

A Psychoeducational Group for Limited–English Proficient Latino/Latina Children

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Abstract:

Latino /Latina children who are considered to be limited–English proficient may be unwilling participants in unique and difficult personal and school-related experiences. The inherent differences in their native culture and language may lead to special academic placements in English-as-a-second-language programs. Participations in a psychoeducational group may prove beneficial in helping Latino /Latina children deal with their experiences, while offering possible coping strategies for managing potential negative self-concepts and attitudes toward school. A 6-week group counseling intervention is presented for working with limited–English proficient Latino schoolchildren. The intervention may also be useful in nonschool settings.

Keywords: psychoeducational; children; Hispanics; Latinos /Latinas; limited– English-proficient

Article:

Latinos/Latinas are found throughout the United States and constitute approximately 13.5% of the U.S. population, numbering more than 38.8 million residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). For the purposes of this article, the term Latino /Latina is used to represent other demographic categorizations, such as Hispanic, Hispano, and Hispanic American. Their numbers are growing at a rate three to five times faster than the general population (Garcia & Marotta, 1997). As a group, Latinos/ Latinas are diverse because subgroups emigrated from different countries, each with their own identities, rituals, customs, and traditions. Despite differences within the Latino/Latina population, their common bonds are Spanish as the native language and a culture uniquely different from the Anglo-American culture (Pedersen, 1990). The 1990 Census shows that 77% of Latino/Latina children and adults speak Spanish in their homes (U.S. Census Bureau, 1995). Children who learn English as a second language and who display daily problems in reading, writing, and communicating in English are considered limited–English proficient (LEP), the most commonly used term to describe bilingual students in U.S. public schools (Gopaul-McNicol & Thomas-Presswood, 1998; Padilla, Fairchild, & Valdez, 1990). The number of children requiring bilingual education is increasing in the United States at an annual rate of 9.6% (Samway & McKeon, 1999). According to Samway and McKeon, 75% of children enrolled in ESOL/ESL (English for speakers of other languages/English as a second language) classes are native Spanish speakers, and two thirds of them are in kindergarten through 6th grade. In most states within the United States, children who have a first language other than English and who also qualify for related special services in public schools are eligible for instruction in ESL/ESOL (Crawford, 1999).

According to Cummins (1994), the presence of linguistically and culturally diverse children is becoming the norm in classrooms across the country. Nationwide, ESL/ESOL enrollment has increased by 104% between 1989 and 1999, compared to an overall increase in school enrollment of 14% for the same time period (National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 2000). The growing numbers of the Latino/Latina population in the United States has led to recent publications showing some common needs and trends for this unique group. According to Garcia and Marotta (1997), 29% of Latinos/Latinas live below the poverty line as compared to 14% of the general U.S. population. Their report also indicated that Latinos/Latinas have high-school dropout rates above the national average, and only 9% hold college diplomas compared to a nationwide average of 21%. Unemployment also is more prevalent among Latinos/Latinas than among the general population (August & Hakuta, 1997).

Samway and McKeon (1999) described social factors (such as learner attitudes, past experiences, and personality) that, in general, greatly influence the education of LEP children. The differences between the culture and language of LEP students in ESOL/ESL programs and that of their language-majority peers thus affect their self-concepts and attitudes toward school. Consequences often manifest themselves as delayed school adjustment, low self-esteem, poor academics, limited expression of feelings, negative attitude toward school related to poor self-concepts, and perceptions of not fitting in (Crawford, 1999; Cummins, 1994; Gibson, Mitchell, & Basile, 1993; Metcalfe, 1981). These issues parallel and enhance those of Latino/Latina children who tend to come from low socioeconomic families, are more insecure, have negative attitudes toward school and academics, display lower self-esteem, feel less empowered than do English proficient students, and feel less valued (Cummins, 1994; Lee, 1995; Ogbu, 1995; Suarez-Orozco, 1995). These stressors obviously have negative effects on the learning and socialization of LEP Latino/Latina children. Unfortunately, most of these children are never exposed to an adult in their school with whom they can talk about their feelings of insecurity, language barriers, bicultural confusion, evolving ethnic identity, or not fitting in with their language-majority peers (Canino & Spurlock, 1994; Lee, 1995).

