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Antiracist School Counseling Advocacy Framework

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Abstract

As the number of Black and Brown pre-K–12 students continues to rise, ensuring that schools are safe and inclusive learning environments is crucial. Educational and systemic inequities persist, creating barriers to success for marginalized student populations. School counselors are uniquely positioned as leaders to drive change, promote antiracist practices, and challenge both written and unwritten oppressive policies. This conceptual article aims to equip school counselors with a framework that supports their role as antiracist advocates. It emphasizes the importance of taking actionable steps, beyond recognizing racism and inequities, to actively address these issues within schools. Specifically, the article seeks to answer the following question: How can school counselors effectively engage in antiracist advocacy? To answer this question, we developed the Antiracist School Counseling Advocacy Framework through a review of literature on antiracism, school counseling, and advocacy. The framework outlines clear action steps for school counselors, including engaging in self-reflection, identifying the level of advocacy needed, empowering students to challenge inequities, and demonstrating the courage to implement systemic change. By using this framework, school counselors can take deliberate and measurable actions toward creating equitable school environments. This framework empowers school counselors to become transformative leaders who advocate for antiracist practices and foster liberating educational experiences for all students.

Keywords

school counseling, antiracism, advocacy

You are a school counselor in a suburban high school with a majority White and wealthy student population. One day, you leave your office and overhear two teachers talking in the hallway.

You hear them discuss the recent out-of-school suspension of a Black female student due to "continued disrespect and insubordination of school authority figures." One of the teachers states, "I'm glad she's finally out of here. It will be quiet in my fourth block for a few days. That will teach her to stop walking around here with her attitude, popping her lips, and using that slang. I can't stand it. If they don't know how to behave in school, then all of them need to stay at home with their mommas. They aren't working anyway." Both turn to each other, laugh, and walk away.

As a school counselor, how would you handle this racist incident? Do you have an obligation to confront the teachers? While it might seem easiest to continue your walk down the hall, you have to acknowledge that you have the privilege of ignoring their comments. But what about the student? When she returns to school, will she feel safe in the classroom with the teacher? Will she feel safe in the school, knowing that she was suspended due to a subjective offense? How will she know that she will not be suspended again simply because of the teacher's bias about her racial identity and mannerisms? After reflecting on the racist incident and your options, a choice needs to be made: How do I advocate for the student and for the other Black students in these teachers' classes? How can I promote antiracism and racial equity in my school? Where do I even start?

Although the above scenario is fictitious, it is all too real in many school hallways across America. Teacher, faculty, and school district words, behaviors, and expectations can often be a mirror displaying their implicit (or explicit) bias toward students, and specifically toward students of color. This bias can be seen in the disparities in special education identification, gifted program enrollment, advanced course placement, and discipline referrals. School counselors have a unique role in which they engage with students, caregivers, community members, and school personnel to promote the success and well-being of all students. If confronted with the scenario above, your first

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instinct may be to continue your original path. However, you owe it to the student to cultivate a safe and welcoming school. But how?

Confronting the teachers and improving the school and classroom environment requires courage and hope. You cannot wish things to improve in school without taking action. Antiracism, or the disruption and dismantling of policies, procedures, beliefs, and behaviors that perpetuate racist actions (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) cannot happen without hope. Hope produces the necessary steps to create change (Abramson, 2024).

There are a number of antiracist frameworks that encourage school counselors and other educational leaders to challenge systemic racism (i.e., Welton et al., 2018) and dismantle racist practices through advocacy (i.e., Clark Goings et al., 2023; Diem et al., 2022). However, school counselors are still left wondering where to start. After hearing from school counselors across the country about both their desire to confront racism in their schools and their concern about lacking a model, we developed the Antiracist School Counselor Advocacy Framework. This innovative framework provides school counselors with a step-by-step guide to recognize racist events, encourage self-reflection, identify their own biases, develop a plan to confront racist policies and practices, and have the hope and courage to advocate for systemic and individual change. Students need adults to advocate for them, and school counselors are in place to do so, even if that place is in the school hallway.

Inequitable and Biased Practices in Education

Education, public or private, has long been accused of inequitable, unethical, and biased policies that are harmful to certain student demographic groups, specifically Black and Brown students (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Oppressive and discriminatory practices in standardized testing, resource availability, student discipline, course content, and course selection remain present long after Brown v Board of Education (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2021a, 2024; Gibson, 2019; Ratts et al., 2007). Specifically, as the student demographics in America's K-12 schools become increasingly diverse (i.e., culturally, racially, religiously, etc.), there is an increased need to create safe and welcoming school environments.

Black students account for approximately 15% of the total student population in U.S. public schools (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2024b). Hispanic/Latino/Latinx students are 28.5%, Asian students 5.5%, and American Indian/Indigenous children are less than 1% of the total student population (NCES, 2024b). White children account for 46% of all children enrolled in U.S. schools. Data continue to show the increasing number of Black and Brown students, yet approximately 77% of school administrators and 80% of teachers working in public schools are White (NCES, 2024b). The differences in student and teacher demographics make it less likely that students of color will come into contact with a same-race school staff member. This can also contribute to lower student expectations, higher suspension rates, and a lack of belonging (Egalite, 2024; Fergus, 2019). Researchers found that demographically mismatched teachers (i.e., White teachers of Black students) had lower academic expectations for their Black students and were more likely to view their Black students as disruptive and inattentive when compared to demographically matched teachers (Gershenson et al., 2015). Teacher bias has also been connected to higher suspension rates and lower test scores (Chin et al., 2020). Consequently, the increased student diversity combined with the lack of teacher diversity can lead to a disregard for student cultural backgrounds, a push to make White middle-class behaviors the default, and the stigmatization and pathologizing of Black and Brown students (Horton-Williams, 2020).

