

School Counselors and Multicultural Education:

Applying the Five Dimensions

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Abstract

Multicultural education is an educational approach designed to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students, including those in marginalized groups. This approach has historically been directed towards teachers, but school counselors have the appropriate training and skills to lead multicultural education efforts, as well. In this article, the five dimensions of multicultural education are described and examples are provided that suggest how school counselors can use each dimension in order to create a context in which all students succeed.

Keywords: multicultural education, school counseling, dimensions

School Counselors and Multicultural Education: Applying the Five Dimensions

As racial diversity increases across the United States, the demographic makeup of public school students in the country is changing (U.S. Department of Education [U.S. DOE], National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2009). For example, between 1980 and 2008 the percentage of people from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds in the U.S. increased from 20% to 46% (U.S. DOE, NCES, 2010). During those same years, the percentage of K-12 public school students from diverse ethnic and racial background also increased from 22% to 44% (U.S. DOE, NCES, 2009). By 2025, the White population in the U.S. is expected to comprise only 58% of the overall population, compared to 77% in 2015 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; U.S. DOE, NCES, 2010). Racial demographics of public schools students are expected to reflect these changes (U.S. DOE, NCES, 2010).

Despite this increase in racial diversity across U.S. schools, research suggests that students of all races may lack the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to function in such a multicultural society (Banks & Banks, 2010). The U.S. DOE's Office for Civil Rights (2008) reports that bigotry, bias, and racism are daily occurrences in public schools in the U. S. Furthermore, many U. S. schools are characterized by ethnic and racial segregation among students (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005), and segregation has increased in schools in some regions since the 1960s (Orfield, Frankenberg, Ee, & Kuscera, 2014). For example, in 1988, 43.5% of African American students living in the southern U.S. attended majority-White schools. In 2011, only 23.2% of African American students in the south attended majority-White schools (Orfield et al., 2014).

Because of this segregation, students have limited opportunities to interact with others who are different from themselves. Tatum (2003) warned about the consequences of segregation when she wrote,

Lack of direct experience means that what one learns about the 'other' is based on secondhand information, information too often conveyed in the form of media stereotypes or parental prejudices. These biases are a barrier to meaningful engagement across lines of difference (p. 212).

Moreover, racism appears consistently present in schools. Several publications in the 1990s noted an increase in racism in schools (Beswick, 1990; Howard, 1996), and recent publications highlight higher rates of perceived racism among African American adolescents, compared to adolescents of majority races (Coker et al., 2009; Seaton & Douglass, 2014). In a 2014 study of 75 adolescents identifying as African American, Caribbean, African, and multiracial, Seaton and Douglass (2014) found that participants reported an average of 26 incidents with perceived discrimination across a span of 14 days. Ninety-seven percent of participants in the study reported perceiving at least one discriminatory experience, which is a considerably higher rate than researchers found among Latino (12%) and Asian American (11%) youth in a comparable 2010 study (Huynh & Fuligni, 2010; Seaton & Douglass). These findings are of concern given research indicating that perceived racial discrimination in adolescence is related to decreased resilience later in life, as well as lower academic achievement, higher rates of mental health, and increased risky behaviors (Brody et al., 2006; Gaylord-Harden & Cunningham, 2009; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003).

Given the increasingly diverse makeup of the U.S., as well as concerns about racism and segregation, Ponterotto, Mendelowitz, and Collabolletta (2008) assert that school counselors benefit from asking three key questions:

(a) What are we doing in our predominantly Caucasian schools to expose students to the culturally diverse people, worldviews, and practices they will encounter as they complete K–12 schools and enter the world of work or universities here and abroad? (b) What are we doing in our predominantly “minority” schools to prepare students for a culturally diverse world where multiple values systems are continuously interacting? And, (c) what are we doing in our culturally integrated schools to ensure meaningful interaction between culturally diverse students so that respect and knowledge of diverse worldviews are garnered in preparation for life beyond secondary school? (p. 94).

