

2007

# The ACA Advocacy Competencies: A Social Justice Advocacy Framework for Professional School Counselors

Manivong J. Ratts  
*Seattle University*

Lorraine DeKruyf  
*George Fox University, ldekruyf@georgefox.edu*

Stuart F. Chen-Hayes  
*Lehman College City University of New York*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/gsc>

---

## Recommended Citation

Ratts, Manivong J.; DeKruyf, Lorraine; and Chen-Hayes, Stuart F., "The ACA Advocacy Competencies: A Social Justice Advocacy Framework for Professional School Counselors" (2007). *Faculty Publications - Graduate School of Counseling*. Paper 9.  
<http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/gsc/9>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School of Counseling at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications - Graduate School of Counseling by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact [arolfe@georgefox.edu](mailto:arolfe@georgefox.edu).

**Manivong J. Ratts,**  
**Ph.D.,** is an assistant  
professor at Seattle  
University, WA. E-mail:  
vong@seattleu.edu

**Lorraine DeKruyf,**  
**Ph.D.,** is an assistant  
professor at George  
Fox University,  
Portland, OR.

**Stuart F. Chen-Hayes,**  
**Ph.D.,** is an associate  
professor at Lehman  
College of the City  
University of New York,  
Bronx, NY.

# The ACA Advocacy Competencies: A Social Justice Advocacy Framework for Professional School Counselors

*The recent endorsement of the advocacy competencies by the American Counseling Association signals their relevance to the school counseling profession. This article outlines the importance of being a social change agent, the value of advocacy in K-12 schools, and how school counselors can use the advocacy competencies as a framework for promoting access and equity for all students. Implications for professional school counselors and school counselor educators in using the advocacy competencies are also addressed.*

Social justice advocacy is a key task of the 21st-century professional school counselor. Calls for school counselors to adopt social justice advocacy as a platform have been well documented (Bailey, Getch, & Chen-Hayes, 2007; Brown, 2005; House & Martin, 1999) and are supported by national organizations such as the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2004, 2005) and the Education Trust (2006). The need is for school counselors to embrace a social justice advocacy perspective and help lead school reform efforts to challenge educational inequities such as achievement gaps stemming from the less than ideal learning environment that is prevalent in many schools (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Cox & Lee, 2007). Social justice advocacy is warranted to right injustices, increase access, and improve educational outcomes for all students. To this end, professional school counselors can serve as agents for social change by using the American Counseling Association's (ACA) advocacy competencies (see Appendix A) as a framework for executing social justice advocacy strategies (Ratts, 2006). The proposal that school counselors incorporate the advocacy competencies into their practice seems timely given their endorsement in 2003 by the ACA Governing Council (2003).

This article provides a conceptual framework for how the ACA advocacy competencies can meet the growing demand for professional school counselors to be social justice advocates. Specifically, this article outlines the importance of being a social change agent and the value of advocacy in K-12 schools. It

also provides a rationale for the competencies as well as a brief overview of their development. In addition, this article offers examples of how school counselors can use the framework of the advocacy competencies to promote access and equity for all students. Implications also are addressed for using the advocacy competencies in the school counseling profession as well as in school counselor training programs.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY IN K-12 SCHOOLS

Lee (2007) has stated that school counselors have both a moral and ethical responsibility to advocate for students and serve as agents for social and political change. This belief has roots in Menacker's (1976) suggestion that sometimes it is the system and not the student that needs adjusting. He noted that school counselors need to go beyond helping individuals adjust to the system and need to also advocate for systemic change.

Lewis and Bradley (2000) concurred:

Advocacy is an important aspect of every counselor's role. Regardless of the particular setting in which she or he works, each counselor is confronted again and again with issues that cannot be resolved simply through change within the individual. All too often, negative aspects of the environment impinge on a [student's] well-being, intensifying personal problems or creating obstacles to growth. When such situations arise, effective counselors speak up! (p. 3)

Understood within the above quote is the message that school counselors cannot ignore the realities of oppression. Neither can they operate solely from the comfort of their offices if they wish to best serve students (Vera & Speight, 2003). Rather, the school counselor role needs to include intervening in the social context that affects students. The

rationale is that interventions that focus solely on individual students will, at best, only be partially effective (Goodman et al., 2004).

