

My Name Is Not Michael: Strategies for Promoting Cultural

Responsiveness in Schools

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Abstract

With the changing cultural demographics in U.S. classrooms, school counselors must develop innovative approaches to promote culturally responsive school climates and organizational change. A vision is offered of systemic cultural responsiveness and culturally relevant teaching practices that nurture and engage all learners. The role of the school counselor in realizing such transformation is described. In this vision, the tenets of advocacy, consultation, collaboration, systemic change, and leadership identified in the ASCA National Model are recognized as the means by which the school counselor can indirectly promote student achievement. This article offers examples of intervention strategies designed to impact the school system, the teaching and learning process, and foster cultural responsiveness. Recommendations for advancing the role of the school counselor are shared.

Keywords: cultural responsiveness, advocacy, consultation, leadership

My Name Is Not Michael: Strategies for Promoting Cultural Responsiveness in Schools

Miguel Espinoza is a fourth grader. He loves school, he loves to read, and he loves his grandfather for whom he was named. Miguel reads both English and Spanish. He is bright, enthusiastic, and learns quickly. Miguel has learned that when he is at home he can speak Spanish and English, and gets to read both his English and Spanish-language books and watch both English and Spanish-language television programs. He has also learned that when at school he can speak Spanish only on the playground, and that his name is not Miguel, but Michael. His teacher believes that Miguel needs to be focused on English only and decided it would be better to just call him Michael.

Despite the increasing number of students from non-dominant ethnic or cultural groups, professional school counselors and educators in the United States public school system often have difficulty openly addressing issues of diversity in the classroom context (Ford, 2010). This difficulty may impede an educator's ability to incorporate cultural references from a non-dominant perspective and, thus, potentially contribute to inequitable outcomes for students from non-dominant ethnic or cultural groups in the classroom (McEachern, Alude, & Kenny, 2008; Phuntsog, 1999). Researchers have documented that culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students are subjected to teaching practices and classroom environments that range from unintentionally biased to overtly abusive (McEachern et al., 2008). Since creating and maintaining safe and judgment-free environments for all students is central to the role of a professional school counselor (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007), counselors must be prepared to assist

teachers and administrators to construct learning environments where CLD students can flourish. School counselors can work toward this important goal by being sensitive to the needs of both students and their teachers, and encouraging educators to engage in culturally responsive teaching practices (Erickson, 1987), while meeting counseling program objectives.

Within the framework of the ASCA National Model (American School Counselor Association, 2012), school counselors are charged to engage in systemic change through advocacy, leadership, and collaboration. The ASCA National Model emphasizes the importance of both direct and indirect services and suggests that school counselors spend approximately 80% of their time in direct service contact with students. The National Model parallels the ACA Advocacy Competencies in operationalizing the distinctions between direct and indirect services: direct services involve school counselors acting with students and indirect services involve school counselors acting on behalf of students (Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007). Although the National Model describes both types of services, the discussion of specific ways in which school counselors can engage in indirect services is limited. The intention of this article is to bring greater awareness to the indirect services school counselors can provide via advocacy, leadership, and consultation that promote socially just school climates and academic achievement. We define and describe culturally responsive schools and culturally relevant teaching (CRT) practices, discuss best practices in collaboration, consultation, and advocacy, and provide recommendations for building relational trust, developing a leadership philosophy, and cultivating a positive school climate.

Cultural Responsiveness in Schools

According to the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems [NCCRESt] (n. d.), cultural responsiveness is the ability to learn from and relate with people of one's own culture as well as those from other cultures. Culturally responsive educational systems are grounded in the belief that culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students can excel in academic endeavors if given adequate support and resources. Pedagogy and practice facilitate and support the achievement of all students in "culturally responsive schools; effective teaching and learning occur in a culturally-supported, learner-centered context, whereby the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured, and utilized to promote student achievement" (NCCRESt, n. d., para. 2).

Many educational systems lack adequate support for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse, and have unique learning styles and social norms. By supporting teachers' capacity to become culturally responsive, the school counselor demonstrates a level of advocacy and leadership that indirectly impacts students' academic performance as well as supports their sense of belonging and worth in the school setting. Evans, Zambrano, Cook, Moyer, and Duffey (2011, p. 53) concur: "It is essential that school counselors convey multicultural advocacy as a natural byproduct of who they are as leaders within the profession." The promotion of multicultural competence among teachers and staff as a fundamental element of the school counseling program equates to the creation of a core curriculum designed to standardize learning objectives.