Beginning as early as preschool, Black, Indigenous, and other students of color (BIPOC) experience bias in discipline and educational opportunities (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2021, 2023). For example, Black preschoolers are two to five times more likely to be expelled than their non-Black peers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness, 2024). In K-12 schools, Black boys are only 8% of the total student population but account for nearly 15% of all in-school and 18% of out-of-school suspensions, often for subjective infractions such as disrespect, insubordination, and defiance (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2023). Black girls are also more likely to be suspended, both in-school and out of school, than any other girls (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2023). Teacher and school staff bias in discipline practices resulting in suspensions equates to students having less in-person instruction as well as less time around their peers, impacting both their educational and social-emotional development.

Black students are more likely to be diagnosed with an emotional disturbance, correlating with a disproportionate number of enrollments in special education programs (NCES, 2024c). In the 2022-2023 school year, 19% of American Indian/Indigenous students, 17% of Black students and 15% of Hispanic/Latino/Latinx students received special education services (NCES, 2024c). These demographics of students also had the lowest graduation rates, with only 74% of American Indian/Indigenous students, 81% of Black students, and 83% of Hispanic/Latino/Latinx students graduating during the 2021-2022 school year (NCES, 2024b). While Black and Brown students are overrepresented in school suspensions and special education enrollment, they are underrepresented in gifted programs and are less likely to take advanced classes (NCES, 2024a). Students of color are more likely to be classified by their behaviors rather than their academics, which begs the question: Are Black and Brown students dropping out of school, or are they being pushed out? As the demographics of our country become increasingly diverse, it is more important now than ever for school staff, including school counselors, to address educational and

discipline inequities and to identify resources to increase student access to opportunities.

The discrepancies in school discipline practices, as well as special education and gifted program enrollment, can result from school personnel viewing student culture, race, and socioeconomic status as inappropriate and unwelcome in schools (Chin et al., 2020; Diamond & Gomez, 2023; Santiago-Rosario et al., 2021). To help combat subjective discipline infractions and other biased practices, schools must implement antiracist practices, and professional school counselors can help lead the charge. Using advocacy skills and culturally sustaining comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCP), school counselors can challenge and change social, political, and educational systems, and ensure the academic and life successes of all Pre-K–12 students.

School Counselors as Change Agents

The work of school counselors should focus on equity, advocacy, and positive change. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position Statement on Student Equity (2024) demands that school counselors ensure the equitable treatment of all students in schools. School counselors have the training and skills to remove inequitable practices, call out racism and bias, and promote equitable student outcomes (Clemons & Cokley, 2022). School counselors have a responsibility to implement culturally sustaining CSCPs that not only align with school academic goals but also promote social/emotional and career success for all students, regardless of race, culture, home language, or family income (ASCA, 2023). To make their programs culturally sustaining, school counselors are responsible for identifying any potential bias and inequity within their school, as well as implementing antiracist practices. However, any change involves hope and courage.

Hope and Courage for Change. Change cannot happen without action, and action cannot happen without hope. School counselors have to believe in both their ability to advocate for their students and their ability to create equitable change in an inequitable system. Hope is much more than a feeling of optimism. Rather, it is one of the necessary steps to make equitable and antiracist change (Abramson, 2024). Hope is often conceptualized in the mental health field as a catalyst for change (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2012). A central perspective is that "cultivating critical hope starts with us—the educators" (Bishundat et al., 2018, p. 91). Critical hope is rooted in antiracist advocacy and systemic transformation, emphasizing the belief that change is possible and that educators and school counselors can actively dismantle barriers to equity to promote antiracist school practices.

Antiracist School Counseling

Antiracism, while not a new concept, is continuing to gain traction in the world of school counseling. In school counseling, antiracism can be explained as an action-oriented commitment to dismantling racist systems in society while affirming the wholeness and humanness of students, families, and communities (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022a, p. 7; Love, 2019; Mayes & Byrd, 2022). Holcomb-McCoy (2022a) defined antiracist school counseling as "school counselors' active approach to dismantling racist practices, racial hatred, systemic racism, and oppression of historically oppressed racial groups within educational systems" (p. 7). Likewise, Mayes and Byrd (2022) describe the ongoing process of antiracist school counseling, which includes unlearning colonialism, learning about the history of oppression, and constant self-reflection.

Antiracist school counseling work involves more than recognizing oppressive systems; it is the active removal of oppressive systems that unfairly target Black and Brown children (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022a). ASCA (2021a) describes the school counselor's role in antiracist practices as one of awareness, knowledge, and action to end racism and bias in education. Antiracist school counselor advocates identify systemic barriers and inequities that prevent students from achieving, while also creating new systems and policies that exclude racism and bias (Betters-Bubon et al., 2022). However, school counselors often ask how to eliminate barriers and disrupt systems that prevent students, specifically those from historically marginalized backgrounds, from achieving academic, career, and social-emotional greatness. An antiracist school counseling instructional framework can support school counselors in reflecting, planning, and advocating on behalf of their students of color.

