

## Practice into Policy and Policy into Practice: An Interview with Dr. Carol Dahir

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### Abstract

A leader in the field of school counseling and school counselor education, Dr. Carol Dahir has engaged in policy development at state, national, and international levels. Through her work, she has served as an advocate for the profession and its advancement. Dr. Dahir co-developed the American School Counselor Association National Standards for School Counseling Programs (1997) alongside Dr. Chari Campbell, which became guiding principles for the profession. Through her work, Dr. Dahir believes strongly in the implementation of moving policy into practice, highlighting this as a major theme of her reflection on our interview. The author offers implications for school counselors and counselor educators.

**Keywords:** policy, practice, school counseling, leadership, Carol Dahir

Effective school counselors and comprehensive school counseling programs are fundamental to providing optimal service to students (Dahir & Stone, 2006). As school counseling practice continues to evolve in response to our ever-changing world, school counseling policy must evolve to reflect the needs of practitioners and students. Effective advocacy for school counseling practice and policy includes an understanding of the history of school counseling and a vision for the future of the profession (Dahir, 2009; Dollarhide et al., 2008). A pioneer in the field of school counseling, school counseling leadership, and school counselor education is Dr. Carol Dahir. Dr. Dahir has engaged in policy and advocacy at school, state, national, and international levels, serving as an agent for change for school counseling and for the benefit of student outcomes. Throughout her career, Dr. Dahir has made substantial contributions to the advancement of school counseling. Dr. Dahir co-developed the initial American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Standards for School Counseling Programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) alongside Dr. Chari Campbell, which have become guiding principles for the profession. Emphasizing the importance of the school counselor's role in advocating for policy change, Dr. Dahir believes strongly in the need to develop policy that directly informs school counseling practice.

Dr. Carol Dahir recently retired as department chair of the School Counseling Department at the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) and is currently a part-time faculty member. Dr. Dahir earned a master's in education and school counseling, a professional diploma in leadership, and a doctorate in educational leadership. Before her work in counselor education, she was an elementary school teacher, middle and high school counselor, and district-level supervisor of school

counseling and student support services. Dr. Dahir described her experiences as a school counselor to be transformative for her school counseling and leadership identities. It was perhaps in her school counseling experiences where her expansive view of school counseling originated and has since anchored the leadership and advocacy that are now hallmarks of her career.

While completing her advanced degrees in leadership, Dr. Dahir served as a member of the ASCA Board and held a pivotal role in the research and creation of the initial ASCA National Standards (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). Additionally, Dr. Dahir has served on the governing board for the National Career Development Association and is a past president of the New York State School Counselor Association (NYSSCA). Throughout her career, Dr. Dahir has trained practitioners nationally and internationally regarding culturally responsive school counseling, school counselor-principal collaboration, and the effective design and implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs. She holds numerous honors and awards for her contributions to the school counseling profession, including two Fulbright Scholarships in Japan and Turkey and a Life Career Achievement Award from the NYSSCA.

For her dissertation, Dr. Carol Dahir collaborated with Dr. Chari Campbell to research and create The National Standards for School Counseling Programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) for ASCA. In addition to the ASCA National Standards, Dr. Dahir became involved in the Transformed School Counselor (TSC) movement where she was fortunate to be mentored by Dr. Patricia Martin and Dr. Carolyn Stone. Dr. Dahir developed the school counselor education program at NYIT and credits her experience in the TSC movement to be instrumental to this endeavor. Together, Stone and Dahir authored three editions of *The Transformed School Counselor* (2015), which outlines school counselors' roles and tasks (e.g., leadership, advocacy, data collection, collaboration, and counseling) for the effective application of socially just, student-focused comprehensive school counseling programs. Additionally, Dr. Stone and Dr. Dahir co-authored *School Counselor Accountability: A MEASURE of Student Success* (2011), to guide practitioners in action research and data-informed decision-making. Dr. Dahir's work continues to be highly relevant as school communities and school counselors navigate the persisting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. School counselors' adaptability and role clarity are critical to overcoming pandemic barriers (e.g., technology limitations, delivery obstacles, time constraints, etc.) and meeting students' social-emotional and academic needs (Savitz-Romer et al., 2021). As the world continues to evolve, Dr. Dahir's contributions to the field of school counseling continue to guide

school counselors' identity development and comprehensive school counseling program delivery.

