This article describes a broader, bolder approach to education reform aimed at addressing the social and economic disadvantages that hinder student achievement. Central principles of this approach to reform include the provision of supports such as early childhood and preschool programs, after-school and summer enrichment programs, parent education programs, and school-based or school-linked health services. The authors discuss expanded partnership roles and three priority areas for school counselors to meet the needs of students, especially poor and minority students, and to address the social, economic, and other barriers that hinder students’ learning: (a) engage families and community members in their children’s education, (b) partner to provide high-quality P-12 enrichment and out-of-school programs, and (c) collaborate to connect children to health services.

There has been no shortage of educational reform attempts to combat persistent achievement gaps, alarming rates of high school dropout, and an array of educational issues that plague schools that poor and minority students attend (Noguera, 2006). A growing body of research highlights the need for schools to address the relationship between the academic challenges that students face and factors related to race, ethnic background, and socioeconomic status (Noguera, 2003, 2004, 2008; Payne, 2008). This is true both in urban areas where poverty is more likely to be concentrated and in more affluent suburban schools that may benefit from their levels of per-pupil funding (Noguera, 2001; Stiefel, Schwartz, & Ellen, 2006). The persistence of the academic achievement gap 8 years after the enactment of No Child Left Behind suggests that a new approach is needed if greater progress is to be realized. Many schools, even those located in affluent communities, have been especially challenged in their efforts to educate poor and minority students. Despite well-intentioned, meaningful, and sophisticated reform efforts that have been used to combat the educational inequities students are facing, gaps in achievement persist (Breitborde & Swiniarski, 2002).

While most stakeholders and policymakers agree
that major reforms in schools are necessary, the reforms that have been implemented in many communities, regardless of the level of affluence, are not working for all students (Payne, 2008). Therefore, high dropout rates and low achievement patterns must be seen as symptoms of deeper systemic problems (Noguera, 2003). And although the accountability movement is important and No Child Left Behind has highlighted the disparities in achievement, an emphasis on high-stakes testing and highly qualified teaching is not enough to eliminate achievement gaps and other social and economic factors that hinder learning.

In essence, many districts have been ineffective in their efforts to increase the capacity of schools to improve student learning because they have focused upon the symptoms of failure rather than addressing underlying causes that extend beyond the classroom (Knoff & Batsche, 1995). There is some evidence that when schools resist the tendency to regard student deficits as the cause of failure, schools are more likely to improve (Fashola & Slavin, 1998). It is imperative for educators to move beyond the normalization of failure so that they can find solutions that make it possible to trump the complex interplay between social and economic conditions and student achievement (Noguera, 2003, 2004). Considerable research has shown that factors such as poverty, family distress, and other conditions outside of schools affect student achievement (Couillard, Garnett, Hutchins, Fawcett, & Maycock, 2006; Flowers & Flowers, 2008). To the extent that schools ignore these issues or attempt to tackle these problems without the investment of family and community stakeholders, there is no reason to believe that schools will improve or that any breakthroughs in reform will occur (Breitborde & Swiniarski, 2002; Noguera, 2003, 2008; Ouellette, Briscoe, & Tyson, 2004; Schutz, 2006).

Given the inability of past reforms to successfully meet the needs of students, particularly poor and minority students, a broader, bolder approach to education informed by ongoing research is a viable alternative to augment the single-focused reform efforts such as No Child Left Behind, which emphasizes high-stakes testing and the promotion of highly qualified teachers. The broader, bolder approach is characterized by two salient aspects of reform that expand the concept of education. First, education must not only embrace formal schooling, but also must embrace the importance of education in informal settings such as in preschool and early childhood programs, summer enrichment and after-school programs, and parent education and support programs (Broader, Bolder Approach Task Force, 2008). These programs augment teaching and learning in schools, facilitate parents’ empowerment so they can support their children’s learning, encourage well-developed children who are leaders and global citizens, and promote connections among schools, families, and communities. Further, the constructive use of out-of-school time helps ensure that the learning that occurs during the typical school day is not lost during weekends, holidays, or summer vacations. Within the framework of the broader, bolder approach to education, enrichment programs would no longer be considered ancillary to the efforts taking place in schools, but as a necessary component of schooling offering additional positive assets to counter any challenges to students’ learning, growth, and development.