Social justice advocacy is a necessary skill that all school counselors need to possess (House, 2004; Perusse & Goodnough, 2004). As achievement advocates, school counselors need to make a concerted effort at examining how environmental factors serve as barriers to student learning (Bailey et al., 2007). Furthermore, the unique role that school counselors play in K-12 schools, coupled with their training, puts them in a position to be systems change agents (House & Hayes, 2002). School counselors working as social justice advocates are educational leaders who challenge the status quo, use data to increase access and address equity for all students, and provide services in classrooms and communities (House & Martin, 1999; Lewis & Arnold, 1998).

The need for school counselors to be advocates for social justice seems to be especially important for students in poverty and students of color who attend schools that accept the false belief that these students cannot achieve at a high level (Bemak & Chung, 2005). Schools that are underfunded, that hire unqualified teachers, and that use outdated curricula and instructional materials are not putting students in ideal positions to be successful in life. Students who are in poverty and students of color are more likely to reach their academic, career, and personal/social potential when they have access to highly trained teachers and quality educational materials and when they attend a school in which the culture expects all students to be college-ready (Education Trust, 2003). School counselors can make this a reality by working out of a social justice advocacy framework. Professional school counselors who work as social change agents can help eliminate the achievement gap, increase academic expectations, and become more proactive in creating safer and more inclusive learning environments for all students (Erford, 2007; Martin, 2002).

## **RATIONALE FOR THE ADVOCACY COMPETENCIES**

Within the context of K-12 schools, the ACA advocacy competencies can aid professional school counselors in meeting the challenges that come with being a social change agent (Rubel & Ratts, 2007). In particular, the advocacy competencies can be a useful tool for school counselors because they provide a framework for conceptualizing microlevel and macrolevel advocacy strategies. Certain situations call for direct interventions with a student; others call for advocacy on behalf of a student. Some situations call for working in classrooms, others in the

community or in the political arena. A framework that focuses on both direct and indirect service is important because it acknowledges the complex interplay between students and their environment.

We believe that the advocacy competencies also complement the ASCA National Model® (2005). In particular, the advocacy competencies align with the ASCA National Model's themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration and teaming, and systemic change. These themes are woven throughout the advocacy competencies. For example, collaboration and teaming are called for when using the advocacy competencies to develop guidance curricula that focus on social justice issues relating to students' academic, career, and personal/social development. Furthermore, according to Lewis, Arnold, House, and Toporek (2003), leadership is necessary in order to be an effective social change agent. The following sections provide examples of how the advocacy competencies can be used as an instrument to help school counselors implement the ASCA framework themes.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADVOCACY COMPETENCIES**

In 2000-2001, as part of her ACA presidential initiative, Dr. Jane Goodman commissioned a task force to explore ways to make social justice advocacy a more integral force in the profession (J. Lewis, personal communication, September 7, 2006). The need for a task force to develop competency standards related to advocacy was in direct response to the profession's continued reliance on using individual counseling techniques to resolve student problems that were rooted in the environment (J. Goodman, personal communication, October 18, 2006). The hope was that the competencies would help counselors recognize how societal oppression negatively impacts human development and would encourage counselors to use both microlevel and macrolevel counseling interventions when working with clients/students.

At the 2003 ACA National Convention, the ACA Governing Council (2003) endorsed the advocacy competencies developed by the task force. This endorsement of the advocacy competencies in 2003 by the ACA Governing Council signifies the increased role of social justice advocacy in the field and the importance of preparing counselors to be social justice advocates.

## **IMPLEMENTING THE ADVOCACY COMPETENCIES**

The advocacy competencies include three levels of advocacy: (a) client/student advocacy, (b) school/

**Social justice advocacy is warranted to right injustices, increase access, and improve educational outcomes for all students.**