Although there is often a strong focus on curriculum development, classroom management, and teaching strategies, the majority of teacher education programs in the United States do not adequately address elements of identity and cultural context (Ford, 2010; Nieto, 2005). These programs do not typically involve examination of one's cultural biases and assumptions. Similarly, the teaching strategies espoused are not usually tailored to meet the unique needs of students from diverse cultural groups (Ford, 2010). For example, many African American, Latino, Native American, and Asian American students use styles of inquiry and responding different from those employed most often by their classroom teachers (Gay, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The most common practice among teachers is to ask convergent questions and use deductive approaches to solving problems. Emphasis is given to details, to building the whole from parts, and to moving from the specific to the general (NCCRESt, n. d.). Prince and Felder (2006) present an alternative constructivist approach to teaching that is primarily learner-centered. This style includes a range of teaching methods (e.g., inquiry learning, discovery learning, and project-based learning) supported by research findings that students learn best by incorporating new information into existing cognitive structures. Students are unlikely to learn if new information has little relevance to what they already know and believe.

School Counselor and Cultural Responsiveness

The role of school counselors is one of promoting conditions that engender safe and supportive learning for all students. Social justice advocacy is a crucial activity for professional school counselors wishing to promote systemic change that leads to such safe and supportive learning environments (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). CLD students

experience a wide variety of oppressive acts within the academic environment – from covert micro-aggressions to overt oppression and discrimination (McEachern et al., 2008). It is within this context that school counselors can implement advocacy interventions at different levels to influence the system and promote equity in education. Although the public education system is idealized as a social equalizer, non-dominant and low-income students are disproportionately affected by funding cuts, lack of access to rigorous curricula, and overcrowding of classrooms (Bell, Love, & Roberts, 2007).

The National Center for Transforming School Counseling developed the Transforming School Counselor Initiative (TSCI; Education Trust, 2009a) to bring awareness to the achievement gap that exists for low-income and non-dominant students in the public school system. Not only does the transformed school counselor fulfill this goal through traditional individual counseling with students who experience distress, but the transformed school counselor is a leader-advocate in planning and implementing programs that reduce the “environmental and institutional barriers impeding student academic success” (Education Trust, 2009b, p. 2).

Just as school counselor preparation programs include training on multicultural counseling, in which future counselors are required to examine their own beliefs, attitudes, skills, and knowledge related to counseling people of different cultural backgrounds, so must teachers be encouraged to examine their own beliefs, attitudes, skills, and knowledge related to teaching students of different cultural backgrounds. Self-awareness has been demonstrated to be central to multicultural counseling competencies (Collins, Arthur, & Wong-Wylie, 2010) and school counselors can incorporate this perspective when developing in-service professional development

training programs for teachers. This will encourage teachers to re-examine some of their beliefs (e.g., the myth of meritocracy) that may inadvertently disenfranchise CLD students.

Advocacy. The ASCA National Model (2012) emphasizes advocacy, leadership, collaboration, and systemic change as characteristics of the 21st century school counseling program. School counselors are “at the forefront of efforts to promote school reform,” (p. 4) including social justice advocacy. The cornerstone of the National Model is that “school counselors believe, support, and promote every student’s opportunity to achieve success in school” (p. 4). This imperative requires school counselors to consider three questions: What is success? What can encourage success? What can hamper success? Not only must school counselors consider these questions for students of the dominant culture, but school counselors must consider these questions for students of non-dominant groups while realizing that success may be defined differently among distinct groups.

The ACA Code of Ethics (2005) states that “counselors advocate at individual, group, institutional, and societal levels to examine potential barriers and obstacles that inhibit access and/or the growth and development of clients” (A.6.a.). The ACA Advocacy Competencies (Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2002) also provide counselors with a framework for understanding the role of advocacy in practice. Ratts et al. (2007) identified specific rationales for the implementation of the advocacy competencies within K-12 schools, and provided examples of micro- and macro-level interventions relevant to professional school counselors. Such guidelines are relevant to this discussion because they (a) describe different approaches to individual and

systems advocacy, (b) emphasize the importance of promoting student empowerment, (c) identify specific advocacy strategies that are useful to implement when collaborating with teachers, administrators, and other community partners, and (d) stress the need to disseminate information that complements all of the aforementioned advocacy concepts to a wide constituency base (Bemak & Chung, 2008, p. 373-74). A fundamental task for the school counselor is to align services with the core mission of schools (Bemak & Chung, 2008) to create the conditions by which all feel empowered.