The aim of this interview with Dr. Dahir is to provide readers of the *Journal of School-Based Counseling Policy and Evaluation* with a perspective on the evolution of school counseling policy from the lens of a leading practitioner, advocate, and educator in the field. Throughout the following interview, Dr. Dahir reflects on her engagement in school counseling policy change and advocacy for the profession. She describes how policy impacted her work as a school counselor and how, in her counselor educator and leadership roles, she hopes to guide novice school counselors toward their own advocacy work for the benefit of school counseling and the students they serve. Following the transcribed interview, the author provides reflections on the interview experience and offers implications for school counseling practitioners and school counselor educators. To ensure accuracy, Dr. Dahir reviewed and approved the transcribed interview and manuscript.

### Interview with Dr. Dahir

The author interviewed Dr. Dahir on August 4, 2021 and August 8, 2021.

**AUTHOR (AU, Jennifer Niles):** *What led you to the field of school counseling?*

**Carol Dahir (CD):** I'd like to say it was planned and intentional, but it was more or less serendipitous. I was a psychology major as an undergraduate and graduated with a dual major of social sciences and education, and was hired as a second-grade teacher. As I needed a master's degree, I was very interested in student services and higher education and I was looking at career services, wellness services, and student activities. Nothing got me excited until I started to explore master's degrees in counseling. I finished my program and was employed in a school district as a junior high school counselor in a school on split session. Much of my work as a counselor was individual counseling work. My department chair saw our roles in a very traditional sense with little opportunity to be creative. I did that for two years, and then I had the opportunity to apply for a middle school counseling position in a new seventh-grade center, as the district was on overload, the way many of the districts were in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The principal of the seventh-grade center was known as a mover and shaker. I was excited to take the position as we had almost carte blanche to build the program. That experience was when I really understood how to work with 450 kids in a way that makes a difference. I learned that school counselors can go into the classroom, run groups, utilize socio-drama and role play, in addition to individual counseling. The administrator that I partnered with had a vision; she knew what she wanted to accomplish with her kids, she knew she only had them for a year. So, we were just going to go full speed ahead to provide any kind of an opportunity we could, and we had that center going for about four years. I went back into a high school after that time, but those experiences in the seventh-grade center taught me that school coun-

seling was more than the way I was taught in graduate school or observed in my first two years in a junior high school. I began to see that by building a foundation and having some goals and a purpose as a school counselor made a lot of sense. What we take for granted now was not the norm at that time.

**AU:** *How did your work as a school counselor evolve toward school counseling leadership?*

**CD:** I was working as a school counselor for eight or nine years and felt like the district that I was in didn't share a vision the way the principal and I had for those few years in the seventh-grade center. Nobody wanted to change. So, I found myself going back for a degree in leadership with the hope of becoming a district supervisor. The great thing about the leadership program was that it allowed us to focus in on the areas that we wanted to impact, and I really wanted to do something about shaking up school counseling.

During that time, I met someone in class who was the incoming president for the New York State School Counselor Association. It was he who inspired me to see the bigger picture of school counseling; he was a district director and he would talk about the things he was doing to develop a district-wide program. It was he who encouraged me to become involved with the [NYSSCA] Board as a regional representative. Those years changed my life, working with people across the state who shared a similar passion, and helped me begin to understand that the school counseling position was much more than a job, it just wasn't something you did. It was about creating positive change in students' lives.

**AU:** *What was it about the work of school counseling and leadership that made you most passionate?*

**CD:** This leads me into the next part of my journey. As I finished my degree in education leadership, I became president of our state association [NYSSCA]. And that's what connected me to ASCA. When I finished undergrad, I didn't intend to become a school counselor, I kind of fell into it. Actually, I didn't know what a school counselor did. But once I found like-minded people who were as passionate and cared as much as I did, I wanted to stay in the field. They're the ones who opened up doors of opportunity for me in the 1990s when I served on the ASCA Board. This was during the time when all of the academic organizations were given funds to develop academic standards under the Clinton administration.

