 | 3.13        | 2.249 | 3.437*   |
| Difficulties Getting Along with Other children | 2.19       | 2.068 | 1.69        | 1.895 | 2.095**  |
| Kind and Helpful Behavior                      | 7.54       | 2.091 | 8.44        | 1.539 | -3.304** |

\* $p < .01$ , \*\* $p < .05$

Table 19

*Teacher Pre and Post Means on SDQ*

| Measure  | Teacher Pre |       | Teacher Post |       | <i>t</i> |
|--|-------------|-------|--------------|-------|----------|
|  | M           | SD    | M            | SD    |          |
| Overall Stress                                 | 10.95       | 6.511 | 8.31         | 5.545 | 4.123*   |
| Emotional Distress                             | 2.27        | 2.075 | 1.31         | 1.715 | 4.778*   |
| Behavioral Difficulties                        | 1.76        | 2.095 | 1.41         | 1.662 | 1.489    |
| Hyperactivity & Attentional Difficulties       | 5.36        | 3.056 | 4.31         | 3.024 | 3.070*   |
| Difficulties Getting Along with Other children | 1.56        | 1.896 | 1.29         | 1.509 | 1.197    |
| Kind and Helpful Behavior                      | 6.53        | 2.521 | 7.22         | 2.492 | -1.982   |

\* $p < .01$

**Summary**

The academic averages revealed some negative changes. Writing and math grades revealed no significant differences between the pre-scores and the first and second quarter grades. There were a few statistically significant differences in the means of numeric averages for the core content areas of reading and science from the pre-scores to

the first quarter report card indicating a decline in the grades. However, there was no significant difference in the pre-score to the second quarter report card grades for reading, and science, suggesting grades, on average, returned to the pre-score level by the end of the first semester. Social studies grades showed no significant change from the pre-score to first quarter grades, but dropped significantly in the second quarter.

The number of behavioral incidences, based on administrative referrals and teacher action plans showed a significant drop. However, the conduct grades noted on quarter report cards indicated no statistical change.

School attendance patterns did show positive change when comparing the fall semester of 2009 with the fall semester of 2010. The total number of attendance entries for students in the sample showed a statistically significant decrease. Specifically, the number of absences and early check-outs for students in the group, on average, declined. Late arrivals did not appear to change.

The second research question focused attention on perceived changes in students in areas more related to the counseling domain. Scores from the parent reports showed a significant improvement, on average, for all of the scale scores. Teachers' scores indicate significant improvement in the total difficulties, emotional symptoms, and the hyperactivity-inattention scales.

Returning to the research questions, there is evidence of change for students who participated in the counseling group on resiliency, although not in all areas. Academic averages demonstrated less response to the effect of group membership. School attendance and some measures of student behavior did reveal positive change. Parents

perceived more significant changes for the members of the sample than did teachers.

However, teachers did report some improvements.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

Professional school counselors need to know the effectiveness of interventions used with students (American School Counseling Association, 2005; Carey et al., 2008; Dimmit, 2009; Studer et al., 2006; Whiston, 2002). In particular, they need quantifiable terms of success to communicate more meaningfully to school decision-makers factors (Leuwerke et al., 2009; Dahir & Stone, 2009). Outcomes related to counseling interventions need to be examined in terms of school importance, specifically student attendance, student behavior, and the academic performance of students (Paisley & McMahon, 2001). Therefore, the first research question focused on examining change in those three areas for students who participated in a small group with the counselors.

In addition, school counselors must maintain their unique position as mental health professionals in the schools (Walley et al., 2009). Although schools have been reluctant to accept the mental health role of school counselors (Walley et al.), stakeholders appear to place more value on counselor involvement in the personal/social domain than academic, at least at the elementary level (Perkins, Oescher, & Ballard, 2010). Interventions must demonstrate change in those domains predominantly associated with counseling (Dahir & Stone, 2009). School counselors must continue to reflect on and draw attention to students in terms of esteem, confidence, emotionality, relationships, and behavior. The second research question maintains focus on this essential perspective for the counselor.

Finally, there is a need for school counselors to have interventions that address multiple problems, concerns, and situations. Time constraints, limited access to students, and a failure of others in the school to understand the significance of mental health options for students demand that counselors possess clearly effective tools with wide-ranging uses (Steen et al., 2007). While counseling interventions that focus on a specific problem are important, a more generic response may provide an important means of broadening the scope of influence and increasing the efficiency of the school counselor. Small groups remain a popular intervention used in schools (Corey & Corey, 2006; Steen et al., 2007; Tomori, 1995) and a focus on strengths (Laursen & Oliver, 2003; Siebert, 2005; Yalom, 2005) reflects current trends in psychology. Furthermore, resiliency offers a current, positive perspective on which to build new interventions (Akos, 2003; Benard, 2009; Edwards et al., 2007; Eppler, 2008; Kitano & Lewis, 2005; Lewis, 1999; Lewis & Hatch, 2008; Neenan, 2009; Siebert, 2005; Ungar, 2006; Washington, 2008). Indeed, that positive perspective offers another important link for counselors serving as social justice advocates who refuse to affix negative labels to students (Krovetz, 2008). A small group designed around the traits of resiliency rather than targeting a specific problem or population could be one such tool that can address multiple problems with diverse students.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher sought to discover the impact of the small group intervention designed around specific traits linked to resilience. Evidence was sought that tied any change in students to data most associated with school, including grades, behavior, and absences. In addition, the researcher examined parent and teacher perceptions before and

after the group to determine possible changes for students in areas more associated with mental health. The research questions were:

1. Does participation in a resiliency group with the school counselor effect change in the participants' numeric grade averages for the core content areas, school attendance record, and behavior referrals as measured by the number of discipline referrals and teacher action plans?
2. Do parents and teachers perceive the students differently after the group experience?

### **Impact on Grades**

Academic grades are of critical importance in determining change since they signify the key outcome for school (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Studer et al., 2006). A comparison of means from final report card grades of the previous school year and the first two quarters of the current year revealed that no significant improvement was made in the core content areas of reading, writing, and science. Means for grades in these areas dropped significantly during the first quarter, but had returned to the level of performance from the previous end of year by the second quarter. Additionally, averages for math demonstrated a slight, but steady decline while those in the area of social studies revealed a drop for the second quarter. These results are disappointing and encourage further investigation.

Although no statistical significance can be attached, one perspective to consider is the number of students whose report card grades changed and the direction of those changes. A positive change of three or more points was evident for 27 students in writing, 23 students in reading, and 22 in science. Another 19 students improved their



overall math scores and 12 improved their social studies average. Unfortunately, a similar number of students evidenced a decline in their grade averages in reading (25), writing (19), and math (28). Social studies and science revealed the greatest declines in quarterly averages with 30 and 27 students respectively.

Forty-four students improved their grades by three or more points in at least one subject and 22 students improved in two or more subject areas. Of the 15 students who did not demonstrate an increase, seven students were students who typically made A's or B's in all subject areas. Their grades remained consistent overall with one subject area showing a slight decline in the numeric average. All 15 continued to have report card grades above average. It is also important to note that the intentional diversity of group members necessitated the inclusion of students with no academic concerns. The scores of those group members could have limited the statistical significance of the total group.

Three of the 30 students initially included for academic reasons did not improve their grades. However, 27 demonstrated slight improvement in at least one area. This means that 90% of the students who were included in the group due to unsatisfactory academic performance did show a little improvement. This may suggest limited effectiveness of the group intervention for the students with academic concerns.

The initial drop in academic grades for the first quarter of the school year could be related to the academic regression that occurs each summer. The loss of learning over the summer is well documented in the research (Cooper & Nye, 1996). It is especially a problem for students with limited resources (Afterschool Alliance, 2010; Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001; Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007). Perhaps this summer loss explains the lower average of grades during the first semester. It might be more

effective to compare same quarter grades from one year to the next. First quarter grades would then be compared to first quarter grades of the following year. Such a comparison would limit the impact of summer learning loss and, perhaps, provide a more authentic measure of academic progress.

Another variable that exerts influence on student performance and subsequent grades is the teacher. Sherman, Rasmussen, and Baydala (2008) found multiple teacher factors contributing to student success, including: use of gestures, knowledge and opinions of interventions, and attitude toward children. Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and their emotional feelings about individual students have been found to predict teacher attributions on learner change (Woolfson & Brady, 2009). In addition, teachers present information differently and have different methods for assessing students (Green & Stager, 1986). Those differences may have an impact on how students engage, acquire the skills, and demonstrate those skills (Boscolo & Mason, 2003; Keaton, Palmer, Nicholas, & Lake, 2007; Shen Chen, & Guan, 2007; Yamarik, 2007). Again, these differences among teacher beliefs, styles, assessments, and expectations affect student grades, and may provide another explanation for score differences from one year to the next. This could account for the statistical lack of progress during the first part of the school year. Comparing grades from the same teacher across an entire year during which the group intervention is delivered could minimize any grade differences due to teacher styles, once again providing a more reliable view of academic growth or regression.

Academic progress cannot be definitively linked to all members of the study sample. Dependent sample *t* tests revealed no statistical change, on average, for students in the areas of reading, writing, math, and science when comparing the pre-score with the

second quarter score. However, there was evidence that many students who participated in the group improved grades on one or more areas. Of particular importance is that 27 of the 30 students who were included based on academic concerns demonstrated improvement in at least one subject area for the second quarter. While no statistical evidence can be claimed, some practical significance might exist, as 90% of students who were referred for academic concerns improved grades in at least one area. Again, more data over a longer period of time could reveal more authentically whether or not the intervention has potential to positively impact grades.

### **Impact on Behavior**

The behavior of students provides a second arena in which school counselors can seek evidence of school change. Appropriate student behavior has been linked with resilience (Doll, Zucker, & Brehm, 2004), so a counseling intervention that could be linked with improved behavior might also infer some enhanced resiliency within the student. Although conduct grades on report cards did not reveal any statistical change in the behavior of students, the number of behavioral reports among group members declined significantly. Specifically, those with histories of behavioral concerns appeared to improve.

In the sample of 59, six students earned conduct grades one letter grade higher than the conduct pre-score. Two students in the sample received conduct grades one letter lower than the pre-score. One of the students who received a “needs improvement” grade had no behavioral reports, complicating interpretation of the conduct grade. Perhaps conduct grades, as determined by teachers, reflect more than behavior or discipline reports, making them more difficult to interpret or measure. In summary, 10%

of the students improved their conduct grades, 89% maintained their satisfactory conduct, and 1% earned lower conduct grades.

A total of 19 students had received an official behavioral report during the previous school year, either in the form of an action plan by the teacher or an official administrative referral for discipline. Eighteen students, or 95% of those referred due to documented discipline problems, reduced the number of behavioral reports. Fifteen of the students who had one report during the first semester of the previous year had zero incidences in the semester during which the group intervention was implemented. Three students who had two reports previously also had zero reports during the study. Overall, 19 of the 20 students, or 95%, referred for behavioral concerns received satisfactory or excellent conduct grades following the group intervention.

Of particular interest is the student who had eight reports during the first semester of the previous school year. During the semester when the student participated in the resiliency group with the counselor, only one report was filed. Unfortunately, that single incident was significant and impacted his academic grades due to an extended removal from classes for in-house suspension. The teacher of this student reported that she believed the time spent with the counselor in the group had made his overall improvement possible. That teacher also indicated that the single incident at the end of the semester was a result of one poor choice and, although the consequence was significant, it did not detract from the genuine improvement in the student's school behavior and classroom engagement. When submitting her completed SDQ after the group's conclusion, this teacher told the counselors, "I don't care what this says. J's participation in the group made a big difference for him."

It is important to note the inconsistencies between behavioral reports and report card grades. Of the two students who had lower conduct grades, only one had a behavioral report on file for the semester. In addition, the student who had eight behavioral reports during the previous school year also had a satisfactory grade in conduct for the same period. In fact, of the twenty students who were included for behavioral reasons, only two of them had earned an “N” or “needs improvement” in conduct during the previous school year. This researcher also experienced incidents in previous years when a student was referred to the counselor for behavioral concerns, only to learn that parents have never been contacted by school staff regarding any problems, no discipline records existed, and conduct grades were satisfactory. Local school administrators have eliminate this disconnect between conduct grades and documented behavior problems through grade level discussions and staff development.

The differences in teachers must also be noted in this circumstance, too. Each teacher possesses his or her own level of tolerance for misbehavior, expectations for compliance, and the subsequent rating of student behaviors (Tauber, 1998; Tomal, 1998). The quality of the connection between student and teacher also impacts both the student’s behavior and the teacher’s assessment of it (Burton, 1998). Therefore, both the behavioral reports and the conduct grades must be interpreted with caution.

Certainly, behavior is difficult to quantify. The counselor must use the tools available in the school setting. For this researcher, conduct grades on report cards and written behavioral reports in the form of teacher action plans and administrative referrals served as sources of information. Based on that available data, there was measured improvement for students who participated in the small group on resiliency based on the

number of behavioral reports. However, that positive result must be interpreted with caution due to the presence of a single student with eight reports. As an outlier, that one student's information could have positively skewed the statistical analysis.

The conduct grades did not reveal a statistically significant change, but did show a very small improvement in the mean for conduct grades during the intervention. However, this, too, must be interpreted with caution given the unreliability of conduct grades. Some practical significance is evident since 95% of the students referred due to behavioral concerns reduced the number of documented discipline infractions and earned satisfactory or excellent conduct grades.

### **Impact on School-Going Behavior**

School attendance is another source for evidence of change. It can be a particularly important measure since many schools use this as proof of school effectiveness. Indeed, No Child Left Behind mandates include average daily attendance as one possible measure of the school's effectiveness. Moreover, researchers have determined that more time in school is linked to increased student achievement (Marcotte & Hansen, 2010). Specifically, data examined by these researchers from No Child Left Behind indicated that the amount of time students are exposed to instruction does impact school performance. The school counselor who can positively influence school attendance may gain value in the perspective of administrators as students gain instructional time.

Students in the sample significantly improved their school attendance. Of the nine students who were included due to attendance concerns, two reduced the number of late arrivals to school, one of which went from six late arrivals to only one, while one

student reduced the number of early check-outs from four to zero. All nine students reduced the number of absences and number of late arrivals, an important result to consider on its own.

The students included in the sample due to a history of school absences accounted for a total of 67 absences during the first half of the previous school year. That composite number fell to ten during the semester of the group intervention. Since school personnel are required to call parents of absent students each day, this reduction in absences consequently decreased the number of phone calls, perhaps by as many as 57 if students had continued similar patterns for attending school, a noteworthy time savings.

Table 20

*Comparison of Days Missed for Students with Attendance Histories*

| Student | <u># Days Absent</u> |            | <u># Days Late</u> |            | <u># Days Checkout</u> |            | <u>Total</u> |            |
|---------|----------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|------------------------|------------|--------------|------------|
|         | Aug-Dec 09           | Aug-Dec 10 | Aug-Dec 09         | Aug-Dec 10 | Aug-Dec 09             | Aug-Dec 10 | Aug-Dec 09   | Aug-Dec 10 |
| 401     | 5                    | 2          | 0                  | 1          | 0                      | 0          | 5            | 3          |
| 405     | 8                    | 1          | 1                  | 1          | 4                      | 0          | 13           | 2          |
| 407     | 10                   | 1          | 0                  | 0          | 0                      | 2          | 10           | 3          |
| 412     | 11                   | 1          | 1                  | 2          | 0                      | 1          | 12           | 4          |
| 432     | 7                    | 1          | 0                  | 0          | 1                      | 4          | 8            | 5          |
| 502     | 6                    | 2          | 6                  | 1          | 2                      | 3          | 14           | 5          |
| 512     | 11                   | 1          | 1                  | 2          | 0                      | 1          | 12           | 4          |
| 514     | 8                    | 1          | 1                  | 3          | 1                      | 1          | 10           | 5          |
| 526     | 1                    | 0          | 2                  | 0          | 0                      | 0          | 3            | 0          |

Thirty-eight students in the total sample reduced their absences during the intervention. Nine of the remaining students in the sample missed the same number of days as the preceding year and 11 missed a few more days. This is an important outcome of the group intervention. Students who are in school more often should also have improved academic skills. Since time in school is linked to academic progress and,

therefore school effectiveness, school counselors who improve attendance may gain credibility and value with school administrators.

The data used for measuring school attendance seems least influenced by differences in grade level and teacher assignment, but there are relevant factors to consider. While the teacher may not be responsible for a student's absences, late arrivals, or early check-outs, the climate in that teacher's classroom and the relationship established with each student exerts influence on the student's desire to be in class (Nemec & Watson, 2007; Veenstra, Lindenberg, Tinga, & Ormel, 2010). Additionally, Doll, Zucker, and Brehm (2004) include authentic, positive relationships between teachers and students as characteristic of a resilient classroom. From this perspective, teachers, and the climate they create and the relationships they do or do not establish, do influence whether or not a child comes to school.