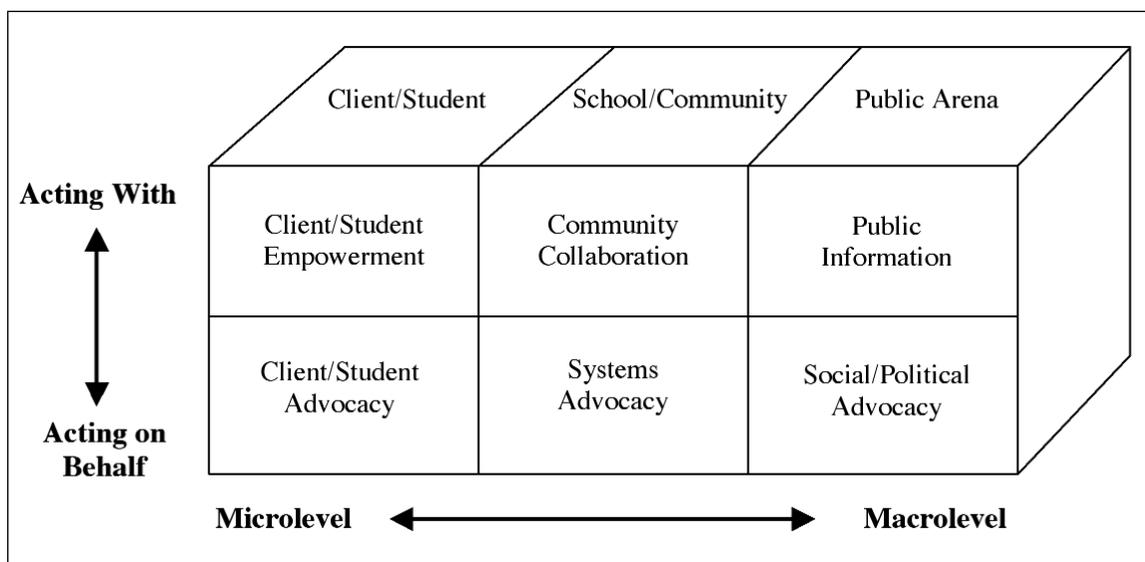


Figure 1. ACA advocacy competencies (source: <http://www.counseling.org/Publications>).

community advocacy, and (c) the public arena level of advocacy (see Figure 1) (Lewis et al., 2003). Each level of advocacy includes two domains and specific competency areas. School counselors can engage in these levels of advocacy in many ways. The following are examples drawn from the experiences of the authors, other school counselors, and school counseling interns.

#### Client/Student Advocacy Level

The client/student advocacy level is focused on the domains of student empowerment and student advocacy. At this level, school counselors advocate *with* students and *on behalf* of students. Empowering students can be done by working with students on self-advocacy tools in the classroom, in small groups, or individually. Empowerment examples include classroom guidance lessons on communication skills or dependable strengths and facilitating groups on bullying or peer mediation.

Empowerment also includes working with students so they can speak up for themselves. For example, a student with a disability may be provided with language and rehearsal opportunities for talking to a teacher about classroom modifications or adaptations he or she may need in order to be academically successful. The student's parents also can benefit from information about their rights and due process in preparation for the child's Individualized Education Plan meeting. School counselors also can help children who are the objects of bullying by empowering them to identify appropriate ways to protect themselves and teaching them how to seek out adult assistance.

Advocating on behalf of students is also part of advocacy at the student level. Sometimes students

may need to have a conversation with a teacher or peer where the power structure is such that they feel vulnerable and powerless. Having a school counselor present as an ally can bolster their confidence. A school counselor acting as a referee who lays out the ground rules and then helps the participants to follow them can help all voices at the table to be heard.

The following situations also call for action on behalf of students: overhearing a career specialist steer an academically gifted female student interested in becoming a doctor toward becoming a nurse; and noticing that a history teacher's list of books for a class project includes exclusively White, male persons. These examples highlight the need for advocacy on behalf of students with individual teachers or school staff. Specific actions could include talking individually with the staff person or teacher as well as working at a systemic level to increase awareness of gender inequities.

Students walled in by generational poverty also may benefit from school counselors advocating on their behalf. They may need opportunities to see beyond the limited horizon they have grown up with, as family members are often unable to provide guidance that students with college-educated family members take for granted. Setting up job-shadowing opportunities can help horizons expand, as can frequent encouragement from volunteer community mentors. Those whose horizons include college may need help with various hurdles. Navigating the process of applying for admissions and financial aid may call for help in accessing a computer. It may call for an explanation of what a personal identification number (PIN) is, and then help in obtaining a PIN to apply for admissions and financial aid.

