Building Connections to Literacy Learning Among English Language Learners:

Exploring the Role of School Counselors

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Abstract

English language attainment and literacy acquisition are of significant importance to achieving academic success and college and career readiness in the United States. The rise in evidence-based standards requires concerted efforts by educators to meet the literacy needs of English language learners (ELLs). When collaborating with ELL teachers, school counselors are in a unique position to build literacy skills among ELL students, while simultaneously focusing on life skill development. This article provides specific suggestions for promoting literacy and social-emotional learning that school counselors can employ by collaborating with teachers and parents and through direct services with ELL students.

Keywords: school counselors, literacy, English language learners, social-emotional learning, collaboration

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English language learner (ELL) students refers to as students receiving specific language assistance services (including, bilingual education, English as a second language [ESL], dual language instruction, and structured English immersion [SEI]). English language students comprised approximately 4.7 million students nationwide during the 2010-2011 academic year, up from 4.1 million students in 2002-2003 (U.S. Department of Education, 2013a). Approximately 9.8% of all public school students received ELL services across the United States in 2010-2011, and some states provided ELL services to almost 20% or more of their student population (California and Nevada [U.S. Department of Education, 2012]). While school districts and states have differentiated instruction based on the language learning needs of students, as evidenced by the various types of ELL programs offered in schools, the reading achievement gap continues to persist between ELL students and non-ELL students (U.S. Department of Education, 2013a). For example, scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) were significantly lower for ELL students compared to non-ELL students at grades four and eight. The mathematics achievement gap for ELL students compared to non-ELL students also persists for some ELL groups, including Latino ELLs (Flores, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2013b).

Aside from challenges associated with learning English, various factors have negatively impacted academic achievement, including, acculturation challenges, experiences of racism and discrimination, and poverty (Benner & Graham, 2011; Grothaus & Cole, 2010; Kohli & Solorzano, 2012; Villalba, Akos, Keeter, & Ames, 2007;

Zychinski & Polo, 2012). Barriers to academic achievement can often be perpetuated through school culture and educational practices that sustain racial inequities in academic success, with such practices often occurring outside of educators' awareness (Bryan, 2005; Bryan & Henry, 2012). When implementing changes to improve academic success for students, Steen and Noguera (2010) emphasized the need for "an integrated approach that moves beyond merely implementing in-school interventions to involve all school stakeholders," including not just teachers and administrators, but also parents and community members (p. 45). In addition to providing counseling services, school counselors have the training and are well-positioned to strengthen connections and partnerships between the school and community to build ELL students' literacy skills.

Comprehensive Services That Assist ELL Students

Despite numerous local, state, and national initiatives, including most recently the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative (CCSS, 2010), many schools continue to struggle to meet annual benchmarks (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2010; Cook, Pérusse, & Rojas, 2012; Steen & Noguera, 2010), particularly where there are high concentrations of ELL students (Fry, 2008). Unfortunately, policy and legislative changes are not sufficient to close the ELL achievement gap (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Easton, & Luppescu, 2010). While over 70% of ELL students are Spanish-speaking (Schachter, 2013), there is a growing diversity of languages spoken in the United States—approximately 381 different languages (Ryan, 2013). It is without a doubt that the vast cultural and linguistic diversity creates significant challenges for schools to meet ELL students' academic needs.

According to the CCSS, which have been adopted by over 85% of public school districts and 46 states, systemic changes need to occur to ensure that all students are held to high expectations in literacy, regardless of the location where students reside and attend school (Achieve, 2013). Systemic changes are likely to be more successful in supporting ELL students' academic needs when efforts are implemented in a comprehensive manner (Cook et al., 2012). For example, through a federally funded project, several schools in Hartford, CT were successful in promoting academic achievement among ELL students by developing and improving English literacy skills across disciplines (Rojas, 2012). Taking a cross-disciplinary approach to building literacy skills means that all educators have a role in the process, including school counselors. While school counselors are not specifically trained in teaching English language acquisition, they focus on promoting students' academic success, social-emotional development, and college and career readiness (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012). However, school counselors may feel inadequately prepared to effectively address the academic needs of ELL students, particularly if they do not share similar cultural and/or linguistic background(s) as their students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this article is to provide school counselors with the knowledge and skills to support the academic needs of ELL students, including providing direct services that can assist in developing ELL students' literacy skills. The consequences of English literacy acquisition delays have long-term deleterious effects on academic performance, graduation rates, and employability (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011). On the other hand, children who attain strong academic and social skills by 11 years of

age are more likely to successfully complete high school and eventually pursue a postsecondary education (Aber, Grannis, Owen, & Sawhill, 2013). Given the importance of English language literacy acquisition, academic success, and social skills outcomes, it befits school counselors to take an active role in assisting ELL students in these areas.