Group work can be used in a variety of ways to assist schoolchildren in expressing feelings and in coping with problems (DeLucia-Waack, 2000). The use of psychoeducational groups with Latino/Latina children is justified because groups provide these children a chance to express themselves with common peers (Baca & Koss-Chioino, 1997), become more self-aware and comfortable with the English language (Asner-Self & Feyissa, 2002), and enhance positive self-concepts and understanding of feelings (Akos, 2000). Developing and conducting a homogeneous psychoeducational group composed of Latino/Latina children presents them with a safe environment where they may discuss culturally specific concerns, as well as be provided with an opportunity to focus on their cultural identity and self-esteem (Merchant & Butler, 2002). In essence, facilitators can use group work as a means of helping Latino/Latina children learn about themselves, develop coping strategies, focus on solutions to basic problems, and foster lifelong interpersonal skills.

The American School Counselor Association's position corresponding to ethnic and racial minority children is that school counselors are also responsible for ensuring that minority children receive access to school counseling programs and interventions to facilitate their personal/social and academic development (American School Counselor Association, 1999). In essence, school counselors and other mental health professionals who work with children have the ability and opportunity to assist LEP, Latino/Latina schoolchildren with academic, career, and personal/social development. However, school counselors also are faced with providing services to a vastly diverse student population due to the ever-growing number of LEP students in U.S. schools (Keyes, 1989). Because school counselors are responsible for ensuring that all children in their schools have the opportunity to experience a sense of academic accomplishment and social-emotional satisfaction, psychoeducational groups are one method for effectively providing services to many children, including LEP, Latino/Latina children experiencing academic and personal/social difficulty (Brown, 1994; Gibson et al., 1993). The six-session psychoeducational group described in this article is designed to be used with Latino/Latina children by school counselors and other helping professionals with varying levels of experience. Topics to be discussed include planning, establishing goals, selecting members, and specific sessions, activities, and methods. Furthermore, although researchers allude to the positive impact that a counselor of similar ethnicity and first language may have on a client (Altarriba & Bauer, 1998; Beals, Beals, & Cordova de Satori, 1999; Clemente & Collison, 2000), this small-group intervention can and should be used by all school counselors, regardless of their ethnicity. It is the content of this group and the fact that it is designed for LEP, Latino/Latina children who qualify for ESL services that make it a useful and timely tool.

A PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL GROUP FOR LATINO LEP CHILDREN IN A SCHOOL SETTING

Latino children are quite capable of dealing with other children in groups—especially children who share a similar language and culture—due to the collectivistic nature of many Hispanic/Latino cultures (Lee, 1995; Pedersen & Carey, 1993). For this reason, school counselors lead-in a group with LEP, Latino/Latina children should experience limited difficulty in getting the children to open up and share some ideas, feelings, and beliefs. The following session-by-session outline for conducting a psychoeducational group with LEP,

Latino/Latina children was developed and field tested by the author and by elementary school counseling graduate students. I selected the discussion topics based on my personal experience with these children as an elementary school counselor. From these experiences, I developed the format, decided on activities, and established goals, objectives, and materials necessary for leading a group of this nature. Overall, this type of psychoeducational group has been conducted with more than a dozen different groups of children.

Planning

The developmental nature of psychoeducational groups proves very useful when working with children's self-concepts and attitudes toward school. Jacobs, Harvill, and Masson (1994) considered a small group to be effective in treating children with negative self-concepts. These authors indicated that well-organized groups, with structured activities and exercises, can assist participants by increasing feelings of self-worth. Therefore, a small group specifically intended for LEP Latino/Latina children should be prepared with preset weekly activities prior to the first session. According to Myrick (1997), a six-session small-group experience conducted during a 6-week time frame is an appropriate number of sessions for a school-based, small-group counseling activity.

School counselors working with LEP, Latino/Latina children also should be aware of their own feelings and training while planning a psychoeducational group for these children. In addition, small-group counselors should become aware of their own biases before beginning a small-group intervention when working with children from culturally diverse populations (Yalom, 1995). Finally, the ability to apply small-group techniques to Latino/Latina children depends more on the counselor's multicultural training, awareness of her or his own culture, and knowledge of her or his clients' cultural identity than on the students' ethnicity (Gopaul-McNicol & Thomas-Presswood, 1998). Overall, minority students from various cultural backgrounds may find small-group counseling experiences to be rewarding and beneficial (Lee, 1995).

