

Intersectionality of Race and Disability: The School Counselors' Role in Policy Reformation

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The United States K-12 education system is riddled with inequities within the intersection of race and disabilities; relatedly, the school counseling literature also demonstrates a similar gap in the literature. As a result, through three case illustrations we highlight the unique experiences of historically marginalized students of color with disabilities, we illustrate the multiplex intersection of race and disability and how a school counselor can utilize leadership, advocacy, and social justice for systemic change. To demonstrate how school counselors can drive change, we include three cases which are structured around the ADDRESSING framework (Hays, 2022). Further, we use this model to support school counselors in systematically considering the complexities of identity, overlapping cultural influences, and the connections to practice. These case illustrations demonstrate school counselors' advocacy to understand and decrease oppressive policies and increase toward culturally affirming practices and access.

Keywords: school counselors, disability, intersection, historically marginalized students

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The role of a school counselor involves advocacy, social justice, and systemic change to remove barriers for all students (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2022a). This includes addressing the unique needs of students of color with disabilities (SWDs), thereby ensuring culturally affirming practices and educational access. To aid school counselors in fulfilling this responsibility, this article first focuses on explaining the ADDRESSING framework (i.e., a model used to understand the complexities of membership, the intersection of majority and historically

marginalized membership, and the connections to practice) (Hays, 2022, 2024). According to Hays (2024), the ADDRESSING framework can be applied to a variety of settings such as a psychology training clinic (Lake et al., 2022), clinical practice related to body size (Brennan, 2018), and pertaining to the impact on therapeutic relationship (Murad-Martinez, 2022). Since the ADDRESSING framework is primarily rooted in clinical counseling psychology practice with no known application to the K-12 educational setting, we incorporate the ASCA National Model (2019a). Next, we discuss how overlapping systems of oppression can affect students' educational pursuits and success, based on students' intersecting identities. Specifically, we define intersectionality generally; then, we discuss students with disabilities (SWDs) and historically marginalized students of color through a lens of intersectionality. Then we discuss the role of school counselors in supporting students of Color with Disabilities. In the rest of this paper, we use the ADDRESSING framework to help school counselors address systemic barriers and intersectionality in educational settings. We present three unique case illustrations that focus on policy, demonstrating how school counselors can create systemic change to support students of color with disabilities using this framework. Finally, we discuss implications for educational systems, including policy and advocacy to support school counselors' work in removing barriers for all students.

The ADDRESSING Framework

The ADDRESSING framework (Hays, 2022) is a model for examining the whole person (counselor and/or client) to understand the interaction of power and marginalization, or what Hays refers to as "majority and minority membership," among cultures or persons' identities. This framework aligns with the theory of intersectionality by positioning identities as complex, and acknowledging that one individual possesses multiple identities that interact or compound. Because the theory of intersectionality acknowledges the overlapping systems of oppression, power, privilege, and politics, the ADDRESSING framework serves as a vehicle or stepping stone for school counselors to understand the systemic oppressive forces impacting underrepresented groups. Further, the ADDRESSING framework also aligns with the MSJCC, yet expands on this previous approach by providing practical, concrete steps for school counseling implementation, which, to our knowledge, is novel and needed within the literature.

Each of the ten letters of the ADDRESSING framework stands for an identity in which an individual could hold majority or historically marginalized membership. The two "Ds" within the ADDRESSING framework focus on **D**evelopmental disability and **D**isability acquired. The "E" within the framework focuses on **E**thnicity and Racial identity. The other letters highlight cultural characteristics of **A**ge and generational influence, **R**eligion and spirituality, **S**ocioeconomic status, **S**exual orientation, **I**ndigenous heritage, **N**ational origin, and **G**ender. The ADDRESSING framework is a practitioner-oriented framework that conceptualizes multicultural work in two broad categories: (1) personal work and (2) interpersonal work (Hays, 2022).

To use the ADDRESSING framework, first, a school counselor needs to be aware of their own identities, beliefs, and commit to personal work. This begins with understanding the effects of cultural influences on their own beliefs, thinking, behavior, and worldview. In her book, *Addressing Cultural Complexities in Counseling and Clinical Practice: An Intersectional Approach*, Hays (2022) encourages counselors to start by recognizing the areas in which they are a member of privileged groups and to become more aware of the ways in which those identities

may limit their knowledge and experiences. It is important for school counselors to work through the ADDRESSING acronym to reflect on their own identities and aspects of their group membership that might hold power and privilege or that might be historically marginalized and oppressed, as this may impact their work with students.