Assisting ELL students to develop and hone English literacy skills cannot be achieved through instruction provided solely by an English teacher; all educators must be responsible in supporting literacy development, including school counselors (Achieve, 2013; Rojas, 2012). ASCA has a professional position statement regarding equity for all students that identifies the school counselor's role to include "promoting equity and access for all students," while recognizing that students from underrepresented populations can encounter educational barriers precluding their participation in rigorous coursework (ASCA, 2012, p. 24). Although the position statement does not specifically define underrepresented populations, ELL students have frequently been excluded from challenging coursework (Callahan, 2005; Cook et al., 2012; Solorzano & Ornelas; 2004; Walker & Pearsall, 2012). Consequently, it is within the school counselor's purview to support the academic needs of ELL students. This article describes the role that school counselors have promoting literacy skill development and offers recommendations on ways to advocate for ELL students and to provide comprehensive services for this student population. Adding to the literature continues to be of significant importance, given the persistence of a reading achievement gap and the dearth of journal coverage that persists within peer-reviewed counseling and school psychology journals (Albers, Hoffman, & Lundahl, 2009).

Building College Readiness Skills Using CCSS as a Guide

School counselors have an important role in working to close the achievement gap and to provide equitable educational services to students (ASCA, 2012; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). Recently, a White House initiative developed by Michelle Obama was unveiled, called Reach Higher, which aims to inspire all children to engage in higher education (Reach Higher Initiative, 2014). The initiative specifically identifies school counselors as the key stakeholder charged with ensuring that all students have an opportunity to reach their fullest academic potential. While implementation of the initiative is in its initial stages, it potentially carries significant importance for school counselors as they promote college and career readiness among ELL students, particularly in combination with other policies and standards, such as the CCSS.

Given these recent initiatives at the federal level (e.g., Reach Higher) and in state academic standards (e.g., adoption of CCSS), school counselors can and should have a central role in ensuring that academic standards, including CCSS, are implemented successfully and with fidelity (Achieve, 2013). CCSS provide academic standards in mathematics, English language arts (ELA), and literacy through a variety of content areas, including history, science, and technical subjects, and they present guidelines of skills and knowledge to be obtained at each grade level (grades Kindergarten through 12 [CCSS, 2010]). They were developed with the goal of ensuring that all students graduate high school with the necessary skills to attain postsecondary success through college, career, and in life (CCSS, 2010).

The urgency with which there needs to be a strong focus on college and career readiness among ELL students is exemplified by the overrepresentation of ELL students

within remedial level courses at higher education institutions. For example, almost a third (29%) of undergraduate first-year Latina/o students were required to take remedial level course work while enrolled at a higher education institution during the 2007-2008 academic year due to insufficient preparation necessary to meet the challenges of academic rigor associated with college course work (Sparks & Malkus, 2013). While statistics for remedial course attendance are not available specifically for ELL students, Spanish-speaking students currently represent the largest ELL population in the United States (Schachter, 2013). Given that enrollment in remedial courses results in no college credits and is associated with lower graduation rates (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2010), more needs to be done to ensure students, and particularly ELL students, can step up to the challenges of postsecondary coursework. Although schools may be effective in preparing students to be college eligible, greater attention is needed that focuses on building college readiness—a major impetus for developing CCSS (Achieve, 2013), and school counselors are in a unique position to take a leadership and collaborative role to support students in this endeavor.

