

Principal and Counselor Collaboration for Social Justice Advocacy: A Standards Alignment

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Abstract

The current P-12 educational landscape is riddled with inequities, especially for historically underserved students. As such, greater efforts are needed from educational stakeholders (i.e. counselors and principals) who center social justice and advocacy practices that eliminate systemic barriers to rigorous educational experiences for all students. This paper proposes an alignment of advocacy and social justice professional standards and competencies for school counselors and principals. This alignment, which consists of three contextual dimensions including social justice identity, human resources, and advocacy actions, serves as the foundational framework for principal-counselor collaboration around social justice advocacy. Implications for practice and research are discussed.

Keywords: Social Justice; Advocacy; Comprehensive School Counseling; Principal-Counselor Collaboration

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Introduction

Many challenges face education stakeholders who are committed to providing high-quality educational experiences for all students. Disaggregated achievement, discipline, and climate data indicate that schools continue to struggle providing students who have been historically underserved with equitable access to rigorous coursework, socioemotional support and development, and college and career readiness. For example in 2015-16, the adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR)¹ was 91% for Asian students, 88% for White students, 79% for Latinx students, 76% for Black students, and 72% for American Indian/Alaska Native students (McFarland et al., 2018). National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data indicate that the average grade eight reading score for Asian/Pacific Islander students (282/500) was higher than all other race groups identified—White (275), Latinx (255), American Indian/Alaska Native (253), and Black (249) (McFarland et al., 2018). Students who reported that they would be the first to go to college, come from low-income families, and identify as a racial/ethnic minority were nine times less likely (9%) to meet ACT college readiness benchmarks than students who reported they did not meet any of those criteria (81%) (ACT, 2017).

Discipline data show gross disproportionalities in exclusionary practices. In 2015-16, Black males comprised 8% percent of enrolled students and 25% of students who received an out-of-school suspension. White male students, who comprised 25% of enrolled students, accounted for 24% of students who received an out-of-school suspension (U.S. Dept. of Education, OCR, 2016, 2018). Unfortunately, schools are hostile places for LGBTQ students. According to the 2015 National Climate Survey conducted by GLSEN (2017), 57.6% of students who identify as LGBTQ felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, and 43.3% felt unsafe at school due to their gender expression.

Given the current landscape of P-12 education, greater attention and effort is needed to address the holistic needs of all children. Although many students and families are able to achieve in the midst of inequities, this is not a reality for everyone. Educators, in

¹ The Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate ACGR is the percentage of high school graduates who graduate on time. A cohort consists of identified first-time 9th grade students, adjusted for any who transfer in or leave or die. The percentage of students who graduate within four years make up the ACGR (McFarland et al., 2018).

collaboration with families and communities, must continue to identify and implement effective programming and access to opportunity for students and families who have been historically underserved, which include Black and Brown students, immigrants, undocumented students, students learning English, students living in poverty, and students who identify as LGBTQ.

School counselors and school principals may serve as leaders in this collaborative effort alongside students and families. School counselors are uniquely qualified to help meet the academic, socioemotional, and career development needs of all students (American School Counselor Association (ASCA), 2012; Betters-Bubon & Schultz, 2018; Dollarhide, Clevenger, Dogan, & Edwards, 2016). Principals must provide necessary resources (i.e., time to carry out related tasks), maintain effective communication, and support the development of counselor leadership (Bore & Bore, 2009; Lashley & Stickl, 2016). To be effective in this regard, principals and counselors must be committed to social justice (Boyland, Kirkeby, & Boyland, 2018; DeMatthews, Edwards, & Rincones, 2016; Dollarhide, Clevenger, Dogan, & Edwards, 2016; Theoharis, 2007) and collaboratively engage in social justice advocacy to address educational inequities (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Lowery, et al., 2019; McCarty, Wallin, & Boggan, 2014). Therefore, it is critical that principal and counselor preparation program faculty and practitioners think creatively about how this collaboration can be developed and implemented.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an alignment of advocacy-related principal standards (PSEL, 2015) and school counselor competencies (ASCA, 2012) as one possibility for conceptualizing what collaborative social justice advocacy might look like in P-12 schools. Relatedly, it serves as a model for principal and school counselor preparation programs. Based on extant research and advocacy-related principal and counselor standards, this alignment provides clarity about the meaning of social justice advocacy and the necessary knowledge, skills, and practices that principals and counselors must demonstrate to collaborate effectively around educational equity. Our work was guided by one central question: What does collaboration for social justice advocacy mean and look like for principals and counselors?

Separate bodies of literature about social justice advocacy exist for principals (DeMatthews et al., 2016) and counselors (Betters-Bubon & Schultz, 2018; Crawford, Aguayo, & Valle, 2017). A gap in the current literature is a conceptualization of what principal and counselor collaboration as social justice advocates can look like. Prior to the 2000s, few studies offered clear and tangible strategies for how to implement social justice advocacy in counseling and school leadership (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009; Trusty & Brown, 2005). However, while counselors have created specific standards for advocacy, the development of similar standards and strategies for principals remains less developed.

Collaboration between principals and school counselors for advocacy is particularly significant in the context of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act and reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965. First, ESSA requires states to develop programs to foster college and career readiness—a goal of comprehensive school counseling programs. Second, ESSA provides pathways for states to invest in principal development with a focus on equity, a goal of social justice leadership and school counseling programs (Young, Winn, & Reedy, 2017). Leaders can provide the context for such initiatives to be effectively implemented in schools.

