

Banana Splits Group Proposal for Middle School Students

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Abstract

Children of divorce often feel alone and isolated. Group counseling can assist students of divorce by giving them a safe place to talk about what they are going through with other peers and a place to help normalize their feelings of divorce. Additionally, the banana splits group will help support parents as they are going through a rough time in their lives and may be less able to support their children because of personal struggles. Students will be identified by teachers, administrators, parents, and themselves. The student's knowledge and thoughts will be monitored from the beginning of the group to the end of the group counseling experience to determine the effectiveness of the group.

Banana Splits Group Proposal

Purpose and Objectives

Purpose and Expected Outcomes

The purpose of the Banana Splits group is to support children who are experiencing parental divorce and/or separation. Children of parental divorce can have many different feelings such as anxiety, depression, anger and fear (Erford, 2010). These students are also more likely to act out and to have lower academic achievement. The American School Counseling Association [ASCA] competencies state that a school counselor provides group counseling to students to promote student success in the domains of academic, career, and personal/social development (ASCA, 2012 pg. 10). By allowing children of divorce a safe space to talk about their experiences of divorce, the group intends to promote student success.

Students for this group will be identified based on a needs assessment (see appendix A). The needs assessment will be filled out by students at the beginning of each quarter with the preface that they should fill out this survey as honestly as possible. Parents will also receive an email about the group and how to refer their children. Additionally, teachers and administrators will be requested to fill out a needs assessment because they can provide feedback about a student's overall wellbeing and any issues that they have noticed. This is especially vital because having the support of school leaders is essential when conducting groups (Erford, 2010). These leaders can also be essential in determining the effects that the group may have on specific students.

The expected outcome for this group is for students to better understand the implications and to discard any misconceptions about parental divorce. This will be measured by giving students a pre-test and post-test (see appendix F). Another expected outcome is for students to learn coping

strategies to deal with parental divorce. At the end of the group, students will be asked to list three coping strategies on their paper banana split for dealing with parental divorce.

Specific Population

The specific population for this group will be students between the ages of nine and twelve. To be invited to the group, students need to be affected by parental divorce or separation within the last year. Depending on student's developmental level and personal experiences, students may have different experiences of divorce. However, developmentally there are similarities among different age groups. Typically, students between the ages of nine to twelve are very self-conscious and are trying to fit in with peers (Lowenstein, 2006). These students often feel ashamed and different because of their parent's marital status and are more likely to have intense anger about parental divorce (Lowenstein, 2006). Additionally, at this developmental age, students are able to think more abstractly and to understand more complex issues (Lowenstein, 2006). Because of these important developmental issues, this group of students is in great need for opportunities to express how they are feeling. Erford (2010) finds that since this age group is very peer focused, group counseling is a practical and effective way to assist children of divorce.

Research Literature

In the United State, the divorce rate is continually rising (Beaulieu & Messner, 2010). Since divorce has become relatively common, children of divorce are often overlooked. Research shows that these students are at a greater risk for developing depression, more likely to have behavioral problems and more likely to perform lower academically (Lowenstein, 2006). This can lead to less successful students. Since elementary and middle school grades are an important indicator of the courses students will be placed into in high school, it is important to provide effective interventions for these students. Since school counselors are advocates for all students'

success, it is important to advocate for children of divorce. In addition to the short term effects of divorce, research finds that some children are still impacted ten years after parental divorce occurred (Lowenstein, 2006). Thus, it is crucial that these students are supported through effective and research based interventions.

Children of divorce are likely to feel isolated and alone. Erford (2010) finds that simply talking about divorce can take away some of the associated negative feelings. Considering 70% of counseling groups for students take place in schools, this is an effective place to work on preventive issues before more serious issues may occur (Erford, 2010). The group setting also provides children with a chance to form relationships with other members and to connect with one another about similar feeling of divorce.

Additionally, a focus group study of 11 to 14 year olds found that there were several important themes related to how parents can help their children deal with divorce (Maes, De Mol, & Buysse, 2012). The first was constructing meaning for divorce. Children wanted a clear explanation of why their parents were getting divorced. It was clear that most parents had given an explanation when talking to the children the first time about the divorce, but the study found the children wanted to talk about the divorce at different times throughout the process.

Additionally, children who had an outside family member to talk to such as a teacher, a grandparent, or a friend seemed to have a better understanding of their parent's divorce. This is important because group counseling gives children the opportunity to discuss their parent's divorce with their peers and a counselor, which may help the child to have a clearer understanding of their parent's divorce.

Another important theme was the feeling of mattering, specifically feeling that their opinion mattered (Maes, De Mol, & Buysse, 2012). The children did not necessarily want to be involved

in making decisions about the family arrangements; however they wanted their parents to ask them if they were okay with the arrangements. Lastly, children were asked what the “ideal” divorce situation would be for their best friend. In addition to the components above, children in the focus group thought parents should make the divorce process as short as possible and parents should not make the child choose between them. Students essentially wanted their parents to consider their opinions to be available to them.

Being available for their children during divorce is often different for parents because they are emotionally and physically drained themselves (Erford, 2010). Furthermore, parents can be affected because of the financial constraints of having two adults funding the household as compared to one adult. This is especially important for children who were already economically disadvantaged as their rates of depression, hyperactivity, and dropping out of high school are significantly higher than children of divorce who were not economically disadvantaged (Strohschein, 2012). This research points to how group counseling may give children some of the extra support that parents are unable to give. Corey and Corey (2010) find that most parents are willing and grateful for their children to receive extra support in group counseling during and after a separation or divorce. Their understanding was that many parents were really interested in what their children were learning and some parents even read additional literature provided as well as requested more information in the form of parental workshops and resources.