Antiracist frameworks that urge professionals to identify and dismantle racism exist within other professions. For example, Clark Goings et al.(2023) urged researchers to become "antiracist researchers" and developed a conceptual framework with 10 principles to aid them in making the shift from observer to activist. Similarly, Diem et al. (2022) developed a theoretical framework to illustrate a systemic view of antiracist activism. However, school counselors not only advocate at a systemic level, they also work within the educational system while teaching students to advocate for themselves on an individual level. Advocacy is a key strategy for disrupting and dismantling systems, as it is essential when implementing antiracist change (Lowenthal & Gold, 2021).

Advocacy

Advocacy remains an integral part of school counseling and is recognized as one of the themes related to the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019a). Advocacy goes beyond advocating for programs, roles, and duties. It is embedded in school counselors' work to support students and families. Goodman-Scott et al. (2022) speak to Professional Advocacy and Student- focused Advocacy. Professional advocacy can be defined as "taking action to promote the profession, with an emphasis on removing or minimizing barriers to counselors' ability to provide services" (American Counseling Association [ACA] Advocacy Task Force, 2020, para. 3). Advocacy in counseling is made clear through the ACA advocacy competencies (Ratts et al., 2007) and the Multicultural and

Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) (Ratts et al., 2016). The ACA competencies provide counselors with a framework that depicts advocacy on a continuum from a micro (individual) to a macro (public) level. These competencies can be used to confront racist and oppressive systemic issues. In addition, the MSJCCs also provide a framework for social justice advocacy. While incorporating the attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, skills, and action (AKSA) competencies, the action competency focuses on counselor/client advocacy at intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, community, public policy, and international/global levels. School counselors can use these competencies for student-focused advocacy. Student-focused advocacy includes removing and minimizing barriers and focusing on opportunities and services for students (Goodman-Scott et al., 2022; Ratts et al., 2007). Consequently, it is our position that student-focused advocacy happens when school counselors acknowledge the barriers facing marginalized populations and intentionally work to remove them on behalf of all students. This intentional work to eliminate and reduce systemic barriers is key to antiracist advocacy.

Antiracist Advocacy

Antiracist advocacy assists in moving the conversation away from what is wrong with the students and instead holds the adults and the system accountable. Regarding the school counselor specifically, the ASCA confirms this work by stating that school counselors should engage in antiracist work by advocating for changes in racist policies and procedures (ASCA, 2021a). Unless school counselors actively challenge and dismantle racist policies and procedures, they risk perpetuating racism in their practice (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022b). Similar to Kendi (2019), it is our position that one cannot engage in antiracist advocacy without first being an antiracist. It is imperative that before school counselors commit to antiracist advocacy, they must obtain the necessary knowledge and skills to understand the historical context behind and the critical need for antiracist advocacy. Engaging in antiracist work means acknowledging racism and how it permeates the educational system (Simmons, 2019). Next, school counselors should be culturally competent in understanding the plight of marginalized students and how to identify gaps in opportunity and achievement. Lastly, school counselors should be equipped with or obtain a skill set that allows for equitable and antiracist advocacy. School counselors should intentionally seek to build their knowledge skill set by reading and applying relevant books and articles such as Interrupting Racism (Atkins & Oglesby, 2018), School Counseling to Close Opportunity Gaps (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022b), Redesigning Schools to be Antiracist (Sharp, 2024), An Antiracist Framework for Evidence-Informed School Counseling Practice (Mayes & Byrd, 2022), Supporting All Students: Multitiered Systems of Support from an Antiracist and Critical Race Theory Lens (Edirmanasinghe et al., 2022), Antiracism Starts With Us: School Counselor Critical Reflection Within an Multitiered Systems of Support Framework (Betters-Bubon et al., 2022), and Meeting Diverse Student Needs (Rutledge et al., 2024), to name a few.

Feedback from practicing school counselors has been consistent, with many asking how to integrate antiracist advocacy into their daily practice. As a result, we created the Antiracist School Counseling Advocacy Framework as a means for school counselors to have a practical tool to understand and implement antiracist advocacy. It includes an opportunity for both internal and external work towards systemic change. Although there has been research and literature that speaks to antiracism in school counseling (Clemons & Cokley, 2022; Leigh- Osroosh et al., 2023; Mayes & Byrd, 2022; Stickl Haugen et al., 2021), there is a gap in specifically focusing on antiracist school counseling advocacy.

Antiracist School Counseling Advocacy Framework

The framework, as shown in Figure 1, provides several key considerations for engaging in antiracist advocacy, and helps school counselors thoughtfully plan their advocacy efforts. The framework also represents how school counselors can utilize Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills (AKS) competencies to determine their advocacy efforts. Notice that the advocacy effort begins with the counselors themselves (Self-Awareness). The school counselor then uses their AKS to identify the potential advocacy need, the extent of the school counselor's influence, and whether to advocate at the individual or systemic level. The school counselor then refers back to their AKS to create and execute a plan toward systemic change. It is important to emphasize how the concepts of hope and courage are woven throughout the entire antiracist advocacy framework. These elements are integral because they drive and sustain the challenging work of dismantling systemic inequities.