### School/Community Level

At the school/community level of advocacy, the school counselor's primary role is that of an ally. School counselors may work individually or in collaboration with others for systemic change in response to environmental barriers. At times a school counselor may join forces with existing organizations working for change. Other situations may call on the school counselor to take the lead in changing the status quo. Addressing systemic barriers calls for leadership skills, teaming and collaboration, an understanding of systems, data analysis, and the ability to assess and plan for potential pitfalls (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001).

When working to change the status quo, data can reveal areas of need or disparity. For example, when data show that a student population is 40% Latino, but the population in advanced-placement calculus is only 10% Latino, this calls for investigation. Responses could include teaming among middle and high school counselors and administrators to take corrective action regarding critical middle school math placements that open or close doors for later advanced math classes.

Simply noticing numbers of students dealing with similar issues can provide school counselors with leverage to impact the school environment for positive change. For example, in one school we are aware of, school counselors saw a number of students struggling because of their sexual orientation. This led to their taking leadership in starting a Gay-Straight Alliance club and the development of a classroom guidance curriculum on harassment. They also alerted their administrators to the need for greater vigilance and response regarding harassment, which resulted in an in-service for all staff in recognizing and responding to various forms of harassment.

English language learners who are left out of the regular course selection process may be left with classes that do not adequately prepare them for their career aspirations. Seeing to it that the school system ensures these students have equal access to rigorous courses, and that students are aware of all of their options, is critical advocacy work. Regarding bullying, teaming with teachers and administrators on strategies and policies to improve school climate so as to create a safe learning environment for all is advocating against bullying at the school system level.

### Public Arena Level

The public arena level of advocacy involves the public information and social/political advocacy domains. This level of advocacy is concerned with informing the general public about issues of educational access and inequities and ways that school counselors can shape public policy. Advocacy at this level requires the use of technology skills, an under-

standing of systems, and the ability to develop relationships with various constituencies.

Working at the public arena level often grows out of school counselors' work at the client/student and school/community levels of the advocacy competencies. For example, hearing a teacher refer to a student living in poverty as a "troublemaker going nowhere" could lead to responses at all levels. Expanding the student's horizons via classroom guidance and via an encouraging relationship with an adult in the school can help the student advocate for himself or herself. Working with teachers to notice and comment on exceptions to the "troublemaking" is a way of advocating on behalf of the student. Working to arrange an in-service on understanding generational poverty is an advocacy intervention at the school/community level. Including school board members in this in-service can broaden its impact. Equipping board members with a better understanding of what is involved in combating poverty's grip can positively impact their budget decisions, which in turn can support school counselors' advocacy work. Recruiting school board and other community members to mentor economically disadvantaged students is yet another way of doing this. Electing school board members as well as city, county, state, and national officials who understand, care, and are willing to take action on advocacy issues is advocating at the public arena level. Furthermore, joining, supporting, and working with the state's professional school counseling association is another way to broaden and strengthen this public arena level of advocacy.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND COUNSELOR EDUCATORS

Using the ACA advocacy competencies as a framework for social justice advocacy efforts by school counseling professionals has implications for both school counselors and school counselor educators alike (Ratts, 2006). For professional school counselors, the advocacy competencies can help promote the academic, career, and personal/social needs of all students that are outlined in the ASCA National Model. However, school counselors may need to have a discussion with their principal regarding how using the advocacy competencies to address social justice issues benefits students. Helping principals understand the significance of advocacy at the micro and macro levels addressed in the advocacy competencies is important given that social justice-oriented school counselors may experience resistance from colleagues, teachers, and family members (Lewis & Bradley, 2000). This is because social justice advocacy calls on school counseling professionals to question the sta-

**Professional school counselors can serve as agents for social change by using the ACA's advocacy competencies as a framework for executing social justice advocacy strategies.**

**As achievement advocates, school counselors need to make a concerted effort at examining how environmental factors serve as barriers to student learning.**

tus quo, to speak out, and to advocate when an injustice is observed (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001).

For school counselor educators who introduce the advocacy competencies into their curriculum, it is important to include the importance of self-awareness and of building relationships. In a classic personal retrospective, Ponzo (1974) cautioned that advocacy work that ignores this can create “additional barriers to change rather than remove ... existing ones” (p. 30). Teaching emerging school counselors how to be flexible, patient, honest, and open can soften resistance that may arise when asking a system to change (Parsons & Kahn, 2005).

