

**Promoting College Access Among Latina/o English Language Learners:
Implications for Professional School Counselors**

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Abstract

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2010), Latina/o English language learners (ELL students) are less likely to complete high school and attend college compared to their White non-Latina/o peers. Numerous factors affect Latina/o ELL students' academic achievement, including insufficient resources, acculturation issues, attitudinal barriers, immigration factors, and English-language proficiency. Through a literature review, we identify particular school counselor interventions that address these barriers and promote college access among Latina/o ELL students.

Keywords: Latina/o English, language learners, professional school counselors, achievement gap, college access, academic achievement

Promoting College Access Among Latina/o English Language Learners: Implications for Professional School Counselors

Academic underperformance is a major concern among Latina/o students, with the dropout rate significantly exceeding their White non-Latina/o peers (Olivos & Quintana de Valladolid, 2005; U.S Department of Education, 2010). Various factors have been attributed to the achievement gap, including English language proficiency, immigration status, acculturation challenges, racism, and socioeconomic factors (Cook, Pérusse, & Rojas, 2012; Flores, 2007; Villalba, Akos, Keeter, & Ames, 2007). Public schools in impoverished neighborhoods often do not have sufficient resources to provide learning opportunities similar to those offered in more affluent communities (Contreras, 2005; Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin, & Allen, 2008). Latina/o students are more likely to attend schools that offer few opportunities to take advanced placement (AP) courses (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004). In 2008, only 13% of twelfth grade Latina/o students took the SAT compared to 62% of twelfth grade White students (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Consequently, there is a large gap between Latina/o students and White students who receive Baccalaureate degrees, with only 9% of Latina/o adults received a Baccalaureate degree compared to 69% of their White adult counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

English language learners (ELL) comprise the fastest-growing student population within U.S. schools (Fry, 2008). The 2010 Latina/o school-age population reached 13.8 million, and in 2025 is estimated to surpass 20.1 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). These figures translate to Latina/o children comprising almost a quarter (23.9%) of the

nation's pre-K through 12th-grade students attending U.S. public schools (Fry & Lopez, 2012). A large proportion of these children are likely to be ELL students (Fry, 2008).

Considering the achievement gap and growing Latina/o student population, there is a strong need to promote academic success among ELL and Latina/o students. However, in reviewing journal coverage of various student-service professions, including professional school counselors, Albers, Hoffman, and Lundahl (2009) found limited research focusing specifically on issues regarding ELL students, with only 4.8% of published articles in peer-reviewed counseling journals between 1995 and 2005 addressing concerns pertaining to ELL students in K-12 schools. This represents the lowest percentage of ELL representation compared to major peer-reviewed journals in school psychology, special education, and speech-language journals (Albers et al., 2009). In addition, focusing solely on Latina/o students without regard to language spoken or ELL students without regard to cultural factors is potentially limiting and does not provide a full understanding of the potential barriers and cultural resources at play that impact academic achievement and college access (Cook et al., 2012; MacDonald, 2004; McKown, 2013; Villalba et al., 2007). Focusing on linguistic needs, while simultaneously taking a culturally sensitive approach, will arguably be more helpful in effectively assisting Latina/o ELL students due to the different challenges and needs that may be present.

Given the relatively minimal research that has been conducted with respect to comprehensive school counseling programs and Latina/o ELL students, we reviewed the literature pertaining to Latina/o ELL achievement in an effort to identify strategies that professional school counselors can use in working with various stakeholders to

promote academic success and increase college access for Latina/o ELL students. In conducting a literature review, the ASCA (American School Counselor Association) National Model (ASCA, 2012) was used as a frame of reference through its emphasis on professional school counselors' engagement in leadership and advocacy roles to promote academic achievement and college access among Latina/o ELL students.

Review of Barriers to Academic Achievement

Researchers have identified numerous barriers to academic achievement among Latina/o students, including discrepancies in resources, assessment standards, and state and federal policies that may preclude higher educational goals (Callahan, 2005; Flores, 2007; Olivos & Quintana de Valladolid, 2005; Spinelli, 2008). Latina/o students often reside in areas where schools are likely to have inexperienced teachers and receive limited academic resources (Flores, 2007). There are also few Latina/o role models in public schools, and undocumented immigrants may be fearful of seeking assistance due to concerns of being reported to officials (MacDonald, 2004). Moreover, undocumented immigrants do not have access to federal financial aid and in some states are not eligible for in-state tuition (Valdes, 2012). These restrictive policies create significant barriers to accessing higher education.