Our alignment of principal and counselor standards is also significant because although research about principal and school counselor collaboration is emerging (Bore & Bore, 2009; Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007; Duslak & Geier, 2018; Lashley & Stickl, 2016), a gap in the research exists regarding collaboration that centers on advocacy. There is little to no examination of the ways in which the standards that guide the practices of both professions overlap, providing an even greater foundation for collaboration to occur. To address this gap, we add to the exploration of advocacy standards by Crawford, Arnold, and Brown (2014) who compared preservice leaders' perceptions of advocacy within professional standards to the delineation of advocacy in counselor standards.

This article is divided into four sections. First, we explain how we make meaning of social justice advocacy. Second, we provide an overview of principal and school counselor roles. Third, we present an alignment of advocacy-related professional standards and competencies that allow for principal and counselor collaboration for social justice advocacy. Fourth, we share implications for research and practice.

Social Justice Advocacy

While there is not one fixed definition of social justice in education (Bogotch & Reyes-Guerra, 2014), scholars tend to uphold certain common principles, such as addressing inequity in education. Principals and counselors must be attuned to the broad goal of social justice to identify and eliminate the perpetuation of inequity for certain groups who have been historically marginalized because of race, gender identity, ability, sexuality, immigration status and country of origin, and class, while maintaining privilege for others (Dollarhide et al., 2016; Furman, 2012; Lewis & Kern, 2018; Pounder, Reitzug, & Young, 2005; Theoharis, 2007). Advocacy is also included in these definitions. For example, Theoharis (2007) defined social justice leaders as those who prioritize issues of identity and marginalizing conditions as "...central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (p. 223). Scholars assert that advocacy refers to working towards a social-justice related outcome. Shields, Dollarhide, and Young (2018) explained that such advocacy "would involve communicating how old knowledge frames perpetuate inequity and working toward equitable reconstruction with a focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice" (p. 8).

Those who work for social justice must continually reflect on the ways they contribute to and benefit from inequities (Furman, 2012) and "must act to reduce and eradicate oppression, however distant [they] may feel from personal culpability for its enactment" (Calderwood, 2003, p. 302). Scholars in school counselor education point out that those who have a "social justice identity" (Dollarhide et al., 2016) internalize these characteristics as their life work and can provide more empowering services to historically underserved or marginalized groups (Marbley, Malott, Flaherty, & Frederick, 2011). Hence, students receive equitable access to instruction and counseling and exploration of career options in which they can accomplish their goals (Pounder et al., 2005).

Because we focus on the over-arching goal of disrupting inequity and facilitating access to high-quality education and post-secondary outcomes, equity, social justice, and advocacy come to have the same meaning. That is, social justice cannot take place without advocacy. Social justice school leadership scholars DeMatthews et al. (2016) explained that social justice leaders create "an inclusive approach to...advocating for social change" (p. 759).

Many scholars assert that it is impossible to work for social justice without engaging in advocacy because advocacy or activism is one way in which social justice is attained (Crawford et al., 2014; Dollarhide et al., 2016; Furman, 2012). Therefore, we understand social justice advocacy to be the actions that school professionals engage in at the individual, institutional, and societal levels to empower marginalized groups and promote change within policies and practices, institutions, and laws that are seen as oppressive by historically underserved groups (Dollarhide et al., Marbley et al., 2011). This means that leadership encompasses the work of principals who have formal leadership positions and school counselors who take on leadership roles as they both engage in advocacy. As Pounder et al. (2005) explained, “part of leading for social justice, then, is understanding that one is not just a leader but an activist for children, an activist who is committed to supporting educational equity and excellence for all children” (p. 272).

Leaders for social justice should develop a global, or “glocal” understanding of educational issues, which Jean-Marie, Normore, and Brooks (2009) define as the meaningful integration of local and global issues, imperatives, and concepts. Doing so, will facilitate leaders’ understanding of how global events and trends influence local realities and vice versa (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). An understanding of the lived experiences, access to resources, and cultures worldwide increases awareness of the likelihood that we are connected to families who experience immigration, war, or terrorism. This awareness will hopefully increase leaders’ empathy and inclination to support students and families who navigate similar circumstances in their schools (Shields, Dollarhide, & Young, 2018). The application of lessons and experiences of educators in other countries within their own context may be valuable. Researchers have documented the financial difficulties leaders face in order to adequately provide facilities for students in lower-income communities (Hopson, Hotep, Schneider, & Turenne, 2010; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Chiu and Walker (2007) identified several suggestions for how to reduce inequality in schools in Hong Kong, such as more equitable resource allocation, assigning skilled teachers to a variety of grade levels and courses, and eliminating tracking. This perspective may inform educational leaders elsewhere.

In sum, advocacy is integral to principal and counselor social justice leadership and collaboration in the United States and world. In this context, the terms “social justice advocacy” and “advocacy” take on the same meaning. Caldwell and Vera (2010) explained that those who have a social justice orientation “endorse social justice beliefs and are engaged in social justice advocacy...” (p. 626). Therefore, although all scholars and practitioners may not agree that the two terms have similar meanings, we use the terms “social justice advocacy” and “advocacy” interchangeably in this context.

Principal and School Counselor Roles

The roles of principals and school counselors should evolve in order for them to seek social justice, as will be explained in this section. Principals can no longer operate only as managers. Likewise, counselors cannot succeed in their roles if principals assign them tasks more fitting for an administrative assistant, rather than a student-centered counselor offering activities and support.

School Principals

The role of the principal has shifted from primarily building manager and disciplinarian to include instructional leadership responsible for students’ academic success, faculty and staff professional development, and effective collaboration with education stakeholders (Drago-Severson, 2012; Spillane, Diamond, & Jita, 2003; Terosky, 2014).