While teachers hold the responsibility of adhering to the CCSS and connecting their curriculum to promote college and career readiness, it behooves school counselors to share in that responsibility (Achieve, 2013). More specifically, the role of school counselors in implementing the CCSS includes the following strategies. First, school counselors become familiar with the CCSS and understand the standards for the different content areas (mathematics, ELA/literacy). Second, they support its adoption by creating a foundation for greater equity and access for all students to engage in rigorous course work. This can be achieved through developing a comprehensive

school counseling program in alignment with the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012), consulting with teachers focused on college readiness, and developing standards-based college- and career-focused guidance curriculum. Third, school counselors act on its implementation. This involves taking active steps toward implementation of the CCSS on a day-to-day basis at the individual level and throughout the school community. Achieve (2013) recommended specific ways that school counselors can take action in promoting college and career readiness in various areas, such as, literacy and mathematics instruction, systemic approaches, instructional practices, professional learning, technology integration, and culture. Beyond becoming knowledgeable in the CCSS literacy standards, school counselors can also promote literacy instruction through the following action steps: (a) gather and analyze data to identify students with literacy needs and subsequently connect those students to the appropriate interventions; (b) monitor student progress and engage in discussions with teaching faculty and administration related to college readiness; and (c) integrate strategies to incorporate the CCSS literacy instruction standards into a comprehensive school counseling program.

Action Step One: Gather and Analyze Data

Rather than assume that all students assigned to ELL services need the same level of literacy instructional support, it is important to recognize that students will have individualized educational needs. Gathering and analyzing relevant data in collaboration with teachers, such as reading/writing assessments and standardized tests, school counselors can assist in identifying whether additional literacy support may be needed (Cook et al., 2012). However, results of standardized testing for placement purposes

and identification of interventions needs to be reviewed with caution given the potential inherent bias of such measures (O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010). Standardized assessments that measure level of English literacy often fail to adequately account for nuanced cultural and linguistic differences (O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010; Spinelli, 2008). For example, students may exhibit significant variations in knowledge of different subject areas based on cultural background, which could result in an inaccurate assessment of literacy level. With this knowledge, school counselors can advocate for appropriate placement and additional literacy supports if needed.

Action Step Two: Monitor Student Progress

Once specific literacy needs and appropriate interventions are identified, school counselors can monitor student progress and discuss their progress with teachers and administrators (Achieve, 2013). A risk of ELL instruction is that students can remain isolated from the rest of the school community, receiving separate literacy instruction beyond that which is needed to support language and academic instruction (Callahan, Wilkinson, & Muller, 2010). School counselors can assist by ensuring that course placement appropriately matches ELL students' achievement levels. On the contrary, if students are not being sufficiently challenged and low expectations ensue, ELL students' academic performance is likely to decline (De Los Reyes, Nieto, & Diez, 2008). Close monitoring in collaboration with ELL teachers can ensure that proper placement changes are made when the time is right. For example, one way to collaborate with teachers could be to develop a simple checklist that captures progress made in literacy skill acquisition, as evidenced by the ELL teacher's observations, English language testing, and academic performance. Using multiple sources of

information to evaluate ELL students' language proficiency beyond formal assessments is important, including observational data, interviews, teacher questionnaires, storytelling, and language samples (O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010).

Action Step Three: Incorporate CCSS Literacy Instruction Standards Into a Comprehensive School Counseling Program

The third action step involves incorporating the CCSS literacy instruction standards into a comprehensive school counseling program following the ASCA National Model (Achieve, 2013). This means identifying ways literacy instruction or support thereof could be connected to school counselors' work with ELL students by providing individual and small group counseling services and by collaborating with parents/caretakers and teachers. Through integrating literacy-based activities in direct services and partnering with teachers, parents, and organizations to provide literacy enrichment opportunities, school counselors can make a direct impact on ELL students' academic achievement and college and career readiness.

Incorporating literacy-based activities can be achieved by providing direct services to students. As school counselors plan their school counseling program, they can identify ways that individual counseling, small group counseling, and classroom guidance promote literacy development. Through individual counseling meetings, school counselors may engage ELL students in discussions regarding what they are learning through assigned books for coursework, topic relevance, and/or areas that interest them. Through this knowledge, school counselors can encourage ELL students to read outside of school to further explore their interests. Later, during follow-up meetings, even if future meetings do not focus specifically on academics, school

counselors could briefly check on the progress of outside reading and encourage

students to share findings. If students have failed to engage in outside reading, it is

helpful to hold high expectations that they can be successful (De Los Reyes et al.,

2008).

It is important to ascertain potential barriers to engaging in outside reading. That

is, students may not know how to go about finding books of interest, or they may have

competing after school obligations and find it challenging to find the time to read. In the

first case, the school counselor could provide some guidance by asking the student to

identify the necessary steps involved in the process. In the case of time constraints due

to competing obligations, prioritizing could helpful, while also recognizing that some

after school duties cannot be compromised, such as the possible need to maintain a

part-time job to contribute to the household income. Rather than giving up on these

students, school counselors can communicate high expectations and believe in the

students' potential (Cook, 2013), even if it means identifying other avenues for

reinforcing literacy skill development. For example, these students may benefit from

engaging in a small group intervention held during the school day, such as during lunch

or a dedicated time of the day when little content and instructional time is lost.