School counselor educators also would do well to model and include in their curricula the six personal activism dimensions suggested by Collison et al. (1998). School counselors can use these in deciding how to most effectively proceed when advocating at the client/student, school/community, and public arena levels. They are as follows:

1. System: Am I inside or outside of the affected system?
2. Social group: Am I a part of the privileged or the oppressed group?
3. Style: Will I intervene indirectly or confront directly?
4. Self-view: Do I see myself as personally effective or ineffective?
5. Information: Do I know a lot or a little? How accurate is what I know?
6. Consequence: Will the personal and organizational consequence of the action be major or minor?

Reflecting on and responding to these six dimensions can guide both counselors-in-training and professional school counselors in the effective implementation of the advocacy competencies.

To illustrate, school counselors working to close the achievement gap are part of the educational system (Stone & Dahir, 2006). Being inside the system allows school counselors access to data and student records, as well as opportunities to attend meetings with key school personnel that students and their families are not always able to attend. Whether one is a member of a privileged or an oppressed group is also an important factor in social justice advocacy efforts (Hardiman, Jackson, & Griffin, 2007). For example, White school counselors advocating for the inclusion of anti-racism curricula may be heard differently than school counselors of color speaking to the same issue. In terms of advocacy styles, sometimes it can be very effective to confront directly; other times it may be more helpful to approach an issue in a more indirect way. Regardless of approach, both styles often call for teaming with others, and

broadening the ownership of the issue at hand in order to achieve hoped-for and lasting results.

With respect to self-view, it is important that school counselors have a realistic sense of their strengths and limitations as social change agents. Some school counselors use their strong technology skills to promote student learning; others rely on their public speaking skills to advocate for students. Where limitations are recognized, school counselors need to be willing to seek further training to better equip themselves to be successful advocates. The amount and accuracy of information school counselors possess also can impact social advocacy experiences. Rushing in uninformed or misinformed can damage one’s reputation and credibility, and it may actually derail advocacy efforts. For this reason school counselors may do well to assess how much information is needed prior to advocating for systemic change, and to verify the accuracy of what is known. Being a social justice advocate also has consequences. Thinking through possible outcomes, both positive and negative, and weighing their cost, both personal and organizational, are critical steps in responsible and effective advocacy.

Another challenge is related to how the advocacy competencies can be infused into school counselor training. For example, are certain levels of the advocacy competencies more relevant to a particular class? Are particular competency areas inherent in the advocacy competencies more applicable to certain courses? Should the advocacy competencies be integrated into a single-issue course, multiple courses, or all courses offered in the department? How do the advocacy competencies align with the multicultural counseling competencies developed by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992)? These are questions that need to be discussed at the departmental, institutional, state, and national levels.

More research also needs to be conducted on the advocacy competencies themselves. A review of the literature revealed that to date, the only research on the advocacy competencies was a doctoral dissertation by Ratts (2006). This study indicated that the advocacy competencies were introduced by 40% of counselor educators who taught multicultural counseling courses in programs accredited by the Council for Counseling and Related Educational Programs during the 2005-2006 academic year. To date, no factor analytic studies have been undertaken to validate whether the advocacy competencies are distinct and mutually exclusive. Furthermore, the extent to which the three levels of the advocacy competencies (i.e., client/student, school/community, and public arena) are viewed as important by counselor educators in counselor training programs is unknown. These are questions that can be appropriately addressed through further research.

## CONCLUSION

The creation and recent endorsement of the advocacy competencies by ACA comes at an opportune time in the history and development of the school counseling profession (Ratts, D'Andrea, & Arredondo, 2004). The achievement gap between privileged and oppressed students continues, the bullying and violence that occur in schools create a less than ideal learning environment, and the need for school counselors to speak out against social injustices and multiple forms of oppression is growing (Holcomb-McCoy & Chen-Hayes, 2007). School counselors and school counselor educators can take the lead in addressing these concerns by using the ACA advocacy competencies as a framework for addressing the needs of all students. Using the advocacy competencies to attend to student concerns can be empowering for students and it can transform how school counseling is practiced. ■