Indeed, the principal's role is complex and varied (Spillane & Lee, 2014). As a steward of the school's mission, the principal must be an effective communicator. As school operations and discipline are still important aspects of the principal role, effective collaboration and distributed leadership are ways to optimize time engaged in instructional leadership related duties (Spillane et al., 2003).

Principals must ensure that resources are aligned to support faculty and staff to carry out their roles and that students have access to rigorous curriculum. Principals must also create a culture of collaboration and shared leadership, which empowers everyone to promote student success (Brooks, Jean-Marie, Normore, & Hodgins, 2007; McCarty et al., 2014). Addressing the needs of all students, particularly those who face challenges due to educational inequities, is a priority for leaders in collaboration with students, families, and colleagues such as school counselors.

School Counselors

In order to meet the diverse needs of students, including socioemotional development, academic success, and college and career readiness; school counselors design, implement, and evaluate comprehensive school counseling programs. These programs center on collaboration, leadership, advocacy, and social justice (Education Trust, n.d.; Hines et al., 2017; Mayes, Dollarhide, & Young, 2018). Comprehensive school counseling programs are designed to provide services through multi-tiered system of supports where individual student performance and typical child development guide prevention and intervention activities. Further, comprehensive school counseling programs are data-informed. Data is collected, disaggregated, and analyzed to identify systemic issues that impact groups of students disproportionately and perpetuate gaps in student outcomes (Hines et al., 2017; Mayes et al., 2018). To address these issues, school counselors strive to remove systemic barriers, which may include addressing school policies and practices (Martin, 2017). The crux of the comprehensive school counseling program is to move beyond the question of "What do school counselors do?" to answer "How are students different because of what school counselors do?" (ASCA, 2012). The latter question champions the holistic needs of all students, centers educational equity, and calls for accountability.

This comprehensive school counseling framework is guided by the American School Counselor Association National Model (ASCA, 2012) and includes four interrelated components: Foundation, Management, Delivery, and Accountability. *Foundation* refers to the overall program focus, which includes beliefs about how all students benefit from comprehensive school counseling programs, mission and vision statements, student competencies, and school counselor competencies as well as ethical standards (ASCA). *Management* refers to the organizational assessments and tools needed to support the comprehensive school counseling program. This includes program assessments, school counselor competency evaluations, annual agreements developed with administrators, curriculum and equity focused action plans, and advisory councils to review and make recommendations concerning program activities (ASCA).

Delivery refers to the direct and indirect services that are provided to students as a part of the comprehensive school counseling program. These services include multi-level, direct student services and include school counseling core curriculum based on student competencies, individual student planning, and responsive services (ASCA, 2012). School counselors also participate in indirect services like referrals, as well as consultation and collaboration with various educational stakeholders including caregivers, teachers, administrators, and community organizations. It is suggested that school counselors spend 80% of their time providing direct services to students (ASCA). Finally, *accountability* refers to activities that demonstrate the effectiveness of

the comprehensive school counseling program on student outcomes and guide future action and improvement of the school counseling program (ASCA).

School Principal and Counselor Collaboration

Principals serve an important role in the implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs so that the needs of all students—and particularly for students and families who have been historically underserved—are met. Of high importance is collaboration with counselors such that they can perform standards-based counselor-related activities (ASCA, 2012; Bore & Bore, 2009; Lashley & Stickl, 2016; Wilkerson, Pérusse, & Hughes, 2013). Next, we summarize what is known about advocacy in terms of standards and related research for school principals and school counselors in their respective fields.

Methods

We examined standards for school leaders and school counselor competencies. In each document, we searched for the words *social justice*, *social justice advocacy*, *advocacy*, or phrases that invoked this meaning, such as *equity*. We created a standards alignment as a stand-alone product, rather than in conjunction with a review of principal and counselor preparation programs, because standards are the foundation for curriculum, instruction, and accreditation for many educator preparation programs. In short, these standards are intended to guide how faculty and practitioners conceptualize best practices in each profession. After a review of extant literature regarding social justice leadership and counselor preparation programs, we developed and categorized standards within three dimensions (social justice identity, human resources, and advocacy actions). We integrated this literature into our discussion of the NPBEA and ASCA standards.

Standards and Competencies Alignment for Social Justice Advocacy

School counseling scholars have been more purposeful in the development of specific advocacy standards than scholars within educational leadership (ASCA, 2012). However, despite this lack of specificity, the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) include equity as a separate standard (Standard 3) and language that references “each student” throughout (National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), 2015). While a general approach to “each student” could be problematic, the PSEL, along with what we know from extant literature about principal social justice advocacy, provide a basic understanding of educational leaders’ advocacy roles.

NPBEA Standards (2015)

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015) recast standards for administrators as The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (see link in citation for the complete document). These standards focus on student learning required for the 21st century. The phrase *social justice advocacy* does not appear in these standards. However, references to social justice and advocacy separately exist. “Equity,” an oft-used phrase in social justice literature, is the focus of Standard 3 (NPBEA, 2015, p. 11).

Substandard 3c states that leaders “articulate, advocate, and cultivate core values that...stress the imperative of...equity, inclusiveness, and social justice; openness and trust...” (p. 9). Standard 2 states that leaders “promote each student’s academic success and well-being.” Substandard 2d indicates that effective leaders will “safeguard and

promote the values of democracy, individual freedom, responsibility, equity, social justice, community, and diversity.” (p. 10).

