

Reaching Higher: College and Career Readiness for African American Males with Learning Disabilities

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African American males with learning disabilities have great promise for success in postsecondary endeavors. However, they are often met with challenging experiences that may detour them on their road to success (Miller Dyce, 2013). As such, it is imperative that all educational stakeholders, including school counselors and school psychologists, collaborate to ensure the college and career readiness of African American males with learning disabilities at every educational level. Throughout this manuscript, the authors discuss how collaboration between school counselors and school psychologists can support African American males with learning disabilities by promoting positive academic, social/personal, and career development needed for postsecondary educational opportunities.

Keywords: College and career readiness, African American males, learning disabilities, school counselors, school psychologists, twice exceptional

Introduction

In the current educational climate, the focus has shifted from students not only being academically successful but also prepared for postsecondary educational opportunities, such as traditional four-year institutions, community colleges, career or vocational institutions. This push for college and career readiness highlights the need for students to develop content knowledge, basic skills, core academic skills, non-cognitive or behavioral skills, and college knowledge (Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009).

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Provided a more holistic view of college and career readiness, there is a great need for all educational stakeholders to be on board. While teachers are often the primary focus in college and career readiness efforts, both school counselors and school psychologists have a stake in student success as well (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012; National Association of School Psychologists [NASP], 2014).

While school counselors and school psychologists are called upon to work with *all* students, they are often required to serve as an extra support and resource for students receiving special education services. School counselors and school psychologists help students accomplish developmental tasks and goals while aligning students' interests and abilities to their individualized educational plan (Santos de Barona & Barona, 2006). Further, both professionals work with key constituents, internal and external to the schooling context, to create a community of support for all students, including students in special education (Bryan & Henry, 2012). Collaboration among school personnel is critical for the academic success for all students, especially for school counselors and school psychologists (ASCA, 2012; NASP, 2014).

Partnerships are needed between these school personnel to ensure that African American males with learning disabilities are college and career ready. Additionally, partnerships among schools, families, and communities are critical to ensuring students, specifically those who are underserved, get the resources they need to be academically prepared for postsecondary opportunities (Bryan & Henry, 2012).

Moreover, partnerships will ensure students not only get academic preparation in school, but outside of school with additional support. Epstein (2010) stated, "more will be accomplished if schools, families, and communities work together to promote successful students" (para 1). The academic success of African American males occurs at many levels. Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Hines and Holcomb-McCoy (2013) suggested that micro-level factors, such as parents and school personnel, can have a positive or negative impact. Therefore, if success is to be realized, partnerships must be an integral part of creating a 'college-going' culture for African American males with learning disabilities.

Special Education Services

Between 1960 and 1975, specific guidelines about the rights of students with disabilities were made much more explicit (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996). The federal courts have made it clear that students with disabilities are owed an educational experience that is equal to their non-disabled classmates, just as the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled with regard to race (Martin et al., 1996). The first special education legislation was Public Law 94-142, also known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Originally introduced in 1971 and made public law in 1975, the IDEA impacted the entire nation, prompting further interest in more state statutes and litigation (Martin et al., 1996). More specifically, this legislation directed states to provide an education for all students with special needs. According to Harrigan (2004), it established two critical rights: (1) a free and appropriate education (FAPE) for students and (2) a least restrictive environment (LRE). Both of these mandates help to ensure that students with disabilities would be provided the necessary supports in an environment that was as close to a general education environment as possible, depending on the severity of the student's disability. More than six million students are enrolled in special education within public schools across the country (National Education Association, n.d.). Of these, approximately one-half have specific learning disabilities, a little more than a million have speech or language impairments, and

500,000 have intellectual disabilities (Owens, Thomas, & Strong, 2011). Interestingly, the early advocacy efforts and lobbying for special education were informed and influenced by the Civil Rights movement in the United States.

Despite being influenced by the Civil Rights movement, there are still areas in need of improvement regarding the services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Labor (2012) reported that individuals with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed than individuals without disabilities. They are also less likely to enroll in postsecondary programs than their counterparts without disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). In the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NTS2) study, African Americans with disabilities were less likely to complete a postsecondary degree and were employed at lower rates when compared to their White peers with disabilities (Newman et al., 2011).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) provides guidelines for transition planning for students receiving special education services. A transition plan is required for all students receiving special education services who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) beginning no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16 years old. It must focus on identifying and developing goals and objectives to facilitate the student's transition from secondary school to postsecondary activities such as college, the workforce, or independent living. Additionally, transition planning is individualized and based on a student's needs, strengths, and interests; therefore, active participation is expected. The underlying purpose of transition planning is to prepare students for life after secondary school (Cameto, Levine, & Wagner, 2004).