Counselor-to-student ratios are of particular concern in many urban and low-income school districts, where a large number of Latina/o ELL students attend public schools. For example, in California for every 945 students, there is only one counselor (California Department of Education, 2013), while the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012) recommends a counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250. High counselor caseloads have been associated with less than desired school counseling services, resulting in a

large number of students' needs being overlooked. As a result of limited accessibility to professional school counselors, low-income and minority students often experience few opportunities to participate in activities that support pursuit of higher education (Kimura-Walsh et al., 2008). Smaller student-to-school counselor ratios have been associated with better academic outcomes, particularly with reduced disciplinary incidents (Carey & Dimmitt, 2012) and higher graduation rates in high-poverty schools (Lapan, Gysbers, Stanley, & Pierce, 2012).

In addition to limited resources, assessment standards and federal policies have presented as barriers to academic achievement among Latina/o ELL students (Spinelli, 2008). Subsequent to the passing of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), school districts became accountable for requiring ELL students to improve English proficiency (Lazarin, 2006) and to test students with limited English proficiency to address academic needs (Spinelli, 2008). Although improvement of English-language proficiency is a primary goal that schools should work toward, the increased focus on mandatory testing and conducting assessments in English may preclude academic success among some Latina/o ELL students (Olivos & Quintana de Valladolid, 2005). Furthermore, conducting English literacy assessments among ELL students to ascertain appropriate placement can be problematic due to psychometric limitations and testing conditions that fail to adequately account for a variety of factors, including, cultural and linguistic differences, variations in subject matter knowledge, and levels of test anxiety (Spinelli, 2008). The accountability pressures have in some cases resulted in fewer opportunities for educating Latina/o ELL students in content-based areas, such as mathematics and the

sciences, thereby compromising performance in these subject areas (Olivos & Quintana de Valladolid, 2005).

Latina/o immigrant students often experience barriers due to acculturation stress and discrimination they encounter in the school community (Benner & Graham, 2011; Reyes & Elias, 2011; Roche & Kuperminc, 2012; Zychinski & Polo, 2012). Latina/o students regularly encounter racial microaggressions, in the form of cultural disrespect, such as educators mispronouncing names (Kohli & Solorzano, 2012). While the mispronunciation of names may seem trivial, Kohli and Solorzano (2012) argued that these experiences of subtle racism can negatively affect one's self-perception. Latina/o ELL students may further perceive experiencing discrimination in the school setting, particularly when serving as interpreters for their parents with school personnel (Benner & Graham, 2011). The experience of discrimination is found to negatively affect Latina/o adolescents' perceptions of school climate, which has further negative repercussions on academic performance (Benner & Graham, 2011).

Researchers have also identified the presence of attitudinal barriers held by school personnel that interfere with academic success (Cavazos Jr., Cavazos, Hinojosa, & Silva, 2009; De Los Reyes, Nieto, & Diez, 2008; MacDonald, 2004). Cavazos Jr. et al. (2009) found examples of professional school counselors who held the belief that Latina/o students could not succeed in college and, instead, encouraged them to pursue other vocational options. Holding low expectations regarding academics has been associated with lower academic achievement (De Los Reyes et al., 2008). Moreover, attitudinal barriers may contribute to the overrepresentation of Latina/o ELL students in special education (Ford, 2012; MacDonald, 2004).

Professional School Counselors' Role in Addressing Selected Barriers

Given the multiplicity and complexity of barriers that Latina/o ELL students encounter, it is imperative to identify school counselor interventions that promote academic success for Latina/o ELL students. In this article, we present three barriers to academic achievement that Latina/o ELL students may encounter and provide strategies professional school counselors can employ to support academic success and increase college access: (a) experience of discrimination and acculturative stress; (b) motivational concerns and attitudes toward Latina/o ELL students; (c) and Latina/o ELL college access and financing. In keeping with the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012), which emphasizes the need for professional school counselors to collaborate with multiple stakeholders in supporting students' academic needs, intervention strategies are organized according to three areas: academic, college, and career preparation with students; collaboration with parents, families, and community members; and collaboration with school personnel.