Advocacy is layered throughout all levels of the public school system. Advocacy practices are not simply linear; advocacy at the faculty level begets advocacy at the individual student level. From an ecological perspective, advocacy interventions at any level influence the entire system, which ultimately benefits students. The cornerstone of empowerment in schools is a school counseling curriculum designed with the intention of motivating all students regardless of race, ethnicity, legal standing, economic status, gender, and ability. The challenge to the existing system is one that requires personal reflection, an understanding of the power structure of modern education, and a desire to give all students, and in particular, the culturally and linguistically diverse ones, a voice. Working to create the conditions for CLD students to achieve academic and social parity in schools continues to challenge systems and the counselors who work in them.

Consultation and collaboration. In addition to advocacy, systemic change, and leadership, the ASCA National Model (2012) identified consultation and collaboration as important skills by which the school counselor can reach out to teachers and staff in an effort to fulfill the goal of creating culturally responsive

schools. Students are more likely to succeed in school when there is an atmosphere of warmth and cooperation, and low degrees of conflict (Baker, Grant & Morlock, 2008; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). Teachers and administrators, in consultation and collaboration with the school counselor, can learn to raise their awareness of students' unique needs and communicate more effectively with individual students (Edwards, Varjas, White & Stokes, 2009; White, Flynt, & Draper, 1997). This awareness can, in turn, contribute to improvements in the overall quality of teaching and learning. Because the caliber of the teacher drives student success (Education Trust, 2009c), collaborating with teachers to promote quality teaching is an essential endeavor of a culturally responsive school counselor. Ongoing teacher-counselor consultation and collaboration involves building relationships whereby both share accountability for the provision of access to educational opportunity. The counselor provides support to the teacher by prescribing a strategy, initiating collaborative activities, and mediating communication among teachers, students, and parents (Baker, Robichaud, Westforth Dietrich, Wells, & Schreck, 2009).

Consultation can extend beyond working with teachers and parents; school counselors can also engage with professionals in related fields to provide more effective services to the student community (Kampwirth, 2006). The importance and benefit of forming interdisciplinary partnerships on behalf of students is well documented (e.g., Dougherty & Dougherty, 1991; Keys, Bemak, Carpenter, & King-Sears, 1998; West & Idol, 1993) and includes collaboration with school psychologists, occupational therapists, speech and hearing therapists, and individualized learning specialists.

Interdisciplinary teams of educators and education specialists' efforts to collaborate for change must include the goal to maintain cultural awareness of self (Portman, 2009), rather than the previously singular focus on provoking change in students. This is particularly relevant when the students of focus are from non-dominant cultural groups. Collaborative planning between departments and programs is a critical element to demonstrate the ability schools have to be educationally relevant and socially just.

Facilitating Culturally Relevant Teaching

Culturally relevant teaching (CRT) is a term created by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) to describe "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p.17–18). CRT utilizes the backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences of the students to inform the pedagogy and methodology. Gay (2006) further defines CRT as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of students. This concept regards the diversity of a school population as an asset rather than a deficit, and thus, requires a shift in the pedagogical core of a system. The parallel process of both teacher and student coming to know who and how they are in relation to academic pursuits exemplifies learning in a social context. The understanding of how students and teachers make meaning is critical to the creation of empowered and empowering school climates conducive to belonging, learning, and academic achievement. By participating in CRT, teachers create a bridge between students' home and school lives. The culturally responsive school counselor

creates a culturally responsive bridge between teachers and students. In understanding and advocating for a mutually beneficial teaching and learning process, the school counselor provides a unique and unparalleled level of leadership.

The development of diverse perspectives, learning to think inclusively and expansively while engaged in scholarly activities epitomizes academic success (Gay, 2006). Collaboratively, educators and school counselors can involve all students in the construction of knowledge, build on students' personal and cultural strengths, help students examine the curriculum from multiple perspectives, use varied assessment practices that promote learning, and make the culture of the classroom and school inclusive of all students (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). A curriculum that utilizes a culturally responsive pedagogical framework addresses the learning styles and backgrounds of all students; it humanizes the teacher, allows for the development of mutual teacher-student understanding, and generates a more equitable learning process.