Multicultural education is an educational approach that has the potential to effectively answer each of these questions and provide students with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to successfully function in a multicultural society.

When students learn and practice skills for managing their differences and similarities with others, they gain advantages for engaging in meaningful and healthy relationships, a skill that will benefit them throughout their lives (Zimmerman, Aberle, & Krafchick, 2005). Students who successfully learn to interact with diverse individuals benefit in their career, academic, and socio-emotional well-being (Ponterotto et al., 2008). Even in communities in which students have little contact with diverse students, multicultural education is beneficial. Many students leave their communities to attend college or seek employment in other settings that may be more diverse than their home communities and require individuals to have broader perspectives and more appropriate social skills (Sink, 2002).

What is Multicultural Education?

Banks and Banks (2010) define multicultural education as an idea and movement focused on reducing prejudice in schools and creating equal educational opportunities for all students. This field is not focused on any one group or minority, however. Multicultural education has evolved to address gender, disability, social class, religion, sexual orientation, and intersectionality (i.e., the combination of group identities) (Banks, 2013; Sleeter & Grant, 2009). Moreover, multicultural education is designed to reform schools so that all students, including those in the majority and minority, acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to thrive in an increasingly multicultural society (Banks & Banks, 2004; Cummins, 2015). In order to accomplish this goal, multicultural education specialists agree that changes must occur in multiple areas of schools including course curricula; teaching materials; individual teaching styles; assessment procedures; overall school culture; and the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of school staff (Banks, 2004; Banks, 2013).

Why School Counselors?

Multicultural education is an approach that has traditionally been aimed at educating teachers. The topic has not been overtly discussed in school counseling, as evidenced by the absence of the term *multicultural education* in essential school counseling resources, such as The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model (2012). However, recent literature suggests that school counselors are ideally suited to implement multicultural education in their schools (Kim, Greif Green, & Klein, 2006; Roaten & Schmidt, 2009).

Professional school counselors seek to serve all students in their academic, career, and social/emotional development (ASCA, 2012). In the academic domain, school counselors help students in achieving academically and successfully learning from diverse teachers and classmates. In the career domain, school counselors ensure that students are working towards post-secondary plans in which they can work with an increasingly diverse workforce. And in the social/emotional domain, school counselors help students develop respect and understanding for others who are different from them.

School counselors meet student needs through implementation of a school counseling core curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services to student needs, and indirect student services. In these ways, school counselors help students develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to be successful (ASCA, 2012). This success includes students' ability to interact with and respect individuals who are different from themselves.

As experts on mental health, interpersonal relations, social skills, crisis intervention, conflict resolution, behavior and attitude change, and human development, school counselors are key persons positioned to help improve multicultural sensitivity among students (Kim et al., 2006). School counselors are also trained in reflective listening and demonstrating compassion when processing students' emotions, which make them adept at facilitating challenging discussions such as those surrounding multicultural concerns with students (Zimmerman et al., 2005). Moreover, with training and practice in relational skills, school counselors are prepared to help schools build stronger connections among students and staff (Howard & Solberg, 2006) and increase

opportunities for understanding and respecting cultural differences (Uehara, 2005). Professional school counselors are also trained in being collaborative resources in schools, support professionals, and leaders (Ponterotto et al., 2008). These trainings and roles make school counselors ideal leaders for multicultural education programs in schools.

Although multicultural education has not been emphasized in school counseling, the field of counseling has historically embraced an emphasis on multicultural competence and social justice (Chang, Crethar, & Ratts, 2010; Chao, 2013; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015). This competence, although related to multicultural education, is not the same concept. Whereas multicultural competence refers to an individual's "culmination of awareness, knowledge, and skills" (Tadlock-Marlo et al., 2013, p. 236), multicultural education encapsulates the behaviors that manifest as a result of such competence. Multicultural competence is needed to carry out the work of multicultural education.

Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education

In a pivotal 1991 article, Banks delineated the dimensions of multicultural education in order to help conceptualize and organize the topic (Banks, 1993; Cole & Zhou, 2014; El-Atwani, 2015). When considered comprehensively, these dimensions comprise a useful conceptual tool to explain how educators can work towards equal opportunities for all students to succeed in school (Cole & Zhou, 2014).

It should be noted that one common approach to multicultural education, the *contributions approach* (Suriel & Atwater, 2012), is not recommended or included among Banks' (1991) dimensions. In this approach, educators emphasize cultural

heroes, holidays, and celebrations to students. They may designate certain activities for specific times of the year, such as discussing female leaders during Women's History Month or historical African American figures during African American History Month (Suriel & Atwater, 2012). These ideas, though well-intentioned, promote a surface understanding of gender, race, and ethnicity. Using a contributions approach can suggest that content about women or African Americans must be taught separately from standard classroom curriculum. In doing so, the approach reinforces the idea that women and African Americans remain and should remain outside the mainstream culture (Appelbaum, 2002; Ryoo & McLaren, 2010).

School counselors are best positioned to implement multicultural education that goes beyond a contributions approach. Such multicultural education involves not just referencing other cultures and groups periodically, but also intentionally working to restructure schools so that all students can succeed. Thus, the five dimensions of multicultural education provide a more appropriate blueprint for multicultural education than the contributions approach. The remainder of this article demonstrates how school counselors can use these dimensions as guidelines to ensure that their own school counseling programs address student needs so that all students can succeed, as well as develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to interact with individuals who are different from themselves.

Content Integration

The first dimension of multicultural education is content integration. This concept refers to the extent that educators "use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts ... in their subject area" (Banks & Banks, 2010, p.

20). Teachers, for instance, demonstrate content integration when they incorporate examples and information from various cultural groups when teaching ideas in their subject areas (Cole & Zhou, 2014; El-Atwani, 2015). Traditionally, content integration was only expected in social studies and language arts curricula, but ideas from a range of different cultural groups can be integrated into every subject, including math and science (Cummins, 2015). Research indicates that when students learn about content reflecting their culture, they are more engaged in the learning process and learn more content than when their cultural backgrounds are not represented in their curricula (Banks, 2015; Lee, 2007).

School counselors can directly apply content integration to their classroom guidance lessons at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. For example, during a classroom guidance lesson on respect, elementary school counselors can use storybooks featuring African American, Latina, Asian, or Native American families. During a middle school classroom guidance lesson on bullying, school counselors can ask students to act out skits about bullying a student because of his or her sexual orientation, race, language, or socioeconomic status. High school counselors can invite speakers from different countries to assist in classroom guidance lessons on college and career readiness.

School counselors are also in a position to indirectly apply content integration by advocating for its use among teachers. School counselors can conduct workshops introducing teachers to the idea of content integration, offer consultation services to staff regarding multicultural education, and collaborate with media center specialists to create a resource library for teachers with materials representing different cultures in

each subject area. By consistently exposing students to realistic images of various cultural groups in teaching materials, educators can help students develop more positive racial attitudes and improve the academic achievement of students in historically marginalized groups (Banks, 2015).

Knowledge Construction

Knowledge construction, the second dimension of multicultural education, involves a process in which educators, “help students to understand, investigate, and determine how the implicit ... biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed” (Banks & Banks, 2010, p. 20). Knowledge construction engages students in a process exploring the biases and values of the creators of the knowledge they are learning (Chin, 2013; Cole & Zhou, 2014; El-Atwani, 2015). These biases may be due to an individual’s background, frame of reference, perspective, and/or cultural assumptions, and may relate to gender, race, ethnicity, and/or social class (Banks, 2004). In order for students to become politically engaged citizens, they must learn how to challenge academic knowledge and question how it is selected (Banks, 2015). Furthermore, knowledge construction teaches students how to critically consider the formation of ideologies, stereotypes, and group classifications (Chin, 2013).