Objectives

The banana splits’ group counseling objectives are:

- Students identified will participate in six, weekly counseling sessions that give students a space to talk about their experience with parental divorce/separation.

- Students' will have the opportunity to hear from peers about their experience of divorce to normalize students' feelings of divorce.
- Students' will discuss problem solving and coping skills for dealing with parental divorce/separation and have a chance to practice these skills through role playing.

Structure & Setting

Size of Group

The size of group counseling should depend on the age and capacity of all members. For example, group counseling for students with excessive behavior problems may need to be limited to four students (Erford, 2010). A general rule of thumb is that groups need to have enough members to have differing opinions, but not too many members that not all have a chance to participate in the group. Erford (2010) finds that "groups larger than nine are considered too large for members to participate, for leaders to prevent subgroups from forming, and for leaders to adequately manage behavior" (pg. 239). Additionally, Glass (2010) finds that a group of 6 to 8 is the optimal size of a group for a new group leader to control, while a more experienced group leader may choose to have 8 to 10 members. This also varies in accordance with the age of the clients and whether a co-leader is available. Corey & Corey (2010) find that younger groups generally consist of fewer members than adult and adolescent groups. For these reasons, the Banana Splits counseling group will consist of six members.

Number of Sessions

The Banana Split's group will consist of six counseling sessions, lasting 30 minutes per session (Corey & Corey, 2010). Group sessions should "ideally run for 30 to 60 minutes depending, again on the issues being addressed and the age of the members" (Corey & Corey, 2010 pg. 70). The actual duration of the Banana Split's group will last for one homeroom period,

which is approximately 40 minutes. This will give the counselor time to pick up the group members while allowing students to have a full 30 minute session during the period. Also, since the divorce rate has been on the rise throughout the United States and is especially prevalent for younger students, this will allow the counselor to work with a larger amount of students during each school year (Erford, 2010).

Time Frame

The Banana Split's group will be conducted for six sessions. For each grade level of middle school students, one group will be conducted for each nine week period. The group will begin in the third week of the quarter as to give the counselor a chance to collect any relevant paperwork (e.g. informed consent, parental consent) and to be available to meet with relevant parties such as parents or teachers before beginning the group. This also gives the counselor a chance to screen students before they join the group, which is important to ensure that students that may not benefit from group counseling will not be placed in group counseling (Corey & Corey, 2010).

The group will be conducted during students' homeroom period as one concern of many parents, teachers, and administrators is students' missing school time. Depending on their grade level, students will meet on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday since Monday and Friday are often used as holidays or for special events. In the event the group was unable to meet for a session, the alternate session would occur the last week of the quarter, if this is feasible for the group leader and students.

Closed Group

The Banana Split's group will be a closed group. A disadvantage of having a group that is open is that "the rapid changing of members can result in a lack of cohesion, particularly if too many clients leave or too many new ones are introduced" (Corey & Corey, 2010 pg. 118). Since

the Banana Split's group will only be six weeks long, any disruptions may affect the group member's willingness to participate. Additionally, a challenge of open groups is that leaders have to continually explain the basic principles and rules of the group (Corey & Corey, 2010). Furthermore, because new members are not acquainted with the group, each session would need to allow for a period to acculturate those students to the group (Erford, 2010). Another important consideration is that counseling groups are often run as closed group because members can develop trust and comfort with one another (Jacobs et al., 2011) where as in an open group it may be harder for students to feel comfortable. Since this group is already time-limited in both the number of sessions and the length of group, it would be difficult to keep new members informed while having a productive group. Thus, this group will be closed.

Physical Setting

The physical setting of the group will be in a room large enough to accommodate seven people. Corey & Corey (2010) find that they like a room that is comfortable enough to fit all members, preferably in a setting where creating a circle is possible. The counselor will make sure to address any potential problems of the room. For example, if the room is substantially large, the school counselor will make efforts to create a smaller space such as adding moving walls or using a certain space of the room. More importantly than actual room space, is that the room ensures privacy. Erford (2010) finds that the location of a group in a school is important and "leaders should take care in planning the location of the group" (pg. 238). This is especially important as information can spread quickly across the school. For this reason, the space will need to be in a physical room and every effort to ensure that students cannot be overheard from another room or across the hall will be made.

Selection of Members

Members will be selected who have dealt with parental divorce or separation within the last year. Because there are numerous stages of divorce many children go through, it is important that all students have had recent experience with divorce or separation (Lowstein, 2006). Students will be selected based on surveys filled out by school staff and students as well as a parent email about the group (see appendix A). This will allow targeted students to be reached out to regarding this group. Students will have the option to participate in the group because some students may not be ready. However, they may eventually be at a point when they feel comfortable participating in a Banana Splits counseling group.

Additionally, students will be screened before attending the group. Hines and Fields (2002) explain that there are four functions to pre-group screening including developing a therapeutic relationship, exploring student's expectations and concerns of the group, and discovering student's prospective problems and commitment to change. Lastly, deciding whether the group is a suitable option for the student is the final reason (Hines & Fields, 2002). This task can be challenging because the counselor has to consider the needs of all of the students and whether this student would fit well into this group. Corey & Corey (2010) caution that counselors need to be aware of screening out clients who could be difficult to work with, but could really benefit from the group as well as screening out individuals that the counselor may have a personal dislike for.