Through small group counseling and even classroom guidance, school

counselors can engage ELL students in shared book reading as a way to both promote

social-emotional development and reinforce literacy instruction (Doyle & Bramwell,

2006). Age- and content-appropriate books should be selected with input from students,

teachers, and parents. Giving the opportunity for children to choose what book they

would like to read promotes ownership and, consequently, an increased sense of

intrinsic motivation that is likely to result in greater reading engagement (Sanacore, 2012). Book choices should be culturally relevant and ideally should teach content or life skills pertaining to the identified needs of the group or classroom. For example, cuento therapy, a form of bibliotherapy, includes the use of culturally relevant poems, short stories, and novels to promote character development through engaging students in discussions that reflect on content communicated in the readings (Villalba, Ivers, & Ohlms, 2010). Cuento therapy has been used successfully with Latina/o ELL students and has been effective in increasing self-esteem and personal-social development (Ramirez, Jain, Flores-Torres, Perez, & Carlson, 2009; Villalba et al., 2010).

Employing bibliotherapy or shared book reading, a school counselor can engage students by encouraging student participation and leadership in storytelling. Engaging children in shared book reading in an interactive manner shifts the role of the child from a passive listener to the storyteller through adult guidance (Flynn, 2011). By asking questions about the book passages and/or pictures, employing strategic questioning, and engaging in multiple readings/conversations, children can enhance their reading comprehension, vocabulary, and social-emotional learning (Daunic et al., 2013; Doyle & Bramwell, 2006). A helpful website, called Best Children's Books (n.d.) provides suggested books by age and topic, including books for young children and older children, and various suggestions on character education, including, character and caring, creative thinking, service/helping others, having courage, generosity/sharing, gratitude, honesty, individuality, determination, kindness, manners, diversity, self-esteem, and open-mindedness.

Dialogic reading (DR) is a method of engaging young children in shared book reading that offers specific strategies to ask questions about stories and has demonstrated efficacy in building expressive language among young children (Brannon & Dauksas, 2012; IES, 2007; Lever & Senechal, 2011) and social-emotional development (Daunic et al., 2013; Doyle & Bramwell, 2006). Engaging in DR involves interactions between an adult, such as the counselor and child (or group of children) following the PEER sequence (IES, 2007): (a) prompts – the counselor prompts or asks the child to say something about the book; (b) evaluates – the counselor evaluates the child's response; (c) expands – the counselor expands the child's response through adding information and rephrasing; and (d) repeats – the counselor repeats the prompt to ensure the child learned from the expansion. In addition, there are five prompts that are employed with DR, forming the acronym CROWD, including word/sentence completion (completion prompts), asking what just happened in the story (recall prompts), eliciting what is happening in pictures or passages (open-ended prompts), "wh" questions (what, where, why, etc. prompts), and asking the child to relate pictures or words to personal experiences (distancing prompts). While all prompts aid with literacy acquisition, such as building comprehension and vocabulary, the distancing prompts help to develop social-emotional learning through linking the story to children's lives (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006). Thus, school counselors can choose to use a variety of prompts based on ELL students' language and developmental needs.

Another approach that can be used when engaging children in shared book reading involves reading, discussion, and writing through employing the 3-2-1 strategy (Sanacore, 2012). Students engage in three steps while they are reading. The first step

requires children to identify three important details from the book, which helps to synthesize their understandings. The second step includes writing and sharing two things that occurred or about the book that most interests them. This allows children to draw connections from the book to themselves. The third step involves writing a question about the book to seek further clarification and understanding, such as why a particular event occurred in the book. Using the 3-2-1 strategy, the school counselor can support children's enjoyment of reading, while using the content of stories to build relevant life skills. For example, the school counselor may prompt students to share their own personal experiences as they relate to the main characters of the story. The following are sample questions that could be used to facilitate such conversation:

- How would you have handled the problem if you had been the main character of the story?

- Share about a time that you had a similar situation or problem and how you dealt with it?

- What have you learned about yourself when it comes to resolving challenging situations, such as the one you just shared?