The School Counselor

Antiracist advocacy work begins with the school counselor. The foundation of a CSCP uses the school counselor's beliefs, values, and school counseling philosophy, as well as the mission and vision of the program. It is imperative for school counselors to engage in ongoing reflection regarding their biases, stereotypes, and perceptions of cultural differences, as well as their feelings about working with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Additionally, school counselors should reflect on their professional goals, including those related to personal development and student outcomes for the academic year. This process requires school counselors to identify and address any gaps in their knowledge or practices. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of fostering all students' growth, development, and ultimate success, with particular attention to racially minoritized students.

Developing an understanding of these components is essential for identifying advocacy needs and determining effective strategies

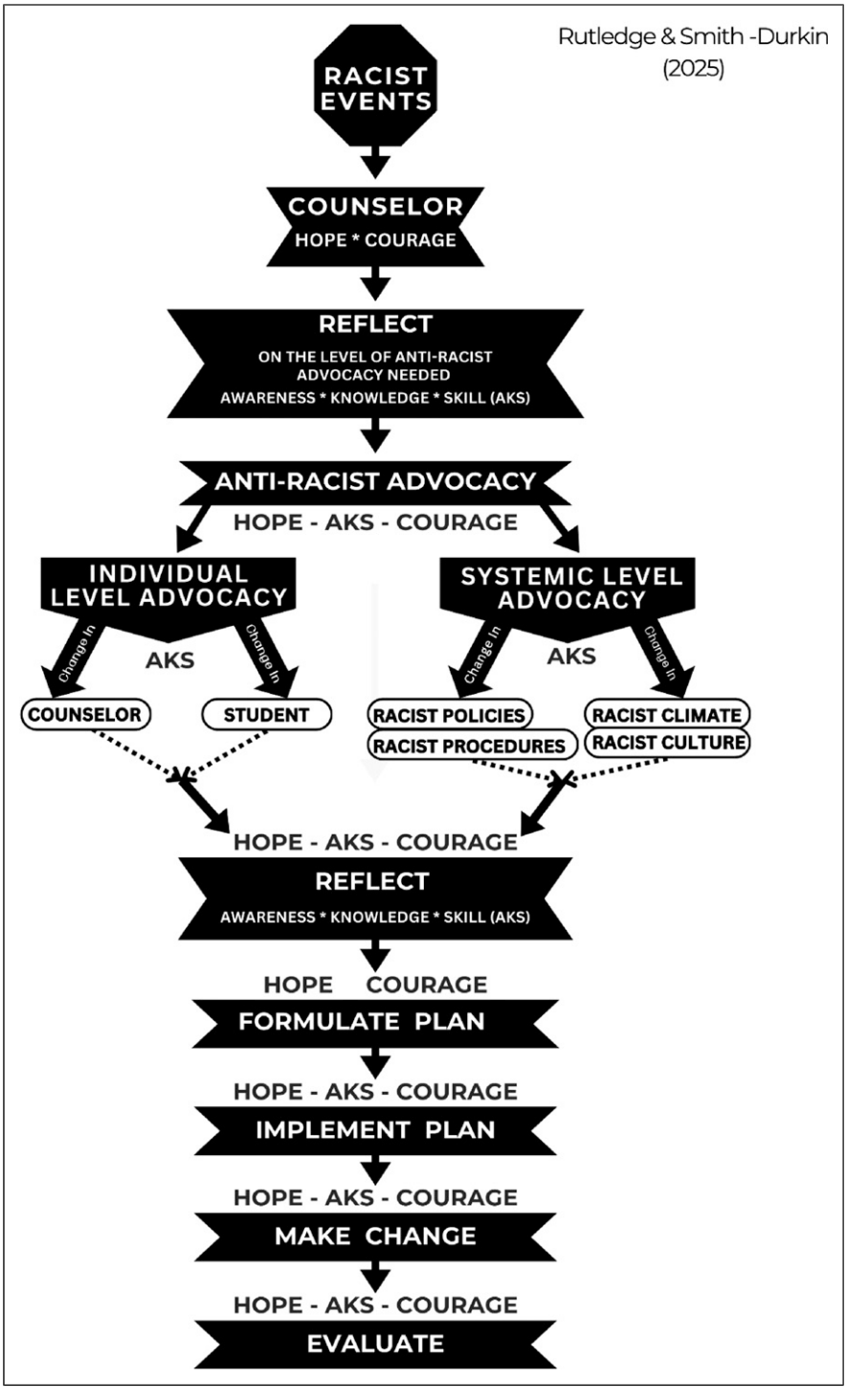


Figure 1. Antiracist School Counseling Advocacy Framework.

