VISTAS Online
ACA Knowledge Center
counseling.org/knowledge-center/vistas
703-823-9800 x281 | 800-347-6647 x281
By Drs. Garry R. Walz and Jeanne C. Bleuer of Counseling Outfitters, LLC | *Sponsored by the American Counseling Association*

Article 60

# A Group Counseling Collaboration Model: Support for Virtual High School Students

Paper based on a program presented at the 2016 American Counseling Association Conference, March 31–April 3, 2016, Montreal, Canada.

Courtney M. Holmes and Kelly A. Kozlowski

Holmes, Courtney M., is an assistant professor at Virginia Commonwealth University. She has 5 years of experience teaching in master's in counseling programs and has published articles covering the inclusion of technology in counseling.

Kozlowski, Kelly A., is a core school counseling faculty member at Walden University. She has over 7 years of experience teaching in master's in counseling programs and has published in a wide variety of counseling journals on topics related to school counseling and technology in the counseling profession.

**Abstract**

This paper describes a collaborative approach wherein master's-level school counseling students provided online group counseling to at-risk virtual high school students. This project describes the utility of collaboration between master's-level school counseling students and a state-approved virtual high school to employ group counseling to promote student success. The collaborative project met the following needs: (1) School counseling master's students received experiential training and supervision leading online groups for at-risk high school students; and (2) at-risk, virtual, high school students participated in an 8-week educational and process counseling group emphasizing academic success. Implications for school counseling and counselor education are discussed.

*Keywords*: online group counseling, school counseling, virtual high school, at-risk students, collaboration model

Online learning is becoming increasingly relied upon in the United States (Setzer & Lewis, 2005) as students ranging from kindergarten to the postsecondary level are enrolling in virtual schools and online distance education programs. In 2012, 28 states offered the opportunity for a full-time, public elementary and secondary virtual public school education (Molnar et al., 2013). Although enrollment is increasing in online learning programs, both at the K–12 and postsecondary levels, graduation rates are not

(Dray, Lowenthal, Miszkiewicz, Ruiz-Primo, & Marczynski, 2011). Attrition rates are higher in online programs than face-to-face educational programs, and not much is understood about this trend (Dray et al., 2011).

However, a myriad of information is known about the dangers for students who drop out of secondary education, including increased potential for drug abuse, violence, poverty, and teen pregnancy (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011; Rendon, 2014). Without intervention, the United States will continue to face long-term problems related to the increase in online enrollment of K–12 students given the large rate of attrition. Virtual school districts currently face numerous challenges regarding how they can more fully support students toward positive outcomes, including social and emotional health as well as academic success and graduation. Currently, a dearth of literature exists that is focused on this topic.

## Review of the Literature

### Virtual Education

Clark (2001) defined a virtual school as "an educational organization that offers K–12 courses through Internet or Web-based methods" (p. 1). These schools can be public, private, and for-profit types of institutions (Molnar et al., 2013). Additionally, students can be involved in online learning programs to different degrees, ranging from a part-time, hybrid model in which they take some components of their education in a face-to-face environment and some in a fully digital environment, to fully online programs and degrees. Many states have approved virtual academies to suffice as state-funded educational environments; data have shown that in 2013, 311 fully online K–12 schools were operating in the Unites States and enrolled nearly 200,000 students (Molnar et al., 2013).

Enrollment in online or virtual learning is rapidly increasing. In a 2005 national survey of 2,305 public school districts in the United States, 36% of surveyed districts reported students who were enrolled in online distance education courses (Setzer & Lewis, 2005). Additionally, an estimated 600,000–700,000 K–12 public school students were engaged in online learning in 2005–2006, and this figure increased to approximately 1,030,000 students during the 2007–2008 school year (Archambault & Crippen, 2009; Picciano & Seaman, 2007, 2009). This represents a 47% increase over just 2 years (Archambault & Crippen, 2009). However, comparison data do not seem to support efficacy equality in the two types of teaching modalities. Not only are attrition rates higher in virtual schools (Dray et al., 2011), Annual Year Performance (AYP) reports also indicate that brick and mortar schools consistently perform better overall than virtual schools (Molnar et al., 2013).

