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# Foreword

The authors of *Culturally Proficient Collaboration* begin by stating, and rightly so, that school counselors are all too often the overlooked educator when it comes to participating in school leadership teams. Although some may argue that this problem exists because administrators don't understand the role of a school counselor, others might rebut that this is because school counselors do not present themselves as competent leaders. Regardless the origin of the issue, this historical concern remains for both school counselors and administrators and must be addressed.

In 1992, Phyllis Hart and Marilyn Jacobi identified six major problems in the preparation of new school counselors and challenged counselors to begin to move from *gatekeeper* to *advocate*. They called for school counseling training institutions to better prepare, challenge and motivate school counselors to advocate for access and equity and to work toward correcting the inequities perpetuated in the educational systems. They suggested counselors use data and become advocates for students with teachers and administrators. Rather than serve as perpetrators of inequity, school counselors could become leaders in systemic change.

Today, in 2011, the National Center for Transforming School Counseling (TSC) posts on its website that school counselors are “all but left out of the education-reform discussion” (The Education Trust, n.d., b, para. 2). It claims school counselors entering the profession are unprepared to effectively serve as advocates for students who need it most—students of poverty and students of color. *There is still much work to be done.*

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model (2005) calls for school counselors to design, implement, and evaluate school counseling programs. The ASCA Model is the framework for building school counseling programs that includes the

foundation, delivery, management, and accountability systems. Within this process, however, are the themes written on the outside of the ASCA Model diamond shape: leadership, advocacy, systemic change, and collaboration. These themes were written to support the school counselor's role as partners in student achievement. I often refer to them as the "blood through the veins" of the school counseling program. School counselors are encouraged to become effective leaders and advocates within schools by collaborating with teachers and administrators to influence systemic changes in school reform.

The ASCA Model also supports the position that school counselors are uniquely positioned to ensure that every student receives access and equity to a rigorous education. The model suggests that school counselors use data to discover inequities, implement plans to close the gap, and then measure the impact. What the ASCA Model does *not* address is the cultural proficiency necessary to become effective school leadership team members. *Culturally Proficient Collaboration* does.

In 2008, ASCA Professional Standard and Competencies were released. Competency I-B-1h states: "demonstrates multicultural, ethical and professional competencies in planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating the comprehensive school counseling program." Again, the ASCA National Model does not address the multicultural competencies. *Culturally Proficient Collaboration* does.

Stephens and Lindsey guide the reader through the historical issues facing the profession and today's evolving new role of the school counselor. This is followed by a description of the *Tools for Cultural Proficiency*. Next they share how these Tools align with ASCA's current professional standards for school counselors. The authors assist the reader, through the use of vignettes, in reflecting on the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they will need to apply the Tools in their work. The vignettes, drawn from real experiences, provide opportunities to illustrate the ideas in practice. Particularly helpful is the *Collaboration Rubric*, which provides excellent examples of cultural proficiency that is informed by either barriers or guiding principles. The continuum of destructiveness to proficiency allows the reader to access her own place on the continuum and, utilizing the *inside-out* approach, begin to access areas of self-growth. Finally, they call for counselors to create personal action plans (much like in the ASCA Model) to address issues of equity in schools.

To effectively partner in student achievement and create change for students, school counselors must possess the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to perform leadership functions in diverse school communities. School counselors must possess the culturally

proficient competencies necessary to confidently and competently discuss challenging issues of equity and access. This means learning not only how to analyze data and look for opportunity and achievement gaps, but also gaining the skills to have challenging conversation with professional colleagues about the next steps. *Culturally Proficient Collaboration* provides professional school counselors with competencies to assess themselves when providing systemwide services to all students. The reader is provided assessment tools to increase their own proficiency in designing and implementing data-driven practices. This book serves to provide opportunities for counselors, teachers, and administrators to create more caring cultures within schools.

It is not enough to complain about the policies and procedures that disenfranchise students; it is the school counselors' responsibility to advocate for systemic change and to use their passionate advocacy voice (much like they do for victims of child abuse) to advocate against institutional racism and systems that serve some, not all. Every interaction becomes an opportunity to respond as an agent of change. The work suggested by Stephens and Lindsey addresses this challenge.

The authors are committed to this work. Diana Stephens is a counselor educator who serves as the Chair of the Diversity and Educational Excellence Working Group in the Center for Equality and Justice. She has grant funded partnerships with school districts assisting administrators and school counselors in creating systemic change. Randall Lindsey is a well-known national expert in Cultural Proficiency Education and has written several books on the topic.

School counselors are leaders, advocates, and systemic change agents in our diverse schools. As an integral part of the total educational program for student success, school counselors learn to design, develop, implement, and evaluate their comprehensive school counseling program to ensure that every student receives developmentally appropriate competencies in academic, career, and personal/social development. School counselors are professional student advocates who promote equity and access to a rigorous education for every student and who work to prevent and remove barriers to learning. To accomplish this, school counselor must develop themselves as culturally competent leaders in educational reform and social justice in the schools and communities they serve.

As a graduate student, professional school counselor, administrator, teacher, or counselor educator, I hope you will take this opportunity to reflect on your *inside-out* process for learning about your own culture, the culture of your school, and the culture of the community

you serve. Reflect on your thinking and practice, on your intentionality, and your ability to have courageous conversations. Reflect on what your students deserve. In the words of the authors: “get centered, go deeper” . . . because *YOU* are the leaders we are waiting for.

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