Other influences also affect school attendance. Relationships with other children, the possibility of bullying, personal illness, family circumstance may all impact whether or not a child comes to school (Stickney & Miltenberger, 1998; Veenstra et al., 2010). The student who believes he or she has no friends or feels bullied will develop reasons to miss school. Indeed, students who feel more isolated or sad may even be more susceptible to illness, increasing absences from school. Family events, whether legitimate reasons to miss school or not, occur outside of the child's control, but still may impact school absences (Stickney & Miltenberger, 1998). Consequently, one must be aware of other influences when evaluating school attendance.

Even when considering other influences, the group experience appeared to impact the attendance of participants. The counselors implementing the group noticed that group



members rarely missed group and always arrived excited about participating. Students spoke to counselors almost daily about group while on hallway duty during morning arrival times. Students checked to make sure group would happen as scheduled, asked what activities were planned, and conveyed their own enthusiastic anticipation about group. In fact, participants expressed intense disappointment when they realized that the groups would not meet one week due to counselor attendance at a professional conference.

Changed patterns of school-going behavior also revealed itself in group attendance. Of the 59 group members, 57 never missed a group session. One student missed a single session and independently made arrangements with the counselor to make up what he missed by participating with a different group that week. One student missed two sessions. Still another, who had a pattern of checking out early on Fridays, dramatically changed that behavior. When parents attempted to take the student from school early on a Friday before a holiday, he refused to leave until the group session was concluded. This was a significant change for this student and seems linked to the counseling intervention.

Additionally, counselors never had to gather students for these groups. In this school, counselors send reminder notices each morning to the teachers of students who are scheduled for group that day. Even with this daily, written reminder, counselors historically had to send for at least one member at group time. Conversely, students in this intervention arrived on time, as scheduled, without prompting. In fact, all members for one group were often waiting outside the door as the previous group dismissed. They appeared happy to be there and never expressed a desire to be anywhere else. This was

even true for those groups that met during the students' recess time or Friday afternoon "preferred activity time," a time when students who met predetermined criteria in the classroom earned the privilege of games or leisure reading.

Some of this may be tied to the bond established between counselors and students, another component of resiliency and protective factor for students (Masten, 2000; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1990). However, it was also evident that students had created valued relationships with each other, yet another factor in fostering resiliency (Henderson & Milstein, 2003). Both counselors noticed that friendships were being formed in group that would not have usually occurred. Students were also excited about sharing what they had accomplished during the week between sessions, reporting on goal achievement and returning optional homework assignments. They provided encouragement for each other, not only during the group sessions, but in other daily school activities as well. They also served as reminders for each other regarding the individual goal work that was a part of the group experience. Although multiple explanations exist, students did not want to miss group and, therefore, did not miss school.

### **Impact on Parent and Teacher Perceptions**

School counselors work uniquely in the domain of mental health (Walley et al., 2009). Other school personnel work to change academic performance and school-going behaviors, but only counselors claim the expertise to delve into the affective domain with intent to facilitate change. Therefore, determining whether or not changes occur in students' perceived wellbeing completes a more comprehensive perspective on the effectiveness of school counselor interventions. Results from analysis of SDQ responses indicate that parents noticed positive changes in all areas and teachers saw positive

changes in overall stress, emotionality, and hyperactivity and inattention.

**Total difficulties.** The total difficulties score represented a kind of composite score measuring overall stress, conduct, and peer relationships. Reports from both parents and teachers demonstrated a significant reduction, on average, in the total difficulties scores. This suggests that both groups perceive the majority of students who participated in the group intervention in a more positive or healthier way. In addition, positive relationships, correct behavior, and low stress connect to resiliency (Doll, Zucker, & Brehm, 2004; Martin & Marsh, 2006).

In this area, both parents' and teachers' scores were, on average, remarkably similar before (parent = 10.9, teacher = 10.95) and after (parent = 8.29, teacher = 8.31) the group intervention. Parents and teachers observe their children and students in very different settings. Yet, both groups reported similar scores. More differences were evident in the subscales, but this comparable overall perspective could suggest that the two groups are more alike in their understanding of the children than is always apparent. Since members of this sample were referred based on school-identified problems of academic performance, conduct, or school attendance, the parents and teachers might occasionally find themselves in somewhat adversarial positions. An understanding that teachers and parents share similar perceptions of the child might lessen tension for each.

Membership in the sample resulted in 54% of students receiving lower scores from teachers and 64% of students getting lower scores from parents. It is important to note that only a few scores fell outside the normal range both before and after the group intervention. Those lower scores were less susceptible to positive change since they were already considered normal. Prior to the intervention, 21 students had parent scores above

what is considered the normal range. After the group, only 10 students had above normal scores. However, five of the parents who had ranked their students high prior to the group did not return the follow-up questionnaire. Based on teacher scores, 33 students were above the normal range before the intervention, but only 15 received scores above normal at the end of the intervention.

This measure of general behavior might be a more meaningful reflection of student behavior than the conduct grades. The total score is based on the subscales of emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity-inattention, and peer problems, all of which can be associated with general behavior. The teachers, on average, identified a significant reduction for students in this area, suggesting that there were fewer problems noted overall. Although conduct grades did not reveal a statistical difference, teachers appeared to consider behavior to be improved for members of the sample.

**Emotional symptoms.** Emotional control has been tied to academic success and productivity, relationships, and behavior (Graziano et al., 2007; Izard, et al., 2001; Leerkes et al., 2008; Trentacosta et al., 2006; Zambo & Brem, 2004) as well as resiliency (APA; Neenan, 2009). Both parents and teachers saw a statistically significant reduction, on average, in students' emotionality, related to somatic complaints, worries, and unhappiness. In fact, the reduction for teachers' average scores was even more significant than for those of the parents.

Parents must rely on reports from the child regarding their feelings about school and school situations. Perhaps children report only the negative circumstances or emphasize them more. It might also be that parents question more whenever a negative event is reported by the child. This researcher experienced multiple situations in which

parents were responding to perceived student incidences, only to realize that either important information was omitted by the child or that the incident was far less important than it had been made to appear. Teachers enjoy direct observation. They are able to see events and emotions rather than rely on the possible hyperbole of child reports. This might explain why the average scores for parents was slightly higher for pre- and post-tests and why the reduction was somewhat less. Whatever the reason, both groups reported positive changes that were statistically different.

**Conduct problems.** This scale focused on obedience, anger management, and honesty. Behavioral management (APA: Goldstein & Brooks, 2002); emotional control (Neenan, 2009); and morality (Wolin & Wolin, 1993) have all been associated with resiliency. Furthermore, stress management might also be related to this area and has been identified as an important skill (Pincus & Friedman, 2004). Only parents reported a statistical difference in conduct problems. Although they began with different perceptions, the scores of parents and teachers were well matched at the conclusion of the group. It is important to note that the initial score averages were higher for parents (2.15) than for teachers (1.76), but the post-test averages were quite similar (parent=1.46, teacher = 1.41). The score range considered normal for this scale is 0-2. Only the average parent score exceeded that normal range, suggesting the parents had more worries about conduct than did teachers. Teacher averages were within normal on both pre-and post-tests. Consequently, the parent averages had more latitude to evidence change.

The lower initial score for teachers could be explained by one teacher's comment that she knew the students better for the second questionnaire than for the first. The first

questionnaire was completed only two weeks into the school year, a time when students and teachers are still becoming acquainted. It is also a time when problem behaviors have not yet become evident to teachers. Even if this is true and the teachers' score were somewhat lower, there was positive movement toward improved behavior based on post-test averages.

**Hyperactivity-inattention.** Both parents and teachers reported significant reductions in the hyperactivity-inattention scale. In this area, however, it was the teacher averages that were higher than those of parents, on both pre- and post-tests. Since this particular scale focuses on physical activity level, impulsiveness, and the ability to focus and complete tasks, it seems reasonable that teacher scores would be higher. Teachers observe students in a far more controlled setting, during which opportunities for inattention and incomplete tasks are more easily detected. Throughout the school day, teachers monitor students with specific expectations for behavior and work production. Indeed, their jobs and the safety and well-being of their students rely on their ability to notice those very behaviors. It makes sense that teachers have greater awareness of any problems students might have in these areas. Even with the differences, both teachers and parents reported a general improvement in this area.

**Peer problems.** Peer problems, as addressed by the SDQ, include: whether and how often a child engages in solitary play, if a child is liked and has friends, is ever targeted by a bully, or prefers adults over other children. Social competence also represents a slice of resilience (Benard, 1991; Krovetz, 2008; Ungar, 2006 ; Wolin & Wolin, 1993). Finally, social support and social problem solving might mitigate stressful events (Dubow & Tisak, 1989).

Only parent scores revealed a statistically significant change. The initial parent scores (2.19) also were higher than those of teachers (1.56), suggesting that parents were, in general, somewhat more concerned about friendships. Other researchers have found that parents may underestimate their children's social skills (Galloway & Porath, 1997), which might explain the higher scores. Additionally, the average scores by parents may reflect their reliance on child reports of peer relationships. As with emotional concerns, those child reports may be filled with emotional distress, easily and quickly forgotten by the children but imprinted on the parents' hearts. Children may also be more willing to share peer problems with parents than with teachers. They may tell a parent about another child who does not like them or is mean to them and never mention it to teachers. In addition, the child may focus on that one problem when talking with parents, never mentioning or even remembering other, more positive interactions experienced. The parent possesses only the narrow and possibly disheartening picture as presented by the child.

Other researchers also reported differences between parent and teacher reports and suggested that the two groups rely on different context-dependent criteria for their assessments of social behavior (Veenstra et al., 2008). Those researchers found that teachers focused on academic performance and peer relations while parents attended to problems that cause stress at home. The difference in context accounts for varying perceptions of social behavior.

Residential status may also impact parental perceptions on the friendships of their children. Several of the students live in communities believed unsafe. Parents in these neighborhoods tend to restrict outside play, limiting opportunities for children to establish

friendships in arenas where parents could more easily observe them. A few of the students also reported living in neighborhoods with few or no children. These students indicated that they did not spend time playing outside with others unless parents arranged for someone to visit. One student reported that no one came to his house to play because of various time limits, including parent work schedules and child activity commitments. These students may experience less practice with friendship, and, consequently, parents may have fewer opportunities to observe that practice.

Teachers witness the interactions of students daily, often with groups that might not choose each other outside of the forced associations within the classroom. In this setting, teachers observe children finding ways to get along. Additionally, the school and classroom represents a controlled environment in which most peer problems are noticed, addressed, and forgotten. However, children do not report all problems with peers. Indeed, it seems that bullying episodes are reported to teachers only when some event makes the report unavoidable. If parental perspective veers toward the negative, the teacher point of view may, in fact, be skewed toward the positive.

The counselors noticed strong bonds formed between students within the groups. Since the groups were formed based on the scheduling availability of the students and the reasons for inclusion were dissimilar, there were few friendships between members prior to group. Some group members knew each other or had been in the same homerooms, but few spent time with each other outside of school or even during the non-structured time in school. As the group progressed, relationships among members became more evident, stronger, and more positive. Students encouraged each other in pursuit of their individual goals. Partnership activities were completed without dissension. Group



members helped each other complete the optional homework assignments. They spent time together outside of the group sessions.

One student, in particular, benefitted considerably from the positive bonds established in group. This student had a history of disrespectful behavior and hurtful peer interactions and had previously participated in counseling groups targeting behavior and individual counseling with no evidence of change. During the first four sessions, the student tried to maintain that same negative pattern with group members. With counselor correction and support from group members, that student began to demonstrate change during the second quarter. In fact, the student announced intentions to change to the group during the eighth session, receiving overwhelming support and encouragement from the other group members. Group members, teachers and the parent all reported positive changes. During the final four weeks, the student diligently worked for significant change, resulting in a surge of earned goal points in group and receipt of a class award. In fact, one teacher sought out the child's homeroom teacher in order to discover the reason for his positive behavior changes evident in her class. This child's story suggests the potential for this group's effectiveness.

**Prosocial behavior.** The prosocial scale of the SDQ provides evidence of students acting intentionally in kind and helpful ways. Prosocial skills impact academic progress (Wentzel, 1993) as well as peer relationships and achievement (Choi & Kim, 2003). While only the parent score averages were statistically significant, the teacher averages also provide some evidence of change in a positive direction. This positive change can also be linked to the bonds formed within the group, both with students and counselors and between students. Volunteering to help and being kind to others requires

courage. Perhaps the relationships formed in group supplied the confidence to reach out to others. In addition, several of the students had set individual goals that centered specifically on being more helpful to others. Those goals would offer another incentive to engage in more prosocial activities.

**Teacher and parent verbal reports.** Teachers met one afternoon after school, received the questionnaires, completed them independently in the group setting and returned them to the counselors. As teachers returned the completed questionnaires to the counselors, many commented on the challenge of completing the scores with a limited focus on the most recent month. One teacher admitted that it was especially challenging because she knew the students so much better now than when the first questionnaire was completed. Several expressed uncertainty regarding whether or not the positive changes they had observed would be revealed in the new questionnaire. The teacher of the student described above specifically stated that she did not care what the questionnaire revealed; the student had made important and positive strides. The teacher of the student who had only recently been involved in a significant disciplinary offense was especially concerned. She indicated that if that one offense had not occurred, the student would be the “poster child” for what counselors could do for children. In fact, she was sure that even the one incident would not undo the positive growth acquired while in the resiliency groups. That kind of teacher support for counselor interventions might be more valuable than a report of numbers.

Parents received the questionnaires in sealed envelopes, completed them at home, and then returned them to the counselors. Counselors had no direct contact with parents. However, parents of ten of the students in the sample sought time with the counselors to

talk about the group experience. Each of the parents mentioned the importance of their child's experience in the group. While most talked in generalities, a few were able to offer specific examples of improved behavior, grades, or a greater desire to be in school. One parent reported that the change in school-going behavior was "very different for the entire family" and something they would have to discuss. While not an overwhelming number, the ten parents represented far more feedback than the counselors typically receive following a small group. The intentionality of the parents in making counselor contact also suggests that it was exceptionally important to them to inform the counselors of their satisfaction. Several parents also had similar conversations with school administrators, who then relayed the positive remarks to the counselors. That further enhances the perceived importance of counselor interventions for students.

### **Implications**

This group can be linked with both statistical significance and practical significance. Statistical significance was evident in school attendance, school behavior, and perceptions of the students by parents and teachers. Parents and teachers perceived positive changes among students in relation to overall stress, emotional distress, and hyperactive-inattentive behaviors. Parents also demonstrated statistical significance with improvements in behavior, getting along with other children, and with helping and kind behaviors. Academic progress in the form of report card grades proved less sensitive to change.

For practical significance, some positive changes were evident in all areas, especially when considering the students based on reasons for inclusion. For the students who were included due to an academic concern, 90% of them improved in at least one

area. Among students with behavioral concerns, 95% of them reduced the number of discipline infractions and earned satisfactory or excellent in conduct. School-going behavior was improved by 100% of the students who had demonstrated some problems in this area. Considered from this perspective, the counselors were able to successfully impact all three areas of concern through a single intervention.

**Small groups.** Small groups are already an essential component of comprehensive school counseling programs (American School Counseling Association, 2005; Corey & Corey, 2006; Steen et al., 2007; Tomori, 1995) and finding ways to measure their effectiveness is important (Carey et al., 2008; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Dimmitt, 2009; Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Studer et al., 2006; Whiston, 2002). This particular small group offers a structure designed to address multiple concerns. Indeed, the reason for including a student is only important in terms of assessing change. This approach also facilitates heterogeneous grouping of students, further enhancing the group approach.

In addition, the number of sessions delivered in this intervention differs from those traditionally offered by school counselors, yet the demonstrated impact validates the method. In their work with adult learners, Sprinthall and Thies-Sprinthall (1983) identified components of intervention designs that facilitate cognitive development. They found that continuity, described as at least six months to a year, is necessary for a program to be effective. Successful programs that bring about change require a greater time commitment. This intervention was implemented from September through December, with a total of twelve sessions delivered to students. Perhaps this extended time commitment provided the necessary continuity, strengthening the intervention.

***Assessing small groups.*** Thinking quantitatively about counseling group interventions is essential for school counselors (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Dimmitt, 2009; Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Studer et al., 2006; Whiston, 2002). Assessments conducted before and after the group were accessible and easy for any practicing school counselors. In addition, using the existing data, like absence reports, report card grades, and discipline information, requires analysis only. This data represents that which is most important to the school's mission. Counselors who link their interventions with improved grades, behavior, and school engagement are counselors that school personnel will value and protect.