Because teachers often have a rigorous set of content areas to cover, they may not have sufficient time to dedicate toward making such deep personal connections to books (Sanacore, 2012). This potential gap is precisely where school counselors can step in to augment connections ELL students can make to literature.

In working with older ELL students, it is also possible to engage in shared book reading through small groups. Students can be presented with different book options to choose from, and weekly small group sessions can be conducted that engage students in the content of the story. For example, students can be assigned a chapter to read

over the course of the week and asked to write down one to two discussion questions for the group. Each meeting, the school counselor can prompt students to share their discussion questions as well as engage in re-readings of short passages for emphasis and to develop further understanding. Furthermore, the school counselor can prompt students to reflect on how the story relates to something in their own lives and what can be learned (using distancing prompts); if students are not already readily reflecting on their personal experiences through the reading discussions. In this manner, ELL students can build literacy skills, while they simultaneously develop important life skills to be successful in all areas of their lives. In addition to employing shared book reading with older ELL students, the school counselor could collaborate with the ELL teacher to connect what they are learning in the classroom to topics associated with the college admissions process. For example, support could be provided in writing the college admissions essay and/or scholarship applications. Through this collaboration, school counselors' college admissions expertise can be combined with ELL teachers' knowledge to effectively assist students with college applications, while concomitantly providing opportunities to further promote literacy skills.

Incorporating the use of technology to build literacy skills and promote social-emotional learning is another area in which school counselors can be helpful. The International Reading Association (IRA, 2009) emphasized the importance of integrating information and communication technologies (ICTs) in classroom instruction to ensure students acquire the technological literacy skills needed to be successful in today's world. However, many educators continue to struggle with teaching literacy skills while employing technologically based strategies of instruction (Hutchison & Reinking, 2011).

Researchers have begun to examine the use of ereaders in literacy instruction combined with eBooks (Guernsey, 2011), video and voice recording to build English language fluency for ELL students (Demski, 2011), and vocabulary building (Jung & Graf, 2008; Stockwell, 2007). Use of ereaders, tablets, if available, or computers could be helpful in engaging ELL students' access to literacy-rich content, such as informational websites, eBooks, and other literacy-based activities. Often literacy instruction using technology is conducted separately from classroom curriculum and not fully integrated into instruction (Hutchison, Beschorner, & Schmidt-Crawford, 2012). However, given the importance of integrating ICTs in classroom curriculum (Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; IRA, 2009), school counselors could help to bridge this gap by spearheading the use of technology in counseling practice. For example, if ereaders or computers are available, facilitating small groups, school counselors could engage children in using various ereader apps or computer programs that target literacy development and/or engage students in shared reading and discussions of eBooks. Sample apps include: Doodle Buddy for drawing, Popplet for brainstorming texts/images and writing, and wordVoc for language and vocabulary skill development through completing fun, game-like tutorials connected to the content of stories children are reading in the classroom or in counseling groups.

Collaboration

When collaborating with administrators, teachers, parents, families, and communities, school counselors can identify ways to promote literacy development that fits within ASCA's roles for school counselors. One way to build a solid foundation of literacy skills and social-emotional development includes targeting family literacy and

providing parenting skills support to families with young children (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011; Clark & Picton, 2012). In fact, there are simple ways for parents or caretakers to get involved with their children's reading, through encouragement to read and reading themselves (serving as role models [Clark & Picton, 2012]). When reaching out to families, school counselors could provide this encouragement in collaboration with the ELL teacher. For example, an informational webpage or document that describes the benefits of reinforcing not only children's reading but also parents' engagement in reading for pleasure could be developed and disseminated in collaboration with the classroom ELL teacher.

Moreover, parents can learn specific ways to engage their children when reading through DR, by involving and engaging children in shared book reading (Flynn, 2011). In addition to developing literacy among children, DR can also build a solid foundation of family literacy by providing parenting reading support to families with young children (Clark & Picton, 2012; Huebner & Meltzoff, 2005; Huebner & Payne, 2010; Lam, Chow-Yeung, Wong, Lau, & Tse, 2013). Parent-child paired readings increase young children's word recognition and reading fluency and enhance parents' level of self-efficacy in supporting their children's learning (Lam et al., 2013). In collaboration with teachers, school counselors could hold parent workshops to provide DR shared book-reading instruction. Because DR is a simple shared book-reading method to learn, only one to two training sessions would be required. Additional optional meetings could be held to reinforce shared book reading through inviting not only parents but also their children. With the assistance of the ELL teacher, language support could be provided,

and the school counselor could focus on building interactive communication to reinforce social-emotional learning and language development.