This ideological perspective suggests that students make meaning of new information in light of their socio-cultural context and posits the inductive approach as more fitting of a culturally responsive learning environment. As Gay (2006) iterates, learning is a social event and requires educators to move beyond conventional, monocultural tactics of teaching and learning. Teachers who utilize a Socratic method of inquiry, for example, promote a learner-centered, strength-based approach whereby students learn based on social interaction as opposed to a linear application of concepts.

The Education Alliance at Brown University (n.d.) identified seven important characteristics teachers can utilize to increase their cultural responsiveness in the

classroom. The characteristics and specific examples of what teachers can do to incorporate each of these characteristics are illustrated in Table 1. These characteristics build on teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and focus pedagogy on students' needs and strengths. Teachers who employ CRT principles engage in fewer instances of cultural miscommunication, demonstrate higher levels of acceptance, and make fewer discipline referrals (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). School counselors can encourage teachers to implement these examples or brainstorm others to engage students in learning activities that promote understanding and acceptance. School counselors who understand how pedagogy and methodology impact the learning climate and endeavor to promote culturally responsive practices within their schools are advocating on behalf of students.

Table 1

Culturally Responsive Characteristics

Characteristics	Examples
1. Positive perspectives of parents and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Conduct needs assessments and surveys (in the parent's first language) of what parents expect of the school community. b) Conduct home visits in which parents are able to speak freely about their expectations and concerns for their children. c) Send weekly/monthly newsletters (in the home language) informing parents of school activities. d) Research the cultural background of students' families.
2. Communication of high expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Be specific in what you expect students to know and be able to do. b) Define success for students individually according to capability. c) Encourage students to meet expectations for a particular task.
3. Learning within the context of culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Use cooperative learning especially for material new to students. b) Assign students research projects that focus on issues or concepts that apply to their own community or cultural group. c) Teach and talk to students about differences between individuals and groups. d) Attend community events of the students and discuss the events with them.

Characteristics	Examples
4. Student-centered instruction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Students will generate lists of topics they wish to study. b) Students lead discussion groups or reteach concepts. c) Create classroom projects that involve the community and/or student's family of origin. d) Allow students to select their own reading material.
5. Culturally-mediated instruction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ask students about their learning style preferences. b) Allow students to set their own goals for a project. c) Question and challenge students on their beliefs and actions. d) Teach students to question and challenge their own beliefs and actions.
6. Reshaping the curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Provide information to students on alternative viewpoints or beliefs of a topic. b) Develop learning activities that are more reflective of students' backgrounds. c) Develop integrated units around universal themes.
7. Teacher as facilitator.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Students will share artifacts from home that reflect their culture. b) Ask members of the community to teach a lesson or give a demonstration (in their field of expertise) to students. c) Guide students through a cultural treasure hunt of customs, important historical events, and values.

Note. Adapted from *Principles for culturally responsive teaching*, (The Education Alliance at Brown University, n.d.).

Strategies to Promote Cultural Responsiveness

The transformation of the school counseling profession from individual responsive service providers to proactive, programmatic systems that support the core mission of schools (Dahir, 2009) is the premise of culturally responsive school counseling. This principle validates the counselor's role in eliminating systemically-based barriers to student achievement. Incorporating teacher and administrative support is consistent with best practices in collaboration and consultation (Kampwirth, 2006) and positions the school counselor to encourage faculty dialogue on promoting both healthy school climates and student development.

Given successful school counseling programs are those that promote and monitor the health of the school climate in terms of students' abilities to thrive cognitively and affectively, the answers to the above questions pertaining to success seem rather simple: The effective school counselor empowers him or herself to be a participant at all levels and layers of the educational process. As reflected so often in the school counseling literature, school counselors are uniquely positioned to effect change. A focus on the cultural responsiveness of a school can allow the humanistic perspective of development to infiltrate and influence policies and practice.

