Lived Stories: Participatory Leadership in School Counseling

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The article is a personal and professional account by 2 counselor educators who worked together as professional school counselors in the same high school setting. Both reflect on the “storied” nature of their professional development and define participatory leadership in school counseling as emerging from engagement and participation in collaborative efforts to bring about systemic change in schools by advocating for all students, especially those who have been traditionally marginalized.

The school counseling profession is engaged in a discourse that concentrates on the transformation of what school counselors do. Professional school counselors, counselor educators, and other stakeholders are in the process of revising the stories that guide the school counseling profession (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2003, 2004; Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Galassi & Akos, 2004; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; House & Martin, 1998; Littrell & Peterson, 2004). This article concentrates on stories that point toward the need for a uniquely democratic form of leadership in school counseling. Before continuing the narrative, the format and authorship of the article deserve comment. Both authors worked together in a public high school as school counselors in California prior to becoming counselor educators at separate institutions.

This article emerges from our conversations about what “worked” at the high school where we were counselors with caseloads ranging from 450–630:1. Our “workability” conversation is rooted in the personal and local analysis of the act-in-context and the recognition that narrative constructions illuminate professional actions (Bruner, 1986, 1990, 1996, 2002; Hayes, 1993; Kearney, 2002; Monk, Winslade, Crocket, & Epston, 1997; Reason & Hawkins, 1988; Rosaldo, 1993; Sarbin, 1993; White & Epston, 1990). As Sarbin put it, “We live in a story shaped world” (p. 63). Furthermore, an ecological perspective shapes our story (Benard, 2004; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Capra, 2002; Conyne & Cook, 2004; Sterling, 2001). In addition, as counselors grounded in Paulo Freire’s (1973, 1997, 1998) critical pedagogy, our efforts take into account the expressed needs and interests of the community rather than imposing externally defined needs. Nearly two decades ago, Alschuler (1986) explored the counseling applications of Freire’s (1973, 1997, 1998) pedagogy and how counselors could take participatory and active roles in creating loving situations with problem-posing education. Freire continues to shed light on school counseling theory and practice. We take the time to share our story because we believe that school counselor educators and practitioners are in a position to construct what Dewey (1938) referred to over 60 years ago as something “new in the story of education” (p. 23). More recently, resilience research points to the need to develop schools where all students have a voice to tell their stories and where the school narrative focuses on helping students reach high expectations, find care and support, and discover opportunities for participation (Benard, 2004). Lewis (2000) linked structure to high expectations, relationships to care and support, and meaning to opportunities for meaningful participation. By balancing structure, relationship, and meaning, school counselors are in a position to help all students develop learning stories where they reach high expectations, encounter care and support, and experience opportunities for meaningful participation within a school community (Benard, 2004; Lewis, 2000).

In order to fully benefit from the lived stories to be shared, it is important to frame our stories in a larger historical context. The school counselor’s role and function have undergone various transformations in response to changing social forces and perceived student educational need. Commonly accepted landmarks in the history of school counseling illustrate that the role and function of school counseling is constantly evolving in a historical context. In the early 1900s, school-based counseling was informed by vocational guidance needs to provide youth job orientation and preparation (Aubrey, 1982). This was followed by the need for intellectual and personality trait measurement in which schools, industry, and military depended on results to optimize skills and aptitudes (Williamson, 1950). Then the space race of the late 1950s directed school counselor duties toward identifying youth (usually White males) gifted in math and science in order to encourage more to attend college and improve the United States’ capacity to compete against world powers (Myrick,
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The school counselor is a leader within the educational community who works with students, teachers, administrators, parents, and other members of the community to build a supportive learning environment that nurtures the development of academic, career, and personal/social competence among students and fosters an appreciation of diversity and a commitment to social justice. (Galassi & Akos, 2004, p. 155)

Participatory leadership builds upon this notion by advocating nurturing relationships with individuals, groups, and other stakeholders.

A 21st-century reconstruction must wrestle with how school counselors’ leadership role was restricted in the past when their role was sometimes viewed as being handmaiden to school administrators. In such roles, school counselors restricted themselves from becoming or serving as progressive and responsive agents of social change. Their capacity to engage students, determine student needs, and ultimately serve the school community was undermined by roles and functions that were defined for them. More recently, school counseling leadership has expanded and been discussed in a variety of ways including leading program development, promoting advocacy, tackling school reform, taking on numerous roles, and recognizing leadership contexts (e.g., ASCA, 2003; Remak, 2000; Dollarhide, 2003; House & Hayes, 2002; House & Sears, 2002; Lewis, 2004). Still, questions persist: From where does the professional school counselor’s authority emerge? How do individual school counselors embrace leadership roles in their schools?