Group Purpose and Goals

According to Akos (2000), group work in an elementary school setting can be effectively used for developmental, remedial, and preventative purposes. Groups also provide school counselors with the opportunity to effectively provide services to concurrently meet the needs of many children (Brown, 1994). These ideas drive the general purpose of a psycho-educational group for LEP Latino/Latina children: to assist them in becoming better acquainted with the school environment, improve or maintain a positive attitude toward school, and understand the meaning and importance of a healthy self-concept.

Gibson et al. (1993) considered group work beneficial for children in that it enables them to confront concerns in a social environment, where they gain indirect support from the notion that their problems are not exclusive to them. This idea of universality leads to decreased shame, isolation, and self-perceptions of being different from others (Yalom, 1995). In addition, group work can be used to assist children in expressing feelings and in coping with various problems (Akos, 2000; Samide & Stockton, 2002). Finally, Campbell and Myrick (1990) found increases in children's positive attitudes toward school for those who participated in a group work scenario. Through group work, school counselors can identify and assist young children with their social development. This experience may also provide children with the coping mechanisms and strategies needed to effectively handle current and future negative experiences they may encounter.

One of the main goals of this group experience is to provide participating Latino/Latina children with a sense of safety and comfort when discussing their positive and negative academic personal experiences. Another goal is that children leave the group with a greater desire to feel better about who they are and empowered to improve their school experience. Finally, LEP, Latino/Latina children should exit the group knowing which individuals they may turn to when they feel most poorly about themselves and school, in an effort to establish a personal support system.

Member Selection

Due to the abstract nature of some topics related to self-concept and attitude toward school discussed in this psychoeducational group, coupled with the participants' limited proficiency in English, it is best if participants are selected from Grade 3 and higher. It is possible to modify this counseling experience for use with younger children, but it would call for the simplification of several terms and topics. In addition, because this group counseling activity is proposed for use by nonbilingual school counselors, and because it is intended for children enrolled in ESL programs, it is helpful if participants have been enrolled in an ESL program for at least 1 academic year. The 1 year of instruction in the ESL setting would provide group participants with at least a level of basic interpersonal communication skills (BISC) in English, allowing them to communicate in the group and with the group facilitator (Crawford, 1999). Therefore, school counselors should consult ESL teachers prior to selecting potential members to determine which children may benefit most from the experience as well as which children have attained BISC in the English language.

OUTLINE OF GROUP SESSIONS

Session 1: Introduction and Shared Experiences

Overview. Even though all of the children participating in this group are enrolled in an ESL program and are considered LEP, it is important for the group facilitator to start by having each child share personal experiences in the school and as members of an ESL program.

Objectives. Students are able to express their feelings about being LEP, while being provided with an opportunity to discuss their experiences in the ESL setting. Moreover, they should understand the reasons for being invited to participate in the group and the organizational structure of the group.

Materials. A dry-erase board, chalkboard, or chart paper (along with appropriate writing instruments) is needed for this session.

Activities. The group facilitator explains group rules and confidentiality to the participants before starting the group, allowing for related questions. Next, group members introduce themselves to the group. Children may share additional information about likes and dislikes, hobbies, and family background. When the introductions are finished, the facilitator tells the group members how the dry-erase/chalkboard is used to write down some of the things they share to list some common themes or experiences. The counselor then writes the following statement, "How I feel about Spanish, English, and school," on the board. The group facilitator then leads a short discussion on what it means to be in an ESL program and how the children feel about not being proficient in English, while writing items on the board. The facilitator should record the list of items on a separate paper for use in additional sessions. The facilitator must be aware of the different experiences, definitions, feelings, opinions, and thoughts that each child shares in relation to being LEP, Latino/Latina and enrolled in an ESL program. The entire group intervention hinges on these experiences. The counselor concludes the session by reviewing the items listed on the board, summarizing the session, and preparing the participants for the remaining sessions by providing a brief outline.

Participant experiences. Latino/Latina children seemed pleased to be in this type of group, where they discussed what it means to be Latino/ Latina and what it means to be LEP. Some of the children who participated in these groups shared they liked the use of a board to write down the things they said. Few had negative things to say about their experiences in the ESL classroom, often mentioning the strengths of their ESL teachers. Others were very open to discussing their home life. One specific child was pleased to find out he was not the only Latino child in the school from a divorced family. Overall, most participants willingly shared their likes and dislikes of their native language, speaking English, and school.