Like content integration, school counselors’ best tool for implementing knowledge construction is their school counseling core curricula. School counselors can present age-appropriate lessons at all levels that require students to critically analyze information and assess what biases may have influenced the creators of that information. Developing such critical thinking skills in students addresses the academic

domain of the ASCA National Model and can help students maximize their abilities to learn (ASCA, 2014). For example, in an elementary classroom, a school counselor may teach students about knowledge construction by playing a recording of local radio announcer calling a baseball game for their home team. The school counselor can compare this recording to one called by a neutral sports analyst working for a large sports network. While they are listening, students can make a list of differences they notice between the two recordings, and afterwards the counselor can lead a discussion about what those differences were and why students think the local analyst may have called the game differently than the sports network analyst. Both recordings represent facts and listening to them is a way for students to learn knowledge, yet both recordings may present different information. School counselors can use the activity to lead a discussion about how biases impact the creation of knowledge, as well as perceptions while learning knowledge.

Middle school counselors could utilize popular magazines to teach students about knowledge construction while addressing the social/emotional domain of the ASCA National Model. First, school counselors can ask students to select their favorite pictures or articles from a magazine. Second, students can make a list of the emotions that the pictures or articles elicit in them. Next, the counselor can facilitate students comparing their lists and their pictures with classmates in small groups. After comparing their materials, the counselor can guide students in discussing what facts and knowledge are presented in their favorite pictures and articles, why they believe the magazine creators chose those items for their magazine, what emotions were provoked, if those emotions were positive or negative, and if the facts they found contradict those

that other students selected. Students can discuss the biases the different media outlets may have when selecting what to include in their magazines, as well as how these decisions impact the feelings experienced while reading the magazines. In this way, school counselors can teach students both about knowledge construction as well as emotional awareness.

High school counselors can use classroom guidance to teach students to critically analyze the content in their own classes. This does not have to mean criticizing their classes or course content, but it can teach students to evaluate how the knowledge in their classes was constructed. To this end, school counselors can lead students in a lesson in which students select a school subject and make a list of the major topics in the textbook for that course. Next, the school counselor can ask each student to survey other material (e.g., the Internet, other textbooks, supplemental reading material, etc.) related to that course and search for topics that are not included in the designated course topic. Counselors can facilitate small group discussions in which students discuss what knowledge they found that was not in their own textbooks, why they believe those topics were excluded, and if they agree with the exclusion of those facts and inclusion of the other textbook topics. Counselors can connect the lesson to the career domain of the ASCA National Model by further discussing with students which topics (both excluded and included) would be most relevant to students' career aspirations.

Prejudice Reduction

Prejudice reduction was not originally included in Banks (1991) dimensions of multicultural education, but was added as a dimension just two years later (Banks,

1993). It is defined as “helping students develop positive attitudes toward different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups” (Banks & Banks, 2010, p. 21). By implementing prejudice reduction strategies with students, educators can reduce students’ likelihood of stereotyping others and increase the probability that students value all individuals, regardless of multicultural characteristics (Chin, 2013; Cole & Zhou, 2014).

Research has shown that prejudice begins to develop in children around the ages of 4 to 5 (Aboud et al., 2012), and children have more positive attitudes towards friendships with other children of the same race, than those of different races (Pica-Smith, 2011). Between the ages of 6 and 18, youth encounter an attitude development process in which their values and beliefs are formed (Zimmerman et al., 2005). If children observe that some people are treated differently than others, they may discern that some people are less capable or worthy and may integrate this conclusion into their worldview. Educators can address these potential misperceptions with children early on and challenge them to critically consider the roles of prejudice and justice in the world (Zimmerman et al., 2005). School counselors, in particular, are uniquely positioned in schools to reduce prejudice among students and encourage positive racial attitudes (Pica-Smith & Poynton, 2014).

One way that school counselors can implement prejudice reduction is through experiential activities with students. These activities are useful in helping students acquire the awareness and skills necessary to successfully interact with peers from diverse cultural groups. Successful experiential activities have a clear purpose and are followed by debriefing with students to process emotions elicited during the activity (Roaten & Schmidt, 2009).