While the current school counseling discourse is driven by standards and national models, it is equally important to speak about the power inherent in professional school counselors who take action in their local schools. The profession is coming to recognize that school counseling’s successful exemplars are more than their roles and functions; their vision of a learning community and who they are is at the heart of their evolving school counseling program (Littrell & Peterson, 2004). Littrell and Peterson’s investigation into the world of a single school counselor exemplar provides a base and springboard for school counselors to share their work with each other. We enter this discussion humbly, and our efforts are directed toward sharing lessons learned and successful actions taken while we were working together as school counselors. In sharing our story, we also redefine leadership in the school counseling profession by describing: (a) participatory leadership that promotes student-defined success as foremost; (b) participatory leadership that addresses ever-evolving student needs; and (c) participatory research that ensures accountability by assessing the impact of what school counselors do to help all students achieve success in learning to learn, learning to work, learning to live, and learning to contribute to a democratic society.

Participatory Leadership

Prior to sharing our own stories, it is important to define participatory leadership, which has tap roots in the work of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and the emerging ecological paradigm in counseling (Alschuler, 1986; Archambault, 1964; Benard, 2004; Conyne & Cook, 2004; Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1973, 1997, 1998; Lewis, 2004; Sterling, 2001). Participatory leadership is leadership that is spread out among counselors in schools, districts, and organizations in promoting a more just and democratic society. Participatory leadership presses school counselors and counselor educators to give up the idea that there is an elite group of highly trained philosopher-kings, similar to those in Plato’s Republic, who are the interpreters and custodians of some hidden truth or a singular answer. Participatory leaders recognize that “interpretations of the world are multivocal” (Bruner, 1996, p. 15). Like all citizens, participatory leaders recognize that professionals participate in communities to construct a world. Truth is not merely given; truth is a participatory construction and is served best in schools where methodologies assess what works to help all youth fulfill their potential in specific communities and contexts.

The leadership challenge among practicing school counselors is to take a stance regarding program development, professional identity, and accountability to outcomes for all students. Critical analysis of the profession can move coun-
counselors to identify the process by which they define “student success.” In other words, counselors must ascertain their function and role as either imposing standards of “success” on the students or engaging students in authentic dialogues that promote individuals and communities to define “success” and, therefore, fostering student participation in achieving “success” (Christensen & Karp, 2003; Freire, 1998). Participatory leadership emerges from engagement in collaborative efforts to bring about systemic change in specific schools by advocating for and engaging all students in ways in which they are challenged to meet high expectations, provided care and support, and given opportunities to participate in activities they find meaningful. In such schools, professionals become accountable to outcomes and conduct practitioner action research to find out what works in helping all students to fulfill their potential in their local school.

Responding to Local Knowledge

The capacity by which school counselors recognize the crucial themes within their school community informs their ability to act on the realities that affect their students’ lives (Littrell & Peterson, 2004). According to Freire (1998), “To investigate the generative theme is to investigate people’s thinking about reality and people’s action upon reality, which is their praxis…the methodology proposed requires that the investigators and the people should act as co-investigators” (p. 87). When counselors believe in the capacity and worth of every human being, they engage the community where they are employed to serve in clarifying community defined needs. Once these student and community needs are identified, the stakeholders being served and the counselors take action to change the environmental conditions that suppress the capacity of youth to fulfill their potential.

By virtue of their position on their respective school sites and the skills they have acquired in their training, school counselors are poised to examine these themes with the students and community that they are charged with serving. Subsequently, once counselors come to understand the nature of participatory leadership, they can better serve the lives of those whom they are charged with influencing in a positive way. In essence, school counselors are challenged to examine their effectiveness in serving a multivocal, pluralistic society and to engage stakeholders as coinvestigators in finding and enhancing the inherent worth of each and every child.