Second, the broader, bolder approach to education includes a focus on basic academic skills and cognitive growth, but moves beyond that and places child and adolescent development at its center. This approach encompasses a holistic, comprehensive view of child and adolescent development: emotional, social, moral, cultural, physical, linguistic, cognitive, academic, and non-academic areas of development from pre-K to age 20, all of which affect student learning. This broader, bolder approach is based on the knowledge that reliance on school improvement efforts alone to raise achievement levels of disadvantaged children will not suffice. Hence, this approach calls for broader partnerships and more stable and consistent links among schools, public health, and human services to address the barriers to children’s learning and development (Adelman & Taylor, 1997, 2002).

Moreover, environmental and cultural factors profoundly impact academic performance; when youngsters’ most basic needs are met, their true potential success can be achieved. For example, far too often, poor and minority families reside in places around this country with few health-care resources. In other cases, these families may be unaware of resources available to them within or outside of their community. As a result, under-resourced families experience greater risk of poor health and are less likely to have a regular source of health care, which affects their children’s ability to learn (Brown & Bolen, 2003). One-size-fits-all solutions that are not tailored to the particular challenges confronting minority and poor students will not be effective (Adelman & Taylor, 1997, 2002; Dryfoos, 1994; Porter & Soper, 2003). By focusing on what schools can do to respond specifically to student needs and by forming partnerships with families and external organizations (e.g., nonprofits, clinics, after-school programs), schools are in a better position to address the systemic factors that invariably increase the likelihood of school and student failure. A broader, bolder approach to education requires that all school stakeholders including student services personnel
such as school counselors as well as families and community members work together to address children’s needs and eliminate the barriers to children’s learning.

WHAT WE KNOW

What we know is that school counselors and other school personnel need to expand how they respond to student needs. Most schools use highly restricted models of intervention when targeting barriers that impact learning (Adelman & Taylor, 2002) and the focus is on dealing with individual cases and providing a specific service. This strategy, although common, is limiting and may lead to a narrowly focused approach while taxing school resources (e.g., financial, personnel). School counselors and other school personnel must consider students’ social and economic contexts when attending to their needs. Specifically, research has supported the notion that concentrated poverty and social isolation of poor families are correlated with negative health and welfare (Arroyo & Rhoad, 1999; Swick, 2009). Viewing students’ academic struggles in isolation from external factors (e.g., issues occurring outside of school) has proven to be short-sighted and often unsuccessful (Adelman & Taylor; Halawah, 2006; Liu, Cheng, Chen, & Wu, 2009).

We also know that in addition to external barriers (e.g., poverty), internal barriers (i.e., within schools, e.g., teacher expectations and beliefs) must be examined (Adelman & Taylor, 1997, 2002). Excessive turnover rates of teachers, principals, central office administrators, and other staff (Porter & Soper, 2003), poor teacher quality, low morale, negative school climates (e.g., disproportionate referral and expulsion of students of color), and limited family involvement diminish the capacity of schools to improve and change (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Noguera, 2003). Therefore, school counselors and other school personnel must pay close attention to and take a systemic approach to addressing external and internal barriers that affect children in order to close achievement gaps and increase academic success for all children (Adelman & Taylor, 2002).

Despite the dismal observations about schools, we know that there are effective schools successfully meeting the needs of low-income students by helping them develop both socially and academically (Blankstein & Noguera, 2004; Finn, Chester, & Manno, 1998). The successes of these schools have been attributed to their ability to foster and support the capacity of schools through good teaching and learning while confronting external issues simultaneously (Haycock, 2001). In other words, these successful schools devise strategies that support a wide-reaching approach to educating children while mitigating the effect of outside negative factors (Dean & Galloway, 2008; McCann, 2000).

One striking illustration of a broader, bolder approach to education that focuses on educating the whole child can be seen in the work of the Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ), which has identified and sought to address the multiple and complex challenges that students face due to poverty. HCZ staff examine students’ and families’ economic, health, environmental, educational, and mental health needs. Following the comprehensive assessment of school and community needs, HCZ staff systematically and continually create school-family-community partnerships that provide wraparound services for their students and families. HCZ recognizes that students cannot be served in isolation. Moreover, it does not view students separately from their environment. By addressing students’ learning needs while attending to their social and economic needs, HCZ is able to strengthen schools, students, and families with the goal of literally transforming their entire community. Essentially, HCZ creates overlapping safety nets for its children and families (HCZ, 2010). The work of HCZ illustrates a more comprehensive approach of educating our nation’s children and provides hope that similar school and community transformation can occur in schools throughout this country to mitigate the challenges students face, thereby enabling their academic success (HCZ).