A study by Landmark and Zhang (2012) examining compliance and practices in transition planning for students with emotional, behavioral, and learning disabilities in Texas, showed that 44.8% of the IEPs with students' postsecondary goals were written in measurable terms. However, those students identified with emotional disturbance (ED) were less likely to have an IEP that included fully compliant transition goals. Furthermore, these IEPs lacked transitional goal alignment with students' postsecondary goals and did not address transition services related to students' needs, interests, or strengths.

Because African American students, particularly African American males, tend to be overrepresented in the ED category, this finding and implications are concerning. The study reported that being an African American student diminished the chances of being fully compliant with IEP team participant requirements, family involvement, and employment preparation. A student's disability category and race should not determine the quality of services they receive. When considering and developing transition plans for students with disabilities, a comprehensive assessment of the students' needs and interests should be conducted. This assessment process may include various components, such as academic, social-emotional, vocational, and career aptitude, plus interest measures to help identify strengths and weaknesses and to develop realistic student goals (Morningstar, Lombardi, Fowler, & Test, 2015). Educators should involve students in the transition planning process by discussing their interests, future goals, empowering them to ask questions and advocate for their own needs, and securing part-time work or volunteer experience to explore their postsecondary and/or career goals.

African American Males in Special Education and/or Gifted Education

African American males face a myriad of challenges in special education. First, they are overrepresented in special education (Gardner & Mayes, 2013; Trotman Scott, Mayes, Griffith, Garrett, & Watkins, 2015). African American males alone make up 8.5% of the K-12 population and account for nearly 17% of the special education population (Civil Rights Data, 2010). When compared to their White male peers, African American males are two to three times as likely to be identified for special education services (Ferri & Connor, 2005). African American males are more likely to be identified as needing special education services in relatively subjective, high-incidence disability categories, such as learning disabilities, cognitive disabilities, emotional disturbance, and speech and language disorders (Trotman Scott et al., 2015).

Interestingly, the intersection of giftedness and disability creates some unique and similar challenges for African American male students as well. First, these twice exceptional students, that is gifted students with a disability, are less likely to have both exceptionalities identified (Mayes & Moore, in press). In fact, it is more likely that African American males will be under-identified as having only a disability, with little or no regard for their giftedness. As such, many twice exceptional African American males may experience their schooling much like their peers who are in special education.

While special education and gifted education can provide great opportunities for students to grow their skills and reach their potential, it can often be challenging for African American males. For example, once identified for special education services, African American males may experience challenges in securing appropriate educational placement (Miller Dyce, 2013; Trotman Scott et al., 2015), so much so that they are more likely to be placed in the more or the most restrictive settings, which means having less access to rigorous courses that may better promote their college and career readiness.

An additional barrier to college and career readiness is time spent out of the classroom learning environment. Regardless of class setting, African American males are often met with deficit perspectives and microaggressions from educators (Ford, Trotman Scott, Moore, & Amos, 2013; Mayes, Hines, & Harris, 2014; Mayes & Moore, in press; Stambaugh & Ford, 2015). These negative perspectives and interactions often push African American males to disengage from the learning environment, underachieve, and ultimately withdraw from school (Miller Dyce, 2013; Stambaugh & Ford, 2015).

These negative perspectives can also lead educators to remove African American male students from the learning environment at a higher rate than other students for disciplinary action (Trotman Scott et al., 2015). As such, their opportunity to learn is significantly decreased and may result in lower levels of academic achievement and an overall lack of preparedness for postsecondary educational opportunities. The research literature related to postsecondary transition for African American students is limited, however, racial differences exist when it comes to transition planning. A finding from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) showed a smaller percentage of African American students had transition goals related to attending a two-year or four-year college compared to White students (40.2% vs. 47.8%, respectively).

Yet, a larger percentage of African American students had transition goals related to attending a vocational school when compared to their White peers (46% vs. 37.4%, respectively) (Cameto, Levine, & Wagner, 2004). This is consistent with Trainor's (2005) study which found that African American students with disabilities were enrolled in vocational education programs

more frequently than their White peers with disabilities, even when they desired to attend college.

The NLTS2 study also found lower participation among African American parents and students in the transition planning process. However, significantly more parents of African American students voiced a desire for greater involvement in this process (51%) than the parents of White students (27%). African American youth with disabilities were less likely than White peers to be employed; African American youth with disabilities were at a 16 percentage point disadvantage relative to White youth in their rate of current employment (Newman, Wagner Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005). This study also indicated that the college degree attainment rate of African American students with disabilities was less than half that for White students with disabilities (Newman et al., 2005). These are all areas that must be addressed when developing transition plans for African American students with disabilities.