A scarcity of literature currently exists that is focused on the experiences of students, teachers, parents, or other stakeholders involved in virtual K–12 education. In one effort to better understand parent and guardian perspectives of K–12 online education and attrition rates, Sorensen (2012) completed a qualitative study and found several themes that portray the perceived barriers or challenges to the online education, including: (a) keeping on schedule; (b) self-discipline; (c) technical issues; and (d) the learning environment. Overall, parents and guardians expressed concern regarding how their children would be able to stay on track completing assignments, whether or not they

would be able to manage the workload and learning independently, and if they could adjust to the online learning environment (Sorensen, 2012). These themes help the field understand some of the perceived barriers to student learning online that will support future interventions to target these barriers in order to support students in their online studies.

**The Role of School Counselors**

Schools are multi-level, complex systems with a myriad of stakeholders. School counselors are a crucial component when considering overall student development and success in graduation. The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) described a school counselor's role as one that "helps students focus on academic, personal/social and career development so they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society" (ASCA, 2014a). Unfortunately, little research exists on traditional school counselor skill transferability to virtual environments.

According to ASCA (2014b), 80% of a school counselor's time should be spent in direct services, including group counseling. In addition, ASCA stated the following regarding school counselors and their professional role with regard to leading groups, "Group counseling is an integral part of a comprehensive school counseling program and should be included in comprehensive school counseling programs and supported by school administrators and school districts" (ASCA, 2014c). Group counseling has been shown to have a positive impact on myriad student issues in traditional K–12 learning (Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2014; Riva & Haub, 2004; Steen, Bauman, & Smith, 2008), including student motivation, academic success, study skills, goal setting, and social skills (ASCA, 2014c).

Group counseling can be helpful to students experiencing interpersonal, family, and/or academic challenges (Gladding, 2003). The efficacy of school group counseling has been well documented for a wide variety of issues (Corey et al., 2014; Riva & Haub, 2004). Students can learn coping skills, and interpersonal skills, form relationships, and discuss developmentally appropriate topics such as peer pressure, bullying, family stressors, and self-esteem (Corey et al., 2014; Steen, Bauman, & Smith, 2007). In a study done surveying 802 school counselors, data showed that 87% offered group counseling interventions in their schools (Steen et al., 2007). Also, 88% of those who were running groups stated that they included a personal/social component in their groups, while 77% included an academic focus (Steen et al., 2007). These data show the importance of a holistic, student-focused perspective that targets social and emotional wellness in addition to academic success.

Considering the documented success of face-to-face groups, and the focus of collaboration in schools in the overall academic success of students within a school context, a logical next step is to transition these services to the online environment so as to meet the needs of online students. Many online students are facing a wide variety of complex issues, including social isolation, negative health conditions, and family stressors (Hurley, 2002; Kerr, 2011). As in brick-and-mortar schools, teachers or administrators alone cannot address such a wide variety of challenges. School counselors are employed by virtual high schools, yet no literature exists to support that appropriate

training in online individual or group counseling facilitation skills is taking place for master's-level counselors.

**Online Professional Counseling Skills**

Current literature has highlighted the need for contemporary counselor trainees to be trained in distance counseling techniques (Cardenas, Serrano, Flores, & De la Rosa, 2008; Gilkey, Carey, & Wade, 2009; Holmes & Kozlowski, 2015; Kozlowski & Holmes, 2014). Research has shown that traditional counseling techniques do not automatically transfer to an online counseling environment, particularly when the modality is group counseling (Holmes & Kozlowski, 2015; Kozlowski & Holmes, 2014). In fact, Kozlowski and Holmes (2014) compared master's-level counseling students' experiences in both a face-to-face process group and an online process group. Findings indicated that participants perceived online group counseling to be better suited for psychoeducational groups given the linear nature of the digital environment. Participants felt that the nature of the online group context was more appropriately tailored to the delivery and discussion of particular psychoeducational information and skill sets. However, this finding could represent the failure of the leaders to facilitate the process of group counseling due to a lack of skill transferability and inability to foster a therapeutic process environment online. As such, the training of counselors to transition face-to-face counseling skills to an online environment has become essential (Anthony, 2015).