Secondly, school counselors need to commit to interpersonal work. To avoid inaccurate generalizations based on someone's physical appearance, the ADDRESSING framework helps school counselors call attention to multiple identities and contexts interpersonally (i.e., between themselves and students, families, staff, community members, etc). School counselors need to be more than just aware of their own identities, but understand the identities their students hold as well. With increased self-awareness and a better understanding of the student's worldview, a school counselor can advocate for the student to create a more equitable school environment through policy reform.

Additionally, it has been suggested that because the ADDRESSING framework focuses on individual specific identities, the model lacks attention to intersections of identities (Chin et al., 2019). However, when we apply the theory of intersectionality as the foundation, these ten letters within the model can help school counselors understand underrepresented groups and oppressive forces -- not just the identities that are present, but how oppressive forces might impact those identities and the corresponding interpersonal dynamics between individuals and settings. Through interpersonal work, school counselors can better understand how the intersections of identities impact their students at the individual and interpersonal levels. This is especially important in the school setting, as school is a microcosm of society. By utilizing the ADDRESSING framework, from a foundationally lens of intersectionality, our goal of this paper is illuminate ways school counselors can take an active role to recognize and acknowledge their own identities (personal work) and those of their students of color with disabilities (interpersonal work) to advocate and drive policy change.

Intersectionality of Student Race and Disability

The term "intersectionality" describes how two or more identities, such as race, ability, language, and socioeconomic class, intersect and overlap to create individuals with unique experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). However, the theory of intersectionality is not just about identity at the individual or interpersonal level; it also focuses on overlapping systems of oppression, power, privilege, and politics (Cho et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1989; Mayes & Moore, 2016). Given the long history of systemic racism and educational oppression permeating United States (U.S.) public education, school environments continue to operate in ways that are strategically harmful to students of color (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022; Love, 2019; Mayes & Byrd, 2022). For example, school policies use as zero tolerance policies often still perpetuate these harmful practices creating opportunity gaps for students. In 2021, approximately 15% of all students enrolled in America's schools identified as Black; 28.5% were Hispanic/Latinx; and 1% as American Indian/Indigenous Persons (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2023). This demonstrates a near majority of students of color in America's schools. As one of the education systems' first responders, it is imperative that school counselors recognize and address bias, racism, and discrimination through interventions, advocacy, and policy reformation. This includes the overrepresentation of students from racially marginalized backgrounds in special education programs (Hines et al., 2021).

Black and Brown students who are identified as needing special education services face

unique challenges and barriers due to their belonging to more than one marginalized group. Racism and ableism contribute to overly oppressive educational environments for students of color with disabilities. Schools, through curriculum and behavioral norms, center White, able-bodied students, leaving students of color with disabilities pushed well beyond the margins (Hines et al., 2021). Methods utilized to assess and identify students for special education programs are overtly racist, including the use of IQ tests that have long been deemed as culturally biased (Blanchett et al., 2009; Frederick & Shifrer, 2018). Statistics continue to show that Black students are overrepresented in special education, accounting for less than 15% of total K-12 enrollment but 17% of SWDs (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Black students are also more likely to be identified with specific learning disabilities, intellectual disability, and emotional disturbance (Barrio & Allen, 2024; Shell, 2020; Tefera & Fischman, 2020). Labels such as these can make students feel responsible for their academic difficulties, ignore the need for systemic change, create a deficit-focus view of students, and dismiss educational inequities (Garwood & Carrero, 2023). Also, due to these special education identifications, Black students are overwhelmingly placed in self-contained classrooms, contributing to continued school segregation from their non-Black and non-special education peers (Garwood & Carrero, 2023; Mayes & Moore, 2016).

Many Hispanic/Latinx students encounter both overrepresentation and underrepresentation in special education (Cruz & Firestone, 2022; Vega et al., 2016). Hispanic/Latinx students are more likely to be identified as needing special education services for specific learning disabilities (Cruz & Firestone, 2022; U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Researchers suggest the misidentification of Hispanic/Latinx students in special education is more likely to occur in predominantly White school districts due to educators' lack of cultural understanding of the needs of students who are English Language Learners (ELLs) or culturally diverse (Fletcher & Navarrete, 2011; Ford, 2012; Guiberson, 2009; Vega et al., 2016).

Racial inequities in special education identification pathologize not just a student's skin color, but also their bodies and brains. Repeated exposure to educational discrimination and teacher bias (Brown & Chu, 2012; Hope et al., 2014), as well as limited access to resources and opportunities can make students of color with disabilities have lower self-esteem and lower postsecondary aspirations for themselves (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022; Mayes & Moore, 2016). As a result, SWDs graduate at lower rates than their non-disabled peers (NCES, 2019), however, Black SWDs are 1.5 times more likely to drop out of school than White SWDs (Shifter, 2020). Black SWDs are also less likely to graduate with a regular high school diploma and more likely to earn a certificate of completion (Blanchett et al., 2009).