There are several methods that could be used to screen potential members. Graver and Morse (1986) suggest that the counselor can observe the students in class and talk to the teacher about how the child interacts with other students. Jacobs, Masson, Harvill, Schimmel (2011) find that the "best way to screen [members] is to conduct a brief interview and find out why the potential

member wants to be in the group” (pg. 403). In addition to these strategies, Erford (2010) adds individual and group interviews as well as screening instruments and knowledge gained from interacting with the student as further methods for screening. While it may be difficult and time consuming to screen potential members in a school setting, it is the encouraged practice by the American School Counseling Association [ASCA] and the Association for Specialists in Group Work [ASGW] (Erford, 2010). Thus, the group members will be screened by conducting individual and group interviews as well as having conversations with school staff and parents about the student.

Process

Group Approach

The Banana Split’s group will be a counseling group. A counseling group “aim[s] at helping participants resolve problems in living or dealing with developmental concerns” (Corey & Corey, 2010 pg. 12). These groups are typically short in time and “focus on adjustment issues for individuals who function relatively normally” (Erford, 2010 pg. 8). Group members usually come to this group because they are experiencing an issue; in this case the divorce or separation of their parents (Erford, 2010). Counseling groups give students a space to explore issues while allowing these students to feel acceptance and support from their peers. Counseling groups also help students to form healthy peer relationships (Erford, 2010). Counseling groups are preventive in nature and allow students the “chance to process their problems, receive constructive feedback, and work on interpersonal skills” (Erford, 2010 pg. 9).

Advantages and Disadvantages

As with any type of therapy, there are both advantages and disadvantages of a counseling group. An advantage is students have the opportunity to talk to other students that are working

through the same issue. This allows students to gain support from one another (Erford, 2010). Additionally, since group counseling is a microcosm of society, students are able to talk about their issues in an environment that is more similar to the situation than in individual counseling (Corey & Corey, 2010). This provides “healthy modeling for both group peers and leaders” (Erford, 2010). Another advantage is this age group is peer focused and peer support typically means more to group members than leader support (Erford, 2010). This is a great benefit of counseling groups as most students want to feel connected with their peers.

In addition to the advantage of students being so peer focused, there comes great responsibility to ensure that members are not harmed by other members (Erford, 2010). This is a disadvantage of a counseling group because if inappropriate members are in the counseling group (Erford, 2010), the group may cause more harm to some members than good. Another disadvantage is that with younger students, it is often difficult to explain what confidentiality is and how it should be respected (Erford, 2010). Along with that, since students in school spend time together in class, at recess, and throughout the course of the day, leaks in confidentiality are more common (Corey & Corey, 2010).

Leadership Style

The Banana Split’s group will utilize a moderate control leadership style. Leadership styles can be viewed as a horizontal continuum from high control to low control leadership (Erford, 2010). The specific leadership style used should take into account the groups topic and the members’ abilities. For example, Erford (2010) uses a group of honors students who are concerned about going to college as an example of students who may be appropriate for a low control leadership style. Whereas a high control leadership style may be more psycho-educational in nature. School groups typically need structure for group members to follow,

especially with children (Corey & Corey, 2010). Due to the Banana Split's group being conducted in a middle school setting, the moderate control group seems to be most appropriate, as in this structure both members and leaders are responsible for the groups progress (Erford, 2010). Leaders who use this style "provide structure and support, encourage members to share, and maintain flexibility in order to allow group members to provide some direction" (pg. 61).

Major Ethical Responsibilities

There are several major ethical responsibilities group leaders must take into consideration including counselor competence, informed consent, and confidentiality. Counselor competency is the idea that "professional counselors [should] practice only within the scope of their education, training, and experience" (Jacobs, Masson, Harvill, & Schimmel, 2011). This may mean that counselors need to receive additional training via workshops or supervised experience before working with certain populations or working in certain environments.

Another important consideration is informed consent. Informed consent is especially significant in schools because most students are under the age of 18. In school settings, "counselors must follow the policies and procedures established by the system regarding parent/guardian consent" (Erford, 2010 pg. 30). Counselors should give potential members relevant information such as the nature of the group, the leader's theoretical orientation, the role of group members and the leader, and the leader's qualifications (Corey & Corey, 2010).

Lastly, confidentiality is a major ethical issue that is related to group counseling. Corey & Corey (2010) state "it [confidentiality] is especially important because the group leader must not only keep the confidences of the members but also get the members to keep one another's confidences" (pg. 72). This sums up a major problem of group work in that there is no guaranteed confidentiality between members (Erford, 2010). Confidentiality is essential to

creating an atmosphere of sharing and trust among leaders and group members (Erford, 2010).

Thus, it is essential that group counselors are aware of and remind clients about confidentiality in a developmentally appropriate way.

Multicultural Considerations

It is important to take into account multiculturalism because of the ever changing diversity within the United States and abroad. For example, in public schools today “more than one-third of the population is comprised of students of color” (Erford, 2010 pg. 37). One way to work more effectively with multicultural clients is by “increasing your awareness of your own cultural values and personal assumptions” (Corey & Corey, 2010 pg. 16). One important premise to becoming a diversity-component counselor is understanding one’s own culture. By understanding one’s own culture, counselors can better understand their own biases and stereotypes (Corey & Corey, 2010).