Getting connected to NYSSCA, serving in a supervisory role in 1989 as a district director, and then completing my doctorate all ignited my passion. This was coupled with the ASCA Standards movement in 1997, and then we had the Education Trust initiate the Transformed School Counseling (TSC) movement. These were parallel. The TSC movement introduced the concepts of leadership, advocacy, data-driven practice, social justice, and collaboration into our work. We would soon begin to use these concepts coupled with the ASCA National Standards, which were focused on student outcomes; TSC was focused on the counselor using their skills on behalf of students. Then, in the subsequent revised ASCA National Models (2005; 2012; 2019), the concepts

became embedded and it's now seamless. I believe ASCA is doing a great job of keeping these beliefs and vernacular going.

**AU:** *You played a pivotal role in the creation of the National Standards for School Counseling Programs. Can you share what it meant to be part of that?*

**CD:** When I was on the ASCA Board we realized if we didn't create standards, someone else was going to do it for us, which was the age-old problem in school counseling. We mulled it over and we decided we needed to develop national standards similar to what the academic educational associations were doing. This was around 1996 and, at the time, I was in a doctoral program for leadership. I was excited when Mary Gehrke, the ASCA President at that time, asked me if I would head up the Standards project. I looked at her and said, 'Mary, I'm in a doctoral program and I need to get my dissertation done.' She said, 'Well, why can't you do this research for your dissertation?' And so, I met with my advisor and said 'I know I've been working on a supervision theme, and I do believe that supervision is important to school counseling. But I have this opportunity to help move the profession forward.' My dissertation chair was a visionary and she said, 'Go for it.' So, it meant taking a step back, re-writing my proposal, and working on a plan with my committee and with ASCA to conduct the research to develop the National Standards.

We utilized survey research, partnered with ACT which offered to help with the scantron of the thousands of surveys sent out, conducted the research and, with my advisor, we were able to identify themes using factor analysis. Chari Campbell and I worked with the themes which evolved into three domains and 27 standards based on the survey items. At that time, Chari was the Elementary journal editor for ASCA; she was a prolific writer. I was just a newbie at the time and just trying to understand the research. So, after drafting the original National Standards and conducting field reviews with every state school counselor association and ASCA state and national leaders, they were published in 1997. We had to have the Standards ready for ASCA in May, just before the end-of-June conference. I was juggling both the Standards and my dissertation simultaneously. My biggest fear was that my dissertation defense would get put off or it wouldn't pass, and then we couldn't publish the research behind the standards. But, by June of 1997, we had a solid draft of the Standards, the three domains of academic, career, personal-social, and the competencies.

The initial Standards were used until ASCA revised them in 2014 and shifted the title to Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success (ASCA, 2014). By the time the first ASCA Model came out in 2003, we already were advocating that we needed to revise the Standards because of outdated language. We needed to follow the new counseling initiatives and the new education initiatives. So, the next shift, which made perfect sense, was to go from Standards that gave us a foundation to a model that would give the program a structure.

Counselors began to embrace working with the standards-based program to the best of their abilities. Until we saw what

a difference it was going to make with students, I don't think the profession caught on fire. And I think we ignited something in the late 1990s. Then the ASCA Model came out in 2003 and was updated every couple of years, and now, just recently, the revision of the Mindsets and Behaviors. There's no school counselor out there who doesn't know about the ASCA Model and Standards. And that makes it exciting, because we can see a whole profession moving in a really positive direction and shifting to improve outcomes for students.

**AU:** *How would you define policy in the context of school counseling?*

**CD:** I think of school counseling as part of education, and for school counseling, education policy really evolves at the state level. There's never been a school counseling policy at the federal level. ASCA has tried over the years, but because I don't think we'll ever see policy at the U.S. Department of Education, policy has to be driven by the state. In the early 2000s, some of the state departments of education were first in the nation to put the ASCA National Standards into their school counseling regulations. In most of our states, we have some kind of regulatory language that specifies what school counselors need to do for practice, how school counselors are prepared, and what the certification or licensure process is. This exists in 50 states, the District of Columbia, and probably in our territories, but there is no national vision to link it together.