## References

- ACA Governing Council. (2003, March 20–22). *2003 ACA Governing Council minutes*. Anaheim, CA: Author.
- American School Counselor Association. (2004). *Ethical standards for school counselors*. Retrieved May 14, 2007, from <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=173>
- American School Counselor Association. (2005). *The ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Bailey, D. F., Getch, Y. Q., & Chen-Hayes, S. F. (2007). Achievement advocacy for all students through transformative school counseling programs. In B. T. Erford (Ed.), *Transforming the school counseling profession* (2nd ed., pp. 98–120). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Bemak, F., & Chung, R. C. Y. (2005). Advocacy as a critical role for urban school counselors: Working toward equity and social justice. *Professional School Counseling, 8*, 196–203.
- Brown, J. T. (2005). Advocacy competencies for professional school counselors. *Professional School Counseling, 8*, 259–265.
- Collison, B. B., Osborne, J. L., Gray, L. A., House, R. M., Firth, J., & Lou, M. (1998). Preparing counselors for social action. In C. C. Lee & G. R. Walz (Eds.), *Social action: A mandate for counselors* (pp. 263–277). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association and ERIC Counseling and Student Services Clearinghouse.
- Cox, A. A., & Lee, C. C. (2007). Challenging educational inequities: School counselors as agents of social justice. In C. C. Lee (Ed.), *Counseling for social justice* (2nd ed., pp. 3–14). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- Education Trust. (2003). *School counselors working for social justice*. Retrieved October 3, 2006, from <http://www2.edtrust.org/EdTrust/Transforming+School+Counseling/Social+Justice.htm>
- Education Trust. (2006). *National Center for Transforming School Counseling at the Education Trust*. Retrieved September 17, 2006, from <http://www2.edtrust.org/EdTrust/Transforming+School+Counseling/main>
- Erford, B. T. (2007). *Transforming the school counseling profession*. Columbus, OH: Pearson.
- Goodman, L. A., Liang, B., Helms, J. E., Latta, R. E., Sparks, E., & Weintraub, S. R. (2004). Training counseling psychologists as social justice agents: Feminist and multicultural principles in action. *The Counseling Psychologist, 32*, 793–837.
- Hardiman, R., Jackson, B., & Griffin, P. (2007). Conceptual foundations for social justice education. In M. Adams, L. A. Bell, & P. Griffin (Eds.), *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (2nd ed., pp. 35–66). New York: Routledge.
- Holcomb-McCoy, C., & Chen-Hayes, S. F. (2007). Multicultural competent school counselors: Affirming diversity by challenging oppression. In B. T. Erford (Ed.), *Transforming the school counseling profession* (pp. 74–96). Columbus, OH: Pearson.
- House, R. (2004). School counselors working as social justice advocates. *Oregon Professional School Counselor Journal, 1*, 1–6.
- House, R., & Hayes, R. L. (2002). School counselors: Becoming key players in school reform. *Professional School Counseling, 5*, 249–256.
- House, R., & Martin, P. J. (1999). Advocating for better futures for all students: A new vision for school counselors. *Education, 119*, 284–291.
- Kiselica, M. S., & Robinson, M. (2001). Bringing advocacy counseling to life: The history, issues, and human dramas of social justice work in counseling. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 79*, 387–398.
- Lee, C. C. (Ed.). (2007). *Counseling for social justice* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- Lewis, J., & Arnold, M. S. (1998). From multiculturalism to social action. In C. C. Lee & G. R. Walz (Eds.), *Social action: A mandate for counselors* (pp. 51–66). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association and ERIC Counseling and Student Services Clearinghouse.
- Lewis, J., Arnold, M. S., House, R., & Toporek, R. (2003). *Advocacy competencies* [Electronic version]. Retrieved October 3, 2006, from <http://www.counseling.org/Publications>
- Lewis, J., & Bradley, L. (Eds.). (2000). *Advocacy in counseling: Counselors, clients, and community*. Greensboro, NC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Student Services.
- Martin, P. J. (2002). Transforming school counseling: A national perspective. *Theory into Practice, 41*, 148–153.
- Menacker, J. (1976). Toward a theory of activist guidance. *Personnel and Guidance Journal, 54*, 318–321.
- Parsons, R. D., & Kahn, W. J. (2005). *The school counselor as consultant: An integrated model for school-based consultation*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Perusse, R., & Goodnough, G. E. (Eds.). (2004). *Leadership, advocacy, and direct service strategies for professional school counselors*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Ponzo, Z. (1974). A counselor and change: Reminiscences and resolutions. *Personnel and Guidance Journal, 53*, 27–32.
- Ratts, M. (2006). Social justice counseling: A study of social justice counselor training in CACREP-accredited counselor preparation programs (Doctoral dissertation, Oregon State University, 2006). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 67*, 1234.
- Ratts, M., D'Andrea, M., & Arredondo, P. (2004). Social justice counseling: A "fifth force" in the field. *Counseling Today, 47*, 28–30.
- Rubel, D., & Ratts, M. (2007). Diversity and social justice issues in counseling and psychotherapy. In D. Capuzzi & D. R. Gross (Eds.), *Counseling and psychotherapy: Theories and interventions* (4th ed., pp. 47–67). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Stone, C. B., & Dahir, C. A. (2006). *The transformed school counselor*. Boston: Lahaska Press.