The next important consideration is a willingness to understand and respect cultures different from one’s own (Alle-Corliss & Alle-Corliss, 2009). This could come in many forms such as reading more about specific cultural groups or attending a diversity webinar or training. As cited in Erford (2010) there are three common goals of working with multicultural groups. The goals are to understand clients’ situations from a cultural perspective, to approach events and behaviors from a functional perspective, and to help members use skills learned in group within their cultural perspective (Erford, 2010).

Evaluation

Effectiveness

With the increased focus on accountability, school counselors need to be able to prove that they are effective in increasing student success (Erford, 2010). The group will measure both

overall effectiveness and the effectiveness of individual sessions. Overall effectiveness will be measured by students' completing a short pre-test before attending the counseling group (see appendix F). Then the students will take the same test after the group to reflect any associated changes. To measure the individual effectiveness of each session, at the end of each group students will fill out a short journal entry. The journal entry will be different from week to week and will be used to measure if a lesson was effective and to consider what students' were taking from each session.

Overview

In conclusion, because of the increase of changing family structures due to divorce, there is an increased need to assist this population. This is especially vital since parents of divorced children are often dealing with their own struggles and are less able to assist their children in this transition period. Also, research finds that there are both long term and short term effects of divorce. Since school counselors are to help all students achieve to their fullest potential, mitigating some of the challenge for students of divorce is especially crucial to helping these children learn.

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Appendices:

Appendix A: Administrator, Student, and Parent Needs Assessment

Appendix B: Student Invitation

Appendix C: Informational Flyer

Appendix D: Email to Staff for Referrals

Appendix E: Informed Consent

Appendix F: Lessons 1-6

Appendix A: Needs Assessments

[Email] Dear ABC Elementary School Staff,

Below is a link to a needs assessment survey to be filled out. This assesment will assist me in guiding my counseling groups and classroom guidance for the upcoming school year. I know that you see many students each day that I may not have a chance to meet or interact with thus your thoughts or comments are very much appreciated. I ask that you please fill out this survey by [insert 2 weeks from now]. As always if you have any comments or questions, as well as concerns about any students, feel free to contact me.

Survey Link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/K9YMTWS> (see below attachment)

Sincerely,

Tiffany Alexander
Elementary School Counselor
Alexander.801@k12.oh.us
(XXX)-XXX-XXXX

BANANA SPLITS PROPOSAL

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1. Please fill out the following information:

Name:

Position (Staff, Administrative, Teacher):

Level: (Elementary, Middle, High School)

Subject Area (if applicable):

2. Please rank the following items in order from 1 to 10. A score of 1 means this issue is a high priority issue whereas a score of 10 is a low priority issue.

<input type="checkbox"/> Bullying	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Career Exploration	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict Resolution	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Coping Skills	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Drug/Alcohol Abuse	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Friendship/Social Skills	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Grief/Loss	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Parental Divorce/ Separation	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Stress Management	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Study Skills	<input type="text"/>

3. Do you have any students who could benefit from any of the following topics?

Bullying	<input type="text"/>
Career Exploration	<input type="text"/>
Conflict Resolution	<input type="text"/>
Coping Skills	<input type="text"/>
Drug/Alcohol Abuse	<input type="text"/>
Friendship/Social Skills	<input type="text"/>
Grief/Loss	<input type="text"/>
Parental Divorce/ Separation	<input type="text"/>
Stress Management	<input type="text"/>
Study Skills	<input type="text"/>
Other (please specify topic and student in need)	<input type="text"/>

4. Would you be interested in having a school counselor complete a guidance lesson in your classroom? If so, what would be a good time/day and course to present the lesson?

5. Do you have any further comments, questions, or concerns? Please feel free to contact the counseling department by phone (xxx-xxx-xxxx) or to talk to your building counselor(s) if you have any concerns or questions that need to be addressed immediately.

Done

STUDENT ASSESSMENT OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAM
_____ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DATE _____

Name: (optional) _____

Circle Your Grade: 3 4 5

Directions: The school counselors would like you to answer the following questions. Please respond honestly to the statements listed below.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
1. I know my counselor's name.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I know where to find my counselor's office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I know how to make an appointment with my counselor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. My counselor schedules an appointment with me soon after I ask for one.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. My counselor honors confidentiality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. My counselor helps me solve problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I feel comfortable asking my counselor for help.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. My parent(s) encourage me to talk to my counselor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. My teacher sends me and my classmates to talk with my counselor about problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I know what my counselor's role is at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Directions: Place an X in the space in front of the topics for which you would like more information.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| ___ Friendship problems | ___ Dealing with Peer pressures |
| ___ Conflict Resolution/Anger Management | ___ Family Issues |
| ___ Dealing with Grief/Loss | ___ Bullying |
| ___ Time Management | ___ Study Skills |

What things would you like to talk to your counselor about by yourself?

Is there anything else you would like to say about your counselors or the guidance program?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP AND PARTICIPATION!

Obtained from: South Carolina Department of Education (2008) *Guidance and Counseling. The South Carolina Comprehensive Developmental Guidance and Counseling Program Model.*
 Retrieved from <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/174/documents/SCCDGCPM06-23-08Final.pdf>

PARENT ASSESSMENT OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAM

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL _____ **DATE** _____

Name: (optional) _____

Circle Your Child's Grade: **K** **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

Directions: The guidance department would appreciate your input in helping us to provide the best services to our students. Please respond honestly to the statements listed below.