Freire (1998) advocated committing to praxis in which counselors authentically use nonhierarchical dialogue with their community. Such dialogue promotes the possibility that high standards will be upheld and that the local needs of the communities will be identified and properly served. Within this process, although the symptoms may prompt the initial dialogue, counselors provide leadership, responsibility, and coordination to move the dialogue beyond the symptoms and toward effective democratic solutions. According to Freire (1998), engaged and sustained dialogue with the community builds trust. Ultimately, honest dialogue reveals underlying causes of symptoms that may be rooted within the very system that school counselors may be upholding. Open dialogue about “causes” followed by action promotes an ongoing social transformation designed by and with those whom school counselors intend to serve. Subsequently, this dialogue constitutes the foundation of a participatory leadership style in which counselors lead by engaging the community in defining its needs and its course of action for improving the community. Dialogue does not impose externally defined needs that fail to take into account the expressed needs and interests of the communities.

Promoting participatory leadership focuses on exploring how counselors move beyond merely perpetuating the status quo by implementing “first order change,” which creates new ways of doing old things. In these cases, forces of change in systems do no more than rigidly replicate and serve a stratified society. The task of participatory leaders is to change the behaviors, norms, and beliefs of practitioners within these systems, thereby creating “second order change” in which the system itself is modified through altering its assumptions, goals, structures, roles, and norms (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974). In essence, the critical examination of our systems begins with the critical examination of ourselves by posing the following questions: Who are we serving? Who are we not serving? Why?

To illustrate how critical examination transforms practice, this article shares three lived stories related to participatory leadership in local contexts. The first two of the following accounts draw on the experience of a former professional school counselor who is now a counselor educator in an urban university in the Pacific Northwest. The third account is from a former school counseling colleague who is a counselor educator in a university in northern California.

Lived Story 1: Student Success

As participatory leaders, school counselors are connected to their community and are informed by exemplary professional models. Participatory leaders are, in essence, social critics who are capable of questioning their own actions. For example, during the early 1980s, I (the first author) trained with Jack Canfield, the Chicken Soup for the Soul guru and marketer, participated in California’s Self-Esteem Task Force meetings, and promoted building self-esteem across the curriculum for all students within the school district. As a teacher–counselor in a continuation high school, I concentrated on providing care and support for all students and found myself grieving when a few students’ life paths and choices eventually led them to San Quentin, California’s high security prison. At the time, I thought focusing on self-esteem was a wise choice for at-risk kids.
My nemesis in the self-esteem crusade was a business teacher at the comprehensive high school. For her, concentration on self-esteem lessons took time away from teaching students skills and competencies; her job was to make sure students learned how to type quickly and efficiently and to be able to operate the latest business software systems. To drive her point home, this revered older teacher pointed me to the secretaries (all women) in the school district who had been educated in the high school business department. Each secretary possessed a sense of professional competence, participated in a tradition of excellence, was recognized within the community, and asserted herself as an empowered participant in the school community. Self-esteem emerged from a sense of competence. The understanding crystallized when I recognized that my students who developed competence demonstrated high self-esteem and that some self-esteem activities I pushed probably taught students that life was about pursuing one feel-good high after another. Care and support had to be balanced with high expectations.

I began to understand that focusing on self-esteem might distract students from learning that mastery includes persistence, overcoming frustration, and challenges inherent in doing something new (Seligman, Reivich, Jaycox, & Gillham, 1995). What helped me with the breakthrough was not the professional literature at that time, but dialogue with a colleague who understood that high expectations help define learning communities. Students needed to be challenged by high expectations and provided with care and support in meeting those expectations. Where she argued that schools had to help all students to do well, I had promoted that schools should begin with helping all students to feel good. She taught me to balance high expectations and care and support by helping students to do well by creating programs that empower students with lifelong competence, and not quick feel goods. She taught me that leaders listen to the wisdom of teachers.

In dialogue with her, I learned that care and support had to be balanced with high expectations. Years later, I supported her when she criticized the district for spending $6000 to bring in a motivational speaker for the day when she wanted to update equipment for her classroom. The motivational speaker met with kids, the breakthrough humor and tears into his presentation, and left with the cash. Charismatic and motivational speakers go home after their speeches, and the real heroes are the educators who build learning communities every day in the work they do, caring for and supporting students to meet high expectations.

### Lived Story 2: Ratios Meet Advocacy

School counselors live in a world where schools do not have enough counselors, and the situation is not likely to change in the near future (Sears & Granrello, 2002; Walsh, Howard, & Buckley, 1999). The average ratio of students to counselors in the United States ranges from 1,182 to 1 in California to 313 to 1 in Vermont, with an average of 513 to 1 (American School Counselor Association, 1999). Harsh economic realities leave professional school counselors in community ecologies where their ratios, roles, and programs shift according to the resources allocated to the program.