Given the positive effects of participating in children's reading and the importance of parents serving as positive role models (Clark & Picton, 2012), parents of older children could similarly encourage reading engagement. For example, school counselors could facilitate a parent group during which they read and discuss topics pertaining to youth development. They could also choose to read one of the same books that their child is reading (in their preferred language), so they can later connect with their child around the content of the book. Ideally, it would be beneficial to co-facilitate the group with the ELL teacher to assist with language comprehension, particularly if the school counselor does not speak a second language.

Lastly, school counselors can connect ELL students with enrichment activities, afterschool programs, and community-based programs to provide children opportunities that further develop their interests and skills. For example, Reading Rockets is a national multimedia literacy initiative that supports young children's literacy needs and offers a wealth of resources (http://www.readingrockets.org/). RIF (Reading is Fundamental) is a community-based reading program that is located in select areas in the United States and provides opportunities to enhance children and family literacy (http://www.rif.org/). Local town libraries also typically provide shared reading sessions for children and families and may provide instructional support to adult ELLs.

Implications for School Counselors and Directions for Future Research

Achieving reading proficiency is essential for all young children, and educators have identified the acquisition of literacy skills by the end of third grade as an important

developmental milestone (Houck & Ross, 2012). Educators commonly identify the process of literacy skill development as a focus on "learning to read" which occurs during grades pre K-3 and a progressive shift in focus to "reading to learn" which occurs from grade four onward (Robb, 2011). While the specific timing of literacy skill development may differ by each child, researchers have identified the importance of continued acquisition of literacy skills from fourth grade and beyond (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011; Robb, 2011).

When an increased focus on standards-based practice, such as the CCSS, is coupled with the need to address the reading achievement gap, school counselors can serve an instrumental role in supporting ELL students' literacy skill development and consequently college and career readiness. While there is debate concerning the role of school counselor's work: whether they should focus more on social-emotional development and college preparation and less on academics – leaving the academics to teachers (Reiner & Hernández, 2013), this article demonstrates that school counselors can and should focus both on promoting social-emotional development and concomitantly connect their work to support academic achievement. School counselors are in a unique position to promote the sustained development of literacy skills among ELL students, while simultaneously promoting life skill development and college and career readiness.

School counselors can assist ELL students, using the CCSS literacy standards in alignment with the ASCA National Model as guides to implement comprehensive school counseling services. Although supporting ELL students' acquisition of literacy skills is a critical component in preparing for college and career readiness, there are other areas

of support that need attention. First, newcomer ELL students often need assistance with the transition process as they acclimate to the new school and community and must adapt to culturally different ways of learning (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). Although there are instructional models available for teachers to assist ELL students with that transition process, such as scaffolding (e.g., Peregoy & Boyle, 2008) and integrating cultural needs and expectations into teaching pedagogy (e.g., DeCapua & Marshall, 2011), more research is needed to identify ways that school counselors can better assist ELL students with academic needs throughout transition.

Second, assessment requirements continue to be mandatory yet often present as significant barriers to achievement (Cook et al., 2012). Due to psychometric limitations and testing conditions that inadequately account for cultural and linguistic differences, ELL students may likely fail to meet required assessment standards (Spinelli, 2008). Understanding ways school counselors can provide greater support to ELL students to navigate the mandatory testing requirements is needed, such as understanding content and implications of various testing as well as being aware of community resources that may be available.

Third, immigration status and changes in immigration laws have significant ramifications for college and career options available to ELL students (College Board, 2012). Future directions for school counseling practice should address implications related to immigration law and policy changes to ensure that school counselors support ELL students and families in financially preparing for postsecondary success. Lastly, but importantly, school counselors can benefit from understanding ways to assist ELL students with overcoming barriers to academic success that can result from

experiencing racial and ethnic discrimination. One way to support ELL students is through implementing culturally responsive interventions that are strength-based and celebrate ELL students' achievements (Grothaus, MacAuliffe, & Craigen, 2012; Reyes & Elias, 2011). Taking a culturally sensitive approach should be at the center of school counselors' work in every aspect of service delivery, extending to literacy development and beyond.

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