We also know that schools alone cannot effectively help students (Bryan, 2005). What is needed is an integrated approach that moves beyond merely implementing in-school interventions to involve all school stakeholders in meeting the needs of students (Adelman & Taylor, 1997, 2002). This is a key element of schools that successfully educate children, especially poor and minority students. Schools must strategically tackle the educational challenges students face in failing schools by using high-quality, stimulating, and relevant curricula; eliminating biased tracking, referrals, and suspensions; and improving school climate and teacher and student morale while embracing the best that communities and agencies have to offer in the form of health care, mental health, family planning, employment support, child care, parent education, and case management (Dryfoos, 1994). School counselors and other school personnel must engage family and community members and agencies in the school in ways that effectively address challenges such as school dropout, poor academic achievement, and many other issues that students face (Taylor & Adelman, 2000).

Ideally, school counselors’ training in education and counseling from a developmental and systemic
framework positions them to play a major role in helping schools implement a broader, bolder approach to education reform that focuses on meeting the needs of children. School counselors are in a position to expand programming efforts beyond the typical school day and engage families and community members in their children’s education to meet students’ needs, close achievement gaps, and ultimately eliminate school dropout.

**SCHOOL COUNSELING IN THE CONTEXT OF A BROADER, BOLDER APPROACH TO EDUCATION REFORM**

School counselors play a major role in schools in addressing the personal-social, academic, career, and college needs of children (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2005). Parents often consult school counselors about how to meet the needs of their children; teachers refer children to school counselors for behavioral and academic assistance; and school and community leaders often seek their input and feedback regarding solutions to children’s problems. Despite their critical position, many school principals continue to delegate school counselors to roles such as quasi-administrator, registrar, and clerk. These roles are in diametric opposition to the roles for which school counselors are trained, such as advocate, leader, and collaborator (ASCA). This practice on the part of principals frequently prohibits school counselors from engaging in program delivery that is far reaching in meeting students’ academic, personal-social, and career development needs.

Furthermore, school counselors have traditionally been left out of education reform efforts (Bemak & Cornely, 2002; House & Hayes, 2002). Indeed, education reform models are frequently articulated without consideration of the role that school counselors should play within such frameworks. However, eliminating the school, family, social, economic, and other barriers to children’s learning requires more than single-focused reform efforts that engage only some stakeholders. A few token activities taken on by some school personnel cannot sufficiently change the academic outcomes of our most troubled students (Porter & Soper, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). A broader, bolder approach to education requires that all stakeholders including school counselors, families, and community members work together to identify and meet children’s needs and to eliminate the barriers to children’s learning. School counselors can play critical roles in teaming and collaborating with school staff and other stakeholders to create, implement, and sustain services that attend to more far-reaching needs of students (e.g., health, mental health, social, financial) and engage families and communities in fostering success for students.

Within the framework of the broader, bolder approach to education, school counselors can engage in teaming and collaboration efforts, leadership roles, and systemic-focused activities delineated in the ASCA National Model® (2005). More specifically, we discuss expanded partnership and collaboration roles for school counselors. Reform efforts within the scope of the school counseling profession include broadening the view of student needs and boldly approaching these needs through strategic school-family-community partnerships and collaboration with health, social, and other community agencies and service providers. Careful attention must be paid to meeting the needs (e.g., educational, developmental, health, safety) of our most troubled children and adolescents, especially those identified in the current reform agenda (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

While the ASCA National Model’s (2005) current emphasis on embracing the mission of a school as well as focused accountability efforts offers school counselors a great starting point from which to examine the needs of all students, it currently stands in need of practical and research support (Steen & Rudd, in press). In particular, the ASCA National Model must be expanded to clearly articulate and provide evidence of ways school counselors can adequately serve students with the highest needs, such as poor and minority children, and engage their families and community stakeholders in their education. Although it is commonly understood that school counselors have a valuable integration of awareness, knowledge, and skills to strategically lead and advocate for productive environments within schools and to build partnerships among schools, families, and communities (Trusty, Mellin, & Herbert, 2008), the ASCA National Model could be expanded to more intentionally reflect this position. This view is based on literature gathered from nearly a decade of research and conceptual frameworks urging school counselors to improve their ability to serve disenfranchised students and families (Bemak & Cornely, 2002; Bryan, 2005; Dotson-Blake, Foster, & Gressard, 2009; Green, Conley, & Barnett, 2005; Green & Keys, 2001; Mitchell & Bryan, 2007). In sum, the ASCA National Model could be expanded to emphasize the school counselor’s role in creating strong relationships within the school and surrounding community to attend to those students most in need of services (Bryan).