For the most part, state and local communities define the level of support they can afford. Although ASCA calls for student to counselor ratios of 250 to 1, the lived experience of most professional school counselors is far from this recommendation. As a high school counselor, I wrestled with the reality of high student-to-counselor ratios that forced the counselors to think of ways to construct an efficient and effective program to serve all students. Our program adapted a conceptualization of best practices and concentrated on increasing the percentage of students graduating from high school and going on to college.

To ensure increased graduation rates and more students meeting the college eligibility index, school counselors advocate for the academic success of all students. In our case, the counselors chose to share compelling school data that pointed to content areas where students failed. During a faculty meeting, the counselors informed faculty that approximately 25% of freshmen failed math and English classes during their first semester of high school. If the school was to reduce the dropout rate and increase the number of students who met the college eligibility index, change had to take place. Success in math and English was crucial to providing students with more options in the future.

After a few months, the math department presented research that supported a hypothesis that smaller math classes might reduce the failure rate for freshmen. They developed a proposal to reduce student-to-teacher ratios in ninth-grade math classes and requested district resources to support the effort. When a school counselor announced his or her retirement, the resource decision became a choice between adding a math teacher to reduce student-to-teacher ratios in math or to replace the counselor. The time had arrived for counselors who had taken a leadership role in recognizing the generative themes to participate as full partners in responding to the greater needs of our school community. Given the math department’s data, hypothesis, and political momentum, even the remaining school counselors voted to reduce math class size to help more freshmen pass math.

The higher student–counselor ratio of 630 to 1 forced the school counselors to develop an evolving program within a context of reduced counseling services. Subsequently, the counselors met with the administration with a detailed list of counselor roles, activities, and an overview of the program with the difficult task of having to cut school counselor duties. At the same time, a growing population, administrative support for counseling, the focus on program development, and the reduced services resulted in unforeseen changes. Higher student-to-counselor ratios meant thinking mechanistically in terms of structure, program, and efficiencies...
required to address the needs of all students. Materials were
developed to better inform parents and students about basic
high school graduation pathways, ranging from the mini-
mum high school requirements to the most rigorous high
school college preparatory program.

After a year with high student-to-counselor ratios and the
flux of changing school budgets, the district hired two more
counselors, including the second author of this article. The new
hires brought greater diversity, lower ratios, and an innovative
leadership effort by a new counselor to initiate a schoolwide
effort to facilitate more meaningful participation by students
in the learning community. The high school served the fastest
growing city in California, and the tremendous suburban growth
fueled intergroup student animosity that created a toxic air of
hostility on campus. In collaboration with students and a bud-
ding administrator, the new counselor sought to constructively
engage all students in full participation in high school life.
Again, the counseling department evolved in an effort to create
a campus climate in which students experienced care, support,
and opportunities for meaningful participation.

Lived Story 3: Giving Voice to All

One of the subgroups most affected by sociocultural factors
related to large scale growth within the community was the
Mexican American student population that constituted ap-
proximately 25% of the total student body. Increased gang
affiliation within this community was widely visible on cam-
pus by the visual markers of the two dominant groups, Norteños
and Sureños. Ongoing physical conflicts between members
of the larger Euro American student population and the sig-
nificant Mexican American community were compounded
by a growing African American community. In addition, the
larger Euro American student population contained multiple
cliques that were identified as the “jocks,” the “skaters,” the
“aggies,” or other groups who differentiated their identifica-
tion and belongingness in opposition to one another.

Although the need to belong is a primary need of all
developing youth, the demarcation between groups and the
oppositional identity and behaviors of some created an air of
animosity with constant verbal and physical conflicts
permeating the school climate. The inability of students to
cross intragroup sociological borders due to the stigma as-
sociated with mingling with others outside one’s own identi-
fied peer group pointed to rigid cultural boundaries that
built impenetrable borders between groups of students. I
(the second author), as a new counselor on campus, found
myself responding to the needs of students whose academic
success was negatively affected by the conflictive relation-
ships. In many cases, I lost students to suspensions, transfer
to alternative education programs, or expulsion.