The SDQ was added in order to provide a specific mental health perspective, a unique and important role of counselors (Walley et al., 2009). With permission, it can easily be used by counselors in most settings to measure results. While communicating change in terms of school data is necessary, counselors must also preserve the unique and essential mental health position they hold in the school setting. Supplementing identified school change with changes in emotionality, levels of confidence, and social skills offers a comprehensive perspective that only counselors can contribute. It further validates the unique position of the counselor in the school.

***Heterogeneous groupings.*** The level of engagement among the students validates the positive approach this group intervention assumes. The absence of deficit-laden labels perhaps moderated any possible student concern about being included. In fact, the reasons for inclusion were never specifically addressed during the group and were only explained individually to students when gaining their assent. Students were never forced to examine their flaws. Rather, their strengths and growth were constantly

acknowledged and celebrated, a more current and positive approach to counseling (Lewis & Hatch, 2008; Ungar, 2006).

***Goal-setting.*** Another important component of this intervention was goal-setting. Several researchers include it as important to academic resilience (Brown et al., 2001; Doll, Zucker, & Brehm, 2004; Martin & Marsh, 2006; Wong, 1997). All group members identified personal goals and then worked to realize them. The ability to set and work for life goals is an essential piece of both educational and life success. Students had sustained practice over eight weeks to develop this skill. In addition, the process of setting and monitoring individual goals for each student required a strong partnership between counselors and teachers, a collaboration that can improve teacher perceptions and ensure the best possible service (Beesley, 2004; Tournaki, 2003). The goal process made teachers an integral part of the intervention, perhaps strengthening its efficacy.

***Length of intervention.*** Finally, the length of this group intervention, 12 sessions, is different from groups typically offered in the school setting. Most counselors offer groups that meet for four to eight sessions, citing time constraints and limited access to students. While that kind of group may have its role, the positive outcomes associated with this semester-long resiliency intervention for a large group of students suggests a far more effective strategy. Consider the level of engagement the members of the sample had with the counselors, each other and the group sessions. Cognitive development and effective intervention programs need continuity (Sprinthall & Thies-Sprinthall, 1983). Increasing the number of times a group comes together facilitates that continuity.

Additionally, consider the individual case of the student who had previously participated in short-term groups and had received individual counseling focused

specifically on changing behavior. No changes occurred until this particular intervention. The change began to happen only after six weeks and was not fully realized until the final four weeks. Ending the group prior to those moments would have resulted in no change for the student. Counselors need to consider more long-term investments with students in need of interventions.

**Focus on strengths.** Building on resiliency not only changes the focus from deficits to strengths, it also augments skills that are known to contribute to school success. This group design focuses on teaching and practicing those skills. The outcomes for students who participated corroborate the link those skills have with school success. Without ever discussing the importance of coming to school every day, the students improved their attendance in school. With no direct conversations about following rules and routines or complying with teacher request, students improved their behavior. Although study skills were never presented, most students raised their grades in at least one area. This approach not only produces positive results, it provides a distinctive, counseling-based intervention linked to the school's mission. That link between the counselor intervention and the mission of the school may then further validate the counselor's role in the school (Leuwerke et al., 2009).

**Social justice.** Because of the focus on strengths and the positive bond created, this tool also represents an instrument for social justice. Students living in poverty or marginalized by color, gender, or sex are often over-represented on lists of students with discipline problems, absenteeism, or academic underperformance. Furthermore, Chang and Romero (2008) reported that excessive absences impact achievement, especially for children in poverty or among marginalized populations. Therefore, the counselor who

monitors and attempts to impact the school-going behavior of students advocates for social justice.

The structure of this intervention also allows the counselor to form groups that are more diverse, not just based on referral reasons. The potentially negative reasons for group inclusion no longer function as the focus of the group. Related deficit-laden labels are not used, furthering social justice (Krovetz, 2008). The counselor can more closely monitor group composition, ensuring a mixture that is not restricted by any one trait. Consequently, the counselor again acts as a social justice advocate

**Counselor education.** The need for appropriately assessing counselor interventions is well documented in the research but counselors continue to be hesitant. Perhaps more instruction and practice on how to assess and interpret interventions is needed in counselor training programs. There need to be more than a few projects that require measuring both school-specific and mental health outcomes. Moving beyond degree programs, perhaps evaluation support can be provided to counselors who are already in service, providing them with both the technical advice and technological support for evaluating their programs. The real-world results that might emerge would contribute not only to the individual counselor's program, but also accumulate important data for other counselors to access when making programmatic decisions.

The preparation associated with this intervention was extensive. The counselors who implemented it often reflected on how that preparation facilitated the group experience, not just in content but in the counselors' ability to be fully present in the session. Perhaps counselor education programs could be more intentional about helping students create an extensive portfolio of interventions with documented effectiveness.



Every class could include the requirement to produce at least one specific intervention, based on research, addressing a frequently encountered need, and including all the important components unique to the intervention.

Another layer to the portfolio could be evaluation of existing programs currently available to school counselors. Counselors would gain experience in discernment of what makes a program effective while creating a list of what to consider when on the job. Once employed, time and needs conspire against the counselor's intent to create such a collection. Training programs that produce counselors with such a portfolio enhance the profession.

### **Recommendations**

This study represents only a first step toward validating an alternative approach for counselors to use in the school setting. This intervention needs to be replicated in various settings, with different populations. As some of the concepts are complex, it might be especially interesting to implement with older students. In addition, some of the concepts might have been more thoroughly explored if more than a single group session had been available. For example, the topics of goal setting, problem solving, and emotional competence were each explored in two sessions. Other concepts, especially stress management and optimism, need to be extended to two sessions each. While this adds another two sessions to the group, bringing the total of fourteen, it would deepen the students' understanding and perhaps yield even greater changes.

Results might be more meaningful if grade comparisons are made between corresponding quarters, for example comparing first quarter of one year to the first quarter of the following year. Finding additional ways to monitor academic progress

beyond quarterly grades, perhaps through individual assessment or specific measures of school-success behaviors, would provide more detailed information. More accurate measures of school behavior would also be helpful, especially one that quantifies behavior more precisely and easily for teachers. Longitudinal studies would reveal the long-term effects of this intervention. Perhaps booster sessions could be implemented as students transitioned from elementary school to middle school or middle to high.

Altering the timing of the group, related to the period in which it is offered as well as the number of sessions delivered to students, might increase the positive results. Future studies might consider implementing the group later in the school year, in order to limit the effects of teacher differences. Even waiting six weeks to begin the group might have benefits. A move to later in the year could give the goal-setting component even more meaning as teachers, with their increased knowledge of the students, could assist in the identification of those goals. The group could be delivered over the entire school year, conducting group sessions every other week, further building on the construct that continuity facilitates cognitive development and strengthens program effectiveness (Sprinthall & Thies-Sprinthall, 1983),.

Finally, a qualitative study that explores the experiences of students who participate in resiliency-based groups as well as their teachers and parents would further deepen counselor understanding of this intervention. Teachers involved in this study wanted to talk to the counselors about what was happening with their students. Indeed, the informal feedback from teachers was encouraging. Consider these comments from teachers:

One specials-area teacher sought the teacher and the counselors to ask, “What have you done with (*student*)? He has been a model student with me in class recently.” A fifth-grade teacher said, “I don’t care what the numbers say. This group made a big difference for (*student*).” A qualitative study that focused on teachers would give them a chance to tell their stories.

### **Limitations**

While this study represents a potentially promising intervention, there were problems and limitations. The identification of individual student goals and the weekly measurement of those goals were challenging and required significant teacher and counselor time. In addition, a change in homeroom structures meant significant differences for teachers related to instructional time and group-associated tasks. The necessity of taking students out of the classroom in order to conduct group sessions represents another limitation. Because of the added tasks required of teachers and the time out of the classroom for students, a positive connection between the counselors and the teachers is necessary. Finally, the counselors who implemented this study were highly trained and skilled at delivering services and assessing change in students.

The weekly goal sheets for students were an important component of the intervention, however, they were problematic. Initially, identifying meaningful goals for each student was especially challenging for teachers. They had difficulty in identifying a broad goal that could be measured across the semester and the requisite goal steps that could be assessed daily. It required several individual meetings with counselors in order to establish appropriate goals and goal steps. In addition, creating and collecting those sheets for group members each week was time consuming for the teachers and the

counselors. The teachers also struggled with completing the sheets each week and sometimes created some feelings of frustration for them. Another problem arose regarding what to do with the goal sheets when a teacher was absent, since substitutes rarely took the time or had the necessary awareness to complete the daily evaluations.

The structure of homeroom rolls was changed for the academic year in which this intervention was implemented. The creation of inclusion classes, which included groups of students receiving special education services, and gifted cluster classes, which placed groups of students identified as gifted, resulted in substantial differences in homeroom populations. Of the eight fifth-grade classrooms, two had zero students participating in the intervention, several had one to three students participating, and two classes had six or more students in the group. Although all eight fourth-grade classrooms had some students participating in the group, there was a similar clustering among three classes having six or more students. Those classes with six or more students in the intervention faced additional problems. The teachers had to be more flexible with instruction when almost a third of their class would leave for group. They also had an overwhelming task in completing the goal sheets for so many students. Creative scheduling by the counselors attempted to minimize the lost instructional time. In addition, the positive bond between counselors and teachers allowed any problems and feelings to be openly discussed and addressed.

Time out of the classroom is another dilemma for counselors implementing small groups. It was necessary for the counselors to work closely with teachers to identify the least disruptive times during which students attend groups. Counselors also had to be more creative about how to develop group schedules. Consequently, the groups did not

meet at the same time each week, alternating times so that no single subject would be consistently impacted by their absence from class. This required strong organizational skills on the part of the counselors to maintain a constantly rotating schedule of group sessions. However, that effort was recognized by teachers and may have further facilitated teachers' continued support for the groups. It also served to limit how much lost class time each student experienced for a particular subject.

Many of these potential problems were mitigated during this study because of the positive relationship that existed between counselors and teachers. The counselors who delivered the intervention had already established a good working relationship with teachers. They routinely provided teachers with data regarding the effectiveness of interventions tried. The teachers and administrators supported the efforts of the counselors and recognized the link counselors had with student achievement. Without this collaboration, some of the other difficulties encountered might not have been resolved.

Finally, two highly qualified and skilled counselors implemented this intervention. Both counselors have multiple years of experience and have embraced the current model which asks, "How are students different as a result of the school counseling program?" (American School Counseling Association, 2005, p. 59). Furthermore, both counselors have studied the concept of resiliency in children and believe in its promise as a healthier and more effective paradigm. Those skills and beliefs contributed to the enthusiasm, energy, and efficacy in which this group was delivered and, therefore, may have impacted results beyond those expected of the intervention alone.

**Conclusions**

This intervention study provides a valid alternative to the traditional groups offered in schools. It provides a bridge for mental health and the academic mission of the school. The possibilities of broadening the reach of the counselor, validating outcomes, and serving as a social justice advocate while delivering effective interventions are all present in this one design. It is hoped that resiliency becomes the intervention of choice for school counselors.

## References

- Afterschool Alliance. (2010). *America After 3PM Special Report on Summer: Missed Opportunities, Unmet Demand*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Akos, P. (2003). Resiliency and school counseling. *The Prevention Researcher*, 10(1), 8-10.
- Alexander, K., Entwisle, D., & Olson, L. (2001). Schools, achievement, and inequality: A seasonal perspective. *Educational Evaluation & Policy Analysis*, 23(2), 171-191.
- Alexander, K., Entwisle, D., & Olson, L. (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review*, 72(2), 167-180.
- American Psychological Association. (n.d.) *The road to resilience*. (brochure). Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter>
- American School Counselor Association (2005). *The ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs, second edition*. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Amschler, D., & McKenzie, J. (2005). Elementary students' sleep habits and teacher observations of sleep-related problems. *Journal of School Health*, 75(2), 50-56.
- Arman, J. (2000). A small group model for working with elementary school children of alcoholics. *Professional School Counseling*, 3(4), 290-294.
- Baker, J., Parks-Savage, A., & Reh fuss, M. (2009). Teaching social skills in a virtual environment: An exploratory study. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 34(3), 209-226.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*.

Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy. *Harvard Mental Health Letter*, 13(9), 4.

Beesley, D. (2004). Teachers' perceptions of school counselor effectiveness:

Collaborating for student success. *Education*, 125, 259-270.

Benard, B. (n.d.). *From risk to resiliency: What schools can do*. Retrieved July 1, 2009,

from

[http://www.tanglewood.net/projects/teachertraining/Book\\_of\\_Readings/Benard.pdf](http://www.tanglewood.net/projects/teachertraining/Book_of_Readings/Benard.pdf)

Benard, B. (1991). *Fostering resiliency in kinds: Protective factors in the family, school, and community*. San Francisco: WestEd.

Benard, B. (2004). *Resiliency: What we have learned*. San Francisco: WestEd.

Bloom, L. (2001). I'm poor, I'm, single, I'm a mom, and I deserve respect: Advocating in schools as and with mothers in poverty. *Educational Studies*, 32(3), 300-316.

Boscolo, P., & Mason, L. (2003). Topic knowledge, text coherence, and interest: How they interact in learning from instructional texts. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 71(2), 126-148.

Bosworth, K., Orpinas, P., & Hein, K. (2009). Development of a positive school climate.

In M. Kenny, A. Horne, P. Orpinas, & L. Reese (Eds.), *Realizing social justice:*

*The challenge of preventive interventions* (229-248). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Bosworth, K., & Walz, G. (2005). *Promoting student resiliency*. Alexandria, VA:

American Counseling Association Foundation.

Bradley, C. (2001). A counseling group for African-American adolescent males.



*Professional School Counseling*, 4(5), 370-374.

Brendtro, L. K., & Longhurst, J. E. (2005). The resilient brain. *Reclaiming Children and*

*Youth: The Journal of Strength-based Interventions*, 14(1), 52-61.

Brigman, G., & Campbell, C. (2003). Helping students improve academic achievement and school success behavior. *Professional School Counseling*, 7(2), 91-98.

Brigman, G., Webb, L., & Campbell, C. (2007). Building skills for school success: Improving the academic and social competence of students. *Professional School Counseling*, 10(3), 279-288.

Brown, J., D'Emidio-Caston, M., & Benard, B. (2001). *Resilience education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Bruce, A., Getch, Y., & Ziomek-Daigle, J. (2009). Closing the gap: A group counseling approach to improve test performance of African-American students. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(6), 450-457.

Burton, M. (1998). *Teachers Action--Students Lives: The Silent Voice of Discipline*. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Carey, J., Hatch, T., Lapan, R., & Whitson, S. (2008). Report of the National Panel for Evidence-Based School Counseling: Outcome research coding protocol and evaluation of student success skills and second step. *Professional School Counseling*, 11(3), 197-206.