Providing online counseling training is in a stage of relative infancy and most traditional counseling training has not yet moved to incorporate online counseling skills or interventions. Training must begin to modernize to include online counseling culture as well as how theories and behaviors can be applied and understood in an online environment (Anthony, 2015). Although research is limited, one study focused on training students to use both chat-based, asynchronous (communication does not take place at the same time such as e-mail) and videoconference, synchronous (communication takes place between parties simultaneously) methods with clients. Cardenas et al. (2008) implemented a training program for clinical psychology students spread over their final three semesters of coursework. This program was designed to support the formation of online clinical skills. The first semester was an introduction to online counseling where students learned counseling techniques as well as the potential uses, benefits, and challenges of the Internet in therapy and mental health services. The second and third semesters of the training included supervised practice (Cardenas et al., 2008). Clinical students showed significantly positive gains in their knowledge of the psychological disorders and interventions that they worked with through the study as well as significantly positive gains in their clinical skills between pre- and post-test. Students reported that they felt more confident to provide online services after the training and felt more positive regarding the benefits of the digital services for a wide array of clients (Cardenas et al., 2008).

**Training of master's-level counselors in online group work.** Several studies have investigated the experience of master's-level counseling students as both leaders and members of online groups. While preliminary, these studies have shown a wide variety of challenges that are faced in the online group environment pertaining to safety, inability to create a genuine and therapeutic environment, and perceived lack of connection between members (Holmes & Kozlowski, 2015; Kozlowski & Holmes,

2014). However, these experiences created the opportunity to experientially train future counselors in online counseling skills in the context of a supervised, academic environment prior to graduation by incorporating the experience into the group counseling course.

Another option for the infusion of online counseling skills training is through the internship experience. Master's-level counseling programs are built on the notion that the internship, a 600-hour experiential component, is a crucial training experience within the curriculum (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2015). The internship is an experience where students are able to connect content learning with experiential learning, practice working with clients in a clinical or school environment, and receive intensive supervision from a trained professional. Infusing an online counseling component in a traditional internship is one way to assist students in learning more about the workings and process of online counseling. Training master's-level school counseling students through a dual internship (face-to-face and online) allows for versatile graduates who have the skill set to work in either environment upon graduation, a particular skill set that may become increasingly relied upon as the number of virtual schools continues to increase (Setzer & Lewis, 2005).

**Project Focus**

To meet the needs of all students, school counselors must collaborate with a variety of stakeholders to implement intervention services. While this collaboration process is well known in brick and mortar K–12 school systems, less is documented on this process in virtual school districts. One potential area for collaboration can include working with local universities to positively impact school completion rates by engaging master's-level school counseling students as virtual interns. Specifically, one example includes the cooperation of school counselor trainees in the implementation of online group counseling. This type of collaboration benefits K–12 students involved in the group process, the school counselor trainees, the professional school counselors employed by the virtual school who can rely on the interns to provide services to meet the needs of a greater number of students, and the school district that holds stake in the academic and personal success of the enrolled students.

Given the challenges to virtual learning and potential academic and social hardships experienced by K–12 virtual students, collaboration between master's-level school counseling programs can be beneficial by offering intentional support to at-risk students. This experience also allows for the school counseling trainees to gain valuable experience working within a digital environment. The remainder of this paper describes the utility of collaboration between master's-level counseling students and virtual school districts to employ group counseling to promote student success.