Applying skills in advocacy, leadership, consultation, and collaboration to promote cultural competence and culturally relevant practices requires the school counselor to adapt a culturally responsive method of school counseling. The positive relationship between teachers and students is indicative of student academic success (Schulz & Rubel, 2011); therefore, it is best practice for counselors to work systemically to develop culturally responsive attitudes and practices. Table 2 identifies examples of how school counselors can foster change at multiple levels in order to positively impact students. The examples are separated into three levels of implementation. The first level, Faculty Development, focuses on strategies to be implemented with entire faculties. The second level, Small Group Development, focuses on strategies that could be implemented with small groups of teachers, administrators, and staff, within departments as well as between them. The third level, Individual Development, focuses on strategies to be utilized with individual adults working in the school system.

Table 2*Culturally Responsive Strategies*

Level of Implementation	Examples
1. Faculty Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Workshops focused on building cultural competence and culturally responsive philosophy, teacher characteristics, curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments b) Guest speakers to address special topics c) Vision/mission building sessions d) Inventory of current building and classroom practices
2. Small Group Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Departmental task-focused group to build philosophy, curriculum, instructional practices, and assessments b) Interdisciplinary group focused on inter- and intrapersonal skill building c) Focus groups read a book together to promote cultural responsiveness and discuss relevance to own practice (i.e., Tatum, 1997) d) Peer coaching teams to practice and evaluate culturally responsive approaches
3. Individual Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Counselor/Teacher collaboration focused on development of teacher's multicultural awareness b) Regular consultation on implementation and practice c) Team teaching using standards blending approach (See Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2009; Schulz, 2010) d) Individual and small group classroom inclusion interventions (See Clark & Breman, 2009)

Faculty Development

All school districts plan and implement in-service and professional development opportunities for its faculty and staff. Most of these opportunities are required by state and local policy to fulfill administrative obligations. Professional school counselors can provide culturally responsive professional development options for teachers, administrators, and staff that are designed to meet their goals in the teaching and learning process. Designing interactive, adult-focused workshops can support the growth of cultural responsiveness by first helping the adults in the system see one another as cultural beings. Providing opportunities to explore social dynamics among

school personnel can be transforming, and will likely transfer into more culturally responsive adult-student interactions (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005).

School counselors can develop workshops aimed at creating school climates that are safe enough for students to develop both cognitively and affectively. Workshop topics may include empathy training, effective communication strategies with parents, and methods to strengthen interpersonal relationships (e.g., Edwards et al., 2009). School counselors can balance the didactic components of the workshops with experiential activities such as simulations, games, and reflective writing. Finally, counselors can encourage cultural responsiveness by addressing social affiliation, power dynamics, and the development of a constructivist view of knowledge acquisition; leaders in fields such as multicultural education and culturally competent communication can be invited to facilitate the assessment of current practice and future goals.

Small Group Development

Given the challenge to meaningfully connect professional development activities to all the adults in the system, focusing on small groups can be an effective way to cultivate cultural responsiveness. Assessing the needs of a small group is a simpler task and small group work allows the school counselor to create the conditions for greater depth of exploration and movement.

The reduction of systemic barriers to student achievement could be achieved by facilitating departments (e.g., Social Studies, Physical Education and Health, Science) to generate vision and mission statements unique to their fields that reflect the seven characteristics of culturally responsive teachers. The school counselor can facilitate the

design and implementation of professional development activities specific to department need. Helping the mathematics teachers, for example, review their current assessments in terms of cultural responsiveness could lead to the development of more effective and meaningful outcomes for students. In addition, facilitating discussions between departments to create inter- and multidisciplinary learning outcomes and identifying additional support mechanisms for culturally and linguistically diverse students can increase a sense of inclusivity and community. Small groups of educators can further implement the tenets of CRT by supporting one another through peer coaching opportunities focused on culturally responsive practices such as cooperative learning.

In my (first author) experience, the small group activity that has resulted in the most gains has been the voluntary reading group. I invited all adults working in the school to participate; two separate groups of faculty and staff, met bi-weekly for one semester to discuss assigned chapters from Beverly Tatum's (1997) book, *"Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?" And other conversations about race.* Designed as a process group, the goal was for members to discuss their reactions to the book and its impact on their role in the learning environment (i.e., teacher, administrator, librarian, and custodian). Anecdotal data indicated that all members found value in the process and increased their awareness as cultural beings. Group participants also reported improved empathy toward all students, in particular CLD students, and an overall increase in CRT practices. These reading groups led to a shift in the school culture, and the following academic year administrators were more willing to devote in-service time to the school-wide goal of becoming culturally responsive. The collaborative and consultative experience of educators voluntarily engaged in

professional development lent itself to both individual development and an increased feeling of community and empowerment for faculty and staff.