for support. Self-awareness serves as a critical foundation in this process; without it, school counselors risk unintended consequences that may undermine their efforts. Self-awareness and the ability to self-reflect are vital components of cultural competence and antiracist advocacy (Betters-Bubon et al., 2022; Negi et al., 2010; Russell, 2020). School counselors who undergo the self-awareness process will use this time to assess themselves in the context of the advocacy need, determine their influence level in the situation, and gauge the knowledge and skills to act appropriately. This examination includes identifying implicit and explicit biases that one may hold. Milner (2007) offers that in self-reflection, one should reflect on self, reflect on self in relation to others, and shift

from self to system. Additionally, it is critical that school counselors engage in continuous examination and evaluation to recognize their limits and only practice within their realm of expertise (ASCA, 2022). Therefore, when the need arises, school counselors should identify the knowledge and skills necessary to act. There are several resources available to assist school counselors with increasing self-awareness. School counselors can consider the Antiracist School Counseling Inventory (Stickl Haugen et al., 2023), the Anti-Racism Behavioral Inventory (Pieterse et al., 2023), or the self-reflection questions presented in the Culturally Affirming Shared Leadership Framework (Gibson et al., 2022).

After the self-awareness step, school counselors must decide on the proper type of advocacy. Is this an individual issue or a systemic issue? Individual advocacy typically means that a school counselor acts with or on behalf of a student. However, the authors propose that individual advocacy can also mean that more significant change can happen as the result of an individual (school counselor) changing their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. For example, if a school counselor harbors bias or prejudice towards a group of students, their behavior may likely reflect that bias, perpetuating racist attitudes and stereotypes. Individual advocacy involves the school counselor identifying and reflecting upon these biases to ultimately change their thinking and behavior. Students are positively impacted by this change in thought and action. Systemic advocacy is when corrupt systems result in oppressive practices. An example is when a disciplinary policy or procedure disproportionately impacts a specific population of students. A school counselor may collaboratively work with school administrators, district officials, and community leaders to implement policies that promote positive school climates and reduce racial disparities in discipline. It is important for school counselors to understand the difference and the connection between the two. Skinner-Dorkenoo et al. (2023) recognize the bidirectional relationship between individual and systemic issues, with each influencing the other, and that often, they are "mutually reinforcing" (p. 393). For example, a racially minoritized student experiencing racial discrimination in a predominantly White school can benefit from both individual and systemic advocacy. Using the AKSA framework, school counselors can determine how to advocate. For example, does the problem involve one student or many? Is this an isolated incident, or does it indicate a more significant school-wide concern? School counselors are responsible for gaining as much knowledge as possible to ascertain the right advocacy effort.

Individual Advocacy

Individual advocacy is the first possible effort, dependent upon the situation. Individual advocacy can include working with the school counselor, working with both the school counselor and the student, or working on behalf of the student. Sometimes, a school counselor faces a situation that differs from their personal beliefs. For example, a school counselor may internalize negative stereotypes about a particular group of students, leading the school counselor to believe in the academic inferiority of these students and intentionally preventing them from enrolling in higher-level courses. Advocacy for a student, this community, or both requires the school counselor to work through their biases and adapt their attitude and behavior to be capable and competent to work with this population. This individual advocacy involves change on the part of the school counselors themselves, and the advocacy effort may end here. Another potential individual advocacy activity is working with a student. To illustrate, a Latinx student overheard inappropriate racial jokes in their math class. In this instance, the school counselor's objective is to teach the students self-advocacy skills to learn how to advocate for themselves. Another option is to work on behalf of the student by working with the students who made the jokes, focusing on promoting acceptance and respect for diversity.

Another example relates to the opening scenario, where the teachers exhibit personal bias and racial discrimination toward the Black female student. In this case, the school counselor would benefit from reflecting on and increasing their awareness of how the teachers' negative perceptions, biases, and stereotypes can harm not only this student but all Black female students. Here, hope and courage play a crucial role. The school counselor must have hope that their advocacy efforts will lead to change and the courage to address the issue with the teachers. Both constructs are essential for achieving meaningful results. Individual advocacy could involve the school counselor working on behalf of the student by directly addressing the teachers' comments and supporting them in self-examination, confronting their biases, and actively changing their behavior.

Systemic Advocacy

The other advocacy option is systemic advocacy, which implies that the need for advocacy is beyond what the school counselor and student can navigate independently; it indicates a broader concern. The concern could be a culture and climate issue, such as a lack of diverse representation, an inability to provide resources for specific language learners, or the need for diversity training for faculty and staff. Another possibility is that a particular policy or procedure negatively impacts a student population. For example, a dress code rule implemented for a specific program or activity could disproportionately impact Black girls. Once the direction of advocacy is determined through awareness and knowledge, it is time to employ skills to plan the actual effort.

In the planning process toward change, the work can be done individually (school counselor only) or collectively with many educational partners, students, parents, and the community. The school counselor should examine the advocacy need, their own level of influence, and the resources available to determine whether they can advocate independently or need to solicit help from others. To support the planning process, the National Education Association (NEA) offers a general phased approach: Prepare, Plan, Act, and Evaluate (National Education Association [NEA], 2020). For the planning process, it is essential to have a clear understanding of goals and strategies.

What specific change is the school counselor advocating for, and what are the suggestions for achieving the goal? During this time, school counselors should also consider the availability of resources, time constraints, identification of allies and supporters, and barriers and constraints (University of Kansas, n.d.).