My choices at this time became very clear because I was
working within a counseling department that modeled
schoolwide leadership and placing student needs as our first
priority. Rather than continue working on the reactive end
of a downward spiraling school climate, I ventured to take a
leadership role by working in tandem with the Dean of
Students and student leaders to construct a dialogue that
engaged the learning community to explore the climate of
the campus. Student leaders were not all necessarily the
traditional “leaders” but rather natural leaders who repre-
sented various groups on campus. Natural leaders were in-
vited to contribute to constructing a campus climate wherein
their meaningful participation would provide them with a
voice in determining what they collectively envisioned as a
school campus where all students learned and achieved to
their fullest potential.

The meetings between the natural leaders generated a
student movement in which the students then reshaped the
culture of their campus. The students named this movement
“Power of Unity.” Once the natural leaders discovered their
commonalities, they also came to appreciate their differ-
ences. Members of the natural leaders groups then, from
curiosity and from the desire to belong to this larger move-
ment, expressed their desire to participate in the effort to
positively influence the school culture. While assisting the
student effort to maintain a climate on campus where stu-
dents held each other to higher interpersonal and intergroup
standards, I continued to facilitate senior graduation checks,
college letters of recommendation, and class changes. The
rewards generated from student ownership of their school
climate led to successes, such as gang leaders resolving con-
flicts nonviolently, students discouraging violent outbursts
as a way of resolving conflict, and students leading forums
to discuss the issues affecting their school climate. These
efforts were made possible by shared leadership in which
students, administration, community, and the counselor
worked together to create the vision and to collaboratively
fulfill it as well. To date, the high school maintains a Power
of Unity Commissioner as an official member of the school’s
leadership class and whose sole purpose is to engage the
campus in a constant dialogue on the quality of the school
culture. The school community learned that advocating for
diverse voices and providing all students with the opportu-
nity to participate in meaningful activities improved the
school climate.

Sharing What Works, and How

The school counseling program never stopped changing,
and the school counselors engaged themselves as participa-
tory leaders in an evolving work in progress that was
redefined according to the ecology of the school community.
As participatory leaders, the school counselors collaborated with
others within a larger community. In one instance, shared
data resulted in larger student-to-counselor ratios and pre-
sented the school counselors with a challenge to share
how the school counseling program served students. The
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program never arrived at some ideal endpoint; the counselors focused on creating an evolving program, developing interventions, and institutionalizing proactive systems to help all students succeed (Lewis, 1999). Now we find ourselves as counselor educators wondering about how to help counselors-in-training find their professional authority and to become participatory practitioners in their schools. One pathway being pursued is to orient counselors-in-training to action research in schools as a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing programs and approaches that work to help all students achieve greater success (Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Whiston, 1996). Practicing school counselors must determine what works in their setting. They are challenged to develop as participatory leaders, to find avenues that help schools to see all students as possibilities and promises, and to share their work with others in their schools, communities, and profession.

In their call for accountability, Paisley and McMahon (2001) suggested developing a “state or national level . . . clearinghouse for site-based program evaluation results . . . for school counseling programs and school counselor positions” (p. 113). The University of Massachusetts, Amherst’s Center for School Counseling Outcome Research (http://www.umass.edu/schoolcounseling/) is moving toward clearinghouse status with its attempt to serve as a resource for sharing evidence-based practices. Still, national clearinghouses have not been established adequately, and there is a need to hear diverse voices share what works. Local efforts to initiate Web-based networks and links may provide greater opportunities for more school counseling practitioners to share what works with other practicing school counselors. Issues regarding quality are being discussed, but, initially, the goal is to create an invitation for professional school counselors to share their work with larger audiences and their colleagues in their own regions of practice. Ad hoc and local clearingshouses seem to be appearing at various counselor education institutions and may contribute to the profession’s ability to design and evaluate programs that ensure that something worthwhile is happening because of school counselors’ actions. The ASCA National Model for School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2003) is moving toward clearinghouse status with its attempt to serve as a resource for sharing evidence-based practices. Still, national clearinghouses have not been established adequately, and there is a need to hear diverse voices share what works. Local efforts to initiate Web-based networks and links may provide greater opportunities for more school counseling practitioners to share what works with other practicing school counselors. Issues regarding quality are being discussed, but, initially, the goal is to create an invitation for professional school counselors to share their work with larger audiences and their colleagues in their own regions of practice. Ad hoc and local clearingshouses seem to be appearing at various counselor education institutions and may contribute to the profession’s ability to design and evaluate programs that ensure that something worthwhile is happening because of school counselors’ actions. The ASCA National Model for School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2003) was written to define stable guidelines for school counselors to construct programs and to define a common language to guide practice for school counselors. At the same time, there is a need for more research supporting the impact of school counseling. School counselors are wise to define criteria and to assess how they are doing their work to determine what actually works to help students in their local schools and district.