		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>N/A</u>
1.	I know the name of my child's guidance counselor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I know where the guidance office is located in my child's school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I know how to contact my child's counselor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I have had communication with my child's guidance counselor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	I feel comfortable talking with my child's guidance counselor about issues and concerns.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	My child's counselor listens and treats me with respect.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	My child's counselor provides resources and information to me as a parent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I am aware that the counselor talks with my child during classroom guidance lessons, in small counseling groups, and/or alone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	My child talks at home about the school counselor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	Guidance services have been helpful to my child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR OVERALL IMPRESSION OF GUIDANCE SERVICES IN OUR SCHOOL.

Excellent
Good
Average
Poor
No Opinion

Directions: Place an X in the space in front of the parent education topics that are of interest to you.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>___ helping my child deal with stress</p> <p>___ motivating my child to achieve</p> <p>___ effective discipline with my child</p> <p>___ single parenting</p> <p>___ drug awareness</p> | <p>___ helping my child deal with grief and loss</p> <p>___ teaching my child to behave responsibly</p> <p>___ helping my child with divorce and separation</p> <p>___ helping my child live in a blended family</p> <p>___ other</p> |
|--|---|

Comments: _____

I prefer to attend workshops during the school day ___; at night ___; not at all ___

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP AND PARTICIPATION!

Obtained from: South Carolina Department of Education (2008) *Guidance and Counseling. The South Carolina Comprehensive Developmental Guidance and Counseling Program Model.*

Retrieved from <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/174/documents/SCCDGCPM06-23-08Final.pdf>

Appendix B: Student Invitation Letter

Dear [Student Name],

You are invited to be a part of the Banana Split's counseling group! The Banana Split's group is just for students whose parents are divorced or seperated. The group will consist of 5 other students and will be a place that you can share about your parent's divorce or seperation. You do not have to join this group. If you do decide to join this club, we will meet for 6 weeks during your homeroom period. Please let me know if you are interested in attending this group by signing the bottom of this form.

Hope to see you soon!

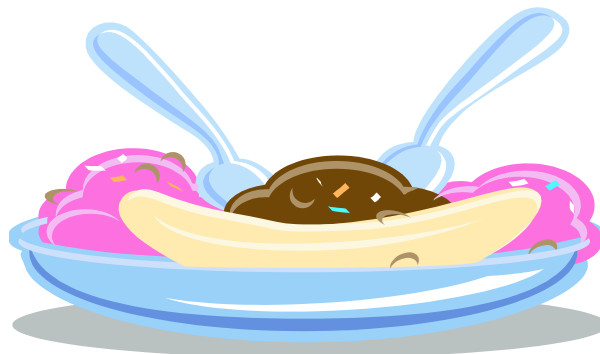
Ms. Alexander

Student Signature: _____

Counselor Signature: _____

Appendix C: Informational Flyer (to be included in parent newsletter)

Banana Splits Group



What? A group for students whose parents are divorced or going through a separation. The group will talk, play games, and complete other group activities

Who? Middle school students

When? The group will be beginning in [Month] and will take place for 6 weeks during student's homeroom period.

Contact? If you are interested in this program please stop by Ms. Alexander's office or contact her via email (alexander.801@k12.oh.us) or phone (XXX-XXX-XXXX).

Appendix D: Email to Staff for Referrals

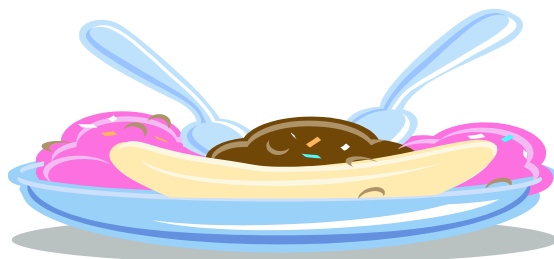
Dear ABC Staff,

A support group is being started for students whose parents are divorced or seperated. If you are aware of any students who could benefit from this group, please email me back with their names.

Thank you for your assistance!

Tiffany Alexander
ABC School Counselor
Alexander.801@k12.oh.us
(XXX)-XXX-XXXX

Appendix E: Informed Consent



Dear [Insert Parent Name],

It is time for the Banana Splits program to begin! Below is some information about the Banana Split's program. In order to get things rolling, we need permission from you for your child to participate this quarter.

What is Banana Splits?

- 🍌 Banana Splits is a support group to help children who live with a single parent, or have experienced divorce, separation, or the death of a parent.
- 🍌 Banana Splits is a "kids helping kids" program. It provides an opportunity to see that there are others who have a similar type of home life and deal with similar challenges.
- 🍌 More than anything, Banana Splits is a time for friendships to grow and for each child to realize that he or she is not the only one.
- 🍌 Banana Splits provides a chance to get ideas from peers on how to solve problems that others have already dealt with or are currently facing.

Who comes to Banana Splits?

- 🍌 Banana Splits is for all middle school students.
- 🍌 Banana Splits is appropriate for children living with only one parent, in a step-family, or moving back and forth between parents or families.
- 🍌 It is for those whose "split" has happened within one year.

How did Banana Splits originate?

- 🍌 Elizabeth McGonagle, a social worker in Ballston Spa, created this program in 1978. She felt strongly that it was important for children to have a safe place to share feelings, explore ways to handle problems associated with living with only one parent, or only one parent at a time, and to see that they are not alone with the unusual stresses they face.