Another reference to advocacy is in Standard 8. Substandards 8h and 8i state the expectation for leaders to advocate publicly for the school, district, and needs and priorities of students, families and the community. However, these needs, if not analyzed through a social justice, or critical, lens, may not yield increased equity for students and families. For example, advocating for technology, such as virtual reality or robotics in the classroom, would build students’ skills, but leaders who advocate for such technology for all students may also continue patterns of inequities if issues related to language, culture, pedagogy, and cost are not addressed through meaningful professional development. This concern is supported by Young et al. (2017) who asserted, “just as the knowledge and skills of educational leaders can be a key support to achieving educational equity, they can also be a barrier when leaders are not adequately prepared to support equity, inclusiveness, and cultural responsiveness” (p. 718).

Several standards have the potential to be social justice-related because they emphasize all students. However, because there is no clear set of social justice competencies, dispositions, behaviors, or advocacy standards, the application of many of the PSEL standards to social justice may not take place without targeted social justice preparation or in-service development. For example, Standard 1 states that “effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission...of high quality education and academic success...of each student” (p. 9). It remains to be seen whether leaders interpret the phrase “each student” to mean through the analysis of disaggregated data of student sub-groups or as overall student performance. Much of what we know about the work of social justice advocacy for school leaders comes from the ways scholars have theorized about it. Thus, we turned to the literature that specifically identifies social justice to inform our understanding of school leader social justice advocacy.

Although some might argue that social justice advocacy can take place in many ways, scholars of social justice and equity-oriented school leadership assert that principals must understand social justice through a critical lens, which requires ongoing analyses of power systems at multiple levels within local, state, national, and global contexts (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018; Bogotch & Reyes-Guerra, 2014; Brooks et al., 2007; Brown, 2004; Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Furman, 2012; Pounder et al., 2005; Shields, 2010; Shields, Dollarhide, & Young, 2018). Jean-Marie et al. (2009) asserted, “...school leaders must increase their awareness of various explicit and implicit forms of oppression, develop an intent to subvert the dominant paradigm, and finally act as a committed advocate for educational change...” (p. 4).

Scholars and practitioners who operate within this paradigm assert that critical consciousness is developed out of an understanding of critical theory (Freire, 2009). Critical theory orients one’s understanding to the ways in which structural inequities, not the deficits of individuals or groups, create systems of oppressions. The application of critical theories to an understanding of lived experiences in an inequitable society develops critical consciousness. These understandings lead to questions regarding internal biases, power, privilege, inclusion and exclusion, and analysis and action against social, political, and economic forms of oppression, or advocacy (Bogotch & Reyes-Guerra, 2014; Brown, 2004; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Pounder et al., 2005; Shields et al., 2018).

There are many actions that contribute to the development of social justice advocacy as has been conceptualized in social justice leadership literature. First, leaders must

develop a mindset and practice in which they engage in ongoing reflection to identify and counteract deficit perspectives they hold about marginalized students and families (Furman, 2012; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). Examples of such advocacy work include engaging families in community advocacy (DeMatthews et al., 2016) while confronting issues of racism (Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015), heterosexism and transphobia (Lewis & Kern, 2018; Marshall & Hernandez, 2012), and ableism (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014) as education leaders create systems for inclusion of students in rigorous academic opportunities.

Leaders engage in advocacy work with an understanding of intersecting identities (Dantley, Beachum, & McCray, 2008); engage with students and families from a perspective that recognizes their assets and leadership capacities (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018); engage in strategic activism within their organizations to achieve their goals (Ryan, 2016); and engage in culturally responsive practices to counter injustices (Khalifa et al., 2016). Next, we explain the ways that school counselors are trained and demonstrate social justice advocacy.

ASCA Competencies (2019)

As the ASCA National Model provides a framework for comprehensive school counseling, it also provides a charge for school counselors to be focused on social justice and advocacy, actively working to create inclusive schools while also eliminating gaps in student outcomes. Therefore, advocacy is a competency that school counselors must demonstrate (ASCA, 2012; McCarty et al., 2014). ASCA conceptualizes advocacy as inherently tied to social justice in that school counselors advocate for students, particularly those with limited power to advocate for themselves, and “work diligently for systemic change to eliminate practices that inhibit or stratify student opportunity” (ASCA, 2005). School counselors must integrate an equity lens in their work to ensure that the unique needs of diverse student groups are being met in the school setting (Hines et al., 2017, Mayes et al., 2018). Furthermore, school counselors must actively review school policies and practices alongside data to understand the ways in which the whole school creates an inclusive environment optimal for all students’ success. If there are policies and practices leading to disparate outcomes, educational stakeholders, including school counselors, must use leadership and advocacy to work together to remove such barriers (Griffin & Steen, 2011; Hines et al., 2017).

This charge for social justice advocacy is supported by the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards and Competencies (2019). The competencies outline the “mindsets and behaviors school counselors need to meet the rigorous demands of the school counseling profession and the needs of pre-K–12 students” as well as those that align to school counselors beliefs, professional foundations, direct and indirect student services, and planning and evaluation that guide comprehensive school counseling practice (ASCA, p.1). Standards and competencies that specifically relate to social justice advocacy include, but are not limited to, developing theoretical orientations to understand and support diverse learning needs, challenging personal beliefs, ensuring a high quality education for all students, and using data-based decision making models to identify and remove systemic barriers that impede student success.