After the ASCA National Model was published, in the mid-2000s, we were doing a lot of school counselor training regarding comprehensive school counseling programming in different states including Delaware, Tennessee, and New Jersey. Other states followed suit and put policies into place at the state level. Using the ASCA National Standards and the domains of academic, personal, and career development, policymakers updated the roles and tasks of school counselors. It seems that unless there is a state-level office that oversees school counseling, school counseling programs typically are managed alone at the district level. Most of our districts get their policy from the states' departments of education and then the school boards develop the local policy, and enforce local procedures in practice.

There is much that has evolved and gives us a lot of hope. After I got off the ASCA board and started to work in higher education, I began to pay close attention to my own state of New York. We started in the early 2000s to try and get our regulations changed. The last time New York state school counseling regulations were updated was in 1978. Finally, we were able to get them updated in 2017. So, there is hope for policy change. It took us from 2003 to 2014 to get the attention of the state department of education. I was the past president of the New York State School Counseling Association and we went to the New York State Capitol in Albany. We lobbied, we wrote, we protested, we did everything we could. We had tried in the past to get comprehensive school counseling in New York, even developing a state model, but it went nowhere. What is not mandated becomes 'good intentions.' So, we persisted, and finally in 2014, the New York state education department hosted an advisory group summit meet-

ing. Two hundred and fifty counselors came together and we were able to propose a new set of regulations that evolved over the next couple of years. And I was fortunate because I was included in many of those state regulatory meetings as a representative of counselor education. By the middle of 2017, we had regulations that were approved and became the amended/revised scope of practice, preparation, and credentialing by the Board of Regents in July 2017, with implementation taking effect in 2019.

The changes meant every school building was required to have a comprehensive program and every student must have access to a certified school counselor. Every school must deliver a school counseling curriculum. Every student in grades six through 12 must have an annual individual progress review one-on-one with the school counselor. And, every school counselor must deliver more direct services than indirect. Since 2019, we have seen significant change across the state of New York, including in the value and perception that principals have of a school counseling program. We've conducted surveys of principals and counselors, and the data revealed improved consensus around school counselor priorities, practices and perceptions. The new policy seems to be affecting change. I've been working closely with New York City Public Schools, and every school building has begun to develop a comprehensive program including a school counseling mission and vision; the school counselors are mapping their programs, and a curriculum template is in place to build a city-wide curriculum. It took us fourteen years, but we now have more elements of the ASCA National Model in place. Finally, there are now some state officials that have a vested interest. And we're now also seeing more school counselors hired at the elementary level.

I believe that with the publication of the latest ASCA National Model (2019) and the revised the Mindset and Behavior Standards, ASCA could be in a position to bring every state department of education together to examine policy and practice across the fifty states. That would be an amazing opportunity to learn from each other. So much could happen if there's the ability to bring states together, have a dialogue about policy and practice, and envision the future of school counseling.

**AU:** *In addition to your work at state and national levels, you have worked a great deal with school counselors internationally. Can you share about your international work with school counseling?*

**CD:** The ASCA National Standards (1997) and the early editions of the ASCA National Model (2003, 2005) became more widespread in their adoption and application across the United States and ultimately crossed borders and continents, including in Japan, the Philippines, and Turkey, which have school counselor positions in public and private schools. My love of travel and exploring different cultures and educational systems motivated me to agree to my first invitation abroad in 2006. I worked with the Japanese Association of Counseling Science and presented ten workshops in less than two weeks on the topic of school counselor accountability. This experience was followed by an invitation the following fall to visit

the University of Iceland's School Counseling and Career Development department, where I spent several days working with graduate students and local counselors on school counselor accountability through a career development lens.

In 2007, one of my Turkish school counseling students at NYIT wanted to host a group of NYIT school counseling graduate students at his former university in Istanbul. Our hope was that it would build a bridge of understanding for the NYIT students to immerse themselves in a culture unlike their own. I was able to develop and secure approval for a two-week study abroad course entitled Counseling and Cultural Competence in a Global Society. Over the next seven years, this course was hosted annually by several different organizations and universities. Through a Fulbright Specialist opportunity that spring semester, I was able to spend a month at Ege University in Turkey working with the counselor education faculty on school counseling initiatives.