Chang, H., & Romero, M. (2008). *Present, engaged, and accounted for: The critical importance of addressing chronic absence in the early grades*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty. Retrieved February 26, 2011 from [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text\\_837.pdf](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_837.pdf)

- Choi, D., & Kim, J. (2003). Practicing social skills training for young children with low peer acceptance: A cognitive-social learning model. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 31(1), 41-46.
- Clark, D., Slate, J., & Viglietti, G. (2009). Children's weight and academic performance in elementary school: Cause for concern? *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 9(1), 185-204.
- Cooper, H. & Nye, B. (1996). The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: A narrative and meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 66(3), 227-269.
- Corey, M., & Corey, G. (2006). *Groups: Process and practice* (7th ed). Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.
- Dahir, C., & Stone, C. (2009). School counselor accountability: The path to social justice and systemic change. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 87(1), 12-20.
- Dembo, M., & Seli, H. (2004). Students' resistance to change in learning strategies course. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 27(3), 2-11.
- Deptula, D., Cohen, R., Phillipsen, L., & Ey, S. (2006). Expecting the best: The relation between peer optimism and social competence. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1(3), 130-141.
- Dimmitt, C. (2009). Why evaluation matters: Determining effective school counseling practices. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(6), 395-399.
- Doll, B., Zucker, S., & Brehm, K. (2004). *Resilient classrooms: Creating healthy environments for learning*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Dubow, E., & Tisak, J. (1989). The relation between stressful life events and adjustment

- in elementary school children: The role of social support and social problem-solving skills. *Child Development*, 60(6), 1412-1423.
- Edwards, O., Mumford, V., Shillingford, M., & Serra-Roldan, R. (2007). Developmental assets: A prevention framework for students considered at risk. *Children and Schools*, 29(3), 145-153.
- Eppler, C. (2008). Exploring themes of resiliency in children after the death of a parent. *Professional School Counseling*, 11(3), 189-196.
- Epstein, L., & Mardon, S. (2007). Homeroom zombies. *Newsweek*, 150(12), 64-65.
- Florence, M., Asbridge, M., & Veugelers, P. (2008). Diet quality and academic performance. *Journal of School Health*, 78(4), 209-215.
- Froeschle, J., Smith, R., & Ricard, R. (2007). The efficacy of a systematic substance abuse program for adolescent females. *Professional School Counseling*, 10(5), 498-505.
- Galloway, B., & Porath, M. (1997). Parent and teacher views of gifted children's social abilities. *Roeper Review*, 20(2), 118-21. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Goldstein, S., & Brooks, R. (2002). *Raising resilient children: A curriculum to foster strength, hope, and optimism in children*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
- Goodman, R. (1997). The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: A research note. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 38(5), 581-586.
- Goodman, R., & Scott, S. (1999). Comparing the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and the Child Behavior Checklist: Is small beautiful? *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 27(1), 17-24.
- Graziano, P., Reavis, R., Keane, S., & Calkins, S. (2007). The role of emotion regulation

- in children's early academic success. *Journal of School Psychology*, 45(1), 3-19.
- Green, K., & Stager, S. (1986). Effects of training, grade level, and subject taught on the types of tests and test items used by teachers. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Hall, D., & Pearson, J. (2005). Resilience: Giving children the skills to bounce back. *Education and Health*, 23(1), 12-15.
- Hall, K., Rushing, J., & Owens, R. (2009). Anger in middle school: The Solving Problems Together model. *Journal of School Counseling*, 7(39), 1-22.
- Han, H., & Kemple, K. (2006). Components of social competence and strategies of support: Considering what to teach and how. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34(3), 241-246.
- Hass, M., & Graydon, K. (2009). Sources of resiliency among successful foster youth. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 31(4), 457-463.
- Haviland, J. (2003). When parent group meetings please parents. *Educational Digest*, 68(7), 51-56.
- Hawkins, J., Catalano, R., & Miller, J. (1992). Risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug problems in adolescence and early adulthood: Implications for substance abuse prevention. *Psychological Bulletin*, 112(1), 64-105.
- Henderson, N , & Milstein, M. (2003). *Resiliency in schools: Making it happen for students and educators*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Izard, C., Fine, S., Schultz, D., Mostow, A., Ackerman, B., & Youngstrom, E. (2001). Emotion knowledge as a predictor of social behavior and academic competence in children at risk. *Psychological Science*, 12(1), 18-23.
- Keaton, J., Palmer, B., Nicholas, K., & Lake, V. (2007). Direct instruction with playful

- skill extensions: Action research in emergent literacy development. *Reading Horizons*, 47(3), 229-250.
- Kitano, M., & Lewis, R. (2005). Resilience and coping: Implications for gifted children and youth at risk. *Roeper Review*, 27(4), 200-205.
- Kolb, S., & Stuart, S. (2005). Active problem solving: A model for empowerment. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 38(2), 14-20.
- Krovetz, M. (2008). *Fostering resilience: Expecting all students to use their minds and hearts well* (2nd ed. ). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Kruczek, T., Alexander, C., & Harris, K. (2005). An after-school counseling program for high-risk middle school students. *Professional School Counseling*, 9(2), 160-163.
- LaFountain, R., (1996). Solution-focused counseling groups: A key for school counselors. *School Counselor*, 43(4), 256-267.
- Lane, K., Kalberg, J., Parks, R., & Carter (2008). Student risk screening scale: Initial evidence for score reliability and validity at the high school level. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 16(3), 178-190.
- Laursen, E. & Oliver, V (2003). Recasting problems as potentials in group work. *Reclaiming Children and Youth: The Journal of Strength-based Interventions*, 12(1), 46-48.
- Leerkes, E., Paradise, M., O'Brien, M., Calkins, S., & Lange, G. (2008). Emotion and cognition processes in preschool children. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 54(1), 102-124.
- Leondari, A., & Gonida, E. (2007). Predicting academic self-handicapping in different age groups: The role of personal achievement goals and social goals. *British*

- Journal of Educational Psychology*, 77(3), 595-611.
- Leuwerke, W., Walker, J., & Qi, S. (2009). Informing principals: The impact of different types of information on principals' perceptions of professional school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(4), 263-271.
- Lewis, R. (1999). A write way: Fostering resiliency during transitions. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development*, 37(4), 200-211.
- Lewis, R., & Hatch, T. (2008). Cultivating strengths-based professional identities. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(2), 115-118.
- Lopez, C., & Bhat, C. (2007). Supporting students with incarcerated parents in schools: A group intervention. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 32(2), 139-153.
- Luck, L., & Webb, L. (2009). School counselor action research: A case example. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(6), 408-412.
- Malott, K., Paone, T., Humphreys, K., & Martinez, T. (2010). Use of group counseling to address ethnic identity development: Application with adolescents of Mexican descent. *Professional School Counseling*, 13(5), 257-267.
- Marcotte, D., & Hansen, B. (2010). Time for school? *Education Next*, 10(1), 52-59.
- Martin, A., & Marsh, H. (2006). Academic resilience and its psychological and educational correlates: A construct validity approach. *Psychology in Schools*, 43(3), 267-281.
- Masten, A. (2000). Children who overcome adversity to succeed in life. *Just in Time Research: Resilient Communities* (pp. 33-41). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota. Retrieved June 26, 2009 from [http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/components/7565\\_06.html](http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/components/7565_06.html)

- Masten, A., Herbers, J., Cutuli, J. & Lafavor, T. (2008). Promoting competence and resilience in the school context. *Professional School Counseling, 12*(2), 76-84.
- Mathai, J., Anderson, P., & Bourne, A. (2003). Use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire as an outcome measure in a child and adolescent mental health service. *Australasian Psychiatry, 11*(3), 334-337.
- McArthur, J. (2002). The why, what, and how of teaching children social skills. *Social Studies, 93*(4), 183-186.
- McEachern, A., & Kenny, M. (2007). Transition groups for high school students with disabilities. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 32*(2), 165-177.
- McMillan, J., & Reed, D. (1994). At-risk students and resiliency: Factors contributing to academic success. *Clearing House, 67*(3), 137. Retrieved August 30, 2009 from Academic Search Complete database.
- McTigue, E., Washburn, E., & Liew, J. (2009). Academic resilience and reading: Building successful readers. *Reading Teacher, 62*(5), 422-432.
- Meier, C., DiPerna, J., & Oster, M. (2006). Importance of social skills in the elementary grades. *Education and Treatment of Children, 29*(3), 409-418.
- Merrell, K. (2010). Linking prevention science and social emotional learning: The Oregon resiliency project. *Psychology in Schools, 47*(1), 55-70.
- Miranda, A., Webb, L., Brigman, G., & Peluso, P. (2007). Student success skills: A promising program to close the academic achievement gap for African American and Latino students. *Professional School Counseling, 10*(5), 490-497.
- Morales, E. (2008). A focus on hope: Toward a more comprehensive theory of academic resiliency among at-risk minority students. *The Journal of At-Risk Issues, 14*(1),

23-32.

Mornane, A. (2009). Adolescent students views of factors influencing their learning.

*International Journal of Learning*, 16(5), 221-229.

Muller, L. (2002). Group counseling for African American males: When all you have are

European American counselors. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 27(3),

299-313.

Neenan, M. (2009). *Developing resilience: A cognitive-behavioural approach*. New

York, NY: Routledge.

Nemec, C., & Watson, R. (2007, April 1). Teacher initiatives to reduce truancy among

high school students. *Online Submission*. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Paisley, P., & McMahon, H. (2001). School counseling for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Challenges

and opportunities. *Professional School Counseling*, 5(2), 106-116.

Pajares, F. (1995, April). *Self-efficacy in academic settings*. Paper presented at the annual

meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

Pajares, F., Miller, M., & Johnson, M. (1999). Gender differences in writing self-beliefs

of elementary school students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 91(1), 50-64.

Paone, T., Malott, K., & Maldonado, J. (2008). Exploring group activity therapy with

ethnically diverse adolescents. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 3(3), 285-

302.

Perepiczka, M. (2009). Wellness-based group counseling with elementary students in

disciplinary alternative education programs. *Journal of School Counseling*, 7(10),

1-27.

Perkins, G., Oescher, J., & Ballard, M. (2010). The evolving identity of school counselors



- as defined by the stakeholders. *Journal of School Counseling*, 8(31), Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Perusse, R., Goodnough, G., & Lee, V. (2009). Group counseling in the schools. *Psychology in the Schools*, 46(3), 225-231.
- Pincus, D. & Friedman, A. (2004). Improving children's coping with everyday stress: Transporting treatment interventions to the school setting. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 7(4), 223-240.
- Prupas, B., & Downing, J. (1994). Using a student newsletter to teach problem-solving techniques to children. *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling*, 28(3), 229-231.
- Rader, L. (2005). Goal setting for students and teachers: Six steps to success. *Clearing House*, 78(3), 123-126.
- Ramirez, S., Jain, S., Flores-Torres, L., Perez, R., & Carlson, R. (2009). The effects of cuento therapy on reading achievement and psychological outcomes of Mexican-American students. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(3), 253-262.
- Resiliency programs key to decreasing US dropout rate. (2007). *International Educator*, 22(2), 34.
- Rink, E. & Tricker, R. (2003). Resiliency-based research and adolescent health behaviors. *The Prevention Researcher*, 10(1), 4.
- Rush, C., & Akos, P. (2007). Supporting children and adolescents with deployed caregivers: A structured group approach for school counselors. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 32(2), 113-125.
- Ruth, W. (1996). Goal setting and behavior contracting for students with emotional and

- behavioral difficulties. *Psychology in the Schools*, 33(2), 153-158.
- Rutter, M. (1979). *Fifteen thousand hours: Secondary schools and their effects on children*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sagor, R. (2008). Cultivating optimism in the classroom. *Educational Leadership*, 65(6), 26-31.
- Santa, A. (2006). How children develop resiliency. *Independent School*, 66-70.
- Schunk, D. (2003). Self-efficacy for reading and writing: influence of modeling, goal setting, and self-evaluation. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 19(2), 159-172.
- Search Institute. (1997). *The asset approach: Giving kids what they need to succeed*. Minneapolis, MN: Author.
- Shallcross, L. (2010). Ramping up resiliency. *Counseling Today*, 52(9), 44-47.
- Shen, B., Chen, A., & Guan, J. (2007). Using achievement goals and interest to predict learning in physical education. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 75(2), 89-108.
- Sherman, J., Rasmussen, C., & Baydala, L. (2008). The impact of teacher factors on achievement and behavioural outcomes of children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): A review of the literature. *Educational Research*, 50(4), 347-360.
- Sherrod, M., Getch, Y., & Ziomek-Daigle, J. (2009). The impact of positive behavior support to decrease discipline referrals with elementary students. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(6), 421-427.
- Siebert, A., (2005). *The resiliency advantage: Master change, thrive under pressure, and bounce back from setbacks*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

- Singh, A. (2010). "Just getting out of bed is a revolutionary act": The resilience of transgender people of color who have survived traumatic life events. *Traumatology*. doi:10.1177/1534765610369261
- Skudrzyk, B., Zera, D., McMahon, G., Schmidt, R., Boyne, J., & Spannaus, R. (2009). Learning to relate: Interweaving creative approaches in group counseling with adolescents. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 4(3), 249-261.
- Sonnenshein-Schnieder, M., & Baird, K. (1980). Group counseling children of divorce in the elementary schools: Understanding process and technique. *Personnel & Guidance Journal*, 59(2), 88-91.
- Sprinthall, N., & Thies-Sprinthall, L. (1983). The teacher as adult learner: A cognitive developmental view. In G. Griffin (Ed.), *Staff Development* (pp.13-35). Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education.
- Stanbury, S., Bruce, M., Jain, S., & Stellern, J. (2009). The effects of an empathy building program on bullying behavior. *Journal of School Counseling*, 7(2), 1-27.
- Steen, S., Bauman, S., & Smith, J. (2007). Professional school counselors and the practice of group work. *Professional School Counseling*, 11(2), 72-80.
- Steen, S. & Kaffenberger, C. J. (2007). Integrating academic interventions into small group counseling in elementary schools. *Professional School Counseling*, 10(5), 516-519.
- Stevens, T., To, Y., Stevenson, S., & Lochbaum, M. (2008). The importance of physical activity and physical education in the prediction of academic achievement. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 31(4), 368-388.
- Stickney, M., & Miltenberger, R. (1998). School refusal behavior: Prevalence,

- characteristics, and the schools' response. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 21(2), 160-70.
- Stroh, H., & Sink, C. (2002). Applying APA's learner-centered principles to school-based group counseling. *Professional School Counseling*, 6(1), 71-78.
- Studer, J., Oberman, A., & Womack, R. (2006). Producing evidence to show counseling effectiveness in the schools. *Professional School Counseling*, 9(5), 385-391.
- Sullivan, J., & Wright, N. (2002). The collaborative group counseling referral process: Description and teacher evaluation. *Professional School Counseling*, 5(5), 366-368.
- Szente, J. (2007). Empowering young children for success in school and in life. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34(6), 449-453.
- Tauber, R. (1998). *Good or bad, what teachers expect from students they generally get!* *ERIC Digest*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 426985).
- Tomal, D. (1998). *A Five-Styles Teacher Discipline Model*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association, Chicago, October 14-17, 1998. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 425158).
- Tomori, B. (1995). Small group counseling at the elementary level: Theory into practice. *Guidance and Counseling*, 10(3), 23-30.
- Tournaki, N. (2003). Effect of student characteristics on teachers' predictions of student success. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 96(5), 310-319.
- Trentacosta, C., Izard, C., Mostow, A., & Fine, S. (2006). Children's emotional competence and attentional competence in early elementary school. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 21(21), 148-170.

- Turnbull, A., & Turnbull, H. (2001). *Families, professionals, and exceptionality: Collaborating for empowerment* (4th ed. ). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Ungar, M. (2006). *Strengths-based counseling with at-risk youth*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, National School Lunch Program Fact Sheet, Page 4. Retrieved May 8, 2010 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/AboutLunch/NSLPFactSheet.pdf>
- Usher, E., & Pajares, F. (2006). Inviting confidence in school: Invitations as a critical source of the academic self-efficacy beliefs of entering middle school students. *Journal of Invitational Theory & Practice*, 12, 7-16.
- Veenstra, R., Lindenberg, S., Oldehinkel, A. J., De Winter, A. F., Verhulst, F. C., & Ormel, J. (2008). Prosocial and antisocial behavior in preadolescence: Teachers' and parents' perceptions of the behavior of girls and boys. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 32(3), 243-251.
- Veenstra, R., Lindenberg, S., Tinga, F., & Ormel, J. (2010). Truancy in late elementary and early secondary education: The influence of social bonds and self-control--The TRAILS Study. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 34(4), 302-310.
- Villalba, J., Ivers, N., & Ohlms, A. (2010). Cuento group work in emerging rural Latino communities: Promoting personal-social development of Latina/o middle school students of Mexican heritage. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 35(1), 23-43.
- Walley, C., Grothaus, T., & Craigen, L. (2009). Confusion, crisis, and opportunity:

Professional school counselors' role in responding to student mental health.

*Journal of School Counseling*, 7(36), Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Washington, S. (2008). Contextualizing risk and resiliency: Using narrative inquiry with female adolescents in an alternative high school program. *Journal of Classroom Interaction*, 43(1), 14-33.

Webb, L., & Brigman, G. (2007). Student success skills: A structured group intervention for school counselors. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 32(2), 190-201.

Webb, L., Brigman, G., & Campbell, C. (2005). Linking school counselors and student success: A replication of the student success skills approach targeting the academic social competence of students. *Professional School Counseling*, 8(5), 407-413.

Webb, L., & Myrick, R. (2003). A group counseling intervention for children with attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder. *Professional School Counseling*, 7(2), 108-115.

Wentzel, K., (1993). Does being good make the grade? Social behavior and academic competence in middle school. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 85(2), 357-364.

Werner, E. & Smith, R. (1990). *Overcoming the odds: High risk children from birth to adulthood*. New York, NY: Cornell University Press.

WestEd. (2011) Resilience & youth development: Resilience theory.

[http://chks.wested.org/using\\_results/resilience](http://chks.wested.org/using_results/resilience)

White, M., & Epstein, D. (1990). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. New York: Newton.