Social justice advocacy is also supported in ethical guidelines for school counselors. In fact, the ASCA’s (2016) *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* uses the term “advocate” 16 times and emphasizes school counselors are advocates “who create systemic change by providing equitable educational access and success by connecting their school counseling programs to the district’s mission and improvement plans” (p.1). Social justice advocacy calls school counselors to have awareness, abilities, skills,

and to challenge the status quo and remove systemic barriers to equitable access to rigorous educational opportunities. Further, social justice advocacy also seeks to close information, opportunity, intervention, and attainment gaps for all students (Kim, Fletcher, & Bryan, 2018).

School counseling scholars have outlined and illustrated the benefits and practices of promoting social justice advocacy in school counseling contexts (ASCA, 2012; Crawford, Aguayo, & Valle, 2017; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Grimes, Haskins, & Paisley, 2013). In particular, a number of studies have indicated that school counselors are in a key position to enhance social justice advocacy for culturally, socioeconomically, and linguistically marginalized populations such as undocumented students (Crawford et al., 2017), Latinx immigrant families (Better-Bubon & Schultz, 2018), students in rural areas (Grimes et al., 2013), and African American males (Washington, 2010).

More recently, Young and Bryan (2018)'s School Counseling Leadership Scale (SCLS) places social justice advocacy in one of the essential dimensions of school counselor leadership behaviors and practice. Relatedly, a special issue of *Professional School Counseling* (2018) centered social justice advocacy and counselor leadership to address academic, socioeconomic, and community barriers for marginalized students and families (Better-Bubon & Schultz, 2018; Kim et al., 2018; Shields, et al., 2018). For instance, Kim et al. (2018) suggested that school counselors' social justice advocacy practices play an important role in facilitating empowerment of marginalized parents. Kim, et al. encouraged counselors to help parents engage in consciousness-raising activities and organizing groups that are led, guided, and directed by parents for positive changes in the school and in the community.

Further, using the School Counselor Leadership Survey (SCLS) and School Counselor Involvement in Partnerships Survey (SCIPS), Bryan, Young, Griffin, and Holcomb-McCoy (2018) examined what school counselor leadership practices benefit the development of school-family-community partnerships with stakeholders. Findings suggested collaboration with school principals may maximize the impact of social justice advocacy on positive outcomes in schools (Bryan et al., 2018; Grimes et al., 2013; Washington, 2010). Given that collaborative efforts between school counselors and principals are essential for social justice advocacy in schools, a need exists to develop a comprehensive collaboration framework between school counselors and principals to enhance social justice advocacy.

Standards Alignment of Advocacy-Related Standards for Principals and School Counselors

Our alignment of social-justice related PSEL standards and ASCA social justice advocacy standards is presented in Table 1. Broad areas of school counselor competencies are indicated as they appear in the standards: Mindsets (M), Behaviors: Professional Foundations (B-PF), Behaviors: Direct and Indirect Student Services (B-SS), and Behaviors: Planning & Evaluation (B-PE). Even though all of the standards were not shared by both professions, our framework is based on standards from both that can be applied in the context of the other. Additionally, some PSEL standards, such as Operations and Management, were not articulated as social justice standards. Therefore, we identified those standards in italics because Operations and Management have the potential to facilitate advocacy efforts if enacted within a paradigm of social justice. Instances where a cell is blank on one side of the table indicate where either school principals or counselor standards reference a particular characteristic and the other one does not (i.e., critical consciousness is delineated in counselor standards and not in principal standards). In one instance, awareness of self and the context of students emerged as integral, yet did not appear in either set of standards. Thus, that

characteristic appears under Social Justice Identity domain but with the cells left blank to denote the absence of standards for either profession.

We divided the standards into the following three dimensions that consist of individual characteristics: **Social Justice Identity** (critical consciousness, disrupt deficit thinking/develop assets-based thinking); **Human Resources** (hiring, counselor duties, shift duties to allow counselors to facilitate comprehensive school counseling programs and work one-on-one with students, and place on decision-making teams); and **Advocacy Actions** (family and community relationships, data-based decision-making and assessment, access to academic rigor, challenge school, local, state, national, and international policy).

Table 1. Aligned Principal (PSEL) and School Counselor (ASCA) Advocacy-Related Standards.

Characteristics	Effective leaders should know, be able to do, and believe:	Counselors should know, be able to do, and believe:
Social Justice Identity		
Critical Consciousness		M2. Every student should have access to, and opportunity for, a high-quality education. B-PF 1d. Use learning theory to support student achievement and success, including students with diverse learning needs.
Shift from Deficit to Asset Thinking	3b. Recognize, respect, and employ each student's strengths, diversity, and culture as assets for teaching and learning. 3e. Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status.	M1. Every student can learn, and every student can succeed. B-PF 6c. Maintain and communicate high expectations for every student, regardless of cultural, social or economic background.
Culturally Responsive Practices	2e. Lead with interpersonal and communication skill, social-emotional insight, and understanding of all students' and staff members' backgrounds and cultures.	B-PF 6d. Explain the dynamics of cross-cultural communications and demonstrate the ability to communicate with persons of other cultures effectively.
	3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness: Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	B-PF 6b. Explain how students' cultural, social and economic background may affect their academic achievement, behavior, relationships and overall performance in school.