Roaten and Schmidt (2009) recommend several experiential activities to reduce prejudice and increase multicultural awareness among students. *My Life in a Bag* is one such activity. In it, school counselors prompt students to place five items in a bag that represent their culture or identity and discuss why they selected each item. Similarly, *Personal Product* involves students creatively displaying aspects of their cultural identity and showing them to their class. Both of these activities can be utilized in individual counseling, small group counseling, or classroom guidance with students. *The Family Tree* is another recommended activity in which students stand in a circle and take turns asking each other “has your family ever...” Students who have experienced the item asked about move to the center of the circle, while others remain where they are. Roaten and Schmidt (2009) recommend that following these activities, school counselors lead a discussion of commonalities and differences among students’ cultural identities.

For more advanced experiential activities, Roaten and Schmidt (2009) recommend activities like *Outside Experts*, in which a class forms a unique cultural group with set cultural norms. Selected students leave the classroom prior to the norms being determined, and upon their return they must devise which cultural norms have been established. In the debriefing session after the activity, students describe what their experiences were like returning to their classrooms and a new culture they were unfamiliar with. Similarly, *Bafa Bafa* is an activity in which a school counselor divides a class into two groups and each sets their own cultural standards. Students take turns visiting the other groups to learn what their cultures are like (Roaten & Schmidt, 2009).

Zimmerman et al. (2005) outlined a prejudice reduction curriculum, *Fairness for All Individuals through Respect (FAIR)*, which is available to school counselors at no cost and includes five experiential activities related to justice in gender, race, and class (www.fair.caahs.colostate.edu). These five activities can be implemented preventively via classroom guidance or small group counseling, or with small groups of students in response to school incidents related to prejudice. The activities can be adapted for students in Kindergarten through 12th grade and can be used together or separately, though only one experiential activity on diversity may not create significant outcomes in students' multicultural awareness (Zimmerman et al., 2005).

The activities in the FAIR curriculum are based on metaphors to help students make sense of their experiences. They include listening to a story and discussing the gender and ethnicity students imagined the characters to be, sorting toys by gender affiliation, examining magazine images to determine how they portray gender and ethnicity, participating in a group task activity distributing resources, and completing an art activity about a metaphorical story. When tailored to students' developmental levels, the activities provide the opportunity for students to explore their thoughts about similarities and differences with others (Zimmerman et al., 2005). Additional ideas for prejudice reduction activities can be found at the website for EdChange and its *Multicultural Pavilion* (www.edchange.org).

School counselors can also implement prejudice reduction efforts by promoting interethnic and interracial friendships among students (Pica-Smith & Poynton, 2014). Promotion of these relationships begins by being open to discussing prejudice and discrimination with students and school stakeholders. School counselors can also

develop partnerships between their schools and communities to demonstrate support for diversity and model intergroup cooperation for students (Pica-Smith & Poynton, 2014). By emphasizing relationships with the community and among students, school counselors can demonstrate the value of intergroup cooperation over prejudice.

Lastly, school counselors can lead school wide interventions to reduce prejudice on a large scale. No Name-Calling Week is an example of one such school wide intervention. This event was created by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and partner organizations to promote kindness and discourage bullying, name-calling, and bias (GLSEN, 2016). No Name-Calling Week activities can include class lessons, poster or door-decorating contests, daily school announcements, video screenings, group discussions, faculty professional development, and class assignments (Kosciw, Diaz, Colic, & Goldin, 2005). Free lesson plans and event materials are available on GLSEN's website (www.glsen.org). In a survey research study of 100 No Name-Calling Week organizers, all participants rated event lesson plans as "useful" or "very useful," and "effective" or "very effective" (Kosciw et al., 2005).