School Counselors and Intersectionality: Serving Students of Color with Disabilities

All counselors, including school counselors, are called to utilize a lens of intersectionality, which we see through the Multicultural Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC; Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018; Ratts et al., 2016). As a necessary *skill* within the MSJCC, school counselors should possess "culturally responsive critical thinking skills to gain insight into how stereotypes, discrimination, power, privilege, and oppression influence privileged and marginalized clients[students]" (pg. 8). Using these competencies, school counselors advocate for and provide counseling services to support students with intersecting identities, acknowledging that students may be marginalized by some identities while simultaneously being privileged by others (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018). School counselors can use these competencies to critically assess school policies that reinforce stereotypes and oppressive practices and then advocate for the creation of new

policies. Furthermore, school counselors serve all students through a culturally affirming comprehensive school counseling program (CSCP), aiming to create a welcoming school environment and decrease systemic barriers (ASCA, 2022a). Grounded in their ethical standards (ASCA, 2022a), school counselors demonstrate the belief that all students can be successful, promote cultural competence toward a safer, more inclusive school, and understand how prejudice, privilege, and various forms of oppression affect students (ASCA, 2022a). This necessary work is supported by ASCA position statements. Mainly, according to ASCA (2021), school counselors engage in antiracism by interrogating and dismantling racist practices and policies harmful to Black and Brown students. ASCA (2022b) also outlines the role of school counselors supporting SWDs, including an overview of related laws (e.g., IDEA). Thus, through ethical code and position statements, ASCA reinforces school counselors' pivotal role in supporting students who have identities that have been historically marginalized based on race/ethnicity and disability status. At the same, absent from these documents is the focus on intersectional identities, such as the compounding, interactive impact of race/ethnicity and disability. In addition, these statements also lack practical recommendations. How can school counselors best serve and support students of color with disabilities? This is an important question to ask ourselves, as approximately 14% of the students enrolled in public schools in the U.S. identify as having a disability, and just over half of those SWDs are Black and Brown students (NCES, 2019).

While the concept of intersectionality is addressed limitedly in ASCA ethics and position statements, we have seen some burgeoning coverage in the school counseling literature. For instance, Chan and Colleagues (2021) recommended using a school-based Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis to conceptualize serving male students of color, centering school policies to combat oppression. Additionally, Ieva and colleagues (2022) studied social justice group counseling training for pre-service school counselors, emphasizing intersectionality. Other scholars examined LGBTQ+ students of color, related to their intersectional identities and experiences with school counselors (Yoon et al., 2024). Wright and Chan (2022) discussed school counselors applying intersectionality theory when facilitating career interventions for students with historically marginalized identities, and most recently, Albright and colleagues (2026) discussed ways to broach the topic of race in disability in school counseling.

Next, regarding disabilities, scholars have primarily focused on preparation and school counselors' roles when working with SWDs (see Alvarez et al., 2020; Goodman-Scott et al., 2019; Milsom & Akos, 2003). Absent from this literature is intersectionality around examining students of color who also have disabilities. Most closely related, Shillingford and colleagues (2021) reviewed school counselors' roles utilizing the ASCA National Model and Multi-tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) to serve Black Males diagnosed with Dyslexia. While this publication is a helpful start, authors did not address the importance of school counselors utilizing the intersectionality lens, specifically when serving this population. Further, Ratts and Greenleaf (2018) noted the importance of school counselors utilizing the MSJCC framework to not only understand intersectionality but also intentionally incorporate it within professional practice. While the MSJCC is seminal in guiding counselors to utilize intersectionality, social justice, and culturally affirming practices, client identities are discussed broadly and primarily within the lens of the counseling relationship, rather than content specific to students of color with disabilities and the recommendations are also general across all counseling specialty areas, rather than school counseling specifically. In sum, there remains a gap in the school counseling literature focusing specifically on the intersection of identities related to students of color who also have a disability,

and the need for practical suggestions for school counselors to utilize when serving this critical student group.

Case Illustration

In this section, we demonstrate how to apply the ADDRESSING framework into practice with three unique, fictional case illustrations. These case illustrations highlight the intersections of student race and disability while also sharing advocacy strategies to promote student equity, create a positive school climate, and work to eliminate racist and ableist policies and practices in schools. Guided by the ADDRESSING framework (Hays, 2022), with the theory of intersectionality as the foundation, and in expanding the MSJCC (Ratts et al., 2016), we aim for our case illustrations to illuminate the importance of understanding the intersection of identities and the dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression that influence the counseling relationship (Crenshaw, 1989), specifically within the context of school counseling and serving students of color with disabilities. Although the case illustrations presented in this paper were specifically crafted for this paper, they are informed by our previous experiences as school counselors, including real-world challenges and situations encountered in school settings. Thereby, we aim to provide realistic and relevant content to enhance the practical applicability of the ADDRESSING framework to the school counseling profession.