	3g. Act with cultural competence and responsiveness in their interactions, decision making, and practice.	B-SS 1d. Demonstrate pedagogical skills, including culturally responsive classroom management strategies, lesson planning and personalized instruction.
	3h. Address matters of equity and cultural responsiveness in all aspects of leadership.	B-PF 6a. Demonstrate basic knowledge and respect of differences in customs, communications, traditions, values and other traits among students based on race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or intellectual ability and other factors.
Awareness of Self and Context of Students		
Develop and Demonstrate Social Justice Vision	<p>1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values: Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.</p> <p>1a. Develop an educational mission for the school to promote the academic success and well-being of each student.</p> <p>2c. Place children at the center of education and accept responsibility for each student's academic success and well-being.</p> <p>2d. Safeguard and promote the values of democracy, individual freedom and responsibility, equity, social justice, community, and diversity.</p>	M3 Every student should graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary opportunities.
Human Resources		
Hiring and Placement of Counselors	6a. <i>Recruit, hire, support, develop, and retain effective and caring teachers and other professional staff and form them into an educationally effective faculty.</i>	<p>B-PE 7b. Discuss school counseling annual agreement with the principal and/or supervising administrator to formalize the delivery, management and accountability of the comprehensive school counseling program.</p> <p>B-PE 7c. Explain and model the appropriate role of the school counselor and the organization of the school counseling program.</p> <p>B-PE 7d. Explain school counseling program goals, their basis in student data and their alignment with the school improvement plan (B-PE).</p>

	<p>9b. Strategically manage staff resources, assigning and scheduling teachers and staff to roles and responsibilities that optimize their professional capacity to address each student's learning needs.</p>	<p>B-PE 7. Establish agreement with the principal and other administrators about the comprehensive school counseling program.</p> <p>B-PE 7e. Advocate for the appropriate use of school counselor time based on national recommendations and student needs.</p> <p>B-PE 7f. Finalize the school counseling annual agreement after presentation to and discussion with the principal and/or supervising administrator.</p>
	<p><i>9c. Seek, acquire, and manage fiscal, physical, and other resources to support curriculum and instruction, and assessment; student learning community; professional capacity and community; and family and community engagement.</i></p>	
	<p>7c. Establish and sustain a professional culture of engagement and commitment to shared vision, goals, and objectives pertaining to the education of the whole child; high expectations for professional work; ethical and equitable practice; trust and open communication; collaboration, collective efficacy, and continuous individual and organizational learning and improvement.</p>	<p>B-PF 7i. Participate in the school improvement process to bring the school counseling perspective to the development of school goals.</p>
ASCA-Identified Counselor Duties	<p>5a. Build and maintain a safe, caring, and healthy school environment that meets that [sic] the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of each student.</p>	<p>B-PF 1d. Use counseling theories and techniques in individual, small-group, classroom and large-group settings to promote academic, career and social/emotional development.</p>
	<p>5c. Provide coherent systems of academic and social supports, services, extracurricular activities, and accommodations to meet the range of learning needs of each student.</p>	<p>B-PF 8d. Articulate and provide rationale for appropriate activities for school counselors.</p> <p>B-PF 8e. Articulate and provide rationale for discontinuation of inappropriate activities for school counselors.</p>
	<p>7b. Empower and entrust teachers and staff with collective responsibility for meeting the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of each student, pursuant to the</p>	<p>B-PF 7d. Create the organizational structure and components of an effective school counseling program aligned with the ASCA National Model.</p>

	mission, vision, and core values of the school.	B-SS 1g. Engage with school administrators, teachers and other staff to ensure the effective implementation of instruction.
Instructional Leadership: Data-Based Decision-Making Teams	<p>3c. Ensure that each student has equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for success.</p> <p>4c. Promote instructional practice that is consistent with knowledge of child learning and development, effective pedagogy, and the needs of each student.</p>	<p>B-PF 7e. Apply the results of a school counseling program assessment to inform the design and implementation of the comprehensive school counseling program.</p> <p>B-PE 2a. Collect and analyze data to identify areas of success or gaps between and among different groups of students in achievement, attendance, discipline and opportunities.</p> <p>B-SS 3a. Use data to identify students in need of counseling intervention.</p>
Advocacy Actions		
Equitable Family and Community Relationships	1b. In collaboration with members of the school and the community and using relevant data, develop and promote a vision for the school on the successful learning and development of each child and on instructional and organizational practices that promote such success.	<p>B-PF 6e. Collaborate with administrators, teachers and other staff in the school and district to ensure culturally responsive curricula and student-centered instruction.</p> <p>B-PF 7h. Serve as a leader in the school and community to promote and support student success.</p> <p>B-SS 6a. Partner with others to advocate for student achievement and educational equity and opportunities.</p> <p>M5. Effective school counseling is a collaborative process involving school counselors, students, families, teachers, administrators, other school staff and education stakeholders.</p> <p>B-PF 8c. Explain the benefits of a comprehensive school counseling program for all stakeholders, including students, families, teachers, administrators and other school staff, school boards, department of education, school counselors, school counselor educators, community stakeholders and business leaders.</p>