The International Day for Tolerance, commemorated every year on November 16, is another school wide initiative that school counselors can help organize to promote positive relations among students and reduce prejudice. This event was first observed in 1996 by the United Nations General Assembly to promote respect and tolerance across the world (United Nations, 2016a). The United Nations defines tolerance as, "neither indulgence nor indifference. It is respect and appreciation of the rich variety of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human" (United Nations, 2016b, para. 1). To plan activities for the International Day for Tolerance,

school counselors can focus on the United Nations' six strategies to counter intolerance: law, education, access to information, individual awareness, and local solutions (United Nations, 2016b). Based on these strategies, school counselors can organize school wide activities in which students enhance their multicultural awareness through dialogue and reflection. They could also initiate fundraising or letter-writing campaigns for students in order to promote education in underdeveloped areas or human rights laws in countries without them. Lastly, they can lead students in naming local problems and brainstorming solutions to those problems. Such activities can help promote tolerance throughout the school and beyond, reducing prejudice in the process.

Equity Pedagogy

Equity pedagogy, the fourth dimension of multicultural education, occurs when educators “modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse ... groups” (Banks & Banks, 2010, p. 22). These teaching modifications may include research-based techniques that successfully address learning with students from different cultural groups (Banks, 2013; Cole & Zhou, 2014; El-Atwani, 2015). When educators employ equity pedagogy, studies show that students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds improve in academic achievement (Banks, 2013; Banks, 2015). For example, when Au (2011) studied the behaviors of teachers of Native Hawaiian students, she found that the reading achievement of students significantly increased when teachers used participation structures in lessons that were similar to the Hawaiian speech event *talk story* (Banks, 2015). Similarly, Lee (2007) found that African American students' achievement improved when their teachers used the cultural practice of *signifying*, using humor and exaggeration to describe others.

School counselors can promote equity pedagogy in two ways. First, school counselors can inform administrators and teachers about specific equity pedagogy strategies and their benefits to students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. For example, cooperative learning is a technique in which individuals work together to achieve mutual goals. Research indicates that students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds are more academically successful in cooperative learning environments as opposed to competitive learning environments (Banks & Banks, 2010). . This technique assumes that all members of a group are equal with one another, will participate in cooperative learning, and will do his or her share of the work. In schools, cooperative learning often manifests as the use of small group work so that students collaborate to increase one another's learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2010).

Other equity pedagogy techniques include culturally relevant instruction, constructivist teaching approaches, and portfolio assessments (Banks & Banks, 1995). School counselors can deliver professional development presentations to faculty members about all of these techniques and their benefits to students. School counselors may benefit from collaborating with teachers who have used such approaches to design presentations together and lead colleagues in discussions about which techniques are most helpful for their specific student populations.

Second, school counselors can utilize equity pedagogy in their own classroom guidance lessons and small group counseling activities. For example, when delivering a classroom guidance lesson about bullying to middle school students, school counselors can integrate a cooperative learning activity in which students work in small groups to design a student intervention to reduce bullying in the cafeteria. Cooperative learning is

most effective when a project is open-ended, without a single correct answer (Zirkel, 2008). By assigning students a task like reducing bullying, which has multiple possible solutions, a cooperative learning approach is more likely to be successful and beneficial to all students. School counselors can use constructivist learning techniques in classroom guidance and small counseling groups by asking many questions and having students co-construct ideas that they believe are best (Banks & Banks, 1995). For example, when leading a small counseling group with students with behavioral problems, school counselors can guide students in constructing their own definition of a well-behaved student. In intentionally using teaching methods that can benefit students in minority cultures, school counselors demonstrate equity pedagogy and directly support their students.

Empowering School Culture

Empowering school culture, the final dimension of multicultural education, entails restructuring school cultures to promote student equity (Banks & Banks, 2010). These kinds of school cultures allow students in marginalized groups to experience cultural empowerment and educational equality by making structural changes in a school's environment (Cole & Zhou, 2014). Such changes include altering "grouping and labeling practices, sports participation, disproportionality in achievement, disproportionality in gifted and special education programs, and the interaction of the staff and the students across ethnic and racial lines" (Banks & Banks, 2010, p. 22). Moreover, empowering school culture involves promoting social action among students to improve opportunities for all people (Chin, 2013). Although similar to the prejudice reduction dimension of multicultural education, empowering school culture is distinguished by supporting

student development through an emphasis on increasing positive experiences in a school culture, rather than reducing negative experiences, as in prejudice reduction.