Case Illustration #1: Elementary School Counselor

Mrs. Green is a Black, middle-aged, cisgender, queer woman who is an elementary school counselor in a predominantly White suburban school setting where 5% of her student population is Hispanic/Latinx and 15% of students have a disability. Since kindergarten, Mrs. Green has been working closely with Blake, who is an undocumented 3rd-grade student with a specific learning disability. Blake currently receives ELL services and interventions for reading and math. Blake has been struggling academically. Mrs. Green has established a great working relationship with Blake's parents. Recently, she has been struggling to communicate since the school board updated its spending policies, which led to the district cutting interpreter positions and creating a language barrier for many students and families, including Blake.

Blake "crumbles" each school day right before English Language Arts (ELA), where peers bully her for her inability to "keep up," repeatedly calling her a "dummy" and stupid. Mrs. Green has utilized the Check-In/Check-Out (CICO) system, which is a research-based intervention that can be adapted to support students and provide timely feedback (Bundock et al., 2020; Goodman-Scott et al., 2025). Additionally, this system has allowed Mrs. Green to collect data on Blake's progress throughout the years, which notes a 50% decrease in meltdowns before ELA over the academic years. By addressing Blake's academic, social, and emotional needs using CICO, Blake has grown tremendously in the last academic year. However, Blake's grades have been declining as the bullying incidents have increased.

Connection to the School Counselor and the ADDRESSING Framework

Mrs. Green uses the ADDRESSING framework to note that she holds majority membership as a middle-aged, upper-middle-class, U.S.-born, Christian, able-bodied person. She holds some minority membership within the ADDRESSING framework as a Black woman and lesbian.

Through reflective work, Mrs. Green realizes that while she is a parent of a SWD, she does not have first-hand experience as a person with a disability or experience as an undocumented student. She learns that Hispanic/Latinx students can either be overrepresented or underrepresented in special education (Vega et al., 2016). Additionally, through her research related to The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, 2004), Individualized Education Plans (IEP), and related to service minutes, Mrs. Green discovers that the services she has been providing to Blake through CICO and small groups can legally be written into her IEP. Mrs. Green worked with the special education director and IEP team to advocate for school counseling services within Blake's IEP by highlighting information included in IDEA around social-emotional support; the team agreed to include these supports.

Additionally, to address the barriers related to communication, Mrs. Green discovers that under IDEA Sec. 300.322, her school and district must ensure, at a bare minimum, that an interpreter be available for Blake's parents as it relates to IEP meetings. However, the district's spending policy led to cut interpreters completely, including for IEP meetings. Mrs. Green advocates at the district level, noting the legal rights of her students and families, such as Blake, to have access to interpreters for these meetings. Through her advocacy efforts, Mrs. Green achieved significant success and is currently collaborating with the district to revise the recently approved spending policy by the school board. She is also developing an advocacy plan to reinstate interpreter services for all forms of communication and is working to incorporate multilingual materials within her culturally affirming CSCP, all while adhering to the spending policy. This facilitated awareness related to knowledge gaps, prompting Mrs. Green to address the legal responsibilities of the district to reinstate interpreter services for Blake as well as other students impacted.

Connection to the Student and the ADDRESSING Framework

As noted earlier, Blake was being bullied by her peers for her academic performance. Since SWDs can be continuously bullied at a higher rate than their peers, it is important for key stakeholders to address social and communication differences (Rose & Gage, 2017). To address bullying, Mrs. Green initiated five different small groups of three SWDs and three peer models to provide psychoeducation on how to identify bullying and report and communicate situations of bullying. The 30 students served in these groups scored an average of 60% on the pre-test, which was focused on defining bullying and reporting incidents correctly, with the average increasing to 88% on the post-test. Through serving Blake in this group, Mrs. Green helped her learn to identify incidents of bullying, how to communicate, and seek support from adults when she is being mistreated. Since the completion of the group, Blake has reported four incidents of bullying with three of the four being appropriate reports where Blake was called stupid and then pushed by a peer and one incident where a peer said she did not like Blake's shoes.

Through CICO, Mrs. Green was able to provide ongoing positive reinforcement when Blake correctly reported mistreatment and feedback on how to handle comments that are unkind but not considered bullying. Another critical step that school counselors can take in addressing school culture is to create a positive environment for SWDs (Milsom, 2006) and continue to work toward cultural competence within the school to create inclusive spaces. Mrs. Green worked with her students of color with disabilities to understand their unique lived experiences and ways to foster a safe school culture, which resulted in the creation of Mindful-Mondays focused on positive peer interactions and providing psychoeducation around peer-to-peer engagement and problem-

solving skills to all students. As a result of Mindful-Mondays, Mrs. Green reported a 25% decrease in referrals to the counseling department for peer conflicts and 20% increase in WOW awards (tickets used to reinforce positive student behavior as part of the school's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) tier 1 initiatives).