- White, N., & Rayle, A. (2007). Strong teens: A school-based small group experience for African American males. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 31*(2), 178-189.
- Whiston, S. (2002). Response to the past, present, and future of school counseling: Raising some issues. *Professional School Counseling, 5*(3), 148-155.
- Whitson, S., & Quinby, R. (2009). Review of school counseling outcome research. *Psychology in the Schools, 46*(3), 267-272.
- Wolin, S., & Wolin, S. (1993). *The resilient self: How survivors of troubled families rise above adversity*. New York, NY: Villard.
- Wong, M. (1997). How risky is “at-risk?” Building the cords of resiliency. *American Secondary Education, 25*, 1-7.
- Woolfson, L., & Brady, K. (2009). An investigation of factors impacting on mainstream teachers' beliefs about teaching students with learning difficulties. *Educational Psychology, 29*(2), 221-238.
- Yalom, I. (with Lesezcz, M.) (2005). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Cambridge, MA: Basic Books.
- Yamarik, S. (2007). Does cooperative learning improve student learning outcomes? *The Journal of Economic Education, 38*(3), 259-277.
- Youth in Mind. (n.d.). What Is the SDQ? Retrieved May 20, 2010. From <http://www.sdqinfo.com/b1.html>
- Young, J., Mufson, L., & Davies, M. (2006). Efficacy of interpersonal psychotherapy-adolescent skills training: An indicated preventive intervention for depression. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 47*(12), 1254-1262.
- Zambo, D., & Brem, S. (2004). Emotion and cognition in students who struggle to read:

New insights and ideas. *Reading Psychology*, 25(3), 189-204.

Ziffer, J., Crawford, E., & Penney-Wietor, J. (2007). The boomerang bunch: A school-based multifamily group approach for students and their families recovering from parental separation and divorce. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 32(2), 154-164.



## Appendix A: Group Lesson Plans

Session 1: Understanding Resiliency and Quiz

Session 2: How To Be Healthy – Exercise, Diet, Rest

Resiliency Topic #1: Resilient Children are Healthy

Session 3: Goal Setting

Resiliency Topic #2: Resilient Children Are Able To Set and Work toward Goals

Session 4: Vision Board

Resiliency Topic #2: Resilient Children Are Able To Set and Work toward Goals

Session 5: Learning about Problem Solving

Resiliency Topic #3: Resilient Children Are Able To Problem Solve

Session 6: Problem Solving Practice

Resiliency Topic #3: Resilient Children Are Able To Problem Solve

Session 7: Emotional Competence

Resiliency Topic #4: Resilient Children Are Able To Understand and Communicate Feelings

Session 8: Emotional Competence

Resiliency Topic #4: Resilient Children Are Able To Understand and Communicate Feelings

Session 9: Stress Management

Resiliency Topic #5: Resilient Children Are Able To Identify and Effectively Manage Stress

Session 10: Personal Competency

Resilient Topic #6: Resilient Children are able to Identify Personal Skills and Believe in their Own Abilities

Session 11: Social Competency

Resilient Topic #7: Resilient Children are able to Make and Keep Friends

Session 12: Positive Outlook

Resilient Topic #8: Resilient Children are able to Interpret Events/Circumstances/Situations in a Positive Way

### Session 1: Understanding Resiliency and Quiz

Goal: Students will understand the concept of resiliency and rate their own traits of resiliency

- Explain the words resiliency and adversity. Adversity is a situation that causes unhappiness or distress and resiliency is the ability to “bounce back” from that situation. Talk about resilience as the capacity to face, overcome and even be transformed by adversity.
- Use a Slinky <sup>TM</sup> toy to demonstrate resiliency. The toy can be stretched and distorted beyond its original shape and dimension, and yet, it is usually able to return to its original shape.
- Brainstorm some of the adversities people face.
- Discuss the importance of resiliency as it relates to being successful in life. Include:
  - Resiliency gives us a sense control over our own destinies. It leads to healthier, happier, and more fulfilled lives.
  - Because it includes goal-setting, we are more able to have a brighter future.
- Distribute the student workbooks.
- Distribute the *Resiliency Quiz* and pencil or pen to each student and have the students complete it as a group. Collect the papers and pencils when completed.
- Emphasize positives by saying:
  - What is “right” is more important than what is “wrong.”
  - We want to focus on strengths and build up weaknesses.
  - Resiliency is something that grows over time. It is normal to experience times when you feel little or no resiliency as well as those times when you feel able to handle anything.
- Explain that over the next sessions, they will be learning about some of the skills that make up individual resiliency.

Session 2:  
How **to** Be Healthy – Exercise, Diet, Rest

Resiliency Topic #1: Resilient Children are Healthy

Goals: Students will identify the basic requirements of diet, rest, and exercise to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Students will set goals for healthy habits and monitor progress over a week.

- Discuss the importance of being healthy.
- Talk about what often happens when we are sick or tired, etc.
  - Less able to handle problems or conflicts
  - Emotions more volatile and erratic
- **Refer to pages in the student workbook:** *Food Pyramid, Exercise—Information, and Sleep Requirements Information*. Review the information on each sheet.
- **Refer to the *I Can Be Healthy* page in the workbook.** Go over the activity sheet and help the students develop a plan for improving their current patterns by setting goals for what each will try to accomplish.
- Direct the students to take their charts, complete them during the upcoming week and bring them to the next session for review.
- Distribute quote poster to the students and discuss. Have the students take their quote posters home and post them in a prominent place where they will be reminded of it daily.
  - What do you think is the meaning of the saying on the poster?
  - What does the saying mean to you personally? How could it apply to your life?
  - What is the benefit of believing something like the meaning of the saying on the poster?

### Session 3: Goal Setting

#### Resiliency Topic #2: Resilient Children Are Able To Set and Work toward Goals

Goal: Students will understand goals and their purpose.

- Direct attention to workbook page with the quote from *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll:
  - Discuss, as a group, what the quotation means to each of them.
- Have the students identify where they want to go in life by asking the following questions:
  - What do you hope to be or accomplish in your life?
  - What do you think will be necessary for you to do in order to achieve it?
  - What are you willing to do to achieve it?
- If students are willing to commit to where they want to go in life as a life goal, ask them to write it on the bottom of the activity sheet and then sign and date it.
- Together, read *How to Set a Clear Goal*, located in student workbook. Spend enough time on each idea to be sure students understand the basic concepts. Refer back to this information as students go through the goal-setting process.
- Instruct the students to identify one goal and write it on the sheet. These goals may relate to the reasons students were included in the group. Teachers may also be asked to identify goals for each student. Help the students identify – individually and as a group – the steps necessary to achieve the goal. Refer back to the questions based on the information sheet.
- Explain that they are to begin working on this goal immediately. The students will write their individual goals and the steps toward those goals on the *Goal Sheet*, which students will keep in their notebooks. Each week the counselor will give a copy of the *Goal Sheet* to the students' teachers. Those teachers will evaluate them as they work toward the goals they have chosen.
- At each subsequent meeting, allow time for the students to discuss their goals and their progress toward them based on *Goal Sheets* with the teachers' evaluations and comments.
- Distribute quote poster to the students and discuss. Have the students take their quote posters home and post them in a prominent place where they will be reminded of it daily.

Session 4:  
Vision Board

Resiliency Topic #2: Resilient Children Are Able To Set and Work toward Goals

Goal: Students will visualize personal goal achievement.

- Explain to the students that the ability to visualize their goal is important to achieving it.
- Students will be creating a small poster that depicts successful goal achievement. The personal poster should reflect the goal identified on their *Goal Sheet*. It may include pictures, graphics, words, and symbols, anything that will help remind them of the goal they are working to achieve. The final representation is personal and individual.
- Distribute poster board or construction paper to each student. Show the students the various art supplies.
- Tell the students they should use the paper or board and supplies to create some kind of visual representation of their goal. When finished it will be their personal poster.
- Distribute quote poster to the students and discuss. Have the students take their quote posters home and post them in a prominent place where they will be reminded of it daily.

Session 5:  
Learning about Problem Solving

Resiliency Topic #3: Resilient Children Are Able To Problem Solve

Goals: Students will identify situations when problem solving is required.

Students will understand the importance of making one's own decisions.

Students will practice using a problem solving model.

- Begin with a discussion on problem solving and choices by asking the following questions:
  - What do you usually do with faced with a problem?
  - What happens if you don't do anything about the problem?
  - What are some choices or decisions you have to make each day or each week?
  - Make a list of difficult choices on the chart paper as they are mentioned.
  - What happens if you don't choose or decide?
  - What if your first choice or decision doesn't work out well? What do you do?
- Show students the “decision maker” – a cube with each side labeled one of these options: yes, no, decide later, do what your friends suggest, do the fun choice, **and do** the work choice. Take turns drawing one of the *Choice Cards*. As the card is selected, the student rolls the decision maker. Discuss the consequences of doing what the “decision maker” suggests. Emphasize that decisions, choices, and solutions will occur regardless of the student's actions and that it is important for them to make their own decisions or solve their own problems.
- Make a “T” chart on the large chart or board. Label the left column, “Problem” and the right column “Possible solution.”
- Brainstorm a list of problems commonly encountered during a regular school week. List them in the left column of the “T” chart.
- Introduce the steps of effective problem solving. Practice the process using one of the problems identified earlier.
  - Identify Problem
  - Brainstorm Possible Solutions
  - Evaluate the possible solutions and choose the best one
  - Try it
  - Evaluate how it worked
- Distribute quote poster to the students and discuss. Have the students take their quote posters home and post them in a prominent place where they will be reminded of it daily.

Session 6:  
Problem Solving Practice

Resiliency Topic #3: Resilient Children Are Able To Problem Solve

Goal: Students will practice using the problem solving model.

- Review the steps to solving problems and tell students that in this activity they will be practicing by solving nursery rhyme dilemmas. Practice by doing one together. For example, Jack and Jill need a better way of securing water without getting hurt.
- Each pair of students receives a nursery rhyme which offers a problem. Students then work through the problem-solving model to arrive at a solution.
- Allow student pairs time to work through the problem solving model.
- After sufficient time, each pair will present their problem and solution to the group. Discuss the process each used and the anticipated success of the solution chosen.

Session 7:  
Emotional Competence

Resiliency Topic #4: Resilient Children Are Able To Understand and Communicate Feelings

Goal: Students will identify feelings and name synonymous feeling words.  
Students will identify situations that might evoke various feelings.  
Students will identify healthy and unhealthy ways to express feelings.

- Use a set of cards on which are faces which demonstrate various emotions. Tell the students they are each to draw one card at a time. For each card drawn, they must name the feeling on the card and describe a situation in which that feeling would be evoked.
- After each *Feeling Face Card* has been identified by the student drawing the card, ask the other students to:
  - Name unhealthy ways to express the feeling and tell what might happen as a result of their action.
  - Name healthy ways in which the feeling can be expressed and tell what might happen as a result of their action.
  - Identify other feelings words which are similar to this feeling.
  - Tell what they would want from others if they had this feeling.
  - Tell how they would let others know they had this feeling.
  - Tell how they might know if someone else was experiencing this feeling.
  - What might they do if someone else was experiencing this feeling?



## Session 8: Emotional Competence

### Resiliency Topic #4: Resilient Children Are Able To Understand and Communicate Feelings

Goals: Students will identify synonymous feeling words for broad categories of feelings.  
 Students will identify the range of feelings within broad categories of feelings.  
 Students will rank feelings by the amount of energy produced.

- Display four posters, each of which is labeled one of the following: mad, glad, sad, or scared. Explain that each of these **is** broad terms for a wide range of feelings. Emphasize that many people do not have the vocabulary to adequately express exactly what they are feeling and, therefore, typically, end up using one of these.
- Distribute sticky notes and a pencil to each student. Challenge the students to identify other words that might describe related feelings for each poster. Write each on a sticky note and add it to the appropriate poster. Examples include:
  - Mad: Angry, upset, livid, frustrated, annoyed, irritated, enraged, cross, furious, infuriated, aggravated, bothered, riled, disappointed,
  - Glad: Happy, pleased, joyful, cheerful, delighted, content, ecstatic, jolly, merry,
  - Sad: depressed, gloomy, miserable, unhappy, low, glum, dejected, despondent, forlorn, melancholy, down, blue
  - Scared: frightened, anxious, terrified, afraid, nervous, worried, shocked, alarmed, horrified, startled, panicky, fearful, jumpy, edgy, tense
- Discuss the importance of being able to specifically name what you might be feeling.
- Students will work in groups of 2 or 3.
  - Each group is given one of the posters. Their job is to put the words in order, demonstrating the intensity of the feeling word.
  - Tell the students to put the words in order, starting with those feelings that generate the least energy (*bothered*) and ending with those that generate the most energy (*enraged*).
  - Be sure to emphasize that there is no right or wrong hierarchy. It is mainly a matter of opinion, but that there are some words that do represent stronger emotions.
- Have partners report their findings to the group. Discuss the arrangements and why it can be helpful to be aware of the differences in these feelings.
- As the discussion for each poster continues, students write the feelings words on their individual pages in the appropriate columns.
- Distribute quote poster to the students and discuss. Have the students take their quote posters home and post them in a prominent place as a daily reminder.

## Session 9: Stress Management

Resiliency Topic #5: Resilient Children Are Able To Identify and Effectively Manage Stress

Goals: Students will identify stressors.

Students will evaluate various stressors for the anxiety each might produce.

Students will identify healthy and helpful ways to deal with stress and stressors.

- Introduce the concept that certain events can create feelings of stress. The event and the amount of stress are unique to the individual. Display four pieces of labeled construction paper. (At Home, At School, With Friends, In the Neighborhood)
- Ask the students to identify things that create feelings of stress for them and write them on the sticky notes, one per note. Each note is to be added to the appropriate piece of construction paper. For example, a note which says, *taking a test*, should be placed on the paper labeled *At School*.
- Read and discuss the notes which were added to the construction paper categories.
- Distribute the *Managing Stress* paper. Allow students time to write in a few stressors in each category. Students should select those that are most relevant for them. Allow time for the students to write a few notes on their papers in the middle column – What it feels like.
- Teach the students that responses to stress may be categorized as either feeling-focused or problem-focused.
  - Feeling-focused responses relate to attempts to modify or manage the feelings induced by the stressor. For example, if the idea of a test is identified as a stressor, a feelings-focused response may include practicing positive self-talk or utilizing calming breaths.
  - Problem-focused responses attack the stressor itself. Using the test example, a problem-focused response would be to study well, make flashcards, study with a friend, etc.
- Divide into 4 groups or pairs, giving each one of the 4 category posters. They may first determine the amount of control they have related to each stressor. This helps determine whether to employ a feeling-focused or problem-focused response. The partners/groups should then try to come up with healthy ways to deal with the stressors.
  - Students write each idea for handling stress on a sticky note – one per note. Each idea may also be coded as FF (feelings-focused) or PF (problem-focused).
  - Add each sticky note to the category. If appropriate, it can be added in close proximity to a specific stressor. General ideas can be placed anywhere on the paper.

- Allow each group to present their ideas on how to handle the stressors.
- Return to the students' *Managing Stress* worksheets. Allow time for them to complete the last column – *How I Can Handle It*.
- Give each student an index cards to the students. Have the students choose a stressor which they frequently experience. Write the stressor on one side of the card and at least one healthy thing they will do in the next week to combat the stressor on the reverse side of the card. Encourage the students to place the cards somewhere as a reminder for what they are working on this week.
- Distribute quote poster to the students and discuss. Have the students take their quote posters home and post them in a prominent place where they will be reminded of it daily.

Session 10:  
Personal Competency

Resilient Topic #6: Resilient Children are able to Identify Personal Skills and Believe in their Own Abilities

Goal: Students will identify what they can do

- Discuss all the things the group members have already learned to do in each of the areas mentioned.
  - Distribute the *My Skills* worksheet to each student. Have them circle any and all that they know how to do well. Sometimes, I try to differentiate between those that they are just now learning to do and what they already know how to do, but that is up to each counselor.
  - Distribute the cards that will fit inside the pockets.
  - As students identify the skills they have acquired, have them write them on the cards, one per card. Each card can then be filed in the appropriate pocket.
- Discuss how they learned those skills. (practice, making mistakes, getting better over time, etc.)
- Have each student create a personal portfolio in the following manner:
  - Give each student one file folder and pens, pencil, or markers.
  - Have the students add their names to the outside of the folder.
  - On the inside of the folder, have the students glue six to eight library pockets.
- Identify the arenas in which students are acquiring skills – academics, the arts, athletics, work-related, interpersonal, intrapersonal, etc. – using age appropriate terminology. Use these categories to label the pockets inside the folder. One might be labeled academic; another might be sports, and music. The students can determine how they want to label each.
- Distribute quote poster to the students and discuss. Have the students take their quote posters home and post them in a prominent place where they will be reminded of it daily.

Session 11:  
Social Competency

Resilient Topic #7: Resilient Children are able to Make and Keep Friends

Goal: Students will identify individuals they consider as friends.  
 Students will identify traits and characteristics important in a friend.  
 Students will identify behaviors that maintain friendships.  
 Students will identify behaviors that cost friendships.  
 Students will commit to positive friendship behaviors.