Taking on the task of empowering a school's culture may seem daunting for a school counselor, but there are several specific ways that counselors can initiate school-wide change. For example, in order to empower school culture, staff members must believe that all students can learn, regardless of their background or cultural characteristics (Banks, 2004). To expose faculty members to this idea, school counselors can lead staff professional development about the need for educational equity. Johnson (1995) notes that in leading such professional development, school counselors should address both the cognitive and the affective elements related to multiculturalism. For example, school counselors can provide specific statistics of achievement gaps among students of different races and ability levels in their school. Affectively, they can share stories of students with whom they have worked (with names and identifying information removed) who have faced inequities such as underrepresentation in gifted programs or overrepresentation in special education. School counselors who have themselves benefited from multicultural training are ideally positioned to lead this kind of professional development for their colleagues and may want to consider sharing their own experiences learning about multiculturalism.

In addition, school counselors can improve the social climates of schools through school-wide initiatives focused on compassion and understanding. Mix It Up at Lunch Day is one such initiative in which students are asked to sit somewhere different than they usually do during lunch (Kindzierski, Leavitt-Noble, Dutt-Doner, Marable, & Wallace, 2013). Although a simple initiative, researchers have found that Mix It Up at

Lunch Day helps students make new friends, leads to positive interactions among students, and increases student tolerance towards social justice (Kindzierski et al., 2013; Teaching Tolerance, 2008).

Similarly, Rachel's Challenge is an initiative that grew out of a desire to prevent social intolerance among students. It is a character education program designed for students 12- to 18-years-old that contains curricula on compassion, kindness, and tolerance. The program involves assembling paper chains of "kindness" with paper links with kind acts written on them (Hollingshead, Crump, Eddy, & Rowe, 2009). School-wide interventions like Rachel's Challenge and Mix It Up at Lunch Day help school counselors improve their school climates so that all students feel safe and empowered.

Finally, school counselors can empower their school cultures by encouraging students to engage in social action, such as community projects or small demonstrations (Chin, 2013). Service-learning may be one tool to use to organize these projects. Service-learning is a method in which educators facilitate student learning through participation in relevant volunteer experiences (Steen, O'Keefe, Griffin, & Routzahn, 2012). School counselors can implement service-learning through their school counseling core curricula or by forming small groups of students to engage in projects. By engaging students in volunteer work that impacts change in a school or community, school counselors can help enhance student development, increase students' exposure to community needs, and improve students' understanding of citizenship (Steen et al., 2012), all supporting the goals of the empowering school culture dimension.

Summary

The goal of multicultural education—to create equal educational opportunities so that all students can succeed (Banks & Banks, 2010; Cummins, 2015)—overlaps with school counselors' goal to remove barriers to academic, career, and personal/social development (Erford, House, & Martin, 2007). Though the field of multicultural education has historically been focused on teachers, school counselors have the training, knowledge, and skills to effectively lead multicultural education efforts in schools. This fact is evident when considering each of Banks' (1991) dimensions of multicultural education and how school counselors can enact them in their work in schools. If school counselors intend to graduate K-12 students equipped with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to interact with individuals who are different from themselves, they benefit from considering how they can implement multicultural education in their own jobs through the five dimensions described in this article.

Although professional school counselors are ideally positioned to lead multicultural education and awareness efforts in schools, they are not inherent experts on the topic. School counselors must commit to their own multicultural personality development and be aware of the cultural worldviews of students in staff in their schools (Ponterotto et al., 2008). Continual professional development in multicultural education can assist school counselors in their own multicultural competency, as well as in leading multicultural education efforts in schools. These efforts can soon lead to a more multiculturally aware generation of K-12 students.

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