**Using the advocacy competencies to attend to student concerns can be empowering for students and it can transform how school counseling is practiced.**

Sue, D. W., Arredondo, P., & McDavis, R. J. (1992). Multicultural counseling competencies and standards: A call to the profession. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 70*, 477–486.

Vera, E. M., & Speight, S. L. (2003). Multicultural competence, social justice, and counseling psychology: Expanding our roles. *The Counseling Psychologist, 31*, 253–272.

**Earn CEUs for reading this article.**  
**Visit [www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org), and**  
**click on *Professional School Counseling***  
**to learn how.**

## APPENDIX A

### ACA Advocacy Competencies

#### Student Level

##### *Student Empowerment Domain*

1. Identify strengths and resources of clients and students.
2. Identify the social, political, economic, and cultural factors that affect the client/student.
3. Recognize the signs indicating that an individual's behaviors and concerns reflect responses to systemic or internalized oppression.
4. At an appropriate development level, help the individual identify the external barriers that affect his or her development.
5. Train students and clients in self-advocacy skills.
6. Help students and clients develop self-advocacy action plans.
7. Assist students and clients in carrying out action plans.

##### *Student Advocacy Domain*

8. Negotiate relevant services and education systems on behalf of clients and students.
9. Help clients and students gain access to needed resources.
10. Identify barriers to the well-being of individuals and vulnerable groups.
11. Develop an initial plan of action for confronting these barriers.
12. Identify potential allies for confronting the barriers.
13. Carry out the plan of action.

#### School/Community Level

##### *Community Collaboration Domain*

14. Identify environmental factors that impinge upon students' and clients' development.
15. Alert community or school groups with common concerns related to the issue.
16. Develop alliances with groups working for change.
17. Use effective listening skills to gain understanding of the group's goals.
18. Identify the strengths and resources that the group members bring to the process of systemic change.
19. Communicate recognition of and respect for these strengths and resources.
20. Identify and offer the skills that the counselor can bring to the collaboration.
21. Assess the effect of the counselor's interaction with the community.

##### *Systems Advocacy Domain*

22. Identify environmental factors impinging on students' or clients' development.
23. Provide and interpret data to show the urgency for change.
24. In collaboration with other stakeholders, develop a vision to guide change.
25. Analyze the sources of political power and social influence within the system.
26. Develop a step-by-step plan for implementing the change process.
27. Develop a plan for dealing with probable responses to change.
28. Recognize and deal with resistance.
29. Assess the effect of the counselor's advocacy efforts on the system and constituents.

#### Public Arena Level

##### *Public Information Domain*

30. Recognize the impact of oppression and other barriers to healthy development.
31. Identify environmental factors that are protective of healthy development.
32. Prepare written and multimedia materials that provide clear explanations of the role of specific environmental factors in human development.
33. Communicate information in ways that are ethical and appropriate for the target population.
34. Disseminate information through a variety of media.
35. Identify and collaborate with other professionals who are involved in disseminating public information.
36. Assess the influence of public information efforts undertaken by the counselor.

##### *Social/Political Advocacy Domain*

37. Distinguish those problems that can best be resolved through social/political action.
38. Identify the appropriate mechanisms and avenues for addressing these problems.
39. Seek out and join with potential allies.
40. Support existing alliances for change.
41. With allies, prepare convincing data and rationales for change.
42. With allies, lobby legislators and other policymakers.
43. Maintain open dialogue with communities and clients to ensure that the social/political advocacy is consistent with the initial goals.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.