- 🍌 Since 1978 this successful program has been adopted in hundreds of schools across the country.
- 🍌 The program is called Banana Splits—the “splits” to describe the reality of the child’s home circumstances and “banana” as a reminder of the fun we have together!

The Nitty-Gritty:

- 🍌 In Banana Splits, small groups of students get together during homeroom with Ms. Alexander.
- 🍌 During our time together, discuss whatever comes up, play games, do role plays and sometimes make things. The time goes fast! Students who begin the program are expected to attend each meeting.
- 🍌 Lastly, to preserve confidentiality, we do not share the particulars of other people’s lives outside of the group. Children are encouraged to communicate with their families about any issues we discuss.

If you would like more information, feel free to email (alexander.801@k12.oh.us) or call me (XXX)-XXX-XXXX. If you are interested in having your child participate, please return the attached form to school as soon as possible.

Thank you. As always, I look forward to spending time with your student.

Sincerely,

Ms. Alexander

Please cut and return signed form to Ms. Alexander

I give permission for my child _____ to participate in Banana Splits.

Parent's Signature: _____

Date: _____

** Adapted from Malinus Pebble Hill School. Retrieved from:
<http://www.mph.net/pdf/Students/BananaSplits.pdf>

Appendix F: Banana Split's Pretest and Posttest Evaluation

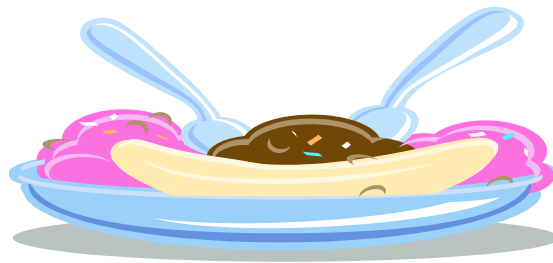
Ideas About Divorce

	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1. Divorce/Separation is a very bad experience.				
2. When people marry, they should stay married.				
3. Divorces/Separation is better than having parents argue all the time.				
4. Life stays pretty much the same for kids after the divorce/separation as it was before the divorce/separation.				
5. When parents get divorced/separated, it can be the children's fault.				
6. I like visiting the parent/guardian I don't live with.				
7. I can talk about the divorce/separation with my parents/guardians, relatives, or friends and they will listen and understand me.				
8. Parents/guardians should get married again after a divorce/separation.				
9. Stepparents are usually mean to the children.				
10. I feel sad and angry about the divorce/separation.				

** Margolin, S. (1996). *Complete group counseling program for children of divorce: Ready-to-use plans & materials for small & large groups, grades 1-6*. West Nyack, NY: The Center for Applied Research in Education

Appendix G: Lesson Plans 1- 6

Banana Splits



Lesson 1

Topic: Introduction to the Banana Splits Group

Check in: Counselor goes to the student's classrooms and picks the students up. Counselor walks students to the group room and welcomes students to the group environment.

Goal 1: Group Introductions

Counselor will begin with an introduction of what the Banana Split's counseling group is and the dates/times the counseling group will be meeting. The counselor will hand out and have students complete the pre-test evaluation. The counselor will then introduce themselves to the group. Next the counselor will have students introduce themselves to the group. If necessary, the counselor will give students a few questions to answer to facilitate introductions.

Goal 2: Discuss Confidentiality

Counselor will give students a handout that says "What You Say in Here Stays in Here except if someone is harming you, if you want to harm someone, or if you want to hurt yourself." See below example. The counselor will explain that this is the basic definition of confidentiality and will ask students to write down examples for each of the three exceptions.



Next the counselor will have students flip the paper over to find the "Do's and Don'ts of sharing outside of group" (see below example). Students will be asked to give an example of what the student could say outside of the group and what they could not say outside of the group. Based on student examples, the counselor will determine whether the group needs to continue to talk about sharing outside of the group or if the group has an understanding of sharing. This will be revisited throughout the group.

Do's and Don'ts of Sharing

I can share...

What I said in group.

Example:

That I am a member of
Banana Split's

Example:

I can't share...

What another group
member said in group.

Example:

That Brad is a member of
Banana Split's

Example:

Goal 3: Establishing Goals

The counselor will introduce the group's purpose of giving students a chance to share their experiences of parental divorce and separation. The counselor will also explain that students are expected to attend the Banana Split's group unless they are absent for the day. Students will be given a folder with binder holes to put all of their handouts in. In the pocket of the folder will be a small journal. The counselor will explain that students will write in this journal throughout the group. The folder and journal will stay in the counselor's office and the counselor will read what the student has written unless the student has folded the page over completely. Students will be asked to write down at least one individual goal in

their journal. The counselor will ask students to share their goal with the group, if they feel comfortable doing so.

Goal 4: Establishing Group Rules

The counselor will discuss what his or her expectations are for group members about sharing and participating within the group. The group members will be asked to think of 5 rules for the groups. The counselor will ensure these goals are easy to understand and appropriate. The counselor will prompt students when necessary to ensure that goals such as respecting each other are included. The counselor will also add that students are always able to pass if they do not want to talk about a certain topic. The rules will be written on the white board and will be typed out and laminated for the next group session.