## Collaboration and Implementation Process

This model describes a collaboration project between a CACREP-accredited master's in counseling program and state-approved, online, virtual high school in the Midwest. The university internship supervisor and several school counselors and administrators of the virtual high school developed a collaborative approach to provide virtual group counseling to at-risk virtual high school students. This collaboration began

in the late summer of 2014 when agreements, contracts, and other documents were developed. The mutual collaboration met the following needs: school counseling master's students enrolled in their internship course during their last semester of the program would receive experiential training and supervision leading online groups for high school students; and at-risk, virtual, high school students would get the opportunity to participate in a counseling group geared toward academic and personal support for 8 weeks during one semester.

**Counselor Trainings**

Several trainings including online group counseling and online school platform (e.g., Blackboard Connect) were mandatory for the master's counseling students. These trainings included: (a) online group counseling training provided by the course instructor and supervisor; (b) technical virtual school digital platform, Blackboard Connect, provided by the virtual academy; (c) specific training regarding how to infuse group counseling techniques into the online learning environment provided by the virtual school counselors; (d) training regarding working with at-risk students; and (e) leading online group counseling training. As such, each leader was explicitly trained in providing online groups and the technological platforms on which they were provided.

**Curriculum**

The university instructor of the internship course who developed the group counseling curriculum has over 7 years experience as a school counselor and has taught master's-level group counseling courses for 5 years (both on-campus and distance learning) where she has included traditional face-to-face, and online group counseling skills in the curriculum.

To overcome the challenges documented in online process groups (Holmes & Kozlowski, 2015; Kozlowski & Holmes, 2014) the group curriculum was designed to combine a pyschoeducational focus with an interpersonal process focus based on suggestions from participants (Kozlowski & Holmes, 2014) as well as common practice for school counseling groups (Steen et al., 2007). Overall, the group's focus pertained specifically to academic achievement. Although, the interpersonal component of the group was included to lessen the isolation felt by virtual school students (Sorenson, 2012) and to facilitate the therapeutic factors of group including cohesiveness, universality, and interpersonal learning.

As the groups were held virtually, specific attention was paid to engage members in such an environment. For example, videos, music, Web 2.0 tools (e.g., Padlet), and other interactive mediums were used to engage participants with the online group process, as it has been noted the online group counselor's job is to "shape the group" and "set the tone" (Bellafiore, Colon, & Rosenberg, 2003, p. 211). Group sessions were developed around techniques for working with at-risk students and geared toward typical struggles that this population of students faces in public education (Brier, 2010; Coil, 2001). All stakeholders, including the administrators and school counselors from the virtual school and the university instructor, agreed upon the final curriculum.

The weekly group session topics were as follows: (1) introductions, welcome, and individual goal setting; (2) furthering goal setting and becoming aware of decision-making process; (3) staying motivated to accomplish tasks; (4) understanding distractions

and challenges with accomplishing goals; (5) understanding personality type; (6) connecting personality type with goal accomplishment; (7) understanding choices and how they are made; and (8) saying good-bye and termination. Each session started with a "log on" activity for students to participate in while other members were joining the group, an opening activity and processing, a main activity and processing, and a closing discussion of the group.

**Group Counseling Process**

In the fall, the virtual high school compiled a list of all the students who were considered "at-risk" for that academic year. The criteria for being considered "at-risk" was that each student received at least two course grades of *F* during their previous semester. At this time, these students were notified via e-mail that they were eligible to participate in a counseling group geared toward supporting them academically and personally for 8 weeks during the next semester. As incentive to participate, gift cards and random homework passes were distributed at the close of the group sessions. If interested, each student was required to get parental consent prior to the beginning of the group. Students were assigned to one of the online groups.