It is important to note that when a school prioritizes the needs of poor and minority students and families, it will not result in school counselors or other school staff overlooking the needs of more privileged students. Rather, focusing on the needs of
the most vulnerable students creates a context where it is possible for a school to truly help all students. Whereas highly educated, affluent parents tend to understand how to obtain the resources and attention they need (or believe they need) from school personnel (Rowley, Sink, & MacDonald, 2002), school professionals are more likely to fail to engage families who are ethnically, racially, and socioeconomically different from themselves unless there is an explicit policy in place for this to occur (Ditranò & Silverstein, 2006).

Within the broader, bolder approach to education framework, school counselors improve their ability to serve poor and minority students and families through school-family-community collaboration and partnerships (Bemak & Cornely, 2002; Bryan, 2005; Green & Keys, 2001). Within this framework, we recommend the following three priority areas that school counselors should attend to in order to meet the needs of students, especially disenfranchised students, and to address the social, economic, and other barriers that hinder students’ learning: (a) engage families and community members in their children’s education, (b) partner to provide high-quality P-12 enrichment and out-of-school programs, and (c) collaborate to connect children to health services. In each of these areas, the school counselor may serve as a facilitator, initiator, coordinator, and advocate of partnerships among school, family, and community stakeholders for the sole purpose of providing supports that help children learn and develop holistically.

Engage Families and Community Members in Their Children’s Education

It is commonly accepted that the more parents and families are involved in their children’s learning at home and at school, the more successful students are in school (Amatea, Smith-Adcock, & Villares, 2006; Breitborde & Swiniarski, 2002; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007). According to some researchers, parent involvement represents a powerful and critical mechanism with which to enhance the relationships between home and school (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). For example, students whose parents are involved in their education are more likely to have higher grade point averages, are less likely to get suspended or expelled from school, and tend to have more postsecondary options, including matriculation to college, than students whose parents and families are not involved (Henderson et al.). One longitudinal study found family involvement to be especially beneficial for students of color, and for those from low-income backgrounds, in that it predicted positive child-teacher relationships and positive attitudes of children toward school (Dearing, Kreider, & Weiss, 2008).

School counselors are in an ideal position to facilitate the connection of poor and minority families to schools (Bemak & Cornely, 2002; Bryan, 2005; Taylor & Adelman, 2000). However, school counselors could benefit from more fully understanding how to engage poor and minority families in effective school-family-community partnerships (Dotson-Blake et al., 2009). One recommendation made in the past and reiterated here is the need for school counselors to take concerted action in establishing a system of collaboration between schools and families that promotes successful learning environments at home and at school (Bemak & Cornely). It is necessary for school counselors to take a systemic approach to engaging families because individual programming efforts and projects have simply not been sufficient enough to reach many families that face barriers that hinder them from connecting with the school.

Poor and minority families whose children face the greatest barriers to learning are often excluded from school decisions about attendance, discipline, curricula, and enrichment needs of children. Therefore, school counselors can advocate for the invitation of these families to be equal partners in decision-making processes in schools (Bemak & Cornely, 2002). This would essentially help to broaden the policies established to be more inclusive of approaches linking families and the school. Many parents, despite their socio-economic backgrounds or experiences with traditional school systems, desire the best for their children. School counselors can be the impetus for the inclusion of parents’ voices when decisions are being made (Dotson-Blake et al., 2009). For example, school counselors can ensure that when steering committees are formed or policies are created, representatives from families of all racial and socio-economic backgrounds are invited to participate. Furthermore, traditional meeting times for such meetings (e.g., during or after school) can be altered to include time frames before school or during weekends in order to include those families that may be unable to attend during typical work hours due to personal obligations (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001).