- Discuss the following questions:
  - Who are your friends? Be sure to distinguish between friends and classmates, and acquaintances. This can be a difficult concept for students to understand.
  - How do you know if someone is your friend?
  - What do you look for in a friend?
  - What makes friends important?
- Distribute *Friendship Wheel* and a pencil to each student and give the following directions.
  - Have each student write his or her own name in the center circle.
  - Then have the students write the names of friends on the spokes of the wheel. It may be helpful to suggest places in which they have friends:
    - ... Think of friends in your class
    - ... Think of friends in school, but not in your class
    - ... Think of friends in your neighborhood or apartment complex
    - ... Think of friends in activities (scouts, soccer, etc.)
    - ... Think of a friend you've had for a very long time
- Have the students think about the way they completed their *Friendship Wheel* as you ask the following questions:
  - What did you discover about yourself as you completed your *Friendship Wheel*?
  - What did you discover about your friends?
  - How would this wheel be different if all of your friendship wishes were true?
  - What do you wish to change about your *Friendship Wheel*? What can you do to make that change happen?
  - What makes you feel good as you look at your *Friendship Wheel*?
- Brainstorm a list of behaviors which win friends and write them on chart paper. Use the following questions to help generate ideas.
  - What are things people do to make friends?
  - What is something you do that makes others want to be your friend?
  - What is something others do that makes you want to be their friend?
  - Think of someone you consider popular. What kinds of things do you notice them doing?

- Review the behavior list. Ask the following questions:
  - Are there any behaviors on the list that may not be good ideas?
  - Which of these behaviors do you think are the easiest?
  - Which of these behaviors do you think are the most difficult?
  - Is there anything on this list that you would never be willing to do?
  - Which of these behaviors do you think you do well?
  - Which of these behaviors do you think you need to improve?
- Discuss what might happen if they decide to really concentrate on doing these behaviors.
- Encourage a commitment:
  - Provide an individual *Friendship Pledge* and pencil to each group member.
  - Have each student write in behaviors on the worksheet, identifying those behaviors he/she already does well and those that need more practice. Allow the students to use those behaviors on the list created or add their own ideas.
  - Have them sign and date their own pledge sheet.
- Distribute quote poster to the students and discuss. Have the students take their quote posters home and post them in a prominent place where they will be reminded of it daily.

Session 12:  
Positive Outlook

Resilient Topic #8: Resilient Children are able to Interpret Events/Circumstances/Situations in a Positive Way

Goal: Students will identify opposing perspectives possible from a single incident. Students will understand the benefits of looking for positive perspectives or interpretations of events.

- Draw *Situation Card* (set one) one at a time. Read aloud only the bold print.
- Ask a student to describe how someone would interpret that situation in a negative way.
- Ask another student to describe how the same situation could be interpreted in a positive way. Continue until all of the cards have been read.
- Discuss the following questions:
  - What might be the problems with seeing only the negative?
  - What might happen next if you see only the negative?
  - What might happen next if you see the positive?
- When students have the idea, you can add set two of the *Situation Cards*, allowing students to read and respond to them independently.
- Allow the participants to come up with their own scenarios, those situations they often encounter throughout each day, which offer opportunities for personal interpretation.
- Distribute quote poster to the students and discuss. Have the students take their quote posters home and post them in a prominent place where they will be reminded of it daily.
- Review the skills and traits presented throughout the group.
  - What skills or traits of being resilient have we discussed?
  - Which are the most difficult for you to understand?
  - Which skills/traits do you think are particularly strong for you?
  - Which skills/traits do you think require a little more effort for you?
  - Which ones do you think will be most helpful for you in school?
  - Which one do you think will be most helpful for you in life?
- Refer students to the *Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like* page. Discuss the first one or two traits together, brainstorming what each looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Have students complete the rest on their own.

- Distribute final quote poster to the students and discuss. Have the students take their quote posters home and post them in a prominent place where they will be reminded of it daily.



## Appendix B: Support Materials for Sessions

### Choice Cards for Session 5

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Should I pay attention to what my friends are doing in class?                        | Should I play a video game instead of doing my homework?               |
| Should I ignore my old friend when I am with my new, more popular friends?           | Should I join in the laughter when that different kid is being teased? |
| Should I accept responsibility for my misbehavior when the teacher asks me about it? | Should I stay home rather go to the movies with friends?               |
| Should I stand up for someone who is being bullied?                                  | Should I wear a coat to school when it's cold?                         |
| Should I wear my flip-flops to school on PE days?                                    | Should I take a water bottle to the soccer game?                       |
| Should I pack my book bag the night before school?                                   | Should I skip breakfast when I am in a hurry?                          |

### Situation Cards Set – Look On The Bright Side – Set One

Read only the bold print. Suggested perspectives are offered just in case students get stuck.

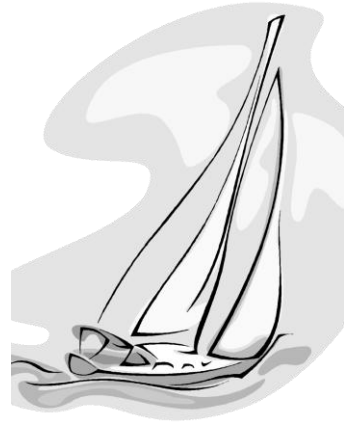
|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>You left the project that was due this morning at home.</b></p> <p><i>Negative view:</i> Teacher will yell and scream. Student will fail the entire grade. Parents will ground for at least one year.</p> <p><i>Positive view:</i> You may have to take a lower grade on the project but can turn it in tomorrow. Teacher and parents may be upset with you but not forever. You will learn to be more responsible about submitting work.</p>   | <p><b>Your best friend is eating lunch with the new student in the class.</b></p> <p><i>Negative view:</i> Your friend is probably mad at you. They are talking about you and deciding not to like you. No one will ever like you.</p> <p><i>Positive view:</i> Your friend has made a new friend and will include you in the friendship, too. The new friend may become another best friend.</p>  |
| <p><b>You made a really bad grade on the Social Studies test.</b></p> <p><i>Negative view:</i> The teacher is going to post your test on the bulletin board for every to see. Everyone else did better than you and they are going to laugh at you. Your parents are going to send you to military school.</p> <p><i>Positive view:</i> The test was really hard. The teacher is going to help you with what you missed and may give you a chance to take it again. No one but your teacher, your parents, and you will know about the test.</p>                            | <p><b>You see two students laughing and whispering to each other.</b></p> <p><i>Negative view:</i> They must be talking about you. They probably know something really embarrassing about you and are going to tell everyone. You'll have to move away.</p> <p><i>Positive view:</i> They are just telling jokes to each other. It's not about you. Even if it is about you, it's couldn't be anything that would upset you. Your friends will always like and support you.</p>  |
| <p><b>You are having a really difficult time understanding the new math skill.</b></p> <p><i>Negative view:</i> You'll never understand it. You are the only in the class who doesn't get it. You'll never be able to go to college or get a good job. You'll probably end up a bum.</p> <p><i>Positive view:</i> This is a really hard skill. Probably everyone in the class is struggling with it. The teacher will explain it again if I ask. I can work hard and will soon understand it. I've been able to learn new things before and I can do it this time, too.</p> | <p><b>You see your parents arguing.</b></p> <p><i>Negative view:</i> They are going to get a divorce. Neither of them will want you and you'll have to go live in an orphanage. You'll never see your friends or family again.</p> <p><i>Positive view:</i> My parents love each other and me. It's OK to argue. It doesn't mean anything more than a disagreement. I have arguments with my friends all the time and we're still friends. Even if they were to get divorced, they would still love, protect, and care for me.</p> |

## Situation Cards Set – Look On The Bright Side – Set Two

|   |   |
|---|---|
| The school counselor comes in your classroom for a talk with the teacher. | You are called over the intercom to come to the school office.                    |
| You see your parent in the school office on your way to lunch.            | You see a group of your friends at the mall while you are shopping with your mom. |
| The teacher puts you at a table with students who are poor readers.       | The teacher asks you to change to a new desk on Monday.                           |
| The soccer coach makes you play goalie for the first half of the game.    | The teacher calls you to her desk after a test.                                   |
| The school counselor asks to see you after lunch.                         | Your mom and dad stop talking every time you walk in the room.                    |

## Appendix C: Student Workbook

# Resiliency



One ship sails East  
And another West  
By the self-same winds that blow.  
'Tis the set of the sails  
And not the gales,  
That tells the way we go.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

## Student Resiliency Quiz

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

|  | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Usually |
|--|--------|-----------|-------|---------|
| 1. I have a positive outlook.                          |        |           |       |         |
| 2. I laugh during the day.                             |        |           |       |         |
| 3. I do not worry about might happen.                  |        |           |       |         |
| 4. I am able to tell people how I feel.                |        |           |       |         |
| 5. I usually know what others are feeling.             |        |           |       |         |
| 6. I get plenty of sleep.                              |        |           |       |         |
| 7. I exercise for one hour every day.                  |        |           |       |         |
| 8. I eat a balanced and healthy diet.                  |        |           |       |         |
| 9. I eat at fast food restaurants.                     |        |           |       |         |
| 10. I get 10 – 12 hours of sleep at night.             |        |           |       |         |
| 11. I have plenty of friends.                          |        |           |       |         |
| 12. I can manage my stress in a healthy way.           |        |           |       |         |
| 13. I know when I am feeling stressed.                 |        |           |       |         |
| 14. I can solve problems by myself.                    |        |           |       |         |
| 15. I can think of many ways to solve a problem.       |        |           |       |         |
| 16. I know how to set meaningful goals.                |        |           |       |         |
| 17. I know how to work toward achieving goals.         |        |           |       |         |
| 18. I set meaningful goals for myself.                 |        |           |       |         |
| 19. I work toward achieving my goals.                  |        |           |       |         |
| 20. I know what I want to accomplish this school year. |        |           |       |         |
| 21. I know what I want to do when I am an adult.       |        |           |       |         |

## Goal Points Sheet

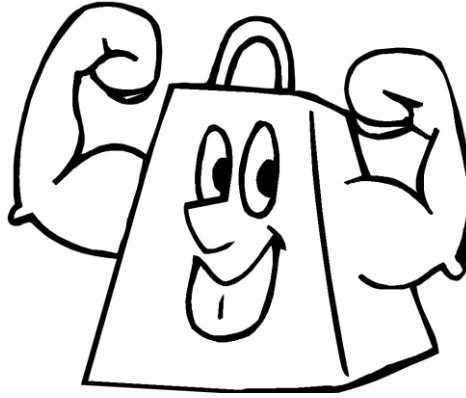
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Color in the boxes for each point earned toward your goal each week.

|           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |            |            |            |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| 25        | 25        | 25        | 25        | 25        | 25        | 25        | 25        | 25        | 25         | 25         | 25         |
| 24        | 24        | 24        | 24        | 24        | 24        | 24        | 24        | 24        | 24         | 24         | 24         |
| 23        | 23        | 23        | 23        | 23        | 23        | 23        | 23        | 23        | 23         | 23         | 23         |
| 22        | 22        | 22        | 22        | 22        | 22        | 22        | 22        | 22        | 22         | 22         | 22         |
| 21        | 21        | 21        | 21        | 21        | 21        | 21        | 21        | 21        | 21         | 21         | 21         |
| 20        | 20        | 20        | 20        | 20        | 20        | 20        | 20        | 20        | 20         | 20         | 20         |
| 19        | 19        | 19        | 19        | 19        | 19        | 19        | 19        | 19        | 19         | 19         | 19         |
| 18        | 18        | 18        | 18        | 18        | 18        | 18        | 18        | 18        | 18         | 18         | 18         |
| 17        | 17        | 17        | 17        | 17        | 17        | 17        | 17        | 17        | 17         | 17         | 17         |
| 16        | 16        | 16        | 16        | 16        | 16        | 16        | 16        | 16        | 16         | 16         | 16         |
| 15        | 15        | 15        | 15        | 15        | 15        | 15        | 15        | 15        | 15         | 15         | 15         |
| 14        | 14        | 14        | 14        | 14        | 14        | 14        | 14        | 14        | 14         | 14         | 14         |
| 13        | 13        | 13        | 13        | 13        | 13        | 13        | 13        | 13        | 13         | 13         | 13         |
| 12        | 12        | 12        | 12        | 12        | 12        | 12        | 12        | 12        | 12         | 12         | 12         |
| 11        | 11        | 11        | 11        | 11        | 11        | 11        | 11        | 11        | 11         | 11         | 11         |
| 10        | 10        | 10        | 10        | 10        | 10        | 10        | 10        | 10        | 10         | 10         | 10         |
| 9         | 9         | 9         | 9         | 9         | 9         | 9         | 9         | 9         | 9          | 9          | 9          |
| 8         | 8         | 8         | 8         | 8         | 8         | 8         | 8         | 8         | 8          | 8          | 8          |
| 7         | 7         | 7         | 7         | 7         | 7         | 7         | 7         | 7         | 7          | 7          | 7          |
| 6         | 6         | 6         | 6         | 6         | 6         | 6         | 6         | 6         | 6          | 6          | 6          |
| 5         | 5         | 5         | 5         | 5         | 5         | 5         | 5         | 5         | 5          | 5          | 5          |
| 4         | 4         | 4         | 4         | 4         | 4         | 4         | 4         | 4         | 4          | 4          | 4          |
| 3         | 3         | 3         | 3         | 3         | 3         | 3         | 3         | 3         | 3          | 3          | 3          |
| 2         | 2         | 2         | 2         | 2         | 2         | 2         | 2         | 2         | 2          | 2          | 2          |
| 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1          | 1          | 1          |
| Week<br>1 | Week<br>2 | Week<br>3 | Week<br>4 | Week<br>5 | Week<br>6 | Week<br>7 | Week<br>8 | Week<br>9 | Week<br>10 | Week<br>11 | Week<br>12 |

What do you notice about your progress toward your goal?

# Resiliency



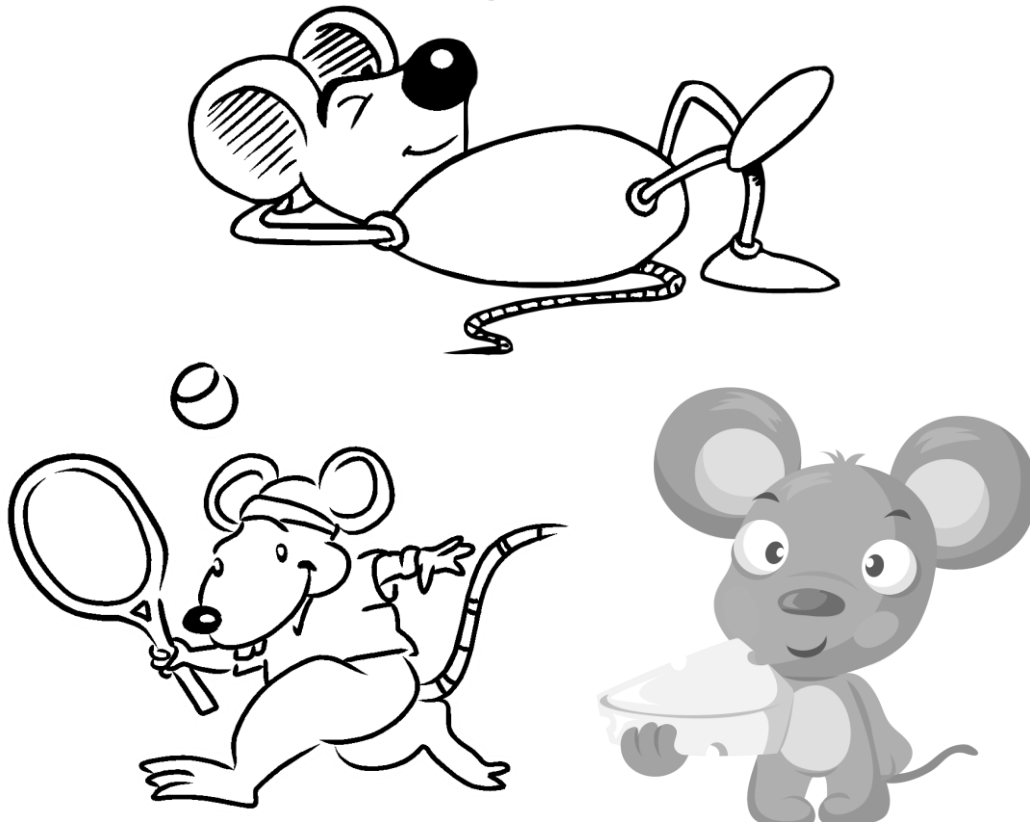
**Resilience is the ability to face, overcome, and even be transformed by problems. It means you can handle challenges and then go forward.**

**You have what it takes to be resilient!**

**Draw a picture or write something about resiliency.**

# BE HEALTHY

**Being healthy is a part of being resilient. When you are healthy, you can handle problems and challenges better.**







**Food Guide Pyramid**

The Food Guide Pyramid is one way for people to understand how to eat healthy. A rainbow of colored, vertical stripes represents the five food groups plus fats and oils. Here's what the colors stand for:

- orange - grains
- green - vegetables
- red - fruits
- yellow - fats and oils
- blue - milk and dairy products
- purple - meat, beans, fish, and nuts

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) changed the pyramid in spring 2005 because they wanted to do a better job of telling Americans how to be healthy. The agency later released a special version for kids. Notice the girl climbing the staircase up the side of the pyramid? That's a way of showing kids how important it is to exercise and be active every day. In other words, play a lot! The steps are also a way of saying that you can make changes little by little to be healthier. One step at a time, get it?