Referring back to the opening scenario, systemic advocacy may involve recognizing that the teacher's perceptions reflect the issue of a broader climate within the school, with multiple teachers exhibiting similar biases. The school counselor would benefit from reflecting on and increasing their awareness of this larger systemic pattern. Collecting data is crucial to deepening understanding and providing context for advocacy efforts. This could include quantitative data from surveys and qualitative data from students sharing their experiences. The school counselor can then identify key educational partners for collaboration. Here, hope and courage are essential, as addressing racial bias on a systemic level may involve taking risks. Advocacy efforts could range from meeting with the administration to present the issue to implementing professional development for all teachers on recognizing and addressing bias.

Make Change

The goal is systemic change. According to the ASCA (2019b), school counselors facilitate systemic change by implementing a comprehensive school counseling program. This comprehensive program, guided by the ASCA National Model, centers on advocacy. Thus, advocacy is a primary method for school counselors to facilitate systemic change.

While the framework incorporates both individual and systemic advocacy, actual systemic change demands collective effort and efficacy. Bandura (1988) defines collective efficacy as a shared belief in the ability to effect change. This shared belief enhances the efforts (advocacy) toward achieving systemic change. Further, collective efficacy leads to collective impact (Donohoo et al., 2018). According to Eells (2011), when studying the impact of collective teacher efficacy on student achievement, collective efficacy positively correlated with student achievement. Engaging in antiracist advocacy has the potential to foster a positive school culture and climate, thereby improving student outcomes. In this way, systemic change advances beyond the status quo and moves toward establishing a new, equitable system. The antiracist advocacy framework provides school counselors with a practical and visible tool to drive advocacy efforts aimed at developing antiracist, anti-oppressive school environments, ultimately supporting student success. Using the opening scenario, the school counselor applies this framework to determine the most effective course of action: individual, systemic, or both. The planning process involves the school counselor and collaborators developing a well-structured implementation plan. As they work through this process, the collective group draws on their awareness, knowledge, and skills to analyze the racist incident, identify the most appropriate advocacy approach, and carry out the advocacy effort. Table 1 outlines key questions that can guide this process. The goal is not only to challenge and change the teachers' racist ideology and behavior but also to create a more inclusive and equitable school culture.

Evaluation

A critical step in advocacy work is evaluating advocacy efforts. There are numerous reasons for conducting evaluations, the most relevant of which include improving effectiveness, assessing strategy, and measuring impact (Naeve et al., 2017). School counselors engaged in advocacy work, particularly those using tools such as the Antiracist School Counselor Advocacy Framework, must determine the success of their efforts and how effective they were. School counselors should engage in evaluation through multiple approaches. The first step is celebration (NEA, 2020). Celebration may pertain to the advocacy effort's overall outcome or individual achievements in moving forward with implementation. Recognizing strengths and positive aspects of advocacy work is crucial. As part of this celebration, school counselors should also promote their success by sharing positive outcomes with all educational partners, including students, parents, faculty, and the broader community. This process of celebrating and promoting success can be categorized as Phase I.

Phase II involves accountability for the school counselor and decision-makers (NEA, 2020). A critical component of this phase is setting aside time for reflection on the process, implementation, and results. Whether the advocacy effort was individual or systemic will determine the participants involved in this reflection process. This may range from self- reflection to debriefing sessions with collaborative partners. Debriefing provides a structured and safe space for individuals to share their thoughts and feelings (Crisis Prevention Institute, 2025; Diaz-Navarro et al., 2021). According to Diaz-Navarro et al. (2021), "debriefing allows teams to reflect on their experience, support each other, share perspectives, identify learning opportunities, and agree on improvement needs" (p. 4).

Additionally, school counselors should seek opportunities to gather direct feedback from the students involved. Narrative data, or hearing directly from students, is a powerful means of evaluation, as it reduces assumptions and provides firsthand accounts of how the advocacy effort has impacted the intended students and/or groups. Finally, school counselors must evaluate the resulting outcomes: Did change occur? Is there evidence to confirm the change? The development of an evaluation tool could serve as the next step in the evolution of the framework, offering a structured approach to assessing the impact and effectiveness of advocacy efforts. The final step in the opening scenario is evaluation. Assessing the success of the advocacy effort can take various forms, depending on the specific plan implemented. If individual advocacy was chosen, the school counselor might follow up with the teachers and the students involved to determine if and how change has occurred. Additionally, the school counselor could ask direct questions

Table 1. Framework for Individual and Systemic Advocacy in School Counseling.