The master's-level group counselors received the relevant trainings from both the university supervisor and the virtual high school counselors. The counselors also collected the appropriate parent permission documents prior to beginning the group sessions. Each counselor learned the relevant curriculum, was trained to lead online groups, and was prepared to facilitate the online group process. As the internship supervisor was the main collaborator in this project, the counselor trainees were able to discuss their group facilitation in weekly group supervision just as any other internship experience. In addition, each intern was assigned a supervising counselor from the virtual high school.

Ten minutes before every session, the group counselor would log onto the school's learning management system in an assigned Blackboard Connect classroom. The group counseling "room" was private, and only the group members were invited to join that particular classroom within the virtual school. The group members would continue to log into the classroom until the time group started. Chat and videoconference functions were available for the group; however, students preferred the chat-only functions and the group facilitators used the videoconference function. Therefore, a majority of group communication was done in a chat-box between members. Group leaders sent emails prior to the group to remind students of the scheduled session.

**Group Session Outline**

As members logged in each week, they had a topic area for conversation to help them begin engagement with the group. Topics included introductory questions where members could divulge social and surface-level identifiers about themselves. Additionally, as the group continued, members were instructed to share whether or not they had achieved their small goal for that week that they set at the last group. Members were encouraged to discuss positive and negative experiences with goal setting and attainment.

After all members were logged-on, the group leader implemented the group plan for that day. These plans were tailored to meet the overall goals and topics for the group

process, which included goal setting, accomplishing goals, and personal motivation. The leaders incorporated multimedia interventions and Web 2.0 tools throughout the group sessions in order to utilize the digital environment of the group. Members were encouraged to create Web 2.0 representations of their identity, their life timeline and goals, etc. and share them with the group using live links. Members were instructed to browse the Web and find music videos that represented a current struggle they were dealing with or a song that motivated them to achieve goals. Additionally, members were given online self-assessment tools (e.g., general personality type) to increase self-reflection and dialogue about how personality traits can influence decision making, and then share their results with the rest of the group via screen share. Overall, the group plans were designed to capture and employ the unlimited access to resources that an online, digital environment allows and support the students in developing and sharing a personal identity through creative means.

To close the group, each member was encouraged to share one component of the group that day that impacted them. Additionally, each member was instructed to share a small goal for this week that they would work on outside of the group. At the end of the group, the group leader sent out a link to the accountability measures. The current project used two surveys for session-to-session data collection: 1) the Networked Minds Social Presence Measure (Harms & Biocca, 2004); and 2) the Group Session Rating Scale (Duncan & Miller, 2007).

## Accountability Practices and Program Evaluation

The American School Counseling Association stresses accountability (ASCA, 2014b). School counselors will, "use data to show the impact of the school counseling program on student achievement, attendance and behavior" (ASCA, 2014b). In accordance with best practices, collaborations and interventions should utilize accountability practices in order to collect data on the efficacy of the project. Accountability markers and assessment tools can vary widely. A myriad of potential assessment tools exist and each program should decide what is necessary or appropriate for their collaboration project.

## Discussion

This project represents a novel attempt at facilitating a collaborative, targeted intervention for at-risk students in virtual schools. An additional component is the experiential online group counseling training for master's-level counseling students in a real environment. Several studies have shown potential challenges of facilitating online group counseling with master's-level counseling students as group members and group leaders (Holmes & Kozlowski, 2015; Kozlowski & Holmes, 2014). Currently, the literature lacks an understanding about how online groups function with "real" clients and in natural environments. This collaborative project met several needs: school counseling master's students received experiential training and supervision leading online groups for high school students; and at-risk, virtual, high school students participated in an 8-week educational and process counseling group geared toward academic success. As a pilot

project, a wide range of information was collected to inform future collaborations and group counseling interventions in virtual high schools.