Case Illustration #2: Middle-School Application

Ms. Miller is a young, White, cisgender woman who is in her third year of being a middle-school school counselor. She works in a school and district where 20% of the student population are students of color. In addition, roughly 12% of the students at the school are individuals with disabilities. Ms. Miller has been working closely with Colin, a Black student with dyslexia who recently moved to the school during the beginning of her 8th-grade year. They quickly establish rapport and Colin discloses that she does not feel supported by her teachers. Colin is a high-achieving student who works hard in all her classes and currently has all As and Bs. However, Colin often experiences strong emotions and is easily overwhelmed as she holds herself to high standards, which has led her to miss school. Her learning disability impacts the amount of effort required to do well in her classes, adding to her overwhelmed feelings.

Ms. Miller has witnessed discrimination by school staff towards Colin in the form of off-handed comments about her inability to “keep it together” by stating that she is “over-emotional” and should be “with those students.” Colin has received harsher punishments than other students for missing class as well as being denied opportunities to make up classwork, resulting in lower grades. This treatment has caused Colin to break down emotionally, making it challenging for her to manage her anger and frustration, often leading to emotional outbursts. Since the school has a zero-tolerance policy, Colin has faced disciplinary action and been suspended. Thus, the IEP team decided to meet to discuss a change of placement for Colin. This would mean removing Colin from being educated with her non-disabled peers (inclusion model) by placing her in a resource room (self-contained classroom).

Connection to the School Counselor and the ADDRESSING Framework

After witnessing discrimination against Colin and expecting the upcoming IEP meeting, Ms. Miller decides to collect additional data on the number of students of color with disabilities. She compares their IEPs to those of their White peers and reviews their goals, accommodations, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) placements, and disciplinary records. After analyzing the data, she learned that over 50% of students of color with disabilities at her school are placed in resource rooms compared to the 15% of White SWDs. Through meeting with students of color with disabilities at her school, she learned that many have faced similar experiences as Colin. Through her own research, she learns that these inequalities are not isolated to her school and students. She discovers that the district and school policies are rooted in harmful practices, creating inequities for students of color with disabilities. Ms. Miller determined that the information needed to be shared with her principal and advocated for her attendance at Colin's IEP meeting.

In preparation for the IEP meeting, Ms. Miller uses the ADDRESSING framework to consider the cultural complexities of her own identities and those of her students. She recognizes that as a White, cisgender, able-bodied person, she holds power and privilege within the school and may not be able to relate directly to the experiences of her historically marginalized students. However, through this interpersonal work of utilizing the ADDRESSING framework she learns

how to use her position of power to advocate for change as a school counselor. For example, she initiates the development of a culturally affirming CSCP, involving a student focus group as part of the process to ensure student voices are included. This resulted in the first CSCP at the middle-school, rooted in culturally affirming practices and based on student experiences. Secondly, she works to create a check-in process with each student of color with disabilities at her school throughout the academic year. Then, she arranges a meeting with her principal and district special education director to review LRE placements, school policies, and advocate for an internal audit of all placements. Then, to create a more inclusive school, Ms. Miller develops an inclusive model proposal rooted in prompting culture-affirming practices to address current systemic issues impacting her students to present to the school board. Through this work, her goal is to reshape the school's culture, utilizing the theory of intersectionality to dismantle practices and policies where students such as Colin are discriminated against based on their intersectional identities.

Connection to the Student and the ADDRESSING Framework

Through her understanding of the ADDRESSING framework, Ms. Miller uses this knowledge as a foundation in collaboration with Colin's parents so she can gain more insight and understanding of Colin's lived experiences prior to the IEP meeting. She discovered that Colin had experienced some racial discrimination at her previous school and often felt isolated. During the IEP meeting, Ms. Miller recognized the critical role she plays in advocating for Colin's educational rights and confronting the discrimination Colin continues to face.

Additionally, at the meeting, she presented literature related to best practices on how to support Black students with dyslexia and advocated for additional accommodations. After the meeting, Ms. Miller teaches Colin self-advocacy skills and strategies to support her when overwhelming feelings arise when experiencing discrimination or mistreatment. Thus demonstrating how Ms. Miller used the ADDRESSING framework to foster awareness, increase her understanding, utilize her skills, and initiate change.

