The School Counselor and Cultural Diversity

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position
School counselors have a professional and ethical responsibility to “expand personal multicultural and social-justice advocacy, awareness, knowledge and skills to be an effective culturally competent school counselor” (ASCA Ethical Standards, 2016, B.3.i). School counselors demonstrate cultural responsiveness by collaborating with stakeholders to create school climate and influence community climate that embraces cultural diversity. Culturally diverse school counseling programs promote the academic, career and social/emotional development of all students.

The Rationale
Diversity is a “…range of cultures and subcultures that represent attitudes, beliefs, values, rituals, symbols, norms and conventions, customs, behaviors and ideologies” (Stone & Dahir, 2016, p. 294). Culture is a powerful and pervasive influence on the attitudes and behaviors of students, stakeholders and school counselors. In response to cultural diversification in schools and communities, school counselors must be more globally responsive and culturally sustaining in the educational and social environment than ever before.

As a part of this charge, school counselors need to continue to enhance knowledge and awareness of prejudice, power and various forms of oppression, and utilize culturally responsive skills to support ever-changing student needs (ASCA Ethical Standards, B.3.i, 2016). In support of students, school counselors implement “equitable academic, career and social/emotional developmental opportunities for all students” (ASCA Ethical Standards, 2016, A.3.b.). It is an “expectation, not the exception” for school counselors to integrate multiculturalism and social justice perspectives into their work as advocates and leaders (Ratts and Greenleaf, 2017, p.8).

The School Counselor’s Role
The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016) and a “host of voices in school counseling literature point to school counselor advocacy as a key factor in making progress toward this vision of equitable schools and communities. Our vision for equitable, inclusive and culturally sustaining schools can inform our advocacy goals as people and as professionals” (Grothaus, Johnson & Edirmanasinghe, 2020, p. 26).

School counselors can provide a culturally responsive school counseling program by:

• exploring their personal beliefs, attitudes and knowledge about working with diverse student populations
• ensuring each student has access to a school counseling program that advocates for all students in diverse cultural groups
• addressing the impact that poverty and social class have on student achievement
• identifying the impact of family culture upon student performance
• using data to assess access to programs and to close the achievement gap among diverse student populations
• delivering culturally sensitive instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling
• ensuring all students’ rights are respected and all students’ needs are met
• consulting and collaborating with stakeholders to create a school climate that welcomes and appreciates the strengths and gifts of culturally diverse students
• enhancing their own cultural competence and facilitating the cultural awareness, knowledge and skills of all school personnel (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2017; Ratts, et al., 2015)

A culturally sustaining school counseling program includes a school counseling program advisory council that incorporates diverse perspectives and has representation reflecting the school's cultural census. Advisory councils can support the school counseling program in the development of goals, curriculum, strategic planning, as well as community bridging, awareness and advocacy (Grothaus, Johnson & Edirmanasinghe, p. 70, 2020).

Summary
School counselors implement a culturally sustaining school counseling program that creates systematic change through growth,
self-awareness, humility, knowledge of worldviews and cultural identities (Grothaus, Johnson & Edirmanasinghe, 2020). School counselors collaborate with all stakeholders to provide relevant interventions and strategies that advocate for and promote social justice for all students (Ratts, 2015, as cited in Grothaus, Johnson & Edirmanasinghe, 2020). Through their school counseling programs, school counselors are positioned to actively become a part of the solution (ASCA, 2020).

**References**


**Resources**


Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP; 2016). *Social and Cultural Diversity Professional Counseling Identity* (p. 11). *School counseling* (p. 34) Alexandria, VA.