Check out: Students will be asked to write down one or more things that they had learned from the group session in their journal. Students will also be encouraged to ask any questions or write any comments the student wants to ask the counselor. Students will be reminded that the counselor will read these entries unless the student folds the page over. If time allows, students will be invited to share what they have learned. The counselor will explain that at the end of each group the student will receive a "piece" of their banana split to keep in their journal. See below numbered example. In this case the students will receive the bowl for their paper banana split. Students will be dismissed and return to their class period after homeroom.



Banana Splits



Lesson 2

Topic: Me and My Family

Check in: Counselor goes to the student's classrooms and picks students up. Counselor walks students to the group room and welcomes students to the group environment. Counselor asks students to tell the group about one fun thing that they did over the last week.

Goal 1: Reiteration of Group Rules, Confidentiality, & Group Sharing

The counselor will handout and go over a list of the group rules for students to put in their binder. The counselor will also point to the "What You Say in Here Stays in Here" on the wall and will have students find and go over their handout on the "Do's and Don'ts of Group Sharing."

Goal 2: To Learn about Each Student's Family

Students will be given different colors of play dough. Students will be asked to build their families. Alternately, if play dough is unavailable, students will be asked to draw a picture of their family. Students will be given laminated hous(es) where they will can separate families by household. Students are given the freedom to express their family from their own perspective. Students will be given 10 minutes to mold their families. Then each student will be asked to share about their family.

Check out: Students will be asked to write down one or more things that they learned from the group activity. Students will also be encouraged to ask any questions or write any comments the student wants to ask the counselor. Students will be reminded that the counselor will read these entries unless the student folds the page over. If time allows, students will be invited to share what they learned from the activitiy. The counselor will give students the banana for their paper banana splits. Students will be dismissed and return to their class period after homeroom.

Banana Splits



Lesson 3

Topic: Feelings of Divorce

Check in: Counselor goes to the student's classrooms and picks them up. Counselor walks students to the group room and welcomes students to the group environment. The counselor asks the students to talk about their favorite sport or free time activity.

Goal 1: To help students understand why parents divorce.

The counselor will read the first section "Why Parents Divorce" of a *Dinosaur's Divorce: A Guide for Changing Families*. The counselor will reiterate what the book said about how it is not a student's fault that their parents got a divorce. The counselor will prompt the students with some of the reasons parents get divorced from the book and will write a list on the whiteboard. Students will be asked to write in their journal why they believe their parents got divorced and will be asked to share if they feel comfortable.

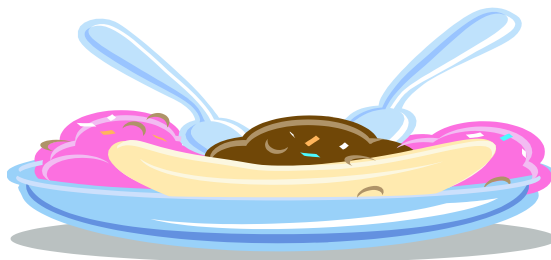
Goal 2: To help students understand and normalize their feelings about divorce by talking to other students going through this same situation.

The counselor will read the "What About You, Children have Feelings Too" section of a *Dinosaur's Divorce: A Guide for Changing Families*. The counselor will reiterate how children may have many different feelings about their parents divorce. The counselor will ask students to share how they feel or have felt during the divorce process. If necessary, the counselor will ask students about times that they have felt worry, guilt, anger, fear, relief, etc. during their parents divorce.

Check out: Students will be asked to write down one or more feelings that they have had during their parent's divorce. Students will also be encouraged to ask any questions or write any comments the student wants to ask the counselor. Students will be reminded that the counselor will read these entries unless the student folds the page over. The counselor will give each student a paper piece of ice cream for their paper banana split. Students will be dismissed and return to their class period after homeroom.

Banana Splits

Lesson 4



Topic: Coping with Divorce

Check in: Counselor goes to the student's classrooms and picks students up. Counselor walks students to the group room and welcomes students to the group environment. The counselor asks students to hold up a thumbs up, a thumbs down, or a side ways thumb to demonstrate how they are feeling.

Goal 1: To learn coping strategies for dealing with parent's divorce

The counselor will tell students that today we are going to play Splitsville. In this game students will build ice cream sundaes by learning the 6 essential skills for surviving parental divorce or separation.

Bendable Banana teaches the importance of flexibility as children adjust to the rules, routines, and expectations of different households. *Cool Down Ice Cream* introduces calming techniques and *Ooey Goey Feelings* gives children healthy ways to manage upset feelings. *Rainbow Sprinkles* reminds youngsters to look for the positives in their daily lives, while *Nutty Nuts* encourages children to talk out problems if setbacks do occur. Finally, *Cheerful Cherry* promotes a favorable attitude toward the future. The game is completed when all parts of the sundae have been collected (as found from

<http://www.childtherapytoys.com/store/product5132.html>)

Check out: Students will be reminded that there are only two more sessions left. Students will be asked to write down one or more coping strategies that they could use when they are feeling down. Students will also be encouraged to ask any questions or write any comments the student wants to ask the counselor. Students will be reminded that the counselor will read these entries unless the student folds the page over. The counselor will give each student a paper piece of ice cream for their paper banana split. Students will be dismissed and return to their class period after homeroom.

Banana Splits



Lesson 5

Topic: How to Deal with Tough Situations

Check in: Counselor goes to the student's classrooms and picks students up. Counselor walks students to the group room and welcomes students to the group environment. Counselor asks students to hold up a thumbs up, a thumbs down, or a side ways thumb to demonstrate how they are feeling.