Moreover, parents of poor and minority children often report a communication gap between them and their children’s teachers (Thompson, 2003). Poor communication helps to exacerbate the social and cultural distance that often exists between schools and poor and minority families (Brandon, Higgins, Pierce, Tandy, & Sileo, 2010; Ramirez, 2003). Therefore, communication is another important area that school counselors must attend to in their efforts to increase family involvement (Griffin & Steen, 2010). School counselors will need to be creative and strategic when providing information to
and soliciting poor and minority families to collaborate. As such, school counselors can set up informational meetings in community places to ensure that parents hear important school information. For example, school counselors can facilitate the provision of school information to be available in shopping malls, hair salons, grocery stores, and places of worship. Moreover, communication methods such as the use of “word of mouth” or phone trees, although more traditional, are also good strategies that school counselors can use to get information to families that are typically underserved (Mitchell & Bryan, 2007).

Additionally, school counselors should endeavor to make sure that information is presented in culturally sensitive ways. School information can be provided in multiple languages, in ways that both schools and families benefit, and not focused simply on improving students’ academic achievement (Bemak & Cornely, 2002; Dotson-Blake et al., 2009; Mitchell & Bryan, 2007). For instance, school counselors can advocate for their schools to offer English-language classes for ethnically diverse families as well as opportunities for school staff to learn basic communication skills in other languages represented in the community. These gestures can help with overall communication between the school and families while also illustrating the school’s willingness to make an effort in embracing cultural differences.

School counselors can work with key stakeholders to create and implement classes for parents as well as adult mentoring programs with the goal of educating and empowering poor and minority families on what is needed to support their children’s education (Doherty, Jacob, & Cutting, 2009). For example, school counselors could work with parent volunteers to design programs for other parents that could address their common concerns (e.g., navigating the school culture or getting a child to sleep at night). Other parent-led workshops could focus on helping parents deal with children with disabilities and other high learning needs (Brandon et al., 2010). These activities not only provide information and support, but in turn also could help to provide a school and community environment that is conducive to the empowerment of parents and families. Efforts involving parents and other community members that emphasize the empowerment of parents have been found to positively impact a school and families’ influence on students’ academic success (Doherty et al.). More specifically, empowerment-based school and family collaboration has been found to increase parents’ self-perceptions, strengthen parents’ social networks, and actively make improvements in their communities (Cochran & Dean, 1991).

Once poor and minority families and schools become more connected, school counselors can help to sustain these relationships. School environments that are warm, inviting, and welcoming help parents to trust schools and school personnel. School counselors can partner with other school staff and stakeholders to create and maintain family-friendly school environments (Epstein, 1995). They may use strategies such as (a) reviewing policies within the school to ensure that they are not unintentionally separating schools and families; (b) examining the physical setup of the school to ensure that it provides places for parents and families to comfortably congregate and visit; (c) offering signs throughout the school in a variety of different languages; (d) suggesting that school personnel refrain from the use of acronyms and professional jargon that may hinder appropriate communication; and (e) involving parents, community members, and cultural brokers in reflecting on whether the school as it currently stands is a place that is welcoming and collaborative (Bemak & Cornely, 2002; Dotson-Blake, Foster, & Gressard, 2009). Cultural brokers are cultural liaisons between school personnel and community members (Dotson-Blake et al., 2009; Mitchell & Bryan, 2007).

While schools often assess factors associated with learning, they often do so with the exclusion of students’ social, economic, health, and environmental needs. School counselors will need to work together with school staff and families to assess the variety of important needs for students, families, and the community that may hinder students’ potential for academic success (Colbert, Vernon-Jones, & Pransky, 2006). School counselors can conduct needs assessments using surveys or focus groups to determine the most pressing concerns that need to be addressed (Mitchell & Bryan, 2007). In order to assess some of the needs in the school and community, school counselors can be sure to ask questions such as the following: “Who are the students and families most in need?” “What internal barriers and external barriers are hindering our students from achieving optimal academic success?” “How should we go about meeting these needs?” These questions can help school counselors, school personnel, and families to critically reflect on and develop an awareness of the unique student, family, and community needs (Dotson-Blake et al., 2009) as well as to prioritize which challenges will be dealt with first (Green et al., 2005).

**Partner to Provide High-Quality P-12 Enrichment and Out-of-School Programs**

A body of research has documented that the achievement gap to some extent is associated with what takes place outside of schools (Broader, Bolder Approach Task Force, 2008; Harvard Family Research Project, 2010). For instance, poor and
minority students acquire knowledge in school just like more advantaged students; however, their lack of participation in learning activities before and after school as well as during summer breaks limits their carryover and sustainability of this information (Harvard Family Research Project). Ideally, such findings should thrust policymakers to ratchet up investments in programs that have shown some promise in enhancing academic achievement, such as longer school days, after-school programs, and summer enrichment and mentoring programs. However, in poor and minority schools and communities, high-quality community-based and school-based enrichment and mentoring programs are scant.

