
Introduction

Children and youth in P–12 schools depend on educational leaders to guide them in developing positive attitudes, competent skills, and pertinent knowledge in becoming productive citizens. Culturally proficient leadership must be capable of cultivating collaborative cultures of care, inclusion, and respect for diversity in our schools so that our youth can be prepared to navigate within an increasingly diverse, global community. The too-often-overlooked and misused role in school leadership teams is the school counselor and combining their skills and knowledge with administrators and teachers at the school.

Why This Book Is Necessary

Where necessary, schools must intentionally recast school counselors from the misused role of “gatekeeper” to “facilitator.” In too many schools the school counselor serves as a “gatekeeper” of the status quo, a role that has maintained disparity in access to resources such as effective teachers, higher academic level courses, and career/college information. Whether counselors have been cast in the role of gatekeeper by their teacher and administrator colleagues or assumed the role volitionally is immaterial. The role of school counselor exists within a context of P–12 education struggling with how best to serve historically underserved students. Schools must make better use of counselors’ knowledge and skills by involving them as full-fledged members of school leadership teams. Counselors serving as advocates for all students will be able to assist their teacher and administrator colleagues to focus on broader issues of student access and success. To do so, the school counselor must be a “facilitator,” fully involved in school leadership teams.

The 21st century professional school counselor has a primary role in ensuring equitable resources and opportunities for all demographic student groups in schools. National and state counseling standards call for school counselors to identify and provide for the diverse academic, career, personal, and social needs of students (American School Counselor Association, 2003; California Commission for Teacher Credentialing, 2001). Newly trained school counselors are expected to enter the field competently prepared to assess student needs, and to develop, implement, and evaluate systemic school counseling programs that effectively provide resources for all students to be successful. Realistically, however, there are many counselors, administrators, and teachers on school leadership teams in today's schools in need of improved ways of using and improving school counselors' skills.

The Education Trust (1997) established a nation-wide transforming school counseling initiative, calling upon school counselors to be leaders, collaborators, advocates, and agents of change, skilled in identifying and removing barriers that perpetuate the achievement and opportunity gap between more-advantaged and less-advantaged students. In order for school counselors to be competently prepared in meeting these rigorous expectations, they need to team with formal and non-formal leaders in school-based settings that support their skill development. In *Culturally Proficient Collaboration* we guide the reader in acquiring knowledge about requirements for school counselors, assessing their current skill level as culturally proficient leaders, and considering ways of becoming more effective in the multiple roles they assume as school leadership team members.

There is sustained focus on improving the preparation of P-12 school counselors throughout the nation (Ward & House, 1998; Studer, 2006; Wood & Rayle, 2006). Missing from this discourse are the experiences of current school counselors who are facing obstacles and creating solutions as they wrestle with moving from old to new ways of counseling at school sites that vary in their level of systemic support and cultural competency. State and national mandates call for high-quality field experience training for school counseling interns (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2001, 2008, 2009; California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2001, 2006). Site-supervisors function in pivotal roles in the advancement of the school counseling profession, and in ensuring that all students in P-12 schools receive the support services they need to be successful. The majority of practicing school counselors were trained in outdated curriculum, and they work in collaboration with formal and non-formal school leaders who are often unaware of, or resistive to, the transformed role of the 21st century professional school counselor.

A Practical Guide for Your Use

To ensure that today's school counselors are included in school leadership teams, and are competently prepared to function in our diverse school communities we need to provide rich, reflective resources to guide their knowledge and skill development. *Culturally Proficient Collaboration* is designed to contribute to this process.

A practical guide with strong theoretical framework was the basis in developing this book for teachers, formal and non-formal school leaders to team with emerging and seasoned counselors in developing culturally proficient practices in providing system-wide services to all children and youth. The book applies the *Inside-Out* approach to learning characteristic of the Cultural Proficiency framework to teachers, school leaders, and counselors and to the counseling function in schools. Additionally, the reader is introduced to and guided through a series of reflective exercises that builds knowledge and skill in the core competencies and essential experiences of exemplary counseling practices, aligned with the American School Counseling Association National Model for school counseling programs and The Education Trust transforming school counseling initiative.

The book is structured to support the reader in three significant areas. First, the reader learns about the transforming school counseling initiative, national counseling standards, and expectations of school counselors in support of equitable educational opportunities for historically marginalized populations of students. Second, the reader is guided through a series of assessments that help to increase culturally proficient practices in designing, implementing, and evaluating comprehensive counseling programs that are data-driven. Third, the reader is encouraged to team with school counselors in functioning as educational leaders, advocates, collaborators, and agents of change in creating cultures of care and rigorous academic expectations.

The Education Trust (2003) suggests "Everyone working in school systems has a critical role to play in helping schools meet the needs of underserved students, especially school counselors." *Culturally Proficient Collaboration* provides the knowledge and practices on the systemic role of the 21st century school counselor, to collaborate with all stakeholders in developing effective school environments.

How to Use This Book

We organized this book in three parts to guide and support your journey toward being a member of a culturally proficient school leadership

team that values the role of counselor in support of equitable access to educational experiences and outcomes:

- Part I comprises three chapters that provide you with a context for the historical and evolving role of school counselor, a discussion of emergent counseling standards and initiatives, and a description of The Tools of Cultural Proficiency. The fourth chapter brings the new counseling standards and initiative and cultural proficiency together into a rubric for your assessment and planning.
- Part II contains five chapters where you are guided through processes of reflection and dialogue to learn and apply the lens of cultural proficiency to the new counseling performance standards and initiative in support of your students.
- Part III is a single chapter devoted to supporting you and your colleagues developing personal and school action plans addressing equity issues in your school.