Ms. Miller collected survey data from students of color with disabilities who engaged in the check-in process during the academic year. Of the 25 students, 20 completed the survey with 90% reporting a shift in the school culture, additional support from teachers, and additional accommodations to actively engage in courses with their peers. Additionally, the internal audit on school policies and LRE with her principal and district special education director confirmed Ms. Miller's findings that students of color with disabilities are placed in resource rooms at a higher rate than their White peers with disabilities. The leadership team worked with Ms. Miller to create professional development training for staff as well as an internal process check-list to utilize during the IEP process. As a result, students' rights to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) were addressed through Ms. Miller's leadership and advocacy efforts.

Moreover, Ms. Miller advocated forming a team of key stakeholders to examine all district policies that perpetuate systemic and oppressive practices. This team identified 15 specific policies that need revision to promote more inclusive and equitable educational environments. Then the policies were released for public comment and later presented to the school board for approval. This demonstrates how school counselors can use their advocacy skills to drive policy reform.

Case Illustration #3: High School Application

Mr. Bolden is a Black, cisgender man who has worked at a suburban school called London High

as a 9th-12th grade school counselor for three years. Jamie is a 9th-grade Black SWDs at London High. Mr. Bolden learns that due to some personal and academic challenges, there is a chance that Jamie might be retained for his freshman year as he is in danger of not getting enough credits to be promoted. He currently has a 2.5 GPA due to failing a few classes. Jamie has a dual diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and dysgraphia and has had an IEP since middle school. Jamie does not have strong peer connections but is interested in participating in baseball next year.

Mr. Bolden, a former high school athlete, is empathetic to Jamie's situation and understands how getting involved in activities after school could be beneficial to his social and emotional development while recognizing the district's GPA policy could hinder Jamie's involvement in sports. In individual meetings with Mr. Bolden, Jamie expresses the embarrassment he feels surrounding his disabilities, especially when his teachers make announcements to the entire class about pulling him for services. He also gets frustrated because, despite his IEP, his teachers do not seem to understand his disabilities. Jamie shares he is often bored and cannot focus in class, which has led to several failing grades and disruptive behavior. The teachers seem to connect his classroom disruptions with his ADHD diagnosis, but Jamie still has received office disciplinary action for not being able to manage his emotions because of the school's zero-tolerance policy.

Connection to the School Counselor and the ADDRESSING Framework

Mr. Bolden shares several intersecting identities with Jamie within the ADDRESSING framework and connects to Jamie regarding his racial and gender identity, but he does not have a disability. Using the ADDRESSING framework, a lens of intersectionality, and through collaboration with Jamie, Mr. Bolden is able to gain an understanding of Jamie's unique educational experiences. Through his own research, Mr. Bolden learns that students of color with disabilities are 1.5 times more likely to drop out of school (Schifter, 2020), coupled with his own lived experiences of being a Black student in the educational system and the impacts that it had on him as a young Black man. He acknowledges that, as a school counselor, he needs to utilize his leadership and advocacy skills to create systemic change within London High. He recognizes the impact and barriers the school district's zero-tolerance discipline policy has had on students of color with disabilities, like Jamie. Utilizing a culturally affirming CSCP, Mr. Bolden partners with the administration to launch professional development trainings that address systemic issues and works to create welcoming spaces to support students of color with disabilities. As a result of this training, in the third grading period, discipline office referrals for students of color with disabilities were down 10% and referrals increased by 20% to the counseling department for SEL support. Further, Mr. Bolden advocates for changes in the district's zero-tolerance policy by presenting to the school board, utilizing data to dismantle a barrier preventing growth and success for students such as Jamie. His advocacy efforts compelled the school board to create a special task force of key stakeholders (students, teachers, administrators, parents, school counselors, and the community) to review the zero-tolerance policy and make recommendations for a new policy the following academic year.

Connection to the Student and the ADDRESSING Framework

Mr. Bolden has worked to establish rapport with Jamie and can utilize his knowledge of the ADDRESSING framework to provide psychoeducation around intersections of identity to Jamie. However, Mr. Bolden recognizes that participation in sports will continue to help foster

community and connection for Jamie at school. Yet, the current GPA policy is blocking Jamie's participation in sports. After doing a quick search, Mr. Bolden stumbles across a letter outlining Section 504 and the connection to activities for SWDs as well as legal rights (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2013). Utilizing this information, Mr. Bolden advocates for Jamie in collaboration with the special education coordinator to remove this systemic barrier, allowing Jamie the opportunity to engage in baseball. Mr. Bolden also recognizes that it will be important for Jamie to learn how to advocate for his rights and accommodations. In partnership with Jamie's family, Mr. Bolden works to educate Jamie on his ADHD diagnosis, current services, and accommodations within his IEP. Then, he helps Jamie learn how to advocate, engage in his own IEP meetings, and learn effective communication strategies to work with his teachers.