Some researchers emphasize that extracurricular and cocurricular enrichment programs that occur before and after school and during the summer can help build competence, confidence, character, and connection in students (Anthony, Alter, & Jenson, 2009; Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000). These enrichment and mentoring programs are both academic and non-academic in nature. In fact, these enrichment programs provide conditions that are conducive to positive youth development. Some of these include (a) positive sustained adult-youth relationships, (b) activities that improve life skills, and (c) opportunities for youth to participate in leadership and valuable community activities (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

Research findings on mentoring programs suggest that, in some cases, mentoring programs play a part in improving academic performance, perceived scholastic efficacy, school misconduct, and attendance (Hansen, 2007). However, the literature is less clear about whether these mentoring programs should be conducted as community-based programs or school-based programs (Rhodes, 2008). Community-based mentoring programs (i.e., located off the school site) occur without the limitations of the school personnel and the school calendar. These mentoring programs tend to have more mentors at their disposal, begin before the actual school year, and continue throughout the entire school year and beyond. School-based mentoring programs (i.e., located in the school and sometimes with school personnel serving as mentors) are often limited by the length of the school year. This is important to note, because there is some evidence documenting that longer and more consistent relationships between mentors and mentees allow their relationships to develop more fully. Indeed, community-based mentoring programs typically pair up mentors and students allowing for longer and more consistent mentor-mentee relationships (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006). However, school personnel who serve as mentors are often more familiar with the developmental needs of students and are more easily vested in serving as mentors (Rhodes et al.). Additionally, school-based mentoring programs have access to mentors and mentees, important information about students and their progress, and curricula in order to ensure the program complements in-class instruction (Harvard Family Research Project, 2010).

With this information in mind, school counselors can collaborate with stakeholders to implement effective school-based enrichment and mentoring programs that can be used to provide additional support networks for poor and minority students who may be struggling to overcome challenging life situations (Bryan & Henry, 2008). Alternately, school counselors can connect students to community-based enrichment and mentoring programs that share the same goals as the school, contain consistent messages of high expectations for students, and use family and community members to serve students by ultimately creating a web of support for students who are most in need (Harvard Family Research Project, 2010). These elements describe the best practices for school- and community-based enrichment and mentoring programs (Rhodes et al., 2006).

These enrichment programs that occur before and after school and during summer breaks must be intentionally aligned with standards and practices that support the school's mission (ASCA, 2005). School counselors can provide leadership in partnership with stakeholders to ensure that these out-of-school activities support students' overall educational experience. More specifically, school counselors can partner with teachers, university faculty, and families in advocating for and initiating programs that integrate best practices and fill important educational gaps, such as the need for more minority students in science. For example, school counselors could be instrumental in coordinating enrichment programs provided by community organizations that combine one or more of the STEM subjects (e.g., science, technology, engineering, and math) with other subjects and/or activities such as physical education, service learning, cultural, experiential, and career-oriented learning opportunities.

In some cases, it may not be feasible or strategic for school counselors to spend their time designing or supervising extracurricular and cocurricular enrichment and mentoring programs. Therefore, school counselors can seek out and partner with reliable and trustworthy community organizations (e.g., faith-based, nonprofit, other schools) to provide the structure and support necessary to carry out this important work for students (Bryan, 2005). For example, school counselors can solicit professional or college sporting teams or businesses and major corporations that have such programs already in
place to provide college readiness and early career development and planning or after-school homework support. Ideally, school counselors will engage various partners in creating or providing programs that use high-quality enrichment and effective mentoring activities to address barriers to learning and to enhance students’ educational resiliency and academic achievement (Bemak, 2000; Bryan & Henry, 2008).

**Collaborate to Connect Children to Health Services**

Unfortunately, far too many poor and minority students come to school with health-care needs that may hinder their learning. Many of these students must navigate school and community environments that have high incidences of crime, violence, and drug problems. Poor and minority families often live in communities with few health-care resources or may be unaware of resources available outside of their community (Adelman & Taylor, 2002). Further, they are at a greater risk of poor health and are less likely to have a regular source of health care (Brown & Bolen, 2003, 2008; Russell, 2003; Seymour, 2004).