**Implications for Collaboration**

As with any first-time collaboration, many lessons were learned during the process. These lessons present several implications for counselor educators and professional school counselors alike. The first curious development was the high school students' preference for chat-only communication. As discussed, the virtual school classrooms had the capability for students to connect via videoconference (picture and sound in real time) and/or chatting (text only in real time). No high school student connected via videoconference in any of the groups, even though the group leaders were logged into the virtual classroom using videoconferencing technology. This highlighted the overwhelming preference of connecting with peers only via chat, even when the counselor was modeling other behavior. The implications of this can only be speculated on at this time, and more research should be done on this phenomenon.

A second lesson learned was the high attrition rate of high school students within the groups. The literature on virtual high schools discusses dropout rates as a large area of concern for general school completion rates (Dray et al., 2011). Interestingly, this same concern trickled down to the group counseling environment. This inability to retain students, even with the incentive of gift cards and homework passes, raises specific implications for virtual school counselors regarding the recruitment and retention of virtual students for group participation.

This particular experience highlighted the importance of a targeted intervention plan to support students in successful outcomes. This group experience did not involve parents other than the signing of a permission slip nor did the teachers get an update about the group experience or goals of the group. A suggestion for future online groups is to involve the teachers and the parents of the student members to mobilize a greater sense of support. The authors speculate that by informing other stakeholders of student participation, it may generate more positive support and engagement for the students outside of the group experience. Open communication between the levels of support for each student may increase overall participation and lessen the attrition rates both for the group as well as in coursework and enrollment.

Another implication is the anecdotal information regarding the group counseling leaders' perceptions of the experience. The group counseling leaders expressed much frustration with the process of virtual group counseling. Throughout the semester-long supervision process, group leaders found it difficult to engage members in a meaningful way throughout the group process. These leader experiences relate to prior knowledge of online group counseling leaders and their frustrations with the inability to produce a therapeutic dialogue and environment among members (Kozlowski & Holmes, 2014).

Much of the supervision surrounding the group experience revolved around ways to try to engage group members, connect them interpersonally, and increase general participation. Even with weekly supervision and discussion with other digital group leaders, master's-level students did not seem to move past the frustration and challenges regarding engaging the group members in the process. This evidence is currently anecdotal and more research should be done on the particular challenges that impede high school student engagement in virtual group counseling.

## Conclusion

This collaboration model holds expansive positive implications for virtual schools as well as the training of professional counselors. Over the course of the project, many lessons were learned regarding the challenges of facilitating online counseling groups in a virtual high school. This information is crucial for counselor education and school counselors as virtual schools and online counseling continue to gain professional momentum. Through increased partnerships, virtual school counselors and counselor trainees can increase the support provided to at-risk virtual students as well as more fully train future school counselors to meet the continually changing needs of the field.

## References

American School Counselor Association (ASCA). (2014a). *About ASCA*. Retrieved from http://www.schoolcounselor.org/

American School Counselor Association (ASCA). (2014b). *ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs (Executive Summary).* Retrieved from http://schoolcounselor.org/ascanationalmodel/media/anm-templates/anmexecsumm.pdf

American School Counselor Association (ASCA). (2014c). *The professional school counselor and group counseling.* Retrieved from http://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/PositionStatements/PS_Group-Counseling.pdf

Anthony, K. (2015). Training therapists to work effectively online and offline within digital culture. *British Journal of Guidance and Counseling*, *43*(1), 36–42. doi:10.1080/03069885.2014.924617

Archambault, L., & Crippen, K. (2009). K–12 distance educators at work: Who's teaching online across the United States. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, *41*(4), 363–391.

Bellafiore, D. R., Colon, Y., & Rosenberg, P. (2003). Online counseling groups. In R. Kraus, J. Zack, & G. Stricker (Eds.), *Online counseling: A handbook for mental health professionals* (pp. 197–216). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Bradley, C. L., & Renzulli, L. A. (2011). The complexity of non-completion: Being pushed or pulled to drop out of high school. *Social Forces*, *90*(2), 521–545.