Since 2009, another ongoing project has been my work with the School Counselors' Circle of the Philippines and the Association of Psychological and Educational Counselors of the Asia-Pacific Region (APECA). The Philippines has school counseling positions in public and private schools across the country. School counselors are trained at the master's level and also must take a licensing exam. Throughout our work together, APECA developed National Standards based on the ASCA Standards, introduced the Mindsets and Behaviors, addressed school counselor accountability, and is looking to develop a model for school counselors to deliver to meet the needs of children.

Additionally, I spent two Fulbright Specialist experiences in 2010 and 2011 at Ochanomizu University in Tokyo. When the opportunity to study in Turkey was no longer possible, I reached out to my colleague at Ochanomizu University, and we created a two-week co-teaching model for preservice master's-level and doctoral-level counseling students. Once again, this experience would allow my students to fully immerse themselves in a culture unlike their own and understand the universal applications of counseling in schools. Although the term school counselor is widely used in Japan, it tends to be a more clinical model of therapeutic intervention for students of high needs. Together, we were able to host two different summer experiences in 2016 and 2018, and Ochanomizu students journeyed to New York in 2017. This provided students at NYIT and at Ochanomizu with the opportunity to learn more about each other and about varying models of school counseling around the world. With the continuously changing demographics across our nation, what better way to gain a deep understanding of human nature, children, and their families than by engaging in experiences that heighten a commitment to cultural responsiveness. I have been fortunate to have many of these experiences and even more fortunate to have been able to share them with my students.

**AU:** *What suggestions do you have for practitioners and counselor educators who are interested in contributing to policy change?*

**CD:** I think the first place to start for policy is for state departments of education to recognize that there's been a lot of change in the field. Again, it is not just 1997 and it's not just 2003. We are now on the fourth edition of the ASCA National Model and we now have new Mindsets and Behaviors. ASCA continues to look forward. I think large state departments of education also need to look forward in the context of what students need. If their students need a broader span of development around academic, college and career readiness, and social-emotional learning (SEL), then this is the time for them to go back to their regulations or policy and identify what is needed in their state beyond the ASCA National Model and Mindset and Behavior Standards. So, I think the first thing state departments need to do is to examine their current policies around school counseling, practice, certification, and preparation. When were they last updated? Do they reflect the current body of knowledge? What is their state's vision? What is needed to change in policy for the next five to seven years?

To your question about practitioners, some of it depends on the state policy and the district policy to what they need to know and be able to do. Often, policymakers and administrators grew up with a guidance counselor mindset, not a school counselor, a reactive model, not a proactive model. Many don't understand that school counselors can be proactive, and that there are reasons to put them on the school leadership team. So, to me, it's multi-layered. You have your state department of education imposing regulations and policies, you have your districts trying to figure out how to make them into procedures. And at the building level, you have practitioners who now need to re-educate their building administrators. We are on our third set of Standards, and we are on our fourth comprehensive Model, and we need to make this work for kids.

For counselor educators, changing policy means changing practice. And if practice changes, higher education needs to change. The curriculum for school counselor education should be aligned with the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and ASCA's school counselor competencies. Newly graduating school counselors should be well-versed in what the state expectations are for school counseling programs.

**AU:** *As you reflect on your experience and the evolution of school counseling, what school counseling trends do you anticipate carrying into the future?*

**CD:** Past trends have really embedded school counselors in college and career readiness. For so long, we were so concerned about the graduation rate, and now we've shifted our focus. Now, it's about ensuring every young person, at least from grades six through 12, has an educational and career plan that matches their future dreams. That should continue to be a priority. And I think that's where some of the international trends are. It is crucial that we consider social justice in terms of school counseling. I'm going to suggest that we broaden our understanding of post-secondary opportunities, whatever they are, whether it's military, apprenticeship, career in tech, programs, college for one year, two years, four

years, a doctorate. I think since the late 1990s, we've levitated our goals and our vision for kids to make sure every student has a successful future. From a policy standpoint, it can be 51 different policies with a common goal and a common agenda.

**AU:** *How can counselor educators prepare the next generation of school counselors?*

**CD:** When we talk about preparing this next generation, it's more than CACREP and it's more than ASCA. We can look at what CACREP expects, and look at the school counselor competencies from ASCA, and put the two together. Together is definitely more powerful than either of them independently. I think then state departments of education must look at what knowledge and skills our graduate students need to be leaders and advocates, collaborators, team players, use data, and then move everything in that direction so that all K-12 students benefit. If leadership is not taught in a course, then it better be embedded across five or six courses. Leadership should be a skill that graduate students acquire throughout. As school counselors, we need to step up and speak up on behalf of our students. I think that we need to make sure that all of those skills are clearly embedded in our coursework.