Implications

Relatedly, at this time, the ADDRESSING framework has been used predominantly in clinical counseling psychology practice, and this paper offers a new use of the framework. This article also underscored the importance of understanding and practicing the MSJCC framework (Ratts et al., 2016), providing a novel perspective not otherwise seen in the literature, with implications for both practice and systemic change (i.e., policy, leadership, and advocacy). To do this, we utilized the ADDRESSING framework (Hays, 2022) to provide concrete practice examples for school counselors to utilize intersectionality in serving students of color with disabilities. As a result, school counselors can utilize not only the conceptual content in this article but also the practical implications through the case illustrations. Practicing and pre-service school counselors can apply this combination of content and examples to their practice in the schools, enabling them to work through each of the steps in the ADDRESSING framework, in their unique setting.

Incorporating the ADDRESSING Framework

Each case illustration provides a unique example of how school counselors can incorporate the ADDRESSING framework into their work by examining their own intersecting identities and membership within groups that have been historically privileged or marginalized and how these experiences might influence choices, biases, and advocacy efforts when serving students of color with disabilities. Additionally, to create a culturally affirming environment supporting inclusion and removing systemic barriers, the school counselors in the case illustrations explored the intersecting identities of their students related to how race-based and disability-based educational experiences, rooted in teacher bias, racism, ableism, and discriminatory school policies, impact their students' academic success. As such, all three school counselors took the time to become aware of their own cultural identities, understand the multiple identities of their students, and recognize how the school setting may have acted as a system of power that oppressed their students. Through reflection and self-awareness, these school counselors acted as leaders and change agents in their schools. Closely related to an intersectionality lens, these self-reflective practices align with Mayes and Byrd's (2022) antiracist framework, such as actively engaging in ongoing self-reflection and implementing culturally responsive and antiracist school counseling approaches and CSCPs.

Advocacy for Policy Change

School counseling is grounded in systemic change, social justice, and advocacy (ASCA, 2025), and these efforts require effort across many levels or systems, therefore we offer multi-systemic levels of implications, shaping policy at various levels. To start, as a result of our article, we ask: how can intersectionality (i.e., through the application of the ADDRESSING framework) be more purposefully integrated into key school counseling approaches and documents? Examples include the ASCA National Model (2025), ASCA position statements, and best practices in school counseling (i.e., school counselor interventions; data collection and analysis, etc.). Next, as school counseling exists within the context of K-12 education, how can other educational frameworks also more purposefully center intersectionality, such as Multi-tiered Systems of Supports, Social Emotional Learning, culturally sustaining practices, trauma-informed practices, and so on. In tandem, school counseling and educational leaders/organizations can also elevate the conversation on intersectionality, such as embedding related concepts and practical examples in organizational mission and vision statements, as well as practical work (i.e., member services, training, research, and lobbying). Counseling and education are also influenced by regional, state, and federal policy, laws, and funding. As a result, how can school counseling professionals and organizational lobbyists identify and partner with willing legislators and other key influential decision-makers, to embed the concepts of intersectionality throughout said policy and laws, and thereby influencing funding?

Through these case illustrations, we highlight several aspects of school culture and policy that can be oppressive to students of color with disabilities with recommendations for advocacy (see Table 1 for summary of advocacy and policy recommendations). Research supports that students of color with disabilities receive higher frequency and harsher disciplinary measures compared to their other peers (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). Thus, we address this policy issue by suggesting school counselors get involved in policy change that provides more emotional support and environmental/academic accommodation to SWDs instead of harsher punishments such as school suspension or refusal to allow making up missing work for missed class time (as seen in Colin and Jamie's illustrations). Supports can include the check-in check-out intervention, small and larger group psychoeducation for students about topics such as bullying and problem solving, and student focus groups to learn more about SWDs experiences and needs. We also recommend looking at zero-tolerance policies and include multiple stakeholder voices to make changes that will not negatively impact SWDs. GPA policies for participating in after school activities, such as sports, can impact SWDs chances at participating with peers in activities that can enrich both their school and social lives (as seen in Jamie's illustration). Thus, we suggest advocacy to make exceptions around this rule, taking a students' disability into consideration.