Individual Development

One of the major roles of the professional school counselor is to promote the socio-emotional development of students by creating trusting, emotionally safe relationships with them. Essential to that process is the cultivation of allies among the faculty and staff. Supporting teachers on a one-to-one level can decrease teacher anxiety and increase overall effectiveness (Kampwirth, 2006). While working in a four-year public high school, I (first author) discovered that 64% of freshmen earned either a D or F grade in their science class. This seemed an alarmingly high number, and one that could not be attributed entirely to the students. Upon investigation, students identified two particular teachers who did not seem to enjoy their work; administrators also identified the same two teachers (one near career end, the other in the second year) who were in remediation. With the backing of the administration, I approached each teacher separately and asked how I could support them through my role as a counselor. Through multiple meetings that focused on the teachers' personal world as well as their teaching philosophy and classroom management strategies, we were able to work on specific interpersonal and intrapersonal barriers to their effectiveness that slowly transferred to student outcomes. Within one academic year, the percentage of D's and F's was reduced to 37%. This example demonstrates the essential role of school counselors to positively impact student outcomes by creating conditions to empower teachers (Baker et al., 2009). The school counselor is largely answerable for the socio-emotional wellbeing of a school, including teachers' direct or indirect impact

on classroom climate. The effort to support the effective and meaningful conveyance of a particular curriculum fits into this school-counseling role.

Like teachers, school counselors also have a curriculum (i.e., ASCA National Standards /individual state standards) to deliver. A consistent barrier to accomplishing the full implementation of the counseling curriculum is access to students. Integrating the counseling curriculum with academic standards (Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2009; Schulz, 2011) is a creative method of working collaboratively with teachers and implementing CRT. My (first author) favorite example of this integration was collaboration with a Language Arts teacher who taught *Romeo and Juliet*. While the teacher accomplished the academic goals connected to the play, the counseling curriculum focused on effective communication strategies, conflict resolution, and interpersonal skill building in the students' current experience. The Language Arts Teacher and I designed lessons together and delivered some components in tandem and others separately. Student academic achievement and teacher effectiveness increased, and counseling objectives were met. Supporting individual faculty and staff in gaining awareness, assimilating new concepts, and applying culturally responsive practices in collaboration with the school counselor increases teaching effectiveness and promotes positive student outcomes (Baker et al., 2009).

Recommendations for School Counselors

School counselors are in prime positions to provide ongoing culturally responsive professional development to teachers and administrators (ASCA, 2012) in order to advocate for meaningful learning experiences and safe, inviting school climates. In turn, school personnel are encouraged to connect to all students in both instructional and

interpersonal ways in order to achieve optimal teaching and student learning. Based on our work in public schools and the principles outlined in the ASCA National Model (2012) and the ACA Advocacy Competencies (Lewis et al., 2003), we recommend the following approaches for school counselors ready to move beyond the direct, responsive services offered to students to incorporate indirect, systemic services into their program goals that are designed to advocate for student inclusion and achievement.

Focus on Relationship Building

Relationship-building is of paramount importance to school counselors engaged in advocacy at all levels of culturally responsive strategies (Singh, Urbano, Haston, & McMahan, 2010; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Developmental, feminist, and multicultural theories assert that individuals exist only within the context of interpersonal relationships (Gilligan, 1982; Cornelius-White, 2007), which corresponds with the theory of cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2004) and learner-centered models of teaching (McCombs & Whisler, 1997; McCombs, 2004). Not only do relationships need to be developed with students, but they must also be fostered with teachers and administrators. School counselors recognize the unique challenges of working within the public school system and intimately understand the demands placed on teachers and administrative staff. From this understanding, school counselors can more readily demonstrate empathy as they work to collaborate with faculty and key personnel.