### **The Pyramid Speaks**

Let's look at some of the other messages this new symbol is trying to send:

**Eat a variety of foods.** A balanced diet is one that includes all the food groups. In other words, have foods from every color, every day.

**Eat less of some foods, and more of others.** You can see that the bands for meat and protein (purple) and oils (yellow) are skinnier than the others. That's because you need less of those kinds of foods than you do of fruits, vegetables, grains, and dairy foods.

You also can see the bands start out wider and get thinner as they approach the top. That's designed to show you that not all foods are created equal, even within a healthy food group like fruit. For instance, apple pie might be in that thin part of the fruit band because it has a lot of added sugar and fat. A whole apple - crunch! - would be down in the wide part because you can eat more of those within a healthy diet.

### **How Much Do I Need to Eat?**

Everyone wants to know how much they should eat to stay healthy. It's a tricky question, though. It depends on your age, whether you're a girl or a boy, and how active you are. Kids who are more active burn more calories, so they need more calories. But we can give you some estimates for how much you need of each food group.

### Exercise – Information Page

You exercise all the time without even thinking of it. Just being active, like when you run around outside or play kickball at school, is a kind of exercise. When you exercise, you are helping build a strong body that will be able to move around and do all the stuff you need and want to do. Try to be active every day and your body will thank you later!

#### Exercise Makes Your Heart Happy

Your heart is a muscle. It works hard, pumping blood every day of your life. You can help this important muscle get stronger by doing aerobic (say: air-o-bik) exercise. Aerobic means *with air*, so aerobic exercise is a kind of activity that requires oxygen. Here are some aerobic exercises:

|                 |                              |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Swimming        | Basketball                   |
| In-line Skating | Skipping                     |
| Soccer          | Jumping Rope                 |
| Biking          | Jogging (or walking quickly) |
| Rowing          | Playing hopscotch            |

#### Exercise Makes Your Muscles Happy

Another kind of exercise can help make your muscles stronger. Doing a push-up or swinging across monkey bars build strength. By using your muscles to do powerful things, you can make them stronger. Here are some exercises and activities to build strong muscles:

|          |            |                 |
|----------|------------|-----------------|
| Push-ups | Tug-of-War | In-line Skating |
| Pull-ups | Running    | Bike riding     |

#### Exercise Makes You Flexible

Most kids are pretty flexible, which means that they can bend and stretch their bodies without much trouble. This kind of exercise often feels really good, like when you take a big stretch in the morning after waking up. It's easy to find things to do for good flexibility:

|  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| Tumbling and Gymnastics                                      | Dancing, especially ballet |
| Yoga   | Martial Arts               |
| Simple Stretches – like touching your toes or side stretches |                            |

#### Exercise Keeps the Balance

Food gives your body fuel in the form of calories, which are a kind of energy. Your body needs a certain amount of calories every day just to function, breathe, walk around, and do all the basic stuff. But if you're active, your body needs an extra measure of calories or energy. If you're not very active, your body won't need as many calories. If you eat more calories than your body needs, it may be stored as excess fat.

#### Exercise Makes You Feel Good

It feels good to have a strong, flexible body that can do all the activities you enjoy - like running, jumping, and playing with your friends. It's also fun to be good at something, like scoring a basket, hitting a home run, or perfecting a dive. Exercising can also put you in a better mood. When you exercise, your brain releases a chemical called endorphins (say: en-dor-funz), which may make you feel happier. It's just another reason why exercise is good.

## Sleep Requirements Information

Sleep is very important to your sense of well-being. It allows your body and brain to rest and prepare for the next day. Lack of sleep impacts learning, memory, attention, and concentration. In addition, children who do not get enough sleep tend to be sick more often. Sleep deprivation adds up over time, too. That means that missing one hour of sleep Sunday through Thursday night feels like the loss of five hours by Friday.

Children who do not get enough sleep may become overly active, irritable, and exhibit extremes in behavior. In fact, sometimes children who are not getting enough sleep may have many of the same behaviors as those with ADHD. When you are tired, you may feel cranky. You may overreact to problems you encounter. Temper tantrums and explosive responses to any provocation are also associated with lack of sleep.

Some studies show that children who get poor grades in school tend to sleep less than students who earn As and Bs. Without enough sleep, you have trouble paying attention in class and following directions. Since lack of sleep makes it difficult to think clearly, it becomes more challenging to learn new things. Even losing one hour of sleep at night makes a difference in how well you learn the next day.

Although precisely how much sleep you may need is unique to you, the sleep requirements do tend to fall within predictable ranges.

|                            |                                   |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Children 4 – 5 years old   | 11 – 12 hours of sleep each night |
| Children 6 – 9 years old   | 10 – 11 hours of sleep each night |
| Children 10 – 12 years old | 9 – 10 hours of sleep each night  |

How can you tell if you are getting enough to sleep? People who get enough sleep do not have trouble falling asleep and awake easily. They also are able to stay alert and awake all day and do not need naps. So, if you fall asleep easily, wake easily, and are not tired during the day, you are probably getting enough sleep. If not, it may be time to change your sleep habits.

Want help with getting to sleep? Here are few ideas:

- Limit foods and drinks that have caffeine, like sodas, tea, and chocolate.
- Make sure you have time to wind down before bed time. Avoid doing physical, demanding or exciting activities for at least thirty minutes before bed time. No video games or TV just before bedtime.
- Try doing some quiet activities like reading, listening to quiet music, drawing, or taking a bath.
- Try to go to bed at the same time every night. Your brain loves routine. If you establish a habit of going to bed at 8:30 p.m. every night, your brain and body will begin preparing for sleep at that time.
- Do not have a TV in your bedroom. Children who have TVs in their rooms sleep less. The same is true for video games and computers.

## I Can Be Healthy!

On the first line, identify how much rest and exercise someone your age needs. Then, identify your goals for this week. Plan how much rest, exercise and healthy eating you will do.

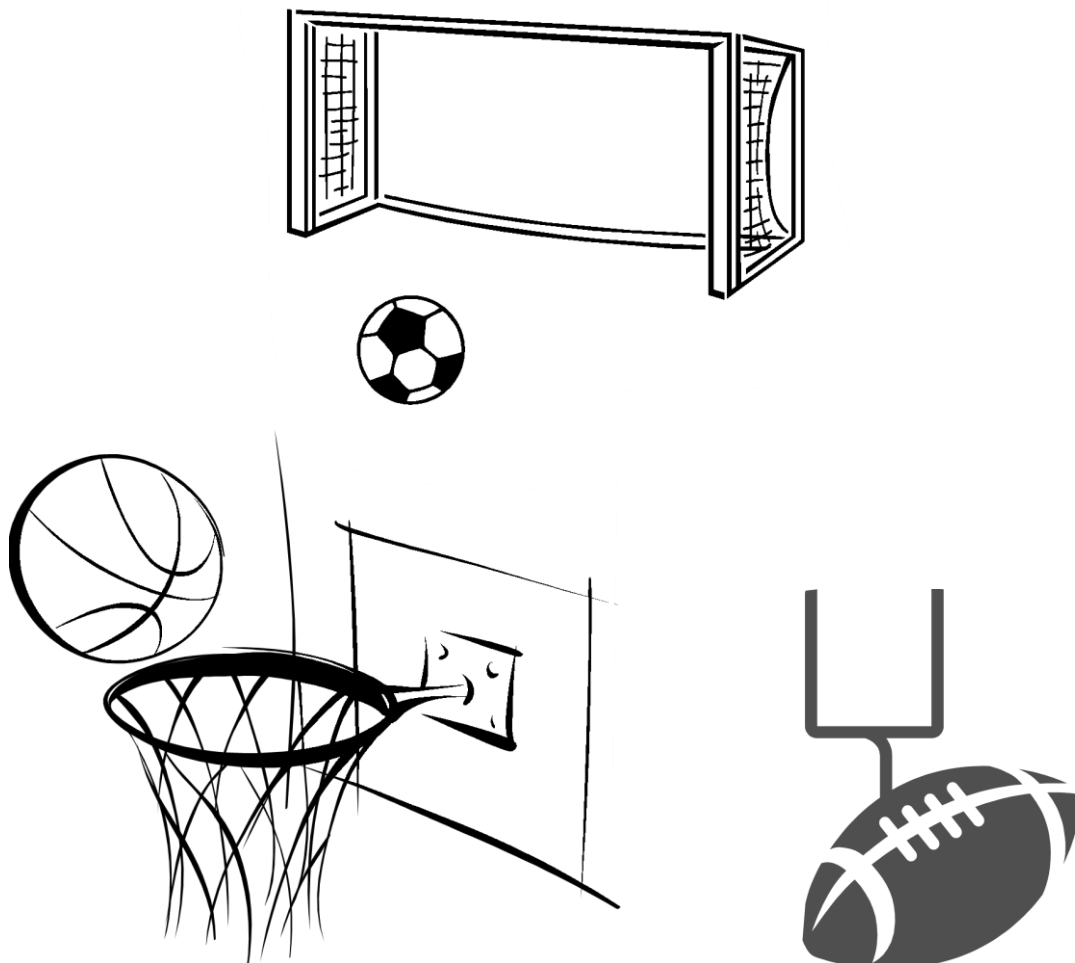
|                             | Get Plenty of Rest   | Get Plenty of Exercise                                | Eat a Healthy Diet  |
|-----------------------------|--|---|---|
| Someone My Age Needs:       | _____ hours per night  | _____ minutes per day                                 | _____ calories per day  |
| <b>MY PLAN FOR THE WEEK</b> | <p>I will try to get _____ hours of sleep each night.</p> <p>I will go to bed no later than _____ (Sunday – Thursday).</p> <p>I will wake each morning by _____ (Monday – Friday).</p> | <p>How much time?</p> <p>When?</p> <p>Doing what?</p> | <p>I will eat more:</p> <p>I will eat less:</p> <p>Anything else?</p> |

| Here's what I did this week: | Get Plenty of Rest<br><b>How many hours?</b> | Get Plenty of Exercise<br><b>How many hours?</b> | Eat a Healthy Diet<br><b>Did you follow your plan?</b> |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Monday                       |  |  |  |
| Tuesday                      |  |  |  |
| Wednesday                    |  |  |  |
| Thursday                     |  |  |  |
| Friday                       |  |  |  |
| Saturday                     |  |  |  |
| Sunday                       |  |  |  |



# SET GOALS

If you want to achieve something, you must first set a goal. Think about what you hope to do or be someday. That's an example of a goal. People who are resilient are always setting goals for themselves and then working to achieve them.





**One day Alice came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree.**

**“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”**

**"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to." said the Cat.**

**“I don't much care where” said Alice.**

**“Then it doesn't matter which way you go”, said the Cat.**

**Do you know where you want to go?**

---

---

---

---

## HOW TO SET A CLEAR GOAL



### **Be specific.**

Be as exact as possible and you are more likely to succeed. For example, instead of saying that you want to make good grades, say that you want to make an A in Science.

### **Set realistic goals.**



Make sure that the goal is within your reach. If it's too easy, you might not work on it. If it's too difficult, you may give up before really trying. Instead of trying to make all As when you are currently failing all subjects, try bringing up two or three areas to Cs. The next quarter, you can aim for As.

### **Develop an action plan.**

Identify the steps you need to accomplish to reach your goal. Be very specific about what you can do each day that will move you toward your goal.



### **Put it in writing.**

Write down exactly what you want to achieve in a positive way. For example, instead of, "I won't get sent to the principal's office," write, "I will follow the classroom rules."

### **Post It**

Display your goal in a place where you will see it every day. This will help remind you what you're working toward. On your bedroom wall, in the front of your notebook, or in your school calendar might be good places.



### **Involve others.**

Ask a teacher, parent, or someone else you trust to evaluate you as they see you working on the steps to your goal. Those checkmarks can be encouraging and may provide the extra motivation needed to keep working.

### **Believe in yourself.**

**Stay positive even when you make mistakes. Get that positive self-talk going! See yourself achieving your goal.**



### **Be flexible.**

Keep in mind that setbacks can happen. Never give up. No one is immediately successful. A good goal means that you have to stretch to achieve it.

### **Reward yourself.**

Reaching a goal takes hard work and you should be proud of your efforts. Call attention to your successes. Invite others to take notice. Take the time to celebrate.



# Goal Sheet

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

My Goal:

---



---

Week of: \_\_\_\_\_

| Steps toward My Goal:  | M         | T         | W         | Th        | F         |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1  | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No |
| 2  | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No |
| 3  | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No |
| 4  | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No |
| 5  | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No | Yes<br>No |
| Points Earned This Week: one point for each <i>yes</i> circled |           |           |           |           |           |

Teacher Comments:

---



---



---



---

Any Behavior Comments:

---



---



---



---



# SOLVE PROBLEMS



Resilient people work to solve problems. They do not blame them on other people. They do not run away from problems. They try something to solve the problem. If it does not work, they try something else.

## How to Solve a Problem

|               |     |
|---------------|-----|
| Problem       |     |
| Alternative 1 | Pro |
|               | Con |
| Alternative 2 | Pro |
|               | Con |
| Alternative 3 | Pro |
|               | Con |
| Alternative 4 | Pro |
|               | Con |
| Alternative 5 | Pro |
|               | Con |

## PRACTICE PROBLEM SOLVING 1

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,  
 Humpty Dumpty had a great fall,  
 All the king's horses and all the king's men  
 Couldn't put Humpty together again.

Identify the problem: \_\_\_\_\_

| Brainstorm Solutions | What are the possible consequences? |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
|                      |                                     |
|                      |                                     |
|                      |                                     |

Choose a solution: \_\_\_\_\_

## PRACTICE PROBLEM SOLVING 2

Jack and Jill went up the hill  
 To fetch a pail of water.  
 Jack fell down and broke his crown,  
 And Jill came tumbling after.

Identify the problem: \_\_\_\_\_

| Brainstorm Solutions | What are the possible consequences? |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
|                      |                                     |
|                      |                                     |
|                      |                                     |

Choose a solution: \_\_\_\_\_

### PRACTICE PROBLEM SOLVING 3

Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet,  
Eating her curds and whey.  
Along came a spider  
That sat down beside her  
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

Identify the problem: \_\_\_\_\_

| Brainstorm Solutions | What are the possible consequences? |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
|                      |                                     |
|                      |                                     |
|                      |                                     |

Choose a solution: \_\_\_\_\_

### PRACTICE PROBLEM SOLVING 4

Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep  
And doesn't know where to find them.

Identify the problem: \_\_\_\_\_

| Brainstorm Solutions | What are the possible consequences? |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
|                      |                                     |
|                      |                                     |
|                      |                                     |

Choose a solution: \_\_\_\_\_

# UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS

Another part of being resilient is understanding feelings in yourself and in others. It includes having words to name feelings and healthy ways to express those feelings.



GLAD WORDS

| Mild | Medium | Strong |
|------|--------|--------|
|      |        |        |

SAD WORDS

| Mild | Medium | Strong |
|------|--------|--------|
|      |        |        |

MAD WORDS

| Mild | Medium | Strong |
|------|--------|--------|
|      |        |        |



SCARED WORDS

| Mild | Medium | Strong |
|------|--------|--------|
|      |        |        |

# MANAGE STRESS

Everyone feels stressed at different times. It is a normal part of life. Being resilient means that you recognize when you are feeling stressed and you have ways to handle that stress. It does not change the circumstances or make the source of the stress disappear. It just means that you are able to handle it.



## MANAGING STRESS

| Stressor            | What It Feels Like | How I Can Handle It |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| At School           |                    |                     |
| With Friends        |                    |                     |
| At Home             |                    |                     |
| In the Neighborhood |                    |                     |

# KNOW YOU CAN

Self-efficacy means that you know your own capabilities. It means you believe that you can work hard and change the way things are. Believing in your own abilities is another part of being resilient.



## My Skills

Circle the things you can do.