Brier, N. (2010). *Self-regulated learning: Practical interventions for struggling teens.* Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Cardenas, G., Serrano, B., Flores, L. A., & De la Rosa, A. (2008). Etherapy: A training program for development of clinical skills in distance psychotherapy. *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, *26*(2–4), 470–483. doi:10.1080=15228830802102180

Clark, T. (2001). *Virtual schools: Trends and issues.* Phoenix, AZ: WestEd/Distance Learning Resource Network.

Coil, C. (2001). *Motivating underachievers*. Saline, MI: McNaughton & Gun.

Corey, M. S., Corey, G., & Corey, C. (2014). *Groups: Process and practice* (9th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). (2015). *2016 CACREP standards.* Retrieved from http://www.cacrep.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2016-CACREP-Standards.pdf

Dray, B. J., Lowenthal, P. R., Miszkiewicz, M. J., Ruiz-Primo, M. A., & Marczynski, K. (2011). Developing an instrument to assess student readiness for online learning: a validation study. *Distance Education*, *32*(1), 29–47.

Duncan, B. L., & Miller, S. D. (2007). *The Group Session Rating Scale*. Jenson Beach, FL: Author.

Gilkey, S. L., Carey, J., & Wade, S. L. (2009). Families in crisis: Considerations for the use of web-based treatment models in family therapy. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, *90*(1), 37–45. doi:10.1606=1044-3894.3843

Gladding, S. (2003). *Group work: A counseling specialty* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Harms, C., & Biocca, A. (2004). Internal consistency and reliability of the networked minds social presence measure. In M. Alcaniz & B. Rey (Eds.), *Seventh Annual International Workshop: Presence 2004*. Valencia, Spain: Universidad Politencnica de Valencia.

Holmes, C. M., & Kozlowski, K. A. (2015). A preliminary comparison of online and face-to-face process groups. *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, *33*(3), 241–262.

Hurley, R. (2002). Fine-tuning an online high school to benefit at-risk students. *Technological Horizons in Education Journal*, *30*(4), 22–42.

Kerr, S. (2011). Tips, tools, and techniques for teaching in the online high school classroom. *TechTrends*, *55*(1), 28–31.

Kozlowski, K. A., & Holmes, C. M. (2014). Experiences in online process groups: A qualitative study. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, *39*(4), 276–300.

Molnar, A. (Ed.); Miron, G., Huerta, L., Cuban, L., Horvitz, B., Gulosino, C., Rice, J. K., & Shafer, S. R. (2013). *Virtual schools in the U.S. 2013: Performance, policy, and research evidence*. Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center. Retrieved from http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/virtual-schools-annual-2013/

Picciano, A. G., & Seaman, J. (2007). *K–12 online learning: A survey of U.S. school district administrators.* Needham, MA: Sloan Consortium.

Picciano, A. G., & Seaman, J. (2009). *K–12 online learning: A 2008 follow-up of the survey of U.S. school district administrators.* Needham, MA: Sloan Consortium.

Rendon, M. G. (2014). Drop out and "disconnected" young adults: Examining the impact of neighborhood and school contexts. *The Urban Review*, *46*, 169–196.

Riva, M., & Haub, A. L. (2004). Group counseling in the schools. In J. L. DeLucia-Waack, D. A. Gerrity, C. R. Kalodner, & M. T. Riva (Eds.), *Handbook of group counseling and psychotherapy* (pp. 309–321). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Setzer, J. C., & Lewis, L. (2005). *Distance education courses for public elementary and secondary school students: 2002–03*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Sorensen, C. (2012). Learning online at the K–12 level: A parent/guardian perspective. *International Journal of Instructional Media*, *39*(4), 297–309.

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., Bauman, S., & Smith, J. (2008). The preparation of professional school counselors for group work. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, *33*(3), 253–269.

*Note: This paper is part of the annual VISTAS project sponsored by the American Counseling Association. Find more information on the project at: http://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/vistas*