Barriers to accessing adequate health services for poor and minority students and families include (a) insufficient family support and practical help, (b) the high cost of services, (c) a lack of key service providers to ensure that well-coordinated services are planned to meet individual and family needs, (d) inequality in access to health and other services, and (e) limited availability of culturally appropriate services for families from ethnic minority backgrounds (Russell, 2003). In fact, poor and minority students and families may be at greater risk of not having their health needs met because of the lack of information and advice available about services as well as the lack of health providers’ awareness of the students’ and families’ cultural needs. However, when physical and mental health services are located in one location, students’ awareness, access, and use of these services increase (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Therefore, schools are an ideal location for providing on-site health services to address a youngster’s physical and mental health needs (Adelman & Taylor, 1997; Dryfoos, 1994; U.S. Department of Education).

School-based health services utilize an interdisciplinary approach to deliver comprehensive physical and mental health care for children and families (Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, 2002). The goals of school-based health services include developing links among schools, families, and communities; organizing and conducting individual risk assessments during primary care; and providing services that build resilience and promote protective factors (Brown & Bolen, 2008). Since 1986, there has been a movement to establish school-based health centers (SBHCs) in schools (Strozer, Juszczak, & Ammerman, 2010). SBHCs now exist in about 1,900 schools in the United States. SBHC use has been found to improve student outcomes resulting in increased attendance and grade point averages (Gall, Pagano, Desmond, Perrin, & Murphy, 2000; Walker, Kerns, Lyon, Bruns, & Cosgrove, 2010). Although school-based health centers are a promising approach for providing health and related services to students, more intensive efforts may be needed to make them useful to children. For instance, in a study of 24 school-based health-care programs, Kisker and Brown (1996) found that these centers did increase students’ access to health care and improved their health knowledge but did not significantly reduce risk-taking behaviors. School counselors can team with other mental and medical health professionals to determine the most effective strategies for addressing students’ health needs that create barriers to learning.

Certainly, when health services are school based (i.e., located in schools), school counselors are in a strategic position to collaborate with medical and mental health staff in examining and addressing poor and minority students’ health-care needs (Adelman & Taylor, 2002; Brown & Bolen, 2003, 2008; Taylor & Adelman, 2000). However, when these services are not located at the school, school counselors can collaborate with community-based health services organizations to link students and families to medical and mental health care. School counselors can begin by creating a directory of readily accessible resources in the community for families and students. In essence, school counselors would need to make a concerted effort to become aware of affordable resources in the community that may be relatively unknown. School counselors must work to build relationships with members of these organizations to become familiar with what services they offer, their protocols for referrals and follow-up, and whom they are most specialized to serve. They also can help to broker the relationships between these organizations and students and families, especially for families that might be reluctant to use the services due to a historical mistrust of health professionals or a lack of understanding of the services offered (Noguera, 2003). When school counselors broaden their efforts to ensure that school, family, and community stakeholders are aware of necessary services (e.g., health, safety) and to facilitate families’ utilization of these services, they will help to remove barriers that hinder children’s academic achievement.

At first glance, this level of school counselor involvement in connecting students and families to
health services may seem impossible or daunting. However, school counselors must keep a mindset that they cannot tackle these macro-problems alone. If they involve influential community stakeholders (e.g., school principals, school board members) who can actively draw on valuable resources currently existing in the community, then the possibilities regarding services that school counselors can collaborate to deliver, initiate, or connect students and families to are endless (Bryan & Henry, 2008; Dotson-Blake et al., 2009).

**SUMMARY**

Given the necessity for school reform efforts to address the multitude of social and economic factors that hinder student achievement, our intention was to articulate a broader, bolder approach to education and to examine its implications for the school counseling profession. In doing so, we have described expanded partnership roles that school counselors can take to more strategically address the needs of poor and minority students, families, and communities. We believe the bolder, broader reform framework is useful to extend the work of school counselors in building partnerships that engage underserved parents and families, to utilize out-of-school time and mentoring programs effectively, and to connect children and families to health services. We offer suggestions to put this bolder, broader approach into practice and believe that if school counselors are to adequately serve all students and families, and poor and minority students and families in particular, they must enlarge their perspectives to engage in such critical school-family-community partnership work.

**References**


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