Session 2: Feelings and How to Express Them

Overview. Focusing on emotions can constitute an important part of many psychoeducational groups (Akos, 2000). Due to the possibility of strong feelings in favor of or opposed to being LEP, Latino/Latina and/or

enrolled in an ESL program, it is imperative that the children in these groups be presented with the opportunity to talk about their emotions.

Objectives. The facilitator assists children with the expression of their feelings more effectively and familiarizes them with a variety of different feelings.

Materials. Blank sheets of plain, non-ruled paper, markers, crayons, or colored pencils are necessary for this session.

Activities. The group facilitator should begin this session by reintroducing the list from Session 1, and then have the children share their feelings attached to those shared experiences. The facilitator should define the words *feelings* and *emotions* and provide examples to ensure that children understand activities for this session. The counselor may want to use a feelings chart or age-appropriate diagram to get the children to think about a variety of emotions. The counselor may also locate a Spanish version of a feelings chart or diagram. An interesting educational activity would invite the children to translate the English-language feelings into Spanish. Children should be encouraged to share two or three different emotions even if they are not related to their experiences, as listed in the previous session.

When a comprehensive list of feelings has been developed, the children and counselor should share the many ways in which feelings are expressed. Participants may share constructive and non-constructive forms of expressing feelings, while emphasizing the more constructive forms. However, the counselor is responsible for paying specific attention to those expressions of feelings related to being LEP, Latino/Latina, and in an ESL program. It is here that counselors can help the children find more constructive ways of coping with possible unpleasant feelings related to ethnicity or educational placement. Again, it would be helpful if the counselors listed, displayed, and saved the topics of discussion from this session.

Finally, the facilitator should ask the participants to draw a picture of something that makes them feel pleasant or unpleasant at school. The picture does not have to directly relate to being LEP or in an ESL class-room; however, the facilitator may use these as settings for scenarios they may discuss via the drawing activity. The counselor should ask each participant to talk about his or her drawing with the group, while encouraging them to use the feeling list the group developed at the start of the session. The counselor also should ask group members to discuss constructive ways of dealing with pleasant and unpleasant feelings in the school setting.

Participant experiences. Most children who take part in this activity enjoy developing a long list of feelings and emotions. For those children who are permitted to talk about some feelings using the Spanish translation, the activity becomes that much more interesting. However, some children have a difficult time drawing pictures that depict unpleasant experiences within the school setting and with regard to being described as LEP. The facilitator may summarize a child's reasons for wanting to focus on a pleasant scenario versus a nonpleasant scenario. However, children should inevitably draw whatever they want. The strength of this session rests in participants' abilities to express themselves more clearly and more appropriately, while lending specific attention to their experiences as Latino/Latina children enrolled in ESL programs.

Session 3: What Is a Self-Concept and How to Make It Stronger

Overview. Although the term *self-concept* may be difficult for children to understand or pronounce, it is a very important variable in their academic and personal/social development.

Objectives. Children increase awareness of their self-concepts. They also explore what kinds of experiences can weaken or strengthen their self-concepts.

Materials. A dry-erase board, chalkboard, or chart paper (along with appropriate writing instruments) is needed for this session. In addition, a "coat of arms" worksheet, where participants may illustrate personal characteristics, and adequate markers, crayons, or colored pencils are needed for this session.

Activities. This session should start with the counselor writing the term *self-concept* on the dry-erase board or chalkboard. Then, the counselor should say the term out loud and define it for the students using language that is age and developmentally appropriate. The counselor must help children understand that the self-concept is not only how they feel about themselves, but that it also affects how they view their world. The counselor also should stress how an individual's self-concept is shaped by his or her ethnicity and, perhaps, academic placement. After the counselor has provided definitions and examples of self-concepts, he or she should allow children an opportunity to share how they feel about themselves. Counselors should probe for self-reflections related to being Latino/Latina, bilingual, LEP, and/or being a member of an ESL program.

For this session, children should be presented with a chance to ponder and express how perceptions of their ethnic identity and academic placement may or may not affect their self-concept. One method for helping children articulate their feelings of self-worth is through an art activity in which participants are asked to draw or color three or four things in which they are successful. These things may be academic, athletic, or culturally related. This art activity may be facilitated by using a "coat of arms" (or "shield") worksheet, whereby each child may draw and/or write three things about himself or herself that he or she likes. The worksheet depicts a blank "coat of arms" with three or four empty sections, which the child uses to draw specific positive, personal attributes. This may help them visualize and understand their self-concepts. Again, the facilitator may wish to highlight or expand on personal attributes related to their cultural and language abilities. Afterward, the counselor may facilitate a discussion about the different drawings by encouraging the participants to explain their picture. Finally, the facilitator assists group participants in acknowledging how important it is for children to be aware of their strengths, and how being aware and acknowledging personal strengths is a way of enhancing their self-concepts.