The capacity to build trust is essential to the belief that counselors can be strong leadership partners to principals and other stakeholders in the school. Building relational trust involves four interpersonal qualities: interpersonal respect, personal regard for

others, role competence, and personal integrity (Robinson, 2010). School counselors have both training and positions in schools that provide unique insight into building relational trust and how best to impact student achievement, making them ideal members of the collaborative leadership team within a school. While principals and counselors may demonstrate expertise in each of their unique roles, how the interaction of these qualities may impact students' academic success, socio-emotional development, and eventual graduation will depend on the school leaders' ability to collaboratively define an inclusive vision and mission for all members of the system.

Such practices in schools can be supported from the top-down, but school counselors must first get administrators to buy into the paradigm shift; a solid and mutually beneficial working relationship with administrators is critical to broaching the sensitive subject of systemic change. Through the relationship school counselors create with administrators, school counselors validate their concerns, allowing for defensiveness to be set aside and advocacy to begin. Once school counselors have garnered the trust and support of administrative staff, they can address curriculum changes and the promotion of culturally relevant teaching.

Because administrators are the gatekeepers for the public school system, the ability of the school counselor to engage faculty in discussions on cultural responsiveness and effect systemic change primarily depends on the support of administrative staff. Characteristics of effective counselor-principal relationships identified by the College Board's National Office of School Counselor Advocacy (2009) include open and consistent communication, shared vision, shared decision-making, and a collective commitment to equity and opportunity. Spearheading efforts to promote

culturally responsive attitudes and practices collaboratively with principals and teachers models mutual trust and respect through the practice of shared influence. School counselors engaged in advocacy interventions at this level need to build mutually supportive relationships with school administrators, teachers, and students. The school culture created from such collaborative efforts lends itself to realizing the core mission of schools: teaching and learning.

Develop a Leadership Philosophy

School counselors are at the hub of the school wheel; most of what happens on a school campus affects their day to day activities. School counselors are consistently connecting students to parents, students to teachers, teachers to administrators, and administrators to community members. This centralized role requires school counselors to embrace an attitude of leadership as they position themselves to create conditions of mutual support and engagement. In fact, servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970; 1977) is a model that is consistent with the philosophy of counseling (Minuchin, 2011). The servant leader takes great care to make sure that others' needs are being served. The servant-leader school counselor strives to ensure that the educational needs of all students are being met at both an individual level as well as an organizational level within the school. Systemic change efforts become transformative movements when everyone's needs are being met.

Greenleaf (1970) introduced the concept of servant leadership and theorized that several specific outcomes would become manifest in the recipients of this type of leadership. Greenleaf (1970) argued that the best way to identify servant leaders was

by evaluating the effects of this leadership style on those they served. Greenleaf (1970, p. 7) expressed that the effectiveness of a leader could be measured by asking:

Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?

Greenleaf (1970) theorized personal growth of the recipients to be the explicit outcome of servant leadership, and growth was to be assessed by increasing evidence of four outcomes: health, wisdom, freedom, and autonomy.

School counselors, by virtue of their training and dispositions, exemplify the model of the servant-leader. They demonstrate an investment in a holistic model of wellness in both their personal and professional endeavors; they develop programming based on a deep understanding of people, relationships, and expectations; they strive to create school climates that support academic freedom and acceptance; and they advocate for all persons to become fully capable to think, feel, and behave as their cultural values prescribe.

School counselor leaders believe in the individual dignity and worth of all the members of the school community (Bass & Bass, 2008). They endeavor to engage all school personnel and students in the process of change, and attempt to negotiate the differences between individual needs and school goals through genuine interpersonal relationships. School counselor leaders choose to share the power in decision-making and promote a sense of community. Such school counselor dispositions fit well into Greenleaf's (1970) concept of leadership. Additional attributes gleaned from his work

are: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth of people, and building community. It is suffice to acknowledge that the school counselor is well suited to the spirit of such a concept of leadership.

Cultivate a Positive School Climate

Professional competence and development will flourish in a school climate of trust, mutual respect, and consistent valuing. School counselors shape a school culture that focuses on changing systems and the context in which they operate through effective communication. Healthy principal-teacher and teacher-student relationships support student learning (Edwards et al., 2009), and student learning is enhanced when the academic environment is safe and supportive (Gable, 2002). A supportive school environment is not only nurtured within the classroom; a supportive school climate is built in the hallways, in administrative offices, in school board meetings, in the lunch rooms and auditoriums – places in which students and any school personnel interact.

In Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, and Higgins-D-Alessandro's (2013) comprehensive review of school climate research, the authors provide rich evidence to support that “school climate has a profound impact on students’ mental and physical health” (p. 359). They suggest that safety in all forms, physical, emotional, intellectual, and social, is a fundamental need for students’ academic success. Astor, Guerra, and Van Acker (2010) point to interpersonal and contextual breakdowns that may contribute to non-supportive norms, structures, and relationships, which highly correlate with students’ experiences of increased violence, peer victimization, punitive disciplinary actions, absenteeism, and reduced academic achievement. Research on school climate

suggests that whereas adults in school communities rate bullying and school violence as mild to moderately severe, students identify these problems as severe (Cohen, 2006). Thapa et al. reported that students of non-dominant races, ethnicities, and cultures perceive school climate to be less supportive than their dominant-culture peers' perceptions. Institutional environment also affects students' wellness; not only are engagement and experiences of connectedness an important consideration, but the physical layout of the school, the surroundings, and resources and supplies communicate messages of belonging and support to students (Thapa et al., 2013). Smaller schools and smaller learning communities are often correlated with increased experiences of connectedness and academic performance. Fewer unsupervised areas, classroom layout, and activity schedules contribute to students' increased perceptions of safety.

Faculty-wide development of supportive learning environments for all students is a point of institutional intervention for school counselors to facilitate. CLD students in particular, can benefit academically when their teachers utilize relationship-building skills in the classroom. School counselors have the skills to provide those conditions required for emotional safety for students, and it becomes the role of the school counselor to engage in advocacy for students by supporting the use of such skills by teachers. Teachers may then utilize relationship-building skills to create a safe and supportive environment in the classroom conducive to their students' learning.

Encouraging teachers, administrators, and staff to greet students by name provides students with the experience of being valued individually. School calendars that accommodate the needs of students from different cultures communicates

acceptance. Mentoring relationships between faculty and students promote mutual sensitivity and respect. Other less obvious adaptations can make a positive difference in CLD students' perceptions of acceptance such as displays of student work, cafeteria foods and décor that reflect the varied dimensions of the student population, and flexible hours of facility operation that accommodate varied family schedules. Entry ways into buildings communicate school culture and the collective values of those in authority. Dorsey (2005) suggests "a picture is worth a thousand trophies" (p. 3), and discusses how candid photos of events and activities that take place in the school can create an inviting environment while also reinforcing positive attitudes and values. The re-examination of school culture can significantly impact students' experiences of safety, acceptance, and opportunity for success.

Closing Remarks

White and Mullis (1999) opine that the "role of the school counselor is to facilitate student learning and successful socialization by focusing on the affective aspects of education" (p. 242). Promoting the learning process as a social event supports the collaborative and consultative endeavors of counselors. The act of facilitating connections and serving as communication specialists allows school counselors to enter the academic realm of schools with messages of wellness, social justice, and change. Inherent in the act of collaboration through leadership is the message of change; the act of systemic level intervention lends itself to positive, inviting school climates and positive academic and social outcomes for students.

Miguel Espinoza is a fourth grader. He loves school, he loves to read, and he loves his grandfather for whom he was named. Miguel reads both English and

Spanish. He is bright, enthusiastic, and learns quickly. Miguel has learned that when he is at home he can speak Spanish and English, and gets to read both his English and Spanish-language books and watch both English and Spanish-language television programs. He has also learned that when at school he can speak Spanish only on the playground, and that his name is not Miguel, but Michael. His teacher believes that Miguel needs to be focused on English only and decided it would be better to just call him Michael. However, Miguel has the opportunity to flourish in his school. He has a school counselor who believes in his ability to function well in both of his worlds, the English-speaking as well as the Spanish-speaking one. This school counselor consistently encourages Miguel to stay positive and develop a self-concept that cannot be diminished by others. Miguel trusts that his school counselor will advocate on his behalf by helping his teachers to learn more about him as an individual as well as about his culture of origin. His school counselor encourages his teachers and other adults in the school to value the diversity of the school by developing a critical consciousness of the undermining effects of oppression and discrimination. His school counselor takes action to ensure all students receive access to the educational opportunities and view their distinctness as an asset. Miguel's school counselor trusts that the work she does to influence the school climate will have a positive impact on Miguel's academic success and sense of belonging in the school. And she calls him Miguel.

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