Experience of Discrimination and Acculturative Stress

Researchers have identified the negative impact of experiencing racial and ethnic discrimination in the school setting (Benner & Graham, 2011; Kohli & Solorzano, 2012). Latina/o students have reported experiencing discrimination, which has the potential to hinder positive youth development (Zeiders, Umaña-Taylor, & Derlan, 2013). Relatedly, Zychinski and Polo (2012) found that acculturative stress was associated with greater depressive symptoms and lower academic achievement in a sample of 133 Latina/o students ages 10 to 14 years old. Acculturative stress pertains to the adjustment of adapting to a different culture and not, necessarily, to the experience of discrimination.

Given the potential for acculturative stress to negatively impacting one's academic performance, it behooves professional school counselors to assist Latina/o ELL students in overcoming this potential challenge. The possibility for experiences of discrimination and acculturative stress to adversely affect a student's academic success and well-being underscores the importance of addressing these issues. There is a growing body of literature that encourages a shift in focus from a deficit perspective to one that focuses on youth resiliency (Bryan & Henry, 2008; Gonzalez, Stein, Kiang, & Cupito, 2014; Reyes & Elias, 2011). For example, in a longitudinal study of 323 Latina/o high school participants, Zeiders et al. (2013) found that perceived self-esteem increased throughout the duration of high school, despite stressful environmental contexts, and attributed this finding to resiliency and ability to adapt to and overcome challenging situations. Thus, while it is necessary to acknowledge and implement interventions that directly reduce (and ideally eliminate) racial and ethnic discrimination, professional school counselors should also employ a culturally sensitive and strength-based approach that builds on Latina/o ELL students' resilience and self-efficacy (Grothaus, MacAuliffe, & Craigen, 2012; Reyes & Elias, 2011).

Academic, College, and Career Preparation With Students

Academic, college, and career preparation are major areas of focus for professional school counselors (College Board, n.d.). In helping students with academic, college, and career planning, professional school counselors can assist Latina/o ELL students to identify their strengths and build a sense of cultural/ethnic pride. One cultural protective factor for Latinas/os that has been identified in the literature is called familismo, which refers to the interdependence and strong

connections between family members (Esparza & Sanchez, 2008; Reyes & Elias, 2011). Thus, professional school counselors might encourage Latina/o ELL students to explore what education means to them and their family. In a study by Ong, Phinney, and Dennis (2006), a strong sense of family interdependence and support from parents was associated with greater academic success and strong desire to achieve in school. Drawing connections to academics and future educational goals, while recognizing the importance of family pride and what education means to the family could potentially be helpful when engaging in discussions with Latina/o ELL students. Through this process of actively celebrating Latina/o culture and ethnic pride, it is possible to increase students' academic self-efficacy (Ojeda et al., 2012). In a study examining career decision self-efficacy among middle school Latina/o students, Ojeda et al. (2012) found that a strong sense of ethnic identity was a significant predictor of career decision self-efficacy. Thus, professional school counselors are encouraged to engage Latina/o ELL students in discussions that promote healthy ethnic identity development when providing college and career planning.

Collaboration With Parents, Families and Community Members

Researchers have identified the need for parent and family involvement in schools (Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Esparza & Sanchez, 2008; Ramirez, 2003; Suárez-Orozco, Onaga, & de Lardemelle, 2010), and collaborating with key community stakeholders is essential to closing the achievement gap (ASCA, 2012). While educators, including professional school counselors, influence career decisions, parents/caregivers and peers have a profound impact on academic performance and college- and career-related decisions (Dahir & Stone, 2012; Woolley, Kol, & Bowen,

2009). Thus, providing workshops and holding parent meetings may be helpful ways to ensure parents' needs and values are being considered. Rather than the professional school counselor setting the agenda for the college planning meeting, it might be helpful to give the opportunity for parents to express thoughts, concerns, and questions as they pertain to their child's college and career transition. While setting and sticking to an agenda is important and need not necessarily be discouraged, it is also important to recognize that encouraging parents' input can be empowering (Durand, 2010). It can also help to communicate a counselor's respect for and appreciation of differing values that may be contrary to parents' experiences of discrimination and racism.

Given that peers play a central role in students' educational aspirations (Shiu, Kettler, Johnsen, 2009; Woolley et al., 2009), it may be helpful to invite a few recent successful Latina/o ELL high school graduates to share their post-secondary experiences, including successes and challenges they encountered. Peers' stories could help to both reinforce high expectations and contradict the negative narratives Latina/o ELL high school students may hold regarding potential for academic excellence. In fact, Gonzalez et al. (2014) examined academic self-efficacy among a sample of 442 Latina/o school students and found that peer support highly influenced college-going self-efficacy. Consequently, the authors suggested the importance of involving Latina/o peers in college and educational planning activities, considering the influence they may have on supporting a strong college-going Latino identity.

Relatedly, professional school counselors could invite Latina/o professionals to talk about college and careers to reinforce academic achievement and provide sources for positive role models. After listening to the experiences of adult professionals,

Latina/o ELL students may be able to better connect and understand the multiple career paths that are available (Villalba et al., 2007). Furthermore, researchers have identified the importance of professional school counselors supporting students by partnering with community organizations (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2007).

These partnerships could be helpful in promoting a positive school culture (Bryan & Henry, 2008), which in turn could become the basis for a school environment that disavows of discriminatory actions. In support of a positive school climate, Roche and Kuperminc (2012) found that perceived school belonging helped to mediate Latina/o students' discrimination stress and improve grades. While establishing community partnerships can be time-consuming, professional school counselors could start by building upon partnerships that already exist in the school rather than starting anew (Bryan & Henry, 2012). Talking with a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) could be a place to begin. Partnering with organizations that already have experience in engaging in partnerships and hold a shared vision also helps to facilitate the process (Bryan & Henry, 2012).

Collaboration and Consultation With School Personnel

Another way to support Latina/o ELL students' academic success and admission to higher education is through mentoring (Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006). Zalaquett and Lopez (2006) conducted a qualitative analysis of 13 bilingual Latina/o, high-achieving undergraduate students and found that parents provided the strongest mentor role in the students' lives, with teachers or professional school counselors serving as mentors for 3 out of 13 participants. Among findings, Zalaquett et al. (2006) emphasized the

importance of believing in Latina/o students' ability to succeed academically, while recognizing that students have different learning styles and academic strengths.

While some of the recommendations provided thus far may be challenging for a professional school counselor to implement individually, it may be possible to start small and choose one goal to work on each year. For example, often times Latina/o ELL students are isolated from the rest of the school community, particularly when they are tracked into bilingual education. Even if one does not speak Spanish, through collaboration with the ELL teacher(s) and administration, the professional school counselor could assist in organizing cultural pride events or pride assemblies for the student body. In an underperforming urban elementary school located in the Northeast (see Taylor, 2013), as part of several interventions to turn the school around, including greater flexibility with curriculum initiatives and staffing changes, school-wide and community-based efforts were implemented to improve school culture and climate. Efforts included holding regular pride events through pride assemblies and character building activities, which involved all of the school community, including parents. These interventions resulted in improved school culture as evidenced by a significant decrease in disciplinary incidents from 207 to 77 incidents (Taylor, 2013). Relatedly, peer mentorship programs in which newcomer Latina/o ELL students are paired with older, more settled students may help with the transition process. This may also help to build a sense of school community across the student body, while simultaneously connecting newcomers to the school.

Motivational Concerns and Attitudes Toward Latina/o ELL Students

In addition to Latina/o ELL students' experiences of discrimination, researchers have identified the presence of attitudinal barriers held by school personnel, which may preclude academic success (e.g., Cavazos Jr. et al., 2009; De Los Reyes et al., 2008). According to Saffigna, Church, and Tayler (2011), during early childhood, children develop self-concepts as others perceive them. Consequently, children begin to behave in ways that fulfill the expectations of adults in their lives. If educators (or parents) hold high expectations, they tend to provide consistent encouragement and assign more challenging tasks and responsibilities to children, compared to those for whom they hold low expectations. This differential treatment can be detrimental to academic performance, and connections between academic performance and self-efficacy have been demonstrated in the literature (Jinks & Morgan, 1999). In fact, De Los Reyes et al. (2008) found that holding negative attitudes about Latina/o ELL students' ability to excel has been associated with lower academic achievement. While there are many factors that contribute to the development of academic self-efficacy, it has been found that children at highest risk for developing low self-concept include, low socioeconomic status, low parent education levels, homelessness, behavioral issues, and poor social skills (Saffigna et al., 2011).

Educators may also hold bias or negative perceptions toward children based on cultural, ethnic, and racial groups, albeit the manifestations of which can be subtle. Harber et al. (2012) found that teacher participants more frequently provided praise and offered less criticism if they believed the student writer was Black or Latino, compared to mock essays from White students. While positive bias may appear to be harmless, it

could also mean that educators are not sufficiently challenging students (Harber et al., 2012). Overall, negative attitudes and bias can have significant educational consequences (Ford, 2012; MacDonald, 2004).

Academic, College, and Career Preparation With Students

There are several ways professional school counselors can work with Latina/o ELL students to improve academic self-efficacy and overcome negative attitudes held by educators. Professional school counselors can serve as mentors and advocates in encouraging academic success. In a study that reviewed effective counselor mentoring relationships across five high achieving high schools with culturally and socioeconomically diverse student populations, Militello, Schweid, and Carey (2011) found commonalities across the schools that may be associated with the academic success of students. Most of the schools had an open policy with regard to taking AP courses—all students were permitted to take AP courses if they chose. The schools went to great lengths to publicly honor and celebrate student successes and accomplishments. Given that professional school counselors are involved in the use of student tracking according to specific academic courses and levels, they can be instrumental in collaboratively promoting Latina/o ELL student access to advanced coursework. They can also help to support Latina/o ELL students who openly enroll in honors level and AP courses to be successful through reinforcing organizational skills that may be taught by teachers (Winebrenner, 2006).

Setting high expectations for all students, including Latina/o ELL students, helps to promote academic achievement. De Los Reyes et al. (2008) reviewed practices of five high-performing schools within the Boston Public School district and found that

setting high expectations is an integral component of school climate necessary for Latina/o students to succeed academically. In these schools, failure was not accepted, and united efforts among teachers and staff supported Latina/o students' academic success. Maintaining high expectations and holding students accountable can be challenging, particularly when numerous attempts to engage Latina/o ELL students fail and little progress is observed. Professional school counselors have good intentions and want students to be successful; however, engaging students who are not readily responding to interventions can become taxing, often resulting in turning attention to other students who are more responsive. In these instances, it would be beneficial to seek support from a fellow professional school counselor or supervisor who can help to reinforce the challenging work.

Another way to reach non-compliant students and to hold Latina/o ELL students to high expectations can be achieved through the use of solution-focused counseling interventions (e.g., Metcalf, 2008; Sklare, 2005). For example, if a teacher complains about a Latina/o ELL student's "lack of motivation," the professional school counselor could redirect the teacher (and student) to identify areas of strengths and/or previous successes in an effort to re-engage the student. It might be that the student was successful in learning to speak English and is now bilingual. Reminding the student (and teacher) about this achievement and celebrating the success of achieving bilingualism could be helpful in identifying other short-term attainable goals toward which the student can work.

Collaboration With Parents, Families and Community Members

The role of parents and peers are important to consider when addressing attitudinal barriers and motivational concerns. Walker and Pearsall (2012) found that both parents and peers impacted access to and successful completion of AP courses. More specifically, students identified insufficient parental support being offered to their non-English speaking parents, and, consequently, were not communicated the relevance of taking AP courses. They also experienced peer pressure to not excel in school. One way to address the peer pressure could be to engage Latina/o ELL students in small group sessions focusing on academic coaching. In working with small groups of Latina/o ELL students, professional school counselors can build on each of the group member's strengths and encourage each student to celebrate one another's academic successes. A focus on student success may, in turn, assist with increasing academic self-efficacy.

In another study, Ramirez (2003) conducted focus groups to find ways to improve school-home relationships with Latina/o parents and identified the importance of communication, expectations, and accountability. It was found that parents expressed being unaware of school policies and culture, so many did not know when and if it was appropriate to approach teachers. This finding suggests the importance of professional school counselors actively reaching out to parents. In terms of expectations and accountability, many parents felt that teachers held lower academic expectations for their children and expressed experiencing a lack of responsiveness from the school with regard to their children's academic performance.

To address these needs and improve school-home relationships, Ramirez (2003) suggested visiting communities to learn more about the cultures of families represented in the school, participating in community-based events, and offering families opportunities to participate in classes and other activities. Given the time constraints professional school counselors encounter, focusing on one or two ways to reach out to parents could be a good way to start. What is important is the quality of the connections between parents and the school. Often professional school counselors will give up on coordinating parent-school events after low turnout and decide time is better spent implementing activities that have better outcomes. One way to improve the parent turnout and, thereby outcome, would be to solidify relationships with key parents (i.e., cultural brokers). Parents who are involved both in the school and community and who could serve to connect other parents and engage them in attending events (Bryan & Griffin, 2010; Bryan & Henry, 2012). Another important factor to keep in mind is the type of event that is organized. Events open to the school community need to be culturally relevant, such as a Latina/o student dance performance or other cultural events. The professional school counselor should also not shoulder the burden of coordinating every event but, rather, can collaborate with teachers, volunteers, and administrators. A language barrier may also result in infrequent outreach to parents given the time involved in accessing an interpreter. A cultural broker may help to bridge this gap when the nature of the desired communication is not sensitive or confidential (Bryan & Henry, 2012).

Collaboration and Consultation With School Personnel

Villalba et al. (2007) identified the importance of collaborating with ELL teachers to address concerns of Latina/o ELL students. In a qualitative study conducted by Walker and Pearsall (2012), one of the participants described being placed in an ELL class due to difficulty with reading and having a Latino surname. When this student was subsequently placed in honors level and AP level coursework, he showed significant academic improvement. This finding exemplifies how racially biased perceptions could potentially impact professional school counselors' work with Latina/o ELL students. In an effort to eliminate attitudinal barriers and racial bias, professional school counselors and ELL teachers could work together to promote a cooperative learning environment in the classroom and throughout the school. Through close collaboration with ELL teachers, professional school counselors can serve as a liaison to support Latina/o ELL students' academic progress and assist with particular counseling needs. They could engage in the ELL classroom to provide relevant college-related information, which, if needed, could be interpreted by the ELL teacher.

Moreover, sheltered English instruction practices offer a unique opportunity for teachers and counselors to get involved in academic activities that promote student engagement in individual decisions with respect to future professional goals (Rojas, 2012). Professional school counselors could also serve as a liaison between teachers and personnel with regard to bilingual program placement and monitor the academic progress of ELL students (Ochoa & Cadiero-Kaplan, 2004). Given that professional school counselors are typically involved in student placement and data collection, they could assume a central collaborative role in sharing information among teachers and

school personnel. One way to achieve this is to utilize a simple teacher checklist form that includes level of English language proficiency (evidenced by testing) and recent academic performance, as a means of monitoring academic progress and course placement.

Latina/o ELL College Access and Financing

Gaining college access presents as a significant barrier for Latina/o ELL students. In addition to the effect of dropping out of high school, Latina/o ELL students are less likely to take college preparatory courses and obtain financial aid opportunities compared to their White peers (Zarate & Burciaga, 2010). Undocumented Latina/o ELL students—that is, those individuals who are not U.S. citizens or legal residents, encounter additional legal and financial barriers to accessing higher education. While undocumented students may assume they are legally barred from attending higher education institutions in the U.S., there are no federal or state laws that prohibit college entrance based on residency status (College Board, 2012). However, policies held by select colleges may be restrictive, such as several public institutions in Virginia that require applicants to show proof of citizenship/legal residency (College Board, 2012). Thus, it behooves professional school counselors to keep up-to-date on local policies and state and federal laws.

Academic, College, and Career Preparation With Students

Given the possibility that Latina/o ELL students have limited educational capital coupled with the SAT gap previously described (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), professional school counselors could reinforce the importance of taking the SAT. It might be that Latina/o ELL students are simply unaware of college requirements and

need to specifically be informed of admissions requirements. Professional school counselors could also consider the ACT as an option for Latina/o ELL students given the significant content and scoring differences compared to the SAT (Princeton Review, 2013). The ACT questions tend to be more straightforward, and composite scores are generated on the ACT instead of individual section scores. The ACT writing section is also not required, whereas the SAT writing section is required (Princeton Review, 2013). Thus, the ACT may be a good match for the student, as long as it meets college admissions requirements.

While it is not legal for educators to inquire about students' immigration status (College Board, 2012), professional school counselors could provide *all* students with financial planning information, including resources for scholarships, eligibility requirements for paying in-state tuition and federal financial aid, and completing the FAFSA. Professional school counselors can provide Latina/o ELL students with relevant resources and engage them in college planning discussions early on. For example, it may be helpful to provide Latina/o ELL students with information on community colleges.

Collaboration With Parents, Families and Community Members

The importance of engaging families in Latina/o ELL students' academic experiences is evident in Esparza and Sanchez's (2008) work that examined Latina/o students' attitudes toward family connection, and its relevance to academics. One way professional school counselors can build this sense of connection could be through giving Latina/o ELL students the opportunity to talk about their family values as part of the college planning discussions. For instance, a student may need to attend college

close to home in order to continue contributing to the household income. Relatedly, Saenz, Rodriguez, Martinez, and Romo (2011) found that foreign-born Latinas/os expressed concern about the ability to pay for college. Thus, being aware of relevant legislature affecting college access and funding could be helpful. For example, recent federal legislature under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) permits some high school students who have entered the U.S. before the age of 16 to qualify for temporary legal immigration status. Individuals qualifying under DACA might be eligible to pay for in-state tuition, depending on the state where they reside, and may be eligible for college institution-specific scholarships (Olivas, 2012). While it is important to not make assumptions about a student's immigration status, working closely with students and parents in a culturally sensitive manner will help to ensure best practices are implemented. Professional school counselors can achieve this through demonstrating concern for and understanding the importance of Latina/o ELL students making decisions that involve their family and adhere to their family values.

Collaboration and Consultation With School Personnel

According to Callahan (2005), tracking students by academic level, ranging from college-preparatory classes to AP courses is related to academic achievement and access to higher education. Thus, greater academic rigor in coursework needs to be available for Latina/o ELL students. Given that professional school counselors are involved in course placement coupled with the effects of tracking on college preparation and access, professional school counselors should collaborate with teachers to place Latina/o ELL students in college preparatory and advanced courses.

Underrepresentation of Latina/o ELL students in AP level coursework continues to be manifest across public schools (Solorzano & Ornelas; 2004; Walker & Pearsall, 2012). Given the incommensurate representation of Latina/o ELL students in AP courses, there is a need for equal access and proportionate enrollment in AP and other college preparatory curricula. While decisions about AP course placement is typically a collaborative approach between school counselors, teachers, and administrators, professional school counselors can take a leadership role in ensuring that all Latina/o ELL students have the opportunity to take upper level and at a minimum college preparatory courses. Professional school counselors can also engage students (and parents) in discussions concerning the importance of completing courses minimally at the college preparatory level to improve college readiness. Given the potential for limited U.S. educational exposure, students (and parents) may not be aware that certain courses are required to meet college application requirements.

Moreover, barriers to academic achievement can be inadvertently sustained by engaging in educational practices that perpetuate racial/ethnic inequities (Bryan, 2005). For example, the practice of reserving AP courses exclusively for the “best” students instead of employing a model that focuses on students’ strengths serves to maintain the status quo of excluding Latina/o ELL students, particularly when language deficits are perceived (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2008). While a student may be acquiring English, he or she could excel in other subjects, such as math and science and should, therefore, be supported in pursuing honors or AP level coursework. Furthermore, relying solely on test scores and aptitude assessments as a means for determining access to honors and AP courses is limiting and fails to recognize other factors related to academic

achievement, such as creativity (Thomas, Singh, Klopfenstein, & Henry, 2008) and academic self-efficacy (Hannon, 2014).

Dual enrollment in high school and college has also been associated with greater college readiness among Latina/o students (Chapa, Galvan-De Leon, Solis, & Mundy, 2014; Vargas, Roach, & David, 2014; Watt, Huerta, & Alkan, 2011). Chapa et al. (2014) found that Latina/o students dually enrolled in college and high school programming scored significantly higher on end of year reading exams, accounting for 44% of the variance, compared to peers at traditional high schools. Relatedly, Watt et al. (2011) found that enrollment in AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), a research-based curriculum focused on providing academic strategies and supports for success (AVID, 2014), helped contribute to Latina/o students' academic success, evidenced by outcomes on state testing, and successful transition to college. Professional school counselors can collaborate with administration and teaching faculty to support academic programming that strategically promotes college readiness for Latina/o ELL youth, including dual enrollment opportunities and AVID, particularly if such programming is underdeveloped or inaccessible. In addition, early exposure to rigorous curricula and college environments is key to developing college and career readiness (Achieve, 2013). Thus, professional school counselors can collaborate with colleagues to develop and implement early college awareness among Latina/o ELL students and promote greater access to culturally relevant college-related curricula.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Professional school counselors are charged with the important role of providing academic and college-related support to all students, and particularly disadvantaged

student populations (ASCA, 2012; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). Latina/o ELL students represent a growing school-aged population and encounter significant institutional and policy-related barriers to achieving academic success (e.g., Callahan, 2005; Flores, 2007; Fry, 2008; Spinelli, 2008). These barriers often result in inequitable educational practices, some of which educators are unaware of, including engaging in biased practices that result in reduced academic expectations for students (Harber et al., 2012). Professional school counselors can assist Latina/o ELL students in achieving academically and to overcome these barriers through taking on leadership and advocacy roles and collaborating with key school and community stakeholders (ASCA, 2012).