Banks (2014) examined the postsecondary transition experiences of three African American males with disabilities. Participants reported being encouraged to pursue full-time employment following high school rather than attending college. They were also unaware that disability services were available at the postsecondary level because it was never discussed. African American males expressed reluctance in seeking accommodations due to the stigma of being labeled with a disability and other people knowing about their learning challenges. These students should have been provided with more explicit transition planning to assist in a smoother shift to college, including an explanation of what a disability is and its effect on academic performance, the importance of accessing accommodations and services, and knowledge on accessing services at the postsecondary level.

Despite all of these challenges, African American males can be successful in school and prepared for postsecondary educational opportunities. When learning environments embrace and celebrate their cultural backgrounds and utilize strength-based perspectives, African American males can reach, if not, surpass their educational goals (Trotman Scott et al., 2015). These learning environments foster not only the mastery of academic skills but also aid in African American males developing their internal resources (e.g., self-esteem, confidence, perseverance, etc.) which are needed to navigate the educational terrain to reach their college and career goals.

Support at both the educational and community level is needed to reduce the numerous disparities faced by African American students with disabilities. Educators must understand the barriers related to parent participation, including how their own behavior may facilitate or discourage partnerships with families (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Javitz, & Valdes, 2012). Educator training is necessary in the areas of cultural competence and developing effective home-school partnerships.

It must be noted, that at the college level, African American students may wish to not disclose their disability status and seek accommodations because they do not wish to be stigmatized or labeled as incompetent, and they wait until they are struggling academically to seek assistance (Banks, 2014). Walker and Test (2011) utilized a self-advocacy intervention to teach African American male college students with disabilities how to request academic accommodations. The intervention involved using a video describing what it meant to have a disability, how it affected learning, and how to be a self-advocate. The researchers also used the *Self-Advocacy & Conflict Resolution Training (SACR): Strategies for the Classroom Accommodation Request* (Rumrill, Palmer, Roessler, & Brown, 1999), a program designed to help students understand accommodations and learn how to access them. Skills were presented to the participants over several sessions and they practiced them in role-playing situations. Upon

completion of the SACR, students met with one of their course instructors to ask for accommodations. The African American males reported that the intervention was effective in helping to use self-advocacy skills in requesting needed accommodations from faculty in their courses.

The Roles of School Psychologists and School Counselors in Special Education

An increase in the percentage of students with disabilities who graduated with a regular high school diploma was seen for the 2001-2002 and 2010-2011 school years. The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD, 2014) reported that, during these years, students with learning disabilities graduated with high school diplomas at a rate of 57% and 68%, respectively. In the 2010-2011 school year, 71% of White students with learning disabilities graduated with a regular high school diploma compared to only 52% of African American students (NCLD, 2014). This leaves them with marginal opportunities for employment. However, with assistance from school counselors and school psychologists, these students can receive the support they need to navigate high school and plan for life after high school.

School Psychologists

Due to their depth of knowledge in the field of special education, school psychologists can and must provide guidance and support in the transition planning process for African American males in special education. A critical role of school psychologists is conducting assessments to determine the presence of a suspected disability and eligibility for special education services (Fagan & Wise, 2007). Therefore, their involvement in the development of transition planning goals that consider postsecondary education and/or workforce goals for students of color in special education is necessary (Joyce & Grapin, 2012).

School psychologists can make significant contributions to transition planning; yet, their involvement is often limited. Staab (1996) found that, although school psychologists wanted to be involved in transition planning, 50% reported their skills were underutilized in this area. Lillenstein and Levinson (2006) examined the perceptions of school psychologists and transition coordinators in Pennsylvania regarding the level of involvement school psychologists have in transition planning and the importance of their involvement. Their finding that school psychologists were not as involved to the extent they would have liked to be was consistent with Staab (1996). Barriers to their involvement included transition not being a part of their job activities, referral backlog, not being invited to participate in transition planning, role restrictions, and the number of buildings served.

As members of the IEP team, school psychologists conduct assessments (i.e., cognitive, academic, and social-emotional) and provide recommendations for transition planning based on their findings to the team (Morningstar et al., 2015). Assessment results allow for useful recommendations and interventions related to students' strengths and weaknesses as they relate to their postsecondary and/or workforce goals (Joyce & Grapin, 2012; Lillenstein & Levinson, 2006). Information obtained from these assessments can assist with identifying appropriate career areas, available supports in developing appropriate academic and/or career-related skills, and preparing students for the transition from high school to postsecondary settings (Joyce & Grapin, 2012; Morningstar et al., 2015). The IEP team meets annually to review and modify students' goals including transition plans. The school psychologist should be involved in the

process annually, but also work with students to explore their future career and educational interests on a regular basis.