I think every school counselor preparation program should have a course in comprehensive school counseling for the experience of designing, developing, implementing and evaluating a comprehensive school counseling program. Every program should have a course regarding students' special needs. We need to have our counseling students well-versed in K-12 students with special needs diagnoses, and students who have experienced crisis or trauma, as we never know when or where the next crisis is going to come from. Additionally, we all should have a very well-developed understanding of post-secondary opportunities. School counselors-in-training need coursework that focuses on how we get our students to take their career development knowledge, career planning knowledge, and then know how to apply it by the time they leave high school. Even if students leave high school undecided, school counselors can equip them with a pathway for how to eventually figure it out. If students know how to explore opportunities, then being undecided is okay. Additionally, every counselor education program should have a research course that includes not just the depth of research, but also action research. School counselors-in-training need to learn how to use data in practice. A practitioner in the building isn't going to spend time reading journals to figure out if their interventions are working, but teaching them some action research is important for accountability.

Two years ago, I would have been that person who questions if we need a class in trauma-informed counseling. After our collective experience in trauma as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important for all of us to understand trauma-informed counseling. We want to make sure that school counselors are prepared for issues that affect children and families. I also think we should be doing a better job of family support. Sometimes in our schools, if there's a social worker, school counselors will delegate family engagement to the social worker, but I think school counselors definitely need

coursework. Again, it could be embedded in working with families, guardians, and parents because our kids come from so many different family guardianship configurations. It's not that we have to be the expert, and we are not there to give therapy. But we can provide that first level of intervention until the family member or the child can begin to figure out what level of support are they going to need.

I think that many counselor education programs are starting to think about what other knowledge and skills the next generation needs. I think in every state the school counseling profession should consider a consistent requirement for ongoing professional development. For example, the state departments of education should enforce that, after every three to five years, school counselors should have to complete a specified number of professional development programs around topics that are current, because school counselors need to stay current.

**AU:** *What do you feel most optimistic about for the future of school counseling and school counseling policy?*

**CD:** If this were 30 years ago, some of us were thinking that if things didn't shake up quick, we were going to be a dying profession. At that time, nobody seemed to be listening. I definitely feel optimistic as so many positive actions have moved us forward. The other thing we need to do is figure out how to do a better job of getting the attention of not just lawmakers, but also the policy-suggesting organizations like The Education Trust, the American Educational Research Association, and others that have a vision for the bigger picture of education and can help our profession to stay current. We should always be embedding current education-related issues into our counselor preparation programs. I think we need to be optimistic about the future and use our leadership skills to get other collaborators to be part of the team, especially school administrators and school leaders. In the state of New York, principals are beginning to understand and see outcomes and value of school counseling.

### Discussion

This interview offers readers the opportunity to understand a school counseling leader's perspective on the evolution of school counseling policy and its impact on the profession of school counseling. Throughout the interview, Dr. Dahir provided insight into school counseling policy and practice from multiple viewpoints including practitioner, leader in policy and advocacy, and counselor educator. After reviewing the transcript, Dr. Dahir identified the theme of using practice to inform policy and implementing policy into practice. Dr. Dahir's identification of this theme underscores her trust in the work of school counselors. As school counselors encounter the daily needs of their students and school communities, they are equipped with the necessary knowledge to advocate for policies that will optimally benefit practitioners and students. Bolstering school counselors' self-efficacy in leadership skills serves to bridge the gap between practice and policy (Curry & Devoss, 2009).