Goal 1: To learn how to handle common situations of divorce

The counselor will tell students that today we are going to do a role playing activity. Each student will be given a list of different role plays that they can act out (see below). The counselor will read each situation and then ask if students have any other role play ideas. If they do, the counselor will approve of and add this role play to the list. The counselor will then split the students into groups of two. Students will select one role play to act out. Note: each group of students will be prompted to pick a different role play. Students will be given 5 to 10 minutes to come up with a role play for the situation that they choose. Each group will role play their situation. After each situation the counselor will ask for the way these students handled the situation and for suggestions for other ways to handle the situation. If time allows, groups will be given an additional role play to act out.

Role Play List

1. A classmate asks you why you live in two different households
2. Your dad asks you whether your mom is dating
3. Your mom asks you to tell your dad he owes her money
4. One of your parents asks if they are your favorite parent
5. Your dad says something mean about your mom while you are in the room
6. Your parents are fighting while you are in the room
7. Other: _____ (approval needed)

Check out: Students will be reminded that there is only one sessions left. Students will be asked to write down one or more things that they learned in their journal. Students will also be encouraged to ask any questions or write any comments the student wants to ask the counselor. Students will be reminded that the counselor will read these entries unless the student folds the page over. The

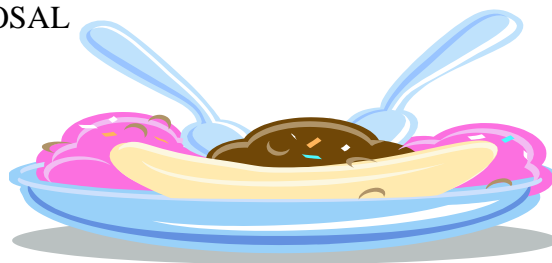
A decorative border of ice cream cones surrounds the page. The cones are arranged in a rectangular frame, with a row of 20 cones at the top, a row of 20 cones at the bottom, and vertical columns of 20 cones on the left and right sides. Each cone is a simple cartoon illustration with a yellow top, a pink middle, and a brown bottom.

BANANA SPLITS PROPOSAL

counselor will give each student a paper piece of ice cream for their paper banana splits. Students will be dismissed and return to their class period after homeroom.

Banana Splits

Lesson 6



Topic: Wrap Up/ Termination

Check in: Counselor goes to the student's classrooms and picks the students up. Counselor walks students to the group room and welcomes students to the group environment. Students are reminded that this is the last session. The counselor brings in some sort of reward (e.g. candy, cookies, brownies, a small toy) to celebrate the end of group.

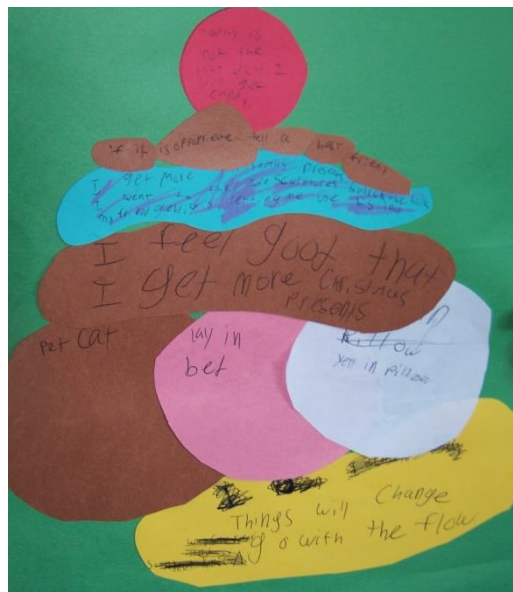
Goal 1: To recap the divorce group

The counselor will have students take all the pieces of their paper banana split out of their folder. The counselor will give students the remaining pieces (whipped cream & cherries). The counselor will tell students that they will be making a banana split today. On each piece of the paper banana split, the counselor will prompt the students to write something that they have learned or a skill they have gained from the group. Below are examples.

- 🍌 On the bowl, write something that has changed since your parent's divorce.
- 🍌 On the banana, write some feelings that you have had about your parent's divorce.
- 🍌 On the pieces of ice cream, write down three ways that can help you cope with your parent's divorce.
- 🍌 On the whipped cream, write a good thing that has happened since your parents have been divorced.
- 🍌 On the cherry, write a hopeful message to yourself or a reminder of something good in your life.



Sample:



Adapted from <http://sassyschoolcounselor.blogspot.com/2012/12/banana-splits.html>

Goal 2: To allow students a chance to tell their parents how they are feeling

The counselor will ask students to take out their journals. Students will be asked to write a letter to their parents either separately or together. Students will be told that they DO NOT have to give these letters to their parents, but they can if they choose to. Students will be given an opportunity to read their letters aloud if time allow. They will also be told that they are welcome to shred/crumple the letters after they written them.

Goal 3: Allow students to talk about what they learned from the group and to let the counselor know what they liked/disliked about the group.

The counselor will give students time to look over their journals and to share what they have learned from the group. Then students will be asked to write in their journal one or more things that they liked and one or more things that they disliked about the group.

Check out: Students will be reminded that they are always welcome to come talk to the counselor in the future and can take their journal and their paper banana split home with them to remind them about their experience in the group. The counselors will encourage students to keep writing in their journal and will thank

the students their hardwork and dedication to the group. Students will be dismissed and return to their class period after homeroom.