Additionally, research suggests that students of color are more likely to be placed in higher restrictive environments compared to their White peers (see Morgan, 2020). As such, we suggest that school counselor's facilitate internal audits to review Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for students of color with disabilities, to determine if their students are appropriately placed (as seen in Colin's illustration). This could also lead to policy change about how determination for LRE is made within the district, with special attention to students of color with disabilities. We encourage the use of literature, data, and professional development opportunities to educate school administrators and staff on systemic issues and discrepancies in student treatment, as well as best practices regarding specific disabilities such as dyslexia and ADHD. We also highlight possible issues with interpreter services for families with language barriers and encourage school counselors to be advocates for students who both need and deserve this service (as seen in Blake's illustration). Blake's illustration also highlights the need for changes in school bullying policies,

Table 1
Advocacy and Policy Change

Common Issue	Case Illustration	Suggested Advocacy/Policy Change
Harsher disciplinary measures	Colin & Jamie	Compare disciplinary measures amongst students to highlight any discrepancies Advocacy for policy change to include increased social/emotional support and environmental/education accommodation for SWDs, which could be written in the IEP to reduce relying on disciplinary measures Professional development for administrators and staff to address systemic issues
More restrictive learning environment	Colin	Internal audit of all SWDs and their placements for re-evaluation to determine if they are placed in the least restrictive environment
Lack of appropriate services (barriers to access to educational services, barriers to language interpreter services, barriers to access to after-school activities, etc.)	Blake & Jamie	Advocacy for school policy change that meets IDEA rights to access appropriate services and needs Advocacy to take students' disabilities into consideration for exceptions to GPA rules for access to after-school activities
Increased risk of bullying	Blake	Multi-tiered school counselor support from individual to classroom to whole school intervention focused on reducing bullying and providing emotional support to those experiencing bullying, as well as teaching problem-solving
Feeling misunderstood by school staff	Colin & Jamie	Professional development for school staff to address discrimination and best practices for working with students with specific disabilities, such as dyslexia and ADHD Student focus groups to give SWDs a voice in sharing their experiences and needs

given the increased risk of experiencing bullying that SWDs face (Rose & Gage, 2017). This could include a multi-tiered approach to education and support within schools regarding bullying and impact. Finally, school counselors can advocate for their own social/emotional support services to be included on students' IEPs (as seen in Blake's illustration) to provide additional mental health support to students of color with disabilities.

School Counselor Education

We believe in the power of education for improving knowledge, understanding, and

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implementation of useful skills and strategies. As such, we recommend education about models and topics related to this area in both pre-service (during masters level courses) and in-service learning. Notable models and topics to include in educational plans could include teaching, discussion, self-reflection, and practical use of the ADDRESSING framework (Hays, 2022) and the MSJCC (Ratts et al., 2016). Additionally, discussion and reflection about the intersection of race and disability, school policies that impact these students, and advocacy skills to address related issues would be valuable for school counselors. School counselors' self-awareness of their own biases and assumptions is an ongoing effort that should start in pre-service training as this may impact how they view and work with students in future. The new 2024 standards of education developed by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2024), an educational governing system, does include education around advocacy for individuals with disability (section A.4). However, the majority of educational requirements around disability services is noted under the Rehabilitation Counseling section, which is separate from both clinical and school counseling education. The standards do include a section on social and cultural identities and experiences (section B.1-11) that incorporate education about cultural difference, social justice, multigenerational trauma, and more, which are in line with issues noted in this paper. Including more discussion about this topic with the intersection of disability would help prepare school counselors to implement models, such as the ADDRESSING framework (Hays, 2022), that could benefit their students.

Conclusion

This article aimed to identify the role school counselors can hold when serving students who have intersecting identities of a historically marginalized race/ethnicity and being a student with disability. We recommend Hay's (2022) ADDRESSING framework as a model to assist school counselors in reflecting on their own personal identities as well as the identities and needs of their SWDs. Hay's framework highlights the complexity of identity, including **Age/Generation**, **Disability** (developmental), **Disability** (acquired), **Religion/Spirituality**, **Ethnicity**, **Socioeconomic Status**, **Sexual Orientation**, **Indigenous Heritage**, **National Origin**, and **Gender**. We used three case illustrations to highlight common issues that students of color with disabilities may face in their school systems at the elementary, middle, and high school level. By applying the ADDRESSING framework to their culturally affirming CSCP, school counselors can provide academic, career, and social/emotional services that specifically support students of color with disabilities.

Although this conceptual article offers case illustration examples of how school counselors can apply the ADDRESSING framework into their work to directly support students of color with disabilities, the intersecting identities as a student of color and a person with a disability call for continued research, advocacy, and policy changes. Further research to see the impact of use of the ADDRESSING framework by school counselors would be a benefit in order to assess outcomes on school counselor confidence and student success. Additionally, studying policy changes made by school districts would be useful to see what impacts are seen by their students of color with disabilities. In conclusion, we know that school counselors play a critical role in ensuring culturally affirming practices within their schools and this can be achieved partly by implementing the ADDRESSING framework in their work, acting as antiracist and anti-ableist counselors, and purposefully advocating for historically marginalized students of color with disabilities.

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