Category	Role	Responsibilities	Guiding questions
Individual advocacy	School counselor	Examine personal attitudes, beliefs, biases, and stereotypes	How can counselors reflect on their biases? What tools or training can help in this self-examination?
		Gain additional knowledge and skills	What resources or professional development opportunities are available for counselors to improve their skills?
		Develop alternative thoughts and behaviors for change	What steps can counselors take to implement cognitive and behavioral changes? How can progress be measured?
	Student	Assist students in examining their attitudes, beliefs, biases, and stereotypes	How can counselors facilitate self- reflection in students? What activities or discussions can support this?
		Teach students self- advocacy skills	What strategies or tools can counselors use to teach self-advocacy? How can students practice these skills?
		Develop and implement an advocacy plan with students	What are the key components of an effective advocacy plan? How can counselors ensure student needs are centered? How can counselors track progress?
Systemic advocacy	Culture/ climate	Assess, identify, and examine school climate perceptions	What methods can counselors use to assess school climate? How can they gather feedback from educational partners?
		Address harmful traditions and norms impacting marginalized students	How can counselors address harmful traditions? What strategies can they use to advocate for change?
		Promote inclusivity for students, parents, and the community	What initiatives or programs can promote inclusivity? How can counselors engage parents and the community?
		Educate others on cultural, social, and environmental influences on student success	How can counselors educate others about these influences? What training or resources can they provide?
	Policies/ procedures	Identify systemic barriers	What tools or data can counselors use to identify barriers? How can they collaborate with others to address them?
		Actively work to reduce and eliminate barriers	What steps can counselors take to reduce barriers? How can they measure the effectiveness of their efforts?
		Review policies and procedures with educational partners	How often should policies be reviewed? What metrics can be used to evaluate their impact?
		Develop inclusive, antiracist, and anti-oppressive policies	What frameworks or guidelines can counselors use to create inclusive policies? How can they ensure buy-in from educational partners?

about their experiences with the advocacy effort. If systemic advocacy was pursued, the school counselor could convene all educational partners for a debriefing session to reflect on the outcomes, focusing on what was effective, what challenges remain, and whether meaningful change occurred. The school counselor can collect evidence of the impact and share it with administrators, faculty, and students while using it to guide and strengthen future advocacy efforts.

Implications for Practice and Research

The Antiracist School Counseling Advocacy Framework offers school counseling practitioners a practical method to advocate from an antiracist perspective. The framework is the first to guide school counselors through a process that intentionally focuses on how to use advocacy for systemic change. It is unique in that several pathways lead to systemic change, ranging from advocacy on an individual level to a systemic level. The process embedded within the model allows school counselors to advocate in beneficial ways that are also within their ability level and skill set. The framework allows school counselors to fully consider the racist issue or event to create the best course of advocacy action.

Another practical use of the framework is to support proactive school counseling work. This aligns with the goals and benefits of a CSCP that shifts the profession from reactive to proactive work. School counselors who can fully address racist issues through advocacy are working to eliminate future occurrences. Such efforts could result in positive consequences. One such positive consequence is the increased ability to consult and collaborate with other educational partners.

Benefits for Practitioners

Pre-Service School Counselors. As a significant topic related to school counseling, advocacy should be a part of school counseling training. Not only is advocacy embedded in the ASCA National Model as a part of a CSCP, but it is also a vital skill related to the school counselor's role as a leader (Havlik et al., 2019). School counseling preparation programs should teach advocacy at both the individual and systemic levels. Individually, school counselors in training should learn how to

advocate for themselves and their role as school counselors. Systemically, school counselors in training should learn how to advocate for students. In addition, school counselors in training benefit from instruction in advocacy, as it allows students to practice critical consciousness and self-reflection. It also allows for the consideration and application of antiracist advocacy knowledge and skills in practice while students are in field experiences. School counselors in training could borrow from teacher education and use Developing Cultural Critical Consciousness and Self-Reflection in Preservice Teacher Education (Gay & Kirkland, 2003) or the Questions That Promote Critical Self-Reflection (Noroña et al., 2023) to assist in developing critical consciousness and ultimately advocacy skills.

School Counselors. The ASCA is clear about the practitioner's duty to advocate for not only the role of the school counselor and their programs, but also "student achievement and educational equity and opportunities" (ASCA, 2019b, p. 5). Utilizing advocacy in a CSCP encourages and supports the school counselor's work in building relationships with students and families. Specifically, school counselors and educational partners promote advocacy by "providing opportunities to build relationships, encouraging student voice, establishing programs to get to know their students and providing targeted support" (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2020, p. 2).

Additionally, advocacy work helps build a safe, positive, and inclusive school climate. Students must feel that their identities are validated and that their school is a place that accepts them completely. School counselors should work toward building a school culture where each student feels welcomed, appreciated, and valued (ASCA, 2021b, 2024; National Parent and Teacher Association, n.d.). Lastly, advocacy work allows for continued personal and professional growth. Betters-Bubon et al. (2022) offer suggestions for approaching multi-tiered services from an antiracist lens. School counselors can use activities from this article to grow and develop their self-awareness and critical self-reflection.

As school counselors become more comfortable with how advocacy aligns with their work, they can model that behavior for students and actively teach them advocacy skills. Numerous resources are available to support advocacy lessons. For example, Collaborative Learning Solutions (clsteam.net/), Learning for Justice (www.learningforjustice.org/), and Overcoming Obstacles (www.overcomingobstacles.org/), as well as various others, provide free materials to support school counselors in creating an advocacy lesson that works for their population.

Counselor Educators. School counselors in training and practitioners must be trained to effectively utilize advocacy in their work. One of the first encounters with advocacy is in school counselor education training programs. Therefore, school counselor educators should recognize the importance of advocacy and provide the necessary knowledge, skills, and opportunities to practice within the curriculum. The antiracist advocacy framework provides a tangible way to teach preservice counselors about antiracist advocacy. It can be used to model antiracist advocacy behavior for students' growth and development (Havlik et al., 2019). Counselor educators should consider providing specific assignments that require students to participate in advocacy-related work as a part of the course (Havlik et al., 2019). The activities shared in Betters-Bubon et al. (2022) offer school counselor educators additional ideas for training pre-service school counselors. Embedding specific advocacy training helps school counselors in training build knowledge and confidence in advocating, especially regarding racist issues. Additionally, it propels students forward on the cultural competence continuum and moves them from a space of awareness of advocacy to action (Brinkman & Hirsch, 2019).

Intentionally incorporating advocacy not only helps the school counselors in training but also benefits the school counselor educator. Incorporating and modeling antiracist advocacy allows for continued personal and professional growth of the school counselor educators as they prepare lessons, gather resources, and learn from their students as they engage in advocacy work. A resource that may be helpful is the textbook *School Counseling Internship: Bridging the Gap Between Training and Practice*, specifically Chapter 8: Meeting Diverse Student Needs (Rutledge et al., 2024).

Benefits to Students

Lastly, and most importantly, there is the benefit of antiracist advocacy on student outcomes. Although research on measuring student outcomes directly related to advocacy is limited, some studies can be generally connected. Numerous research studies have examined the use of advocacy as a learning strategy and emphasized the importance of teaching students self-advocacy skills (Jamison-Dinowitz, 2014; Kling, 2000; Stoltenberg, 2018). Advocacy has been found to play a significant role in supporting student academic success (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2020). Although evidence is needed, current advocacy results are promising when considering how antiracist advocacy may impact increased student success. Further, it is suggested that advocacy in schools supports the "elimination of educational disparities, the improvement of quality of education and classroom experiences, and increases inclusivity and diversity in the classroom" (American University, 2023, "What Are The Core Benefits of Advocacy" section). This also demonstrates the need to study how antiracist advocacy in schools can support student outcomes. In the Eliminating Racism and Bias In Schools Practice Brief, the ASCA speaks to how antiracist advocacy can improve school culture while simultaneously helping students contribute to a society free from oppression and bias (ASCA, n.d.). According to a review of advocacy-related research, advocacy has been found to increase student engagement, improve students' sense of belonging and well-being, and increase academic motivation (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2020).

Systemic Change

Advocacy is often described as "speaking truth to power" (National Education Association, n.d.). In this context, advocates highlight educational inequities and disparities that hinder student success, making those with the authority to enact change aware of these issues. To effectively speak truth to power, advocates must first recognize their own influence and leverage it when advocating for change. When school counselors engage in advocacy, they use their power to shape decisions that directly affect students, leading to systemic change. Such change addresses the root causes of issues rather than merely treating the symptoms, which is crucial for closing opportunity gaps and promoting the academic well-being of all students. Therefore, school counselors should embrace their roles as "leaders, advocates, collaborators, and consultants who create systemic change to ensure equitable educational outcomes through the school counseling program" (ASCA, 2022, para. 2).

Challenges

Although antiracist advocacy is presented as a critical role of the school counselor (ASCA, 2021a), it is not without its challenges. To be an effective antiracist advocate, one must recognize the challenges that come with this work. Advocacy is not simply about good intentions. However, it requires a deep understanding of the existing barriers and the resilience to navigate them. Some specific challenges to note are expecting resistance and pushback, self-doubt (DeMink-Carthew et al., 2023), lack of knowledge and skill (Williams et al., 2022), fear of negative consequences (Ng et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2022), and recognizing and managing emotional labor and burnout (Gorski & Erakat, 2019; Ng et al., 2022). Antiracist advocates should prepare for opposition. Preparation allows school counselors to strategically continue with advocacy efforts. Preparation could include knowing who to expect opposition from, being able to quickly reframe conversations, and having several options for resolution. Effective advocacy requires extensive knowledge and skill. Advocating without adequate knowledge and skill could result in unintended harm and, ultimately, failed advocacy efforts. Antiracist work can be emotionally exhausting. Recognizing the toll this work takes allows advocates to set boundaries, seek support, and sustain their efforts over the long term.

Future Research

The Antiracist School Counselor Advocacy Framework is a newly developed framework designed to assist practicing school counselors in their advocacy efforts. The next step in developing the framework is to validate its use with research. Research provides the necessary evidence to support the development and implementation of the framework, ensuring that advocacy efforts are practical, effective, and sustainable. Research questions worth pursuing could include: How do school counselors implement an antiracist framework in different school settings (urban, rural, suburban)? What are the barriers to implementing an antiracist school counseling framework? Does the use of the antiracist framework result in positive outcomes for students? Without scientific inquiry, the antiracist advocacy framework cannot thrive. A strong research foundation is essential to validate its benefits and demonstrate its potential to drive systemic change.

Conclusion

The framework presented here offers a comprehensive approach for school counselors to guide their advocacy efforts. The importance of antiracist advocacy in school counseling is emphasized by this framework, which outlines individual and systemic approaches. By understanding the interconnectedness of these levels, school counselors can effectively address the root causes of inequities. Engaging in antiracist advocacy benefits students and enriches the professional practice of school counselors and counselor educators. By adopting this framework, school counselors can enhance their comfort and effectiveness in advocating for antiracist policies and practices. With a commitment to antiracism, school counselors can play a pivotal role in dismantling systemic racism and fostering inclusive learning environments for all students.

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