At Portland State University, the school counseling specialization has developed an evolving Web-based, peer-reviewed system for posting practitioner projects related to program development in their own settings (Counselor Education, School Counseling Specialization, Counseling in Action, http://www.ed.pdx.edu/coun/schcoun.html). Most projects focus on how counselor interns engage in implementing Oregon’s Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Framework (Oregon Department of Education, 2003) and the ASCA National Model for School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2003, 2004). Projects also target student success in ways that promote resilience systemically (Benard, 2004; Lewis, 1999, 2000, 2004). The Web site promotes sharing local ideas, projects, and activities and prompted the Oregon School Counselor Association to develop a Web-based journal to encourage greater participation and sharing of professional school counselors’ lived stories and what works (Oregon School Counselor Association, Oregon Professional School Counselor Journal, http://www.oscainc.org/professional_journal/). Web sites that provide a forum for the work of professional school counselors promote participatory leadership and lead more practicing school counselors to share their lived stories and what works.

Why are such efforts important? In the 1950s, 64.5% of the articles written in school counseling journals were written by K-12 practitioners, whereas in the 2000s that number has dropped to 6.6% written by practitioners (Bauman et al., 2003). Our experience with school counselor colleagues has taught us that most practicing school counselors do not have the time to write for professional journals. Most are busy striving to make things work within evolving programs. They might present their ideas at local and regional conferences, but they do not necessarily want to write for publication. They are “doers” (Sink, 2002). Practitioners must be encouraged to share their work and to conduct more research because “school counselors need more research that examines what works” (Whiston, 2002, p. 154). Without more practitioners sharing their lived stories or what works in a wide array of contexts, our profession risks perpetuating a culture in which practitioners are turned into passive consumers of goods and services defined by well-meaning leaders or marketers with ready-made answers. Such one-size-fits-all answers might not fit the community context where they are applied; professional school counselors who have a relationship with their school and the stakeholders in their communities can determine what pathways take priority.

Concluding Thoughts

School counseling continues to be and will remain an evolving specialty (Paisley & Borders, 1995) in which professionals advance by participating in an ever-evolving enterprise that responds to a social ecology and historic moment. Participatory leaders take action in specific locations over time. When professional school counselors apply sound principles, develop programs, and play out their role as educational leaders in learning communities, they are in more powerful positions. As participatory leaders, they can move the profession toward
forms of accountability measured by what works in specific contexts to help all students reach high expectations, experience care and support, and find opportunities for meaningful participation. Such a stance requires professional responsibility. Professionals need to move beyond talk of being saved by motivational speakers or other fashionable messianic leaders. Participatory leaders take responsibility to bring in and listen to diverse voices. They focus on what works and how it works to help all students in local communities and contexts thrive. Participatory leaders draw upon deep democratic traditions that emerge from a simple principle: e pluribus unum.

Borders (2002) offered a charismatic idea for creating a more inclusive conversation by encouraging the profession to refocus its attention on “how school counseling is being done in a wide range of contexts, by a variety of practitioners” (p. 182). Showing an appreciation of the ways counseling is done in a wide array of contexts fosters a sense of participatory leadership among practitioners. Ultimately, approaches that respect counselors within community contexts allow for greater understanding of particular needs related to diverse communities and build the capacity for guiding specific actions that inform the evolving professional discourse.

Participatory leadership is a challenge because it calls professionals to be engaged in a continuous process to implement best practices in specific contexts and to share their work at conferences and in other venues, such as state and university Web sites. Participatory leadership calls school counselors to greater responsibility to students, parents, colleagues, professional associates, their school, their community, themselves, and, most important, to creating school counseling programs that are committed to social justice. Such leadership incorporates ethical demands in that it requires school counselors to come out of their offices, engage in dialogue with their community, to transform their programs, to help all students fulfill their potential, and to appreciate how we all construct our world continually moment to moment. Such are our lived stories in our ever-evolving school counseling profession.

References

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