This session is enriched by the counselors' abilities to link the ideas and beliefs of the group participants. It also is paramount that the group facilitator stress there is no such thing as a "perfect" or "bad" self-concept. Rather, the counselor should assist children in understanding that the more they understand their self-concept, the better chance they have of controlling how they feel about themselves and their academic surroundings.

Participant experiences. Self-concept is a difficult term to define and explain, particularly to young children who may not have a clear grasp of the English language. The use of an art activity in this session is justified in that it aids in the understanding of this complex idea. Although some participants had a difficult time saying the word concept, most of them have shared their enjoyment of the "coat of arms" worksheet. Some children have even requested that their sheets be laminated to protect their sheets. Children have also indicated they understand the importance of being able to monitor their own self-concept.

Session 4: How Do You Feel About School

Overview. It is essential for the group facilitator to gauge participants' attitudes toward school. Specifically, the group leader must investigate how group participants' Latino/Latina ethnicity and LEP status affects their perceptions regarding school, to assist their comfort level in the school environment.

Objectives. The facilitator assists children in becoming more familiar with their feelings toward school, while acquiring a better understanding of the ESL setting and teachers.

Materials. A dry-erase board, chalkboard, or chart paper (along with appropriate writing instruments) is needed for this session.

Activities. Gathering information about students' attitudes toward school also involves asking about their perceptions of school personnel and other students. The overall goal of this session is to help participants realize and understand their feelings about school. The secondary goal is to help them think about things and people that can help them achieve a more positive attitude toward school if they currently have a negative attitude, or how to maintain a positive attitude toward school if and when they are presented with negative, school-related experiences.

One way to help children achieve or maintain a positive school attitude is to encourage them to think about adults and fellow students they trust and feel close to within the school, and environments within the school where they feel most at ease. It may benefit the group facilitator to list those people as well as what makes them a trustworthy individual. If participants can attach a small amount of happiness or comfort to these people and these settings, it may assist children with their attitudes toward school. In addition, it may also help the group to discuss how they feel about the ESL program, as well as the teachers and paraprofessionals who work in that capacity. Often, it is these adults that bridge these children's home and culture with the school environment. A separate list of these ESL teachers' and paraprofessionals' positive attributes may further assist these children in perceiving school in a positive light. Again, the counselor should record and display a list of people within the school setting who may help these children achieve or maintain a positive attitude toward school. As with Session 1, the facilitator should record this list on a separate sheet of paper to assist in recalling this information for later use. Last, the group facilitator should alert group participants that there are only two sessions remaining in an effort to prepare them for the termination phase of the counseling group.

Participant experiences. Participants tend to be very comfortable and pleased to be part of the group by this session. They also may report use of effective coping skills in stressful situations at school based on the topics discussed in the first three sessions. The activities discussed in this session further assist children in having a more positive attitude toward school. A former participant in this type of group shared with her group members how much she liked to use the "coat of arms" from Session 3 to help her feel better at school, particularly when she was being teased in her non-ESL classroom. Another child got excited during the activities in this session when explaining how much her ESL teacher helped her with all her class work, leading her to get better grades in her non-ESL classes. The only negative reactions expressed by some of the children in group were that they disapproved of the impending group termination.

Session 5: Becoming More Comfortable at School

Overview. This session provides participants with a forum to discuss their attitudes toward school and how attitudes relate to certain school experiences. In addition, the facilitator addresses the ability all children have to control their own attitudes toward school.

Objectives. The facilitator reviews participants' attitudes toward school and learning, in addition to helping them improve or fortify their attitudes toward school and learning.

Materials. Scenario cards outlining pleasant and unpleasant experiences that may occur in the school (to be developed by the facilitator) are needed for this session.