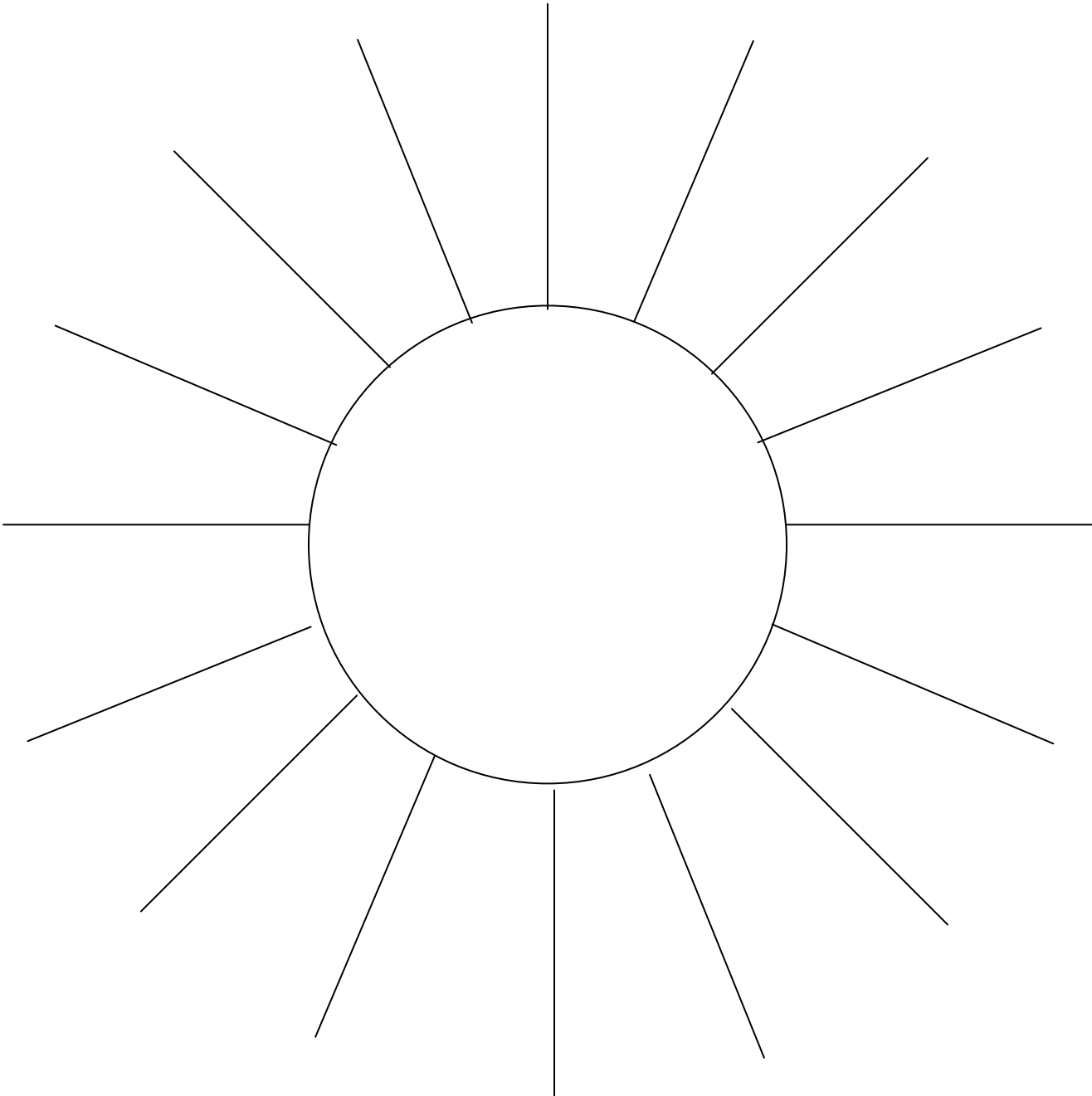
|                                 |                         |                   |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Roller Skate                    | Run fast                | Build things      |
| Make my friends laugh           | Be a friend             | Ride a bike       |
| Find things on a map            | Do a project for school | Read              |
| Make good grades on tests       | Sing                    | Draw cartoons     |
| Color pictures                  | Play piano              | Use a computer    |
| Play soccer                     | Write neatly            | Draw anything     |
| Solve math problems             | Paint                   | Solve a mystery   |
| Take care of my dog             | Sit quietly             | Do a back flip    |
| Help my mom/dad with chores     | Tell jokes              | Bake a cake       |
| Make interesting pencil designs | Make cookies            | Make my bed       |
| Keep my stuff organized         | Draw animals            | Laugh             |
| Play board games                | Tell a good story       | Follow directions |
| Write creative stories          | Clean my room           | Play Chess        |
| Put puzzles together            | Take care of myself     | Wash my clothes   |
| Listen to my friends            | Do cartwheels           | Stand on my head  |
| Take care of my cat             | Read chapter books      | Memorize facts    |
| Take tests well                 | Concentrate             | Stay healthy      |
| Tell how I feel                 | Handle Stress           | Write Stories     |

# HAVE & BE A FRIEND



Resilient people are able to make and keep friends.  
They act in friendly ways and know how to be a  
friend to others.

Friendship Wheel



## Friendship Pledge



I promise to continue to do these things which make me a good friend.

|       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

I promise to work hard at doing these things that will make me a better friend.

|       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

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

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



# BE POSITIVE



Having a positive outlook means that you tend to believe that things will work out OK. It is also called being optimistic. Optimistic people are fun to be around and appear to be happier. Optimism or a belief that everything will be all right is part of resilience.

| RESILIENCE                            | Looks Like | Sounds Like | Feel Like |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-------------|-----------|
| Being Healthy                         |            |             |           |
| Setting Goals                         |            |             |           |
| Solving Problems                      |            |             |           |
| Understanding and Expressing Feelings |            |             |           |
| Managing Stress                       |            |             |           |
| Being Competent                       |            |             |           |
| Making and Keeping Friends            |            |             |           |
| Having a Positive Outlook             |            |             |           |
| Being Resilient                       |            |             |           |

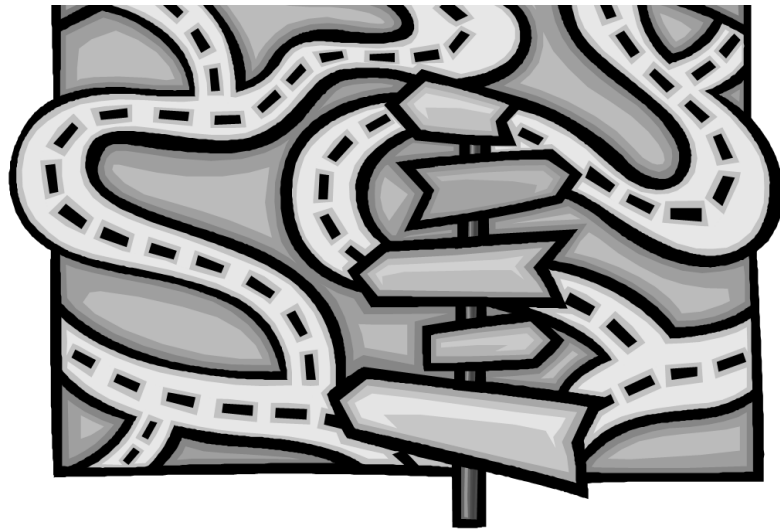
## Appendix D: Session Posters

A man too busy to  
take care of his health  
is like a mechanic too  
busy to take care of  
his tools.

Spanish proverb



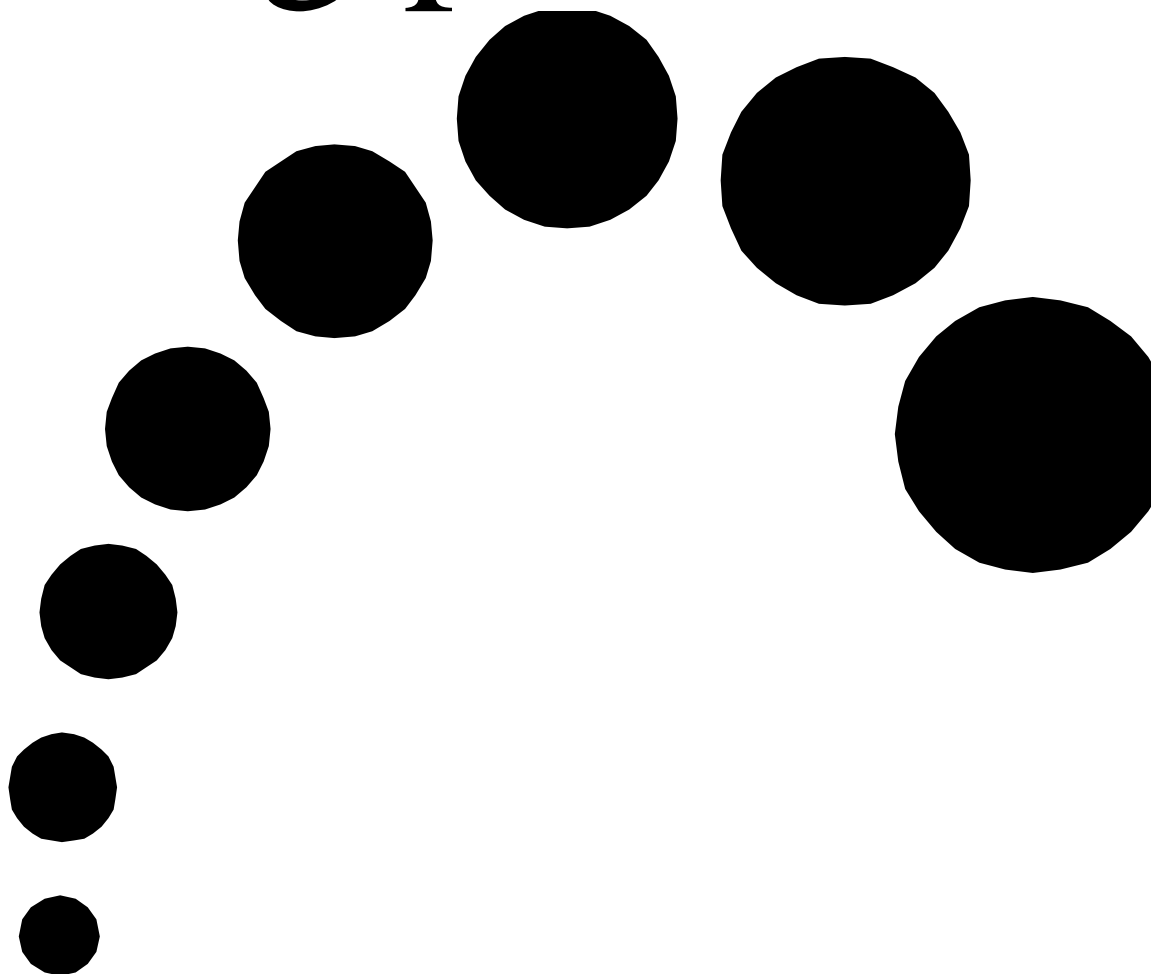
# Goal Setting



If you don't know  
where you are  
going,  
any road will get  
you there.

Lewis Carroll

Every  
big problem



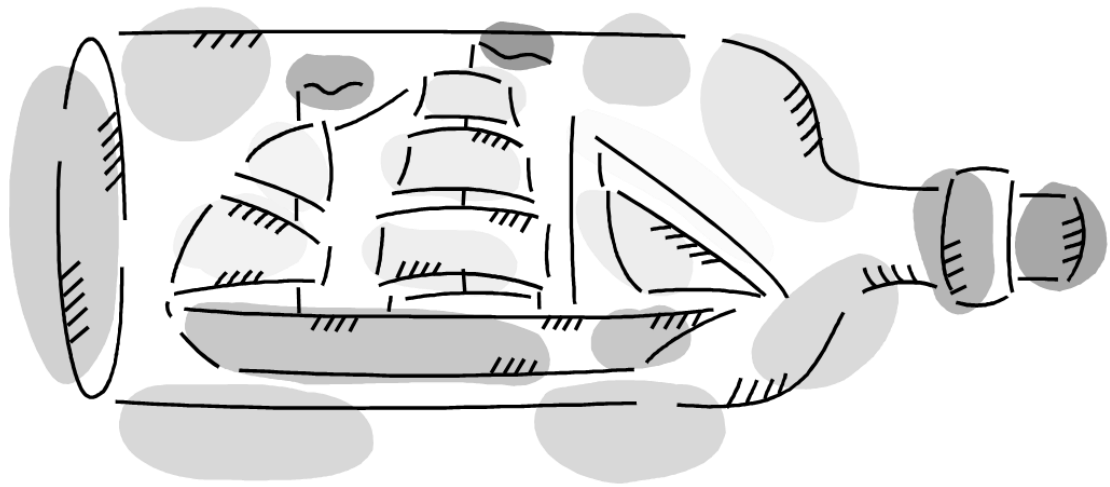
was at one time a  
wee disturbance.

When I repress my  
emotion



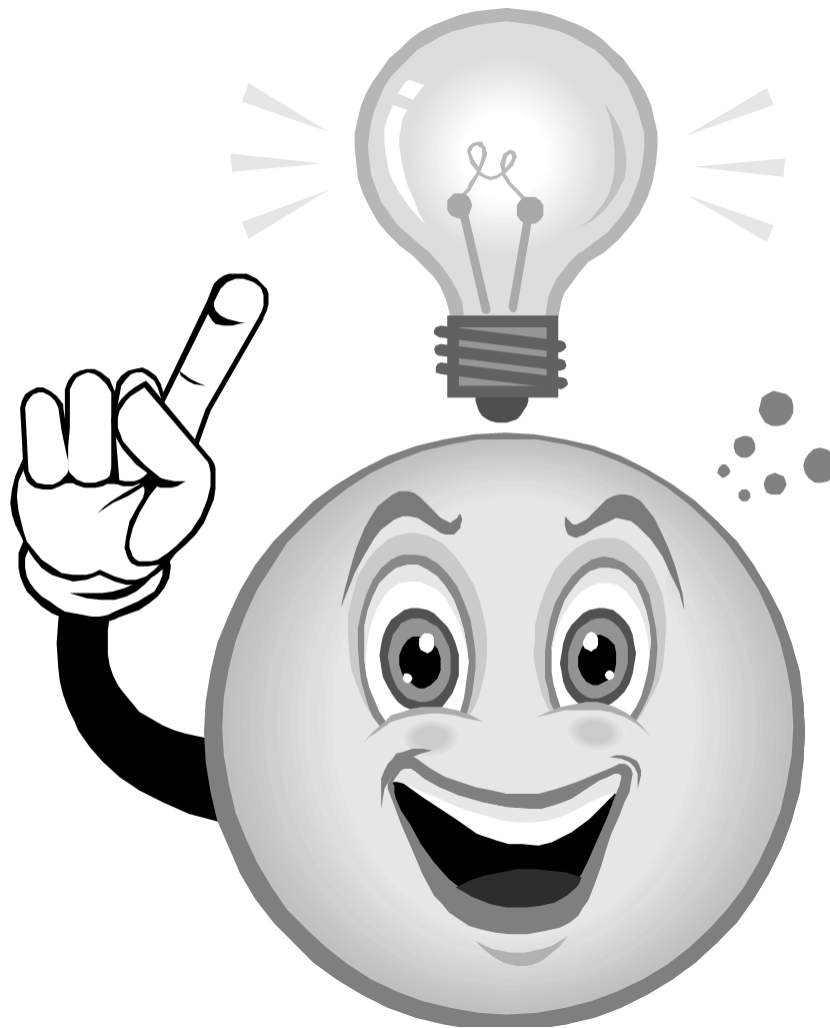
my stomach keeps  
score.

A smooth sea  
never made




a skillful  
mariner.

They are able because  
they think



they are able.

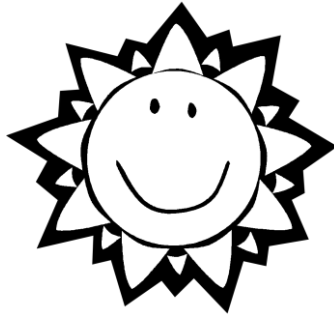


Wishing   
to be friends is  
quick work,  
but friendship is  
slow-ripening  
fruit.



There is little difference in people,  
but that little difference makes a big  
difference.

The little difference is attitude.  
The big difference is whether it is



positive

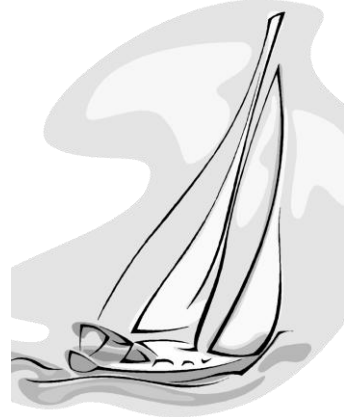


or

negative.

Clement Stone

# Resiliency



One ship sails East  
And another West  
By the self-same winds that blow.  
'Tis the set of the sails  
And not the gales,  
That tells the way we go.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox