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# The Girls' Leadership Experience Camp: A Parallel Process of Leadership Skill Development for School Counselors-in-Training

*School counseling programs must provide counselors-in-training with effective and multifaceted leadership skill-building opportunities (Brott, 2006; DeVoss & Andrews, 2006; Dollarhide, Gibson, & Saginak, 2008; Kaffenberger & Murphy, 2007). The Girls' Leadership Experience Camp (GLEC) was created by the authors to enhance the leadership abilities of local girls while providing a training ground for future school counselors to develop their own leadership abilities. The camp participants included 16 rising sixth-grade girls who were potential first-generation college students and were identified by school personnel as possible leaders. The training experiences were framed using the core qualities and components of the ASCA National Model® (American School Counselor Association, 2005). This article describes the processes and outcomes related to leadership training of future school counselors via the GLEC.*

Effectively preparing school counselors-in-training is a multifaceted endeavor. School counselors-in-training will be expected to intervene effectively with students, teachers, parents, and other constituents while demonstrating a thorough and thoughtful understanding of the various milieu in which they and their students live and work. School counseling students must master counseling, consultation, and administrative skills and then integrate these abilities to enhance student learning (Davis, 2004; Schmidt, 2007). Although academic training is critical, experiential opportunities can strengthen school counseling students' classroom learning (Brott, 2006; Rowell & Benschhoff, 2008; Ziff & Beamish, 2004). Engaging students in learning through real-life examples, in which they are allowed to experience both success and failures, can enhance students' professional practice (Heriot, Cook, Matthews, & Simpson, 2007). What follows is a description of a training program, the Girls' Leadership Experience Camp (GLEC), which was designed to address some of the needs of a local community while providing intentional, experiential leadership training for school counseling graduate students.

## SCHOOL COUNSELORS AS LEADERS

As the definition of the role and function of the professional school counselor continues to be refined, the importance of leadership skills for school counselors has been highlighted in the literature (American School Counselor Association, 2005; Davis, 2004; Dollarhide, 2003; Kaffenberger, Murphy, & Bemak, 2006; Lewis & Borunda, 2006). Davis noted that school counselors as leaders are action- and impact-oriented in the school environment. Davis defined leadership as "the process of influencing others to create a shared commitment to a common purpose" (p. 216). This definition includes the following concepts: being mission driven, promoting core values, commitment as opposed to compliance, and shared responsibility.

While we agree that, as leaders, school counselors-in-training benefit from instruction on more traditional competencies associated with leadership, such as strategic planning and motivational, organizational, and visioning skills, our definition of leadership for school counselors is inspired by James Burns' (1978) classic concept of transformational leadership. Burns stated that transformational leadership "occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 20).

Using Burns' (1978) influential theory of transformational leadership as our foundation, we conceptualized what we call *process leadership* as the ability to holistically (i.e., emphasizing the whole and the interdependence of its parts) assess and promote individuals' strengths, while providing opportunities for them to use these abilities in developing and carrying out individual and interdependent goals. This vision of leadership encourages the emergence of skills from the inside out, rather than promoting a top-down, externally oriented view of leadership, which has been criticized by individuals such as Noam Chomsky (2002) as a potentially manipulative construct whereby leaders convince followers to

**Although academic training is critical, experiential opportunities can strengthen school counseling students' classroom learning.**

subordinate themselves to an outside power.

In their study, Dollarhide, Gibson, and Saginak (2008) concluded that successful school counselor leaders (a) took responsibility for leadership, (b) created and followed through on specific goals, (c) found a way to define their unique professional role in the school, (d) grew from challenges, and (e) added new leadership skills to their repertoire. Our view of leadership incorporates the proactive stance described by Dollarhide et al. and emphasizes shared responsibilities as well as building on and improving one's own abilities. As the leadership role for school counselors extends into areas such as program development, social justice and advocacy, educational reform, and professional growth via leadership development (Lewis & Borunda, 2006), we sought to facilitate school counselors-in-training's efficacy as leaders before officially entering the profession.

Because process leadership celebrates leaders' strengths, the core values and activities for the camp were aligned with school counselors' self-identified skills. For example, school counselors-in-training identified group facilitation, media literacy training, conflict management, and creative expression through arts as existing skill sets. Thus, the camp was relationally focused and creatively oriented. As the school counselor trainees were empowered by the acknowledgement of their strengths, they were then able to recognize areas of weakness that might prohibit camp participants from having a well-rounded experience. For example, this particular group of trainees did not have expertise in areas such as physical fitness and nutrition, public speaking, or science and technology, which were all previously identified as important areas of efficacy for the camp participants. Therefore, the need for collaboration became apparent and school counselor trainees recognized the importance of recruiting experts from various communities.

DeVoss and Andrews' (2006) presentation of the Integrative School Counseling Leadership Model promotes many of the qualities associated with process leadership, including leadership emergence from within, personal growth, advocacy, collaboration, and self-awareness. Van Linden and Fertman (1998) further advocated for a focus on self-awareness in leaders. Their definition of leaders describes (both adults and adolescents) who "think for themselves, communicate their thoughts and feelings to others, and help others understand and act on their own beliefs" (p. 17). In keeping with this definition, school counselor trainees' development of efficacy with regard to their own self-understanding naturally leads to the ability to address concerns beyond themselves. Matters outside of personal development can include areas of impact such as those mentioned by the ASCA National Model® (American School

Counselor Association, 2005): advocacy (working for the benefit of others, with their cooperation, and for the strengthening of the profession); collaboration (working effectively and respectfully with other professionals for the good of our clients); and systemic change (understanding the interrelationships among people and subsystems, and realizing the potentially larger implications of our actions).

## **ASCA NATIONAL MODEL AS A FRAMEWORK FOR LEADERSHIP**

The ASCA National Model (2005) was developed to provide the mechanism with which school counselors and school counseling teams will design, coordinate, implement, manage and evaluate their programs for students' success. It provides a framework for the program components, the school counselor's role in implementation, and the underlying philosophies of leadership, advocacy, and systemic change (ASCA, p. 9).

Thus, the ASCA National Model provides a seemingly endless array of opportunities for school counselors to intervene in their school communities. However, the breadth of the model, which is perhaps part of its strength, can also make it seem difficult to conceptualize in actual counseling practice. Bringing life to structural models is an ongoing pedagogical challenge (Heriot et al., 2007; Ziff & Beamish, 2004). Therefore, we attempted to offer for school counseling graduate students an educational experience that relied on a *teach, act, reflect* approach. Our approach is consistent with experiential education qualities identified by the Association of Experiential Education. These qualities include openness to unknown outcomes, promoting relationships and well-being, and focusing on holistic aspects of human beings (Association of Experiential Education, 2008).

In order to ensure the integrity of our leadership interventions, we worked to develop an experience that was relevant to our counselors-in-training as well as the students in our local schools. Lewis and Borunda (2006) indicated that school counselors must be responsive to the needs of the communities they serve. We therefore developed an intervention that served a dual purpose—teaching school counseling graduate students various aspects of leadership while enhancing leadership skills among a group of underrepresented preadolescent girls. Our intervention was the Girls' Leadership Experience Camp, a week-long day camp aimed at enhancing the self-esteem, technological competence, and decision-making skills of rising sixth-grade girls who showed the potential to become successful first-generation college students. The GLEC participants were selected from two local schools and the camp coun-

selors were undergraduate and graduate students, seven of whom were school counselors-in-training.

## NEEDS OF PREADOLESCENT GIRLS

We specifically chose to intervene with young girls for several reasons. First, preadolescent girls face significant stressors as they work to navigate personal, social, educational, and vocational concerns. In general, adolescent girls of all ages encounter issues related to relational aggression, changing bodies, emerging sexuality, and self-esteem concerns (Choate, 2008). In addition to the challenges faced by most emerging adolescents, girls in particular encounter dissonance about their identities as females. According to LeCroy and Daley (2001), females are more likely to wish they had been born male, to feel it is better to be male than female, and to denigrate characteristics that stereotype their gender. Further, as girls mature, they are often socialized into acting “nice,” avoiding conflict, and withdrawing from competition (Simmons, 2003). As their sense of themselves and their worth is narrowed by societal expectations, girls may feel the need to hide their true selves.

As a result of these pressures, girls may learn to measure their status and power in terms of outward appearances and others’ impressions of them (Artz, 2004). To complicate matters further, the social trend toward the sexualization of girls has led to a view of self-worth heavily based on sexual appeal (Choate & Curry, 2009). Choate and Curry noted that objectification of girls may have academic consequences, especially if girls think they are not competent enough and therefore opt out of courses, such as math and science, that require self-empowered beliefs among girls. This restricted view of their own competence clearly has the potential to limit actualization of girls’ talents and capabilities. In some cases, these limitations carry significant implications. For instance, the U.S. Department of Labor (2007) reported that Euro-American women still earn only about 80% of men’s median wages. This figure is complicated further by ethnicity, in that African-American and Latina women typically earn less than Euro-American women.

A variety of factors contribute to this discrepancy, not the least of which is women’s noticeable underrepresentation in fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). A report by the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education (2008) summarizing Title IX stated that only 20–25% of the degrees in physics, computer sciences, and engineering are earned by women. The claim of this coalition is that enforcement of Title IX has been insufficient, and that educational institutions have a responsibility to better prepare girls for

STEM-related exploration and occupations.

The GLEC was created, in part, to assist girls in developing key skills that help ameliorate weaknesses embedded in our societal and educational structures that often lead to disempowering beliefs. At the same time, the GLEC was a strength-based initiative designed to build on the participants’ natural resilience and capabilities. The GLEC was designed to reach girls before the transition to middle school, when social pressures steadily begin to mount (Kent, 2002), in order to strengthen or build a foundation of self-awareness and self-efficacy. Anderson and Choate’s (2008) review of the literature revealed that higher levels of self-esteem can act as protective factors regarding life stressors for adolescent females. The goals of the GLEC were intentionally crafted to help girls develop skills related to leadership and effective communication, personal and social development, self-awareness and acceptance, physical well-being, and science and technology. The GLEC experience was simultaneously deepened by a parallel process of counselors-in-training learning about intentional, process-oriented leadership while modeling and teaching this type of leadership to GLEC participants.

## THE GLEC AS A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TOOL FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS-IN-TRAINING

The GLEC served the dual purpose of developing leadership skills in school counselors-in-training as well as meeting the aforementioned needs of preadolescent girls, also known as the GLEC participants. By addressing personal, social, and academic topics for GLEC participants and by providing hands-on experience for school counselors-in-training relevant to the components of the ASCA National Model (2005), both constituents were engaged in the process leadership model via strengthening skills through experience while sharing these abilities with others.

For the purposes of this article, the mission and goals related to leadership for the GLEC participants are described as a secondary aspect of the GLEC. As a primary leadership development process, we review the particulars related to our work with school counselors-in-training.

### Real-World Leadership Experience for School Counselors-in-Training

The seven school counselors-in-training served as counselors at the GLEC and also took a three-credit course entitled “Girls as Future Leaders” before they participated as counselors in the week-long camp experience. This course involved learning about preadolescent girls through readings and focus groups in a middle school as well as becoming

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familiar with the GLEC curriculum (see Appendix A). While our main hope was that school counselors-in-training would develop their own leadership skills as well as foster such skills in the GLEC participants via process leadership, we were aware that students would need a framework in which to place their knowledge and experiences of the camp. Because school counseling leadership now involves concepts such as “leading program development, promoting advocacy, tackling school reform, taking on numerous roles, and recognizing leadership contexts” (Lewis & Borunda, 2006, p. 406), we utilized the ASCA National Model’s (2005) four components—foundation, delivery system, management system, and accountability—as areas in which process leadership skills could be developed.

Beginning with the foundation of the GLEC, we educated students about the mission of the camp as well as our philosophy of leadership. We also explained to the students the systems of support that were enabling us to carry out the GLEC. Specifically, two students who completed independent studies with us while we were initially conceptualizing the GLEC were invited to interdisciplinary meetings with faculty who were contributing their ideas regarding all aspects of the camp, from funding options to curriculum planning. These two students also completed reviews of literature about adolescent female development and helped review girls’ empowerment programs

The school counselors-in-training who served as counselors at the GLEC also were intimately involved with the delivery system related to the camp. Specifically, students worked in pairs as counselors for pods of four to five girls. In this role, they carried out various functions such as tweaking and implementing the camp curriculum to suit the needs of their GLEC participants and working with girls on group and individual goal-setting for the GLEC experience as well as for life after the camp. They also responded to a myriad of the girls’ needs for safety and physical concerns, belonging, education, conflict resolution, and social/emotional connection and they notified us, the directors of the GLEC, of particular counseling needs for which the girls might need referrals.

In terms of the management system, the students organized communications with the GLEC participants’ parents as well as with faculty who were helping deliver various aspects of the camp curriculum. They consulted directly with us, the GLEC directors. They reviewed and revised daily time schedules and planned each day’s activities within the time-frame they were given. The school counselors-in-training understood that the camp was data driven, and they collected pre-camp data in pairs at each of the GLEC participants’ houses before the GLEC.

They helped assemble post-camp assessment packets. Finally, they participated in daily assessment of the GLEC participants’ experiences using three qualitative questions at the end of each day.

All assessments were self-report instruments and they included the Behavior Assessment System for Children, 2nd Ed., Self-Report Form (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004); the Multidimensional Self-Concept Scale (Bracken, 1992); and the Brief Multidimensional Life Satisfaction Scale (Seligson, Huebner, & Valois, 2003). Additional measures were created by the authors. One was the Girls Self-Efficacy Questionnaire, a 25-item instrument developed to assess beliefs about the ability to engage in certain behaviors (i.e., working in a group, building a robot, and engaging in physical activity). The other was titled Three Questions for Formative Evaluation, which included, “What component of the camp experience today worked best for you and why? What component of the camp experience today did not work for you and why? What are you hoping to experience tomorrow at camp?”

Brott (2006) stated, “A pragmatic, ‘learn by doing’ approach throughout the training program will provide counselors-in-training with the necessary knowledge, skills, and application for demonstrating the effectiveness (i.e., accountability) of the school counseling program” (p. 180). Students learned by doing throughout the GLEC in many ways. As mentioned above, they collected camp data and daily qualitative data. They shared this feedback, as well as their own impressions about how the day’s activities were going with us, at an appointed time each day. Their direct experience with all facets of the camp, and most importantly with the GLEC participants themselves, coupled with their academic training, culminated in a training experience for students that also served a need in the community.

By providing school counselors-in-training with specific experiences that would help them develop leadership skills while at the same time addressing each facet of the ASCA National Model (2005), we were able to ameliorate some deficiencies, highlighted in the literature, about school counseling programs. Specifically, Kaffenberger et al. (2006) noted that there is often a discrepancy between the curriculum of school counseling training programs and the reality of the school counseling role, which requires effective school counselors to serve as systemic change agents and leaders in the educational system. Additionally, Studer, Oberman, and Womack (2006) highlighted the necessity of improved accountability and assessment skills for school counselors. We, as counselor educators, modeled the importance of leadership skills as well as solid assessment and accountability protocol within the ASCA framework.

## GLEC Overview: Objectives and Outcomes

In addition to leadership training, the camp was intended to promote self-awareness, healthy lifestyles, and interest in science and technology. The camp was offered during the summer of 2006 for girls from local schools. Participants were recruited through school counselor referrals, which were based on observed leadership abilities. Sixteen rising sixth-grade girls from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, who were potential first-generation college students, participated in the camp. Camp participants included 7 girls who self-identified as Caucasian, 4 as African American, 3 as Latina, and 2 as biracial or multiracial.

In terms of daily happenings, GLEC participants engaged in lessons and activities regarding physical well-being, the exploration of science, and the development of technological competence. In addition, each day of the camp focused on a specific theme-based module. These themes were titled (a) “Getting Real with You and Me! Building Healthy Relationships,” (b) “Shout It Out! Finding and Using Our Authentic Voices,” (c) “Loving the Skin We’re in! Self Care and Acceptance,” (d) “Working It Out! Decision Making and Problem Solving,” and (e) “Making Our Way! Envisioning the Future.” In corresponding order, the five modules enabled girls to (a) develop effective interpersonal communication skills and learn about elements of healthy relationships, (b) receive training designed to develop their decision-making skills and public speaking abilities, (c) critique media images of women and participate in wellness-based activities and projects that honor self-acceptance and healthy choices, (d) explore their beliefs and values while learning the steps involved in mediating and responding to problems, and (e) participate in goal-setting experiences based on personal visioning of dreams and goals and gain exposure to new possibilities and educational/career options.

Pre and post data were collected from GLEC participants and their parents, measuring concepts such as self-efficacy, behavior, life satisfaction, and physical well-being. Data from counselors-in-training included qualitative questioning and course evaluations. The data analyses indicated that the girls felt that camp successfully met its original objectives, and that the camp counselors, who obtained course credit for their summer training and experience, benefited from their training and work with the GLEC participants.

## COUNSELOR FOCUS GROUP OUTCOMES

Five of the seven counseling students, referred to from here on in this section as counselors, participated in a focus group discussion 2 years after the

camp to discuss their experiences with the GLEC. Although we originally intended to interview the counselors approximately 6 months after the camp, we faced several challenges when trying to arrange our meeting. Several students moved out of the area, one had a baby, and others were committed to their ongoing graduate training. We decided that although the passage of time would inevitably alter their recollections, we believed that the counselors’ post-camp professional experience would enable them to provide us with thoughtful and realistic answers to our questions regarding their preparation and training.

We provided our definition of process leadership and reviewed the qualities infused throughout the ASCA National Model (leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change) as well as its four components (foundation, delivery system, management system, and accountability). We then asked what the counselors had learned from the camp experience about the four qualities and four components associated with the ASCA National Model. We offered clarification, such as, “The delivery system includes issues such as curriculum development and delivery, responding to individual needs, and referring to other resources,” when the counselors had questions.

After we asked the initial prompt regarding each of the qualities and components we let the counselors talk to us and amongst each other until they provided no new information or observations regarding that particular area. We then asked, “What are some ways we could have helped you learn more about this topic?” We again allowed the counselors provide their observations and reflections until the topic seemed exhausted. We frequently asked additional probing and clarifying questions, attempting to ensure that we were hearing the depth and breadth of the counselors’ experiences. The focus group session was audio and videotaped, and the researchers also took notes during the session. A review of the data revealed the following themes, deduced from a constant comparative content analysis.

### Leadership, Advocacy, Collaboration, and Systemic Change

Leadership, collaboration, and advocacy lead to systemic change (ASCA, 2005). Table 1 includes a summary of what the counselors felt they learned about these qualities from the GLEC as well as what they felt could have enhanced their learning.

### Foundation, Delivery System, Management System, and Accountability

The school counselors-in-training also provided feedback regarding their experience of each component of the ASCA National Model (2005) during

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**Table 1. Leadership, Advocacy, Collaboration, and Systemic Change Skills Learned and Needed**

| Skills Learned  | Experiences Needed to Enhance Learning   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to work through complex problems</li> <li>• How to model problem solving and teamwork in collaboration with counselors</li> <li>• How to utilize counseling skills with diverse girls with varying needs</li> <li>• How to model acceptance, which helped teasing among GLEC participants to cease and group identity to form</li> <li>• How to collaborate with other professionals for the GLEC participants' benefit</li> <li>• How to use power respectfully with young girls who admire counselors</li> <li>• How to help young people critique social systems (i.e., media) that impact their lives</li> <li>• How to understand the cultural context for the GLEC participants via readings and data gathering in homes</li> <li>• How to communicate practically with parents</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience more team-building opportunities for counselors before and during the GLEC experience</li> <li>• Have more public direction at GLEC from GLEC directors</li> <li>• Gain more information about how curricula were chosen</li> <li>• Have more understanding of inter-professional work carried out pre-GLEC</li> <li>• Become involved earlier in the planning process for the GLEC</li> </ul> |

the GLEC. They again indicated areas in which they felt well prepared, and several instances in which they would have welcomed more instruction and involvement.

**Foundation.** First, counselors shared their observations about the foundation of the camp. They indicated that they felt comfortable with and valued in the process of facilitating the vision of the GLEC. They learned about the complexity of creating mission statements and visions and, as a result, now understood the importance of thoughtfully defining a vision or mission statement for their own endeavors. They also observed that professionals have varying degrees of awareness and competence regarding any given intervention. This seemed reassuring and also surprising to the counselors, some of whom were facing for the first time the fallibility of trained professionals.

While the counselors understood the mission of the GLEC created by the directors, they did not feel they would have been prepared to develop the mission themselves without a more thorough macro view of their interventions in the context of the school system. They felt their experience could have been improved by having resources like a binder, outlining the specific goals and activities of each day. They also wanted more information about what was acceptable to say to the girls about the GLEC's mission and what was not public information, especially when

the media came to visit. This concern arose from the GLEC directors' request to avoid identifying the GLEC participants as "at risk" or "disadvantaged." Finally, the counselors wondered if it they would have been more effective if they had served as GLEC counselors closer to the end of their counseling training program, rather than near the beginning.

**Delivery system.** The counselors felt they learned a significant amount about adolescent development and cultural considerations through the course readings and discussions. They found that the readings, as well as their visits to the GLEC participants' homes, helped them avoid pathologizing or stereotyping the GLEC participants. The counselors realized that the GLEC participants truly saw them as role models and that the power associated with this role must be taken seriously and treated with great respect. The counselors found that it was important to nurture the girls in small groups (i.e., pods of four or five) for GLEC participants to feel comfortable with the large group. They also realized they needed to be active rather than passive in helping the girls work through concerns and conflicts.

The primary recommendation the counselors made regarding the delivery system relevant to the GLEC concerned the reality of poverty faced by the campers' at varying degrees. Several of the campers lived in unstable housing areas, and the counselors were occasionally taken aback by the girls' living

arrangements as well as their lack of access to reasonable resources. Although visiting the girls' homes was invaluable experience, the counselors would have welcomed more opportunities to discuss the reality of poverty as well as to process their own personal and professional reactions to the reality of the girls' lives.

**Management system.** The counselors noted that the GLEC was well organized with a strong foundation allowed for events to run smoothly. They indicated that the schedule was detailed and gave them a structure from which to operate. They felt comfortable with their roles and understood what was expected of them and the campers.

The counselors did not note anything that could have been improved about the management system. However, because all of the counselors were not directly involved in initial discussions and in ultimate planning sessions, it is possible that they were somewhat unaware of the multiple levels of planning and attention to detail that were required before the GLEC began. This lack of awareness could have led to uninformed evaluative comments, both positive and negative, during the focus group. In retrospect, we would likely involve future counselors in a more detailed training regarding the GLEC management, including a brief history of how the GLEC was originally envisioned as well as the pragmatic considerations, such as liability and budget, that ultimately shaped the format of the camp.

**Accountability.** The counselors noted that the daily feedback given by the girls as well as the pretest and posttest measures ensured that the GLEC participants' needs would be assessed and met to the best of our abilities. They stated that the pretests and posttests as well as the daily questions for the girls helped sharpen the focus of the overall GLEC as well as each day's activities during the experience. They therefore learned about formative evaluation (evaluation completed during the experience that is then used to influence the ongoing operation of the camp) as well as summative evaluation (evaluation completed after the experience). The counselors' ongoing awareness of the emphasis on accountability was a powerful recollection for them. They observed that they understood the importance of attending to goals and outcomes throughout GLEC activities. They also noted that their involvement in the data-gathering process made the idea of accountability more vivid for them.

Counselors did mention that having access to the data would have helped them review the progress of the GLEC for themselves. They would have liked to have known, on an ongoing basis, how the campers were perceiving their effectiveness as counselors in addition to how the campers were feeling about other aspects of the camp experience. Several coun-

selsors also mentioned that because the data-gathering and analysis processes can be complicated, they would appreciate as much exposure as possible to these aspects of the camp. They also recommended that leaving notes and suggestions for subsequent counselors would assist future counselors in improving all aspects of the GLEC experience.

Our final question for the counselors was, "What will you take with you from this experience to inform your practice as a professional school counselor?" The counselors affirmed that they would recognize and honor the importance of collaborating with various professionals to meet the needs of their populations served. They wanted to continue inquiring of children with whom they worked about what their lives are like on a daily basis. They understood and respected the importance of being intentional and data driven in practice. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they wanted to honor the fact that "kids are the experts on their own experience. We are collaborators with them."

## CONCLUSION

Through the GLEC, school counselors-in-training developed process leadership skills. Counselors-in-training agreed that they were able to learn firsthand about the qualities that permeate the ASCA National Model (2005), including leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change. They also indicated an experientially based understanding of the four components of the ASCA National Model, including a program's foundation, delivery system, management system, and accountability measures.

School counselors-in-training identified areas of skill that could have been developed better for them throughout the GLEC experience. These improvements were connected to both a big-picture understanding of the program as well as gaining access to more specific details for intervention and follow-up.

As the directors of the GLEC project, we recognize limitations to our work. As with any project targeted at meeting community needs while simultaneously training students, the pilot experience provides fertile training ground for all parties. We learned how to navigate the occasionally rough waters of intensive planning, delivery, and follow-through for a new endeavor such as the GLEC. We came to understand the value and power associated with interprofessional collaboration as well as partnership with our students and GLEC participants alike.

We are embarking on the second GLEC and are pleased to have received funding through two awards at our university so that we can sponsor the GLEC again. We hope to recruit school counselors-in-training in advance, include them in the planning for all aspects of the GLEC, and plan for their

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involvement in follow-up data collection and analysis. We expect this will significantly improve the students' learning experience. We also expect to hold a focus group with the counselors less than one year after the ending of the second GLEC, as opposed to two years. We recognize, also, that the focus group format itself has limitations (Krueger & Casey, 2008). Although focus groups can quickly allow participants' opinions to surface, the participants are revealing just that—opinions—rather than their actual practices. What they say they believe and what they actually do can be very different. Furthermore, participants are vulnerable to the phenomenon of group think, in which participants agree with what others have said, even if the majority opinion is inconsistent with their own beliefs (Berg, 2006). In our case, our training in group counseling helped us to clarify, probe, and question effectively. However, we also acknowledge our own desires for certain outcomes could have shaped our facilitation of the group.

In conclusion, we believe that by involving school counselors in-training in the planning, implementation, and follow-up assessment of the GLEC, we provided them with real-world experiences that can inform their future work and impact as school counselors. Heeding Conner and Strobel's (2007) reminder that today's youth are tomorrow's leaders, we are hopeful that our students are now better able to envision and carry out programs that meet the needs of many children through innovative paths. We believe the counselors-in-training benefited from an experientially based understanding of how to infuse the ASCA National Model (2005) into their work as future school counselors. Consistent with Roach et al.'s (1999) view that training young leaders is most effective using a process-oriented, collective experience approach as opposed to "individual, competitive, and incremental" (p. 21) models, we were able to immerse the counselors in leadership skill training via the GLEC experience. ■

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## APPENDIX A

### Sample Resources for Counselors-in-Training Regarding Adolescent Girls

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