Activities. The primary objective of the first part of Session 5 is to encourage thinking about comfort (their personal comfort level) and how attitudes affect their comfort level at school. The facilitator should have the students brainstorm the meanings of the words comfort and comfortable. The facilitator should specifically ask if and how specific aspects of their culture and language help them achieve a sense of comfort and stability. When this has been accomplished, the facilitator should then probe for things that make the participants feel comfortable and uncomfortable at school. The facilitator may wish to review the items discussed by the group in the previous session as cues for talking about attitudes toward school and learning. Facilitators should not ignore possibly negative accounts of high stress and anxiety at school due to being in an ESL program, Latino/Latina, or LEP. However, the facilitator should seize these opportunities to highlight how the issues discussed in previous sessions may assist these children in dealing with unpleasant experience, thereby leading them to an increased level of comfort within the school.

To emphasize the impact of self-concept, emotions, and comfort level on attitudes toward school, the facilitator should develop four or five scenarios prior to the fifth session. The facilitator should write these scenarios and read them aloud to the group. The scenarios should present stories where fictional children are confronted with stressful or positive situations in the school setting (classrooms, media center, playground, ESL classroom, etc.). When the facilitator has read the scenarios to the group, the children are asked to discuss what they heard in

their own words, to talk about what kinds of attitudes were displayed by the characters in the story, and how the characters can go about changing or improving their attitudes. The facilitator should focus on participants' suggestions as to how the characters in the story can change their attitude.

Participant experiences. Because the last session focuses on termination activities, the fifth session is the last session to present new material. Children who participated in the group enjoyed hearing the scenarios and teaching the characters in the stories how to deal with negative attitudes. They also verbalized their excitement when a positive scenario was shared, and they were able to pick out appropriate feelings, or coping skills. It is helpful if some of the characters in the scenarios are provided with Latino/Latina names. One child happened to share the same name with a character in one of the scenarios and shared how much he liked the connection. Another child indicated her sibling had the same name as one of the characters in the scenarios and that her sibling often acted like the character in the story. These small details may further assist children in relating the activities and lessons to their academic experiences.

Session 6: What We've Learned About Ourselves and Our School

Overview. Each member is provided with an opportunity to discuss what he or she has learned as a member of the group.

Objectives. Children express what they have learned from participating in the group by demonstrating their ability to link feelings, self-concept, attitudes toward school, and cultural and language characteristics.

Materials. All previous lists and worksheets should be made available for this session.

Activities. Engage the participants in a go-around activity focused on what they have learned since the group started, related to the first five sessions. The facilitator may want to ask about self-concept, feelings and emotions, attitudes and how they can be changed, places and people that provided comfort within the school setting, and children's opinion of the group experiences. In addition, a chance to provide feedback between members should be encouraged by the group facilitator. The facilitator may elect to model this behavior by complimenting one child on positive, observed change since the beginning of the group, and then having another student say similar things about a different student. Because participating in this psychoeducational group may have been an enjoyable and safe activity, participants should be permitted to express disappointment in the group's termination. However, the group facilitator also should assist children with the realization that they have discussed and participated in an activity that lends itself to other experiences—inside and outside the school—and has provided them with useful and simple coping skills. Finally, this last session should also permit these children to share their opinions about the separate sessions, group content, and group facilitator.

Participant experiences. The last session usually arouses bittersweet sentiments from most participants, specifically those who displayed personal/social growth. Children almost think they can extend the group into more sessions if they continue to talk. Some children also reacted to the last session by not saying much. As one child expressed at the termination of the group, he had never before been a member of a small-group activity for Latino/Latina children like himself, where all they did was talk about things that mattered to him. Accounts like these are common, and group facilitators should expect them. Facilitators are free to establish their own way of responding and dealing with negative reactions to group termination. One method may involve a group reunion a few months after group termination.

CONCLUSION

Counseling services can play a crucial role in helping Latino/Latina children feel better about themselves and their academic surroundings. Due to the unprecedented increase in the numbers of Latino/Latina children and the urgency to deal with their personal and scholastic stressors, it is important to make a positive impact in the lives of these children. Counselors who take the time and effort to learn more about these children, their

families, and their unique culture and language can become instrumental in contributing to their academic, career, and personal/social development.

Group work may be the best way of assisting LEP, Latino/Latina children within the school setting. Counselors who are knowledgeable of psychoeducational group techniques may provide these children with a great service, by developing and implementing a group experience specifically tailored for them. This type of group can help children come to grips with their identities, fears, and concerns, while developing effective and useful ways of coping with negative experiences and emotions related to the school environment. It may also show these children that there are safe and positive people and experiences within the school setting, people and experiences that may empower and enlighten them in their studies and social interactions. It is my hope that the information provided here serves to help more counselors to address and attend to Latino/Latina children.

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