	<p>8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community: Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being.</p> <p>8e. Create means for the school community to partner with families to support student learning in and out of school.</p>	<p>B-SS 5a. Gather information on student needs from families, teachers, administrators, other school staff and community organizations to inform the selection of strategies for student success.</p> <p>B-SS 5b. Share strategies that support student achievement with families, teachers, administrators, teachers, school staff and community organizations.</p> <p>B-SS 5d. Facilitate in-service training or workshops for families, administrators, other school staff, teachers or other stakeholders to share school counseling expertise (B-SS).</p>
Create Access to Academic Rigor for Under-Represented Students	<p>1c. Articulate, advocate, and cultivate core values that define the school's culture and stress the imperative of child-centered education; high expectations and student support; equity, inclusiveness, and social justice; openness, caring, and trust; and continuous improvement.</p>	<p>B-PE 2c. Create goals based on student, school and/or district data to close the achievement, opportunity and/or information gaps.</p> <p>B-PF 9c. Use data to demonstrate a need for systemic change in areas such as course enrollment patterns; equity and access; and achievement, opportunity and/or information gaps.</p>
Advocate for Student, Family, School, District, and Community Needs	<p>8h. Advocate for the school and district, and for the importance of education and student needs and priorities to families and the community.</p>	<p>B-PF 9a. Act as a systems change agent to create an environment promoting and supporting student success.</p> <p>B-PF 9d. Develop and implement a plan to address personal and/or institutional resistance to change that better supports student success.</p>
	<p>8i. Advocate publicly for the needs and priorities of students, families, and the community.</p>	<p>B-PF 8b. Advocate responsibly for school board policy and local, state and federal statutory requirements in students' best interests.</p>
Knows and Understands Law to Challenge Policy	<p>9h. <i>Know, comply with, and help the school community understand local, state, and federal laws, rights, policies, and regulations so as to promote student success.</i></p>	<p>B-PF 2a. Explain the organizational structure and governance of the American educational system as well as cultural, political and social influences on current educational practices.</p> <p>B-PF 2b. Explain educational systems, philosophies and theories and current trends in education, including federal and state legislation.</p>
	<p>3d. Develop student policies and address student misconduct in a positive, fair, and unbiased manner.</p>	<p>B-PF 2c. Explain and/or inform the process for development of policy and procedures at the building, district, state and national levels.</p>

		B-PF 9c. Use data to identify how school, district and state educational policies, procedures and practices support and/or impede student success.
Ongoing Assessment of Principal and Counselor Actions	<p>10. School Improvement: Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.</p> <p>10a. Seek to make school more effective for each student, teachers and staff, families, and the community.</p>	B-PE 3a. Use achievement, attendance and/or discipline data to create school counseling program goals aligned with school improvement plans (B-PE).

Discussion

Our standards alignment yielded three key understandings about what is required for collaborative advocacy efforts between principals and school counselors. First, development of a social justice identity and critical consciousness is essential. Second, there are important issues regarding management, hiring, and re/assignment of duties that the principal must oversee in order for counselors to advocate for students rather than serve as stop-gap measures for tasks such testing and supervision. Third, there are many ways advocacy is enacted in schools. Principals and counselors ought to establish systematic opportunities for reflection on, and reenactment of, successful advocacy efforts in ongoing professional development and organizational culture.

Social Justice Identity: Critical Consciousness and Critical Theory

We framed our discussion of social justice from a critical perspective because of how scholars explain its value in identifying inequities—the bedrock of social justice work. As Brown (2004) articulated, “a critical stance [outlines] clearly the need for professors to retool their teaching and courses to address issues of power and privilege—to weave social justice into the fabric of educational leadership curriculum” (p. 78). Dollarhide et al. (2016) found that counselor educators who develop a social justice identity view social justice as part of who they are. This belief is reflected in counselor mindsets (M1, M2). In contrast, there are no mindsets for principals.

Leaders must have an awareness of self and their values, beliefs, and/or dispositions in order to develop critical consciousness (Khalifa, Gooden & Davis, 2016). Critical self-reflection fosters the development of critical consciousness. It is defined as the “understanding of historical, cultural, and biographical reasons for one’s needs, wants, and interests” (Mezirow, 1985, p. 27). This allows individuals “to externalize and investigate power relationships and uncover hegemonic assumptions” (Brown, 2004, p.84). It also allows them to foster personal awareness and growth, giving leaders the opportunity to come to terms with their own prejudices and assumptions that come from their own cultural background (Furman, 2012). Awareness of self and students is noticeably absent from both principal standards and counselor competencies and must be addressed.

Other aspects of this dimension include eliminating deficit-based thinking, which blames underserved students and families for the inequities that shape school marginalization and underperformance. This is included in PSEL Standards 3b and 3e. Culturally responsive practices, which continuously address the cultural needs of

students, parents, and particularly those of minoritized communities are also important and included in the standards for principals and school counselors (Khalifa et al., 2016) (3, 3g, 3h, B-SS1d).

As explained earlier, one way to develop a social justice orientation is through the teaching and application of critical theory—not as stand-alone theoretical content but to illustrate the integration of theory and practice. Even though critical theory is not explicitly stated as a counselor competency, a professional foundation behavior includes the use of learning theory to support students with diverse needs (B-PF 1b). As stated before, critical theory is developed in the literature about social justice leadership (Bogotch & Reyes-Guerra, 2014; Brown, 2004). Likewise, we believe that explicit reference to a critical orientation will enhance social justice advocacy orientation and behaviors within principal standards. Without this theoretical foundation, it seems unlikely that principals and counselors will develop the type of understanding and commitment required to sustain advocacy work.

Human Resources

The human resources dimension includes the knowledge and skills required by principals and counselors to create the organizational conditions within schools for collaboration. As principals increase their professional knowledge about counselors, they must uphold expectations and create systems to support the counselor role and collaboration (5c). Likewise, counselors must do their part to self-advocate for their appropriate role through communication, leadership, and education of principals, faculty, staff, and families (B-PF 8c). As such, “school leaders, specifically principals, can create a culture that allows school counselor collaboration to thrive by partnering with school counselors and ensuring they have access to the necessary resources and supports” (Young, Millard, & Kneale, 2013, p. 265). Although PSEL standards do not explicitly state school counselors when referencing school faculty and staff, language does indicate principals ought to hire effective teachers and other professional staff (6a) and they should ensure students have access to “academic and social support” (3c).