In working with students, professional school counselors can emphasize Latina/o ELL students' strengths through respecting cultural heritage and values. Holding high expectations and communicating nothing but success needs to become part of the school culture (De Los Reyes et al., 2008). Advocating for open access to honors level and AP courses is one way to communicate high expectations, while helping to reduce inequitable educational practices (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2008; Militello et al., 2011). Further research examining Latina/o ELL educational outcomes of open enrollment is needed to better understand how professional school counselors can effectively support this population in achieving academic success. In addition, professional school counselors could benefit from more training on addressing the presence of lower expectations or negative attitudes, particularly given the likelihood of engaging in discriminatory practices without one's awareness (Harber et al., 2012; Kohli & Solorzano, 2012).

It is also advised for professional school counselors to be cognizant of immigration issues and low-income status when assisting Latina/o ELL students with higher education (College Board, 2012). More research is needed to keep up with changes that occur with legislation and local policies and how they affect college entrance and financing options. For example, currently over 18 states include provisions allowing undocumented immigrants to pay in-state tuition, and at least five states (California, Minnesota, New Mexico, Texas, and Washington) permit undocumented students to receive state financial aid (National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL], 2015). Keeping abreast of local state policy changes is imperative considering the positive impact on access and college affordability.

In working beyond the school building, professional school counselors are encouraged to form and maintain relationships with families and community members. It is helpful to get involved in community events where Latina/o ELL families reside to increase understanding of students' cultural background and family values (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Ramirez, 2003). Professional school counselors are also encouraged to partner with local organizations (Bryan, 2005). Furthermore, additional research identifying outcomes of partnerships based on type of school setting (e.g., rural vs. urban and suburban) could be helpful in providing further suggestions to best support Latina/o ELL students (Bryan & Henry, 2012).

It is also imperative to collect and share data on Latina/o ELL students' performance in coursework to identify outcomes of counseling interventions and academic progress (Cook & Hayden, 2012; Ochoa & Cadiero-Kaplan, 2004). In following the ASCA National Model (2012), professional school counselors can

implement data-driven interventions through surveying targeted academic goals at the start and completion of interventions (Stone & Dahir, 2007). Through this process, professional school counselors can become cognizant of specific interventions that help to contribute to Latina/o ELL students' academic success. Showing teachers and administrators the data-based outcomes of interventions will lend support to professional school counselors taking up class time to assist Latina/o ELL students. Further research to identify data-driven practices could be helpful for this population, particularly for students who are not responding to current interventions.

Professional school counselors are encouraged to work closely with ELL teachers to provide counseling support and to connect Latina/o ELL students with the school community. While there is extensive literature that addresses assessment practices with ELL students (e.g., Albers et al., 2009; Bryon & Rogers, 2010; Spinelli, 2008), more research is needed to identify specific strategies that professional school counselors could employ in supporting Latina/o ELL students' language acquisition. In addition, post-secondary preparation needs to begin as early as elementary and middle school (College Board, 2007; Thorn & Contreras, 2005). Overall, it is hoped that these suggested interventions are helpful in professional school counselors' work with Latina/o ELL students.

Conclusion

It is well-documented that Latina/o ELL students are less likely to enter college and are more likely to drop out of school compared to their White non-Latina/o peers (Cook et al., 2012; Olivos & Quintana de Valladolid, 2005). The presence of Latina/o ELL students is also growing among urban schools due to an increase in immigration

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Consequently, professional school counselors and other educators urgently need to take measures that close the achievement and opportunity gaps (College Board, 2008; Education Trust, n.d.). In keeping with the ASCA National Model, professional school counselors promote academic achievement and college and career readiness through school and community collaboration with all key stakeholders (ASCA, 2012). Professional school counselors advocate for equal access to educational opportunities, striving to close achievement and opportunity gaps for all students, including Latina/o ELL students. Professional school counselors should achieve this through implementing culturally sensitive interventions that respect cultural diversity and communication differences. Given the relative dearth of research that focuses specifically on professional school counselor interventions with Latina/o ELL students, further research is needed to identify ways in which professional school counselors can best support these students in achieving academic success and increasing opportunities to attend college.

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