Dr. Dahir's suggestions regarding school counselor preparation echo her fellow scholars, considerably in relation to leadership training in school counselor coursework (LeBlanc & Borders, 2021). In recent years, literature has expanded regarding school counselors' leadership role, highlighting the necessity of leadership skills for school counselors' implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs for students (Dahir et al., 2019; LeBlanc & Borders, 2021; Mullen et al., 2015; Mullen et al., 2019). ASCA identifies leadership as a core component of the school counselor identity. The ASCA National Model (2019) defines leadership as a school counselor's capacity to guide others. Further, it is emphasized in the ASCA National Model that leadership occurs in the designing, implementation, and assessment of a school counseling program. Despite the emphasis on school counselors' leadership roles, school counselors report only a moderate amount of leadership experiences (Mullen et al., 2018). When school counselors embrace their leadership roles, they are poised to create more socially just and equitable schools (Holcomb-McCoy & Chen-Hayes, 2007; Shields et al., 2018) and to serve as powerful agents for policy change. Counselor educators can equip school counselors-in-training with leadership skills and knowledge necessary to become confident school counselor leaders (LeBlanc & Borders, 2021).

Additionally, Dr. Dahir highlighted the importance of collaboration for effecting lasting change for the school counseling profession. In the interview, Dr. Dahir reflected on the ways she collaborated with fellow school counselor practitioners and school counseling organization leaders with a shared understanding of the school counseling profession. She emphasized that it is important for school counselors to also work cross-collaboratively with administrators, educators, researchers, organizations, and higher education faculty. Kaffenberger and colleagues (2006) reflected similar sentiments in their argument for the benefits of school counselors as collaborative leaders at the school, district, and state levels. Working collaboratively in leadership allows school counselors to create systemic change for students while advocating for the advancement of the profession (Kaffenberger et al., 2006). As she described in the interview, Dr. Dahir evaluated and documented the positive outcomes of collaborative leadership for school counseling policy in the state of New York (Dahir et al., 2019). Further, she described the ways international collaboration with school counseling professionals helped to expand the cohesion of school counseling services around the globe. Dr. Dahir's vision of school counseling is one of collaborative action in order to transform the profession to integrate the needs of our rapidly changing world.

### Personal Reflection on Interview

Throughout my conversation with Dr. Dahir, it was clear that she has an unwavering belief in the school counseling profession as a whole and in the impact of school counselors on students' lives. The interview with Dr. Dahir may offer school counselors new insights, particularly regarding the ways we can instigate our collective spark for leadership. For school counseling practitioners, Dr. Dahir's example serves as a call to action for engaged advocacy for students and the



profession. School counselors can make an impact on their students' lives not only in the daily tasks of a school day but also through advocacy for policy change. At local, state, and national levels, school counselors can work collaboratively with each other to communicate with key stakeholders and policymakers (Dollarhide, 2003). Globally, school counselors can build connections with fellow practitioners around the world with the goal of understanding and learning from various models of school counseling. With an understanding of school counseling's history and emerging trends, school counselors can advocate for new approaches that may better serve students and communities.

For counselor educators, Dr. Dahir's story is a catalyst for instilling school counselors-in-training with a passion for leadership. School counselor educators can include students in experiential learning opportunities that bridge connections between school counselors across cultures and countries. Additionally, school counselor educators can increase students' leadership self-efficacy by offering opportunities for leadership throughout school counselor training (Mullen et al., 2019). There exists an opportunity for collaboration in action regardless of position or years of experience. The author hopes that readers, with their unique talents and positions within the school counseling field, are energized by Dr. Dahir's story and are motivated to become advocates for school counseling policy.

During the interview with Dr. Dahir, the author noticed a theme of responsiveness woven throughout. As Dr. Dahir described her journey, she demonstrated a sense of attunement to the needs of her students, to the environment, and to a changing society, each of which guided her toward intentional, responsive leadership. In her work as a school counselor, Dr. Dahir discovered innovative ways to support and respond to her students' needs. In the development of the ASCA National Standards, she listened to the needs of school communities throughout the nation. Through her involvement with the Transformed School Counseling Initiative, she addresses ways to equip school counselors with the necessary skills for successful implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs nationally and abroad. As a counselor educator, Dr. Dahir promotes school counselors' cultural responsiveness to create socially just and equitable schools. At a time when we are faced with unprecedented challenges, both globally and as a profession, there is an opportunity for intentional, responsive, and collaborative leadership. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Dahir for her ongoing contributions to our field and for the hope she inspires for the future of school counseling. Dr. Dahir's journey is a model for how to act with vision and intention for the benefit of many.

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