For effective collaboration, principals and counselors must fundamentally understand each other’s roles. Principals need to understand and appreciate the counselor’s expertise (Bore & Bore, 2009). Principals should hire counselors who have demonstrated school-wide leadership and aim to foster student success. As a part of the interview process, “principals should seek to know how prospective counselors plan to collaboratively apply their leadership knowledge and skills” (Bore & Bore, 2009, p. 133). Once hired, counselors should engage in ongoing education about and modeling the importance of their role (B-PE 7c). Moreover, “counselors should take the initiative of educating their principals on, and demonstrating, the skills they should possess. In fact, this education process should start during hiring interviews” (Bore & Bore, 2009, p. 133).

Principals can minimize non-counseling related duties and foster staff understanding about the importance of counselors in building and district-wide decision-making meetings. By creating a plan for responding to crises when the counselor is in meetings, the principal can ensure that time dedicated to collaborative meetings remains a priority. Counselors are expected to provide a rationale for why they should engage in appropriate activities (B-PF 8d) and, equally important, why they should discontinue inappropriate activities (B-PF 8e). As it is often difficult for principals to reallocate non-counselor time and duties, it is imperative that counselors develop the skills to be efficient time managers so they can maximize time with students and presence in team meetings (Young et al., 2013). However, per PSEL Standards 9b and 9c, principals must be able to acquire and manage resources so they can create time and reallocate

staff duties, which will enable counselors to perform their work. One way to do this is through the development of annual agreements regarding the counselor role (B-PE 7).

Principals and counselors on educational leadership decision-making teams can merge their abilities and perspectives to make student-centered decisions that will strengthen the entire team (McCarty et al., 2014). First, school leaders should ensure that there is an alignment between the goals of counselors and the school and ensure the counselor is included in decision-making teams such as school planning committees, instructional teams, or leadership teams (Young et al., 2013). This will allow for teams to collaboratively identify barriers to equitable achievement and problem solve how to address them. For example, Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes (2007) explained how teams can use data analysis skills to investigate why only 10% Latinx students are enrolled in advanced placement courses when they make up 40% of the student population. As part of their work on data-based instructional leadership teams, principals and counselors must advocate for increased access to academically rigorous courses. This is a key outcome of advocacy in schools (3c, B-PE 2a).

Advocacy Actions

This dimension includes those standards and competencies that most directly enact change. These efforts include equitable engagement with families (1b, B-PF 6e), and advocacy for equitable policy at all levels (3d, B-PF 8b). For collaborative advocacy to take place, principals and counselors should know civics, law, and policy (9h, B-PF 2c) and be willing to challenge inequitable school, local, state, national, and international policies. Lewis and Kern (2018) explained the distinction between legal questions that begin with “Must we?” and “May we?” (such as “Must we permit same-sex couples to prom?”) and policy questions that begin with “Should we?” They point out that school leaders must make decisions about what schools “should do” within the boundaries of the law. Therefore, “social justice can serve as a lens through which leaders answer the policy-related “Should We?” questions” (p. 6). In addition to knowledge of the law, administrators can use the legal system to advocate for inclusion and challenge local laws that do not inclusively protect all students, such as LGBTQ students. For example, 31 administrators from different states submitted a brief in support of LGBTQ inclusion in a 2017 court case (Lewis & Kern, 2018). Public advocacy based on knowledge of policy and communities to dismantle inequities is expected of both principals and counselors (8i, B-PF 9a).

Implications and Conclusion

Through this process, we have identified some key areas for either the development of future standards for principals and school counselors, or for incorporation into principal and school counselor preparation. Leadership practices need to be standards-based but more fundamentally, the theory by which they are conceived and implemented ought to be clearly articulated. At the center of such theoretical underpinnings should be critical reflection about power, privilege, and historically neglected issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and class (Furman, 2012; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Scholars have conceptualized how to foster social justice leadership and provide frameworks and activities to incorporate such development into existing preparation programs (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018; Brown, 2004; Furman, 2012).

The skill of fostering mutual respect and communication among principals and school counselors is mentioned in literature (Bore & Bore, 2009; Duslak & Geier, 2018) but is not mentioned in either set of standards. Duslak & Geier (2018) found that meeting frequency was the greatest factor in predicting the quality of the principal-counselor relationship. Structured meeting time did not seem to influence the quality of the

meeting. This suggests that regular, informal conversations—perhaps at common arrival times, lunch, or breaks—and school walk-throughs are valuable. The counselor should communicate their unique skill set to promote student discipline or help maintain positive classroom cultures (Bore & Bore, 2009). This could be incorporated into principal and school counselor expectations through role-play or experiential learning activities in schools. Principal and counselor preparation programs are increasingly taking an interest in the preparation of candidates in both programs to meaningfully collaborate (Boyland et al., 2019; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Lowery et al., 2019).

Finally, we believe in the importance of principals and counselors understanding social justice issues from a global perspective. This knowledge is absent in both sets of standards. We recommend that principals and counselors develop a global awareness. We also recommend that future research be conducted to investigate how global awareness of inequity, and collaboration for advocacy influence local leadership and counseling practices and student outcomes. Questions to consider include: In what ways, if any, does an understanding of international contexts play a role in the service of students who may be from that country? How do principals and counselors make meaning of global contexts and social justice related to their advocacy practices? Relatedly, more empirical studies about how social justice leaders enact their practices are needed (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Furman, 2012).

The standards-based alignment of principal and school counselor advocacy offers hope in the face of persisting inequitable data on achievement, behavior, and college and career readiness. Effective collaboration between school counselors and principals can bring forth the leadership necessary to foster social justice advocacy that engages educational stakeholders to create a consistent network of support for students, ensuring that *all* students reach their potential.

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