Parent involvement, particularly for those from low-income backgrounds, is an important area in transition planning by school psychologists. Parents from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds likely experience several barriers to their participation in transition planning, such as discrimination, poverty, and a lack of information regarding their rights and special education procedures. The parents may often feel a power imbalance with school personnel, where they suspect decisions and transition goals were already made without their input (Wagner et al., 2012). To facilitate parent involvement in the transition planning process for African American families, school psychologists need to coordinate parent workshops that discuss information related to the transition process -- their legal rights, roles, and the availability of community resources. School psychologists should also begin discussing transition procedures at an earlier age, this may help in giving students the opportunity to develop essential skills in independent living and postsecondary and career readiness (Wagner et al., 2012).

In an in-depth review of the literature, Wilkins and Huckabee (2014) found the three most common interventions associated with graduating from high school among students with disabilities involved: (a) mentoring; (b) interventions targeted to specific disability-related needs; and (c) class setting and exit options. They found that dropout prevention programs also focused on engaging students through relevant instruction and skills students would need after school, through job training, awareness of various careers, and exposure to postsecondary education. School psychologists may also assist students with disabilities by providing them with support groups for transitioning from high school to postsecondary education as these programs have showed effectiveness in increasing the success of those students (McEachern & Kenny, 2007). For students seeking to transition to a postsecondary institution, school psychologists can collaborate with students and their families by discussing the accommodations provided by institutions of higher education. They can assist both parents and their children in advocating for their needs by explaining how to contact the disability office at their higher education institution to receive accommodations. This is particularly relevant as the participants in Banks' (2014) study reported a lack of awareness of the availability of services for students with disabilities in college.

School Counselors

School counselors should and do have a role to play in serving the unique needs of students in special education. School counselors serve as supporters, counselors, consultants, collaborators, resource providers, investigators, planners, trainers, and teachers (Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason, 2014). Their training in such service delivery is a perfect fit for advocacy efforts related to students in special education and their families. For African American males, being identified as having a disability can exacerbate an already challenging school experience. There is already a lack of understanding in meeting the needs of African American males, as more are inappropriately assigned to special education classes, are increasingly alienated from their schools, are dropping out of schools at a high rate, are illiterate, and ultimately, are not career and college ready (Miller Dyce, 2013).

Given the unique knowledge, awareness, skills, and training that school counselors have, the leadership role of school counselors in the IEP process is increasing (ASCA, 2013). The opportunities to support African American male students with learning disabilities are vast for

school counselors. For example, school counselors are typically a part of the IEP process. School counselors can be incredibly useful by employing a strengths-based school counseling approach. Modeling positive communication, identifying strengths and internal assets of the students, and facilitating family involvement can all aid in supporting all students with special needs, particularly through the IEP process (Geltner & Leibforth, 2008). It is particularly important to highlight and reinforce the strengths of African American males, given the subtle and overt messages they receive that are typically deficit oriented. Beyond participation in the IEP process, school counselors can also implement a systemic perspective for students with special needs and their families (Chen-Hayes et al., 2014).

School counselors, while trained in delivering individual counseling, often do not have the time to deliver such services to all students who need it. As such, it is critical for school counselors to understand the contextual factors in African American male students' lives, and intervene in as many of those factors as possible (Chen-Hayes et al., 2014; Trotman Scott et al., 2015). School counseling programs that function within systems paradigm are aligning with the tenets of the ASCA National Model (2012). Understanding how parents, for example, fit into the overall intervention plan for students with disabilities can be a part of employing a systems perspective. The support that families provide their children is critical in their educational and career success.

Since parents are a crucial part of students' educational experience, school counselors can be significant in facilitating effective partnerships that ensure a team approach to serving students' needs. Understanding parents' concerns can be useful in school counselors' advocacy efforts for students in special education (Taub, 2006; Trotman Scott et al., 2015). For example, school counselors will often serve as a resource for parents when they first learn of their child's diagnosis and subsequent referral to special education. There is a period of grief and loss associated with who they dreamt their child will be before he or she was ever born. While students with disabilities can still thrive educationally and vocationally, school counselors are often the school personnel who support parents through the journey of parenting a student with special needs and remaining an active and informed participant in this educational process.

Collaboration on College and Career Readiness

School counselors and school psychologists have training and expertise that overlap, especially when helping students with learning disabilities, in particular, African American males. Specifically, these school personnel can collaborate to prepare this population for post-secondary opportunities by using the National Office for School Counselor Advocacy's Eight Components of College and Career Readiness (NOSCA, 2010). The eight components are designed as a comprehensive, systematic approach for school counselors' use to inspire all students to, and prepare them for, college success and opportunity – especially students from underrepresented populations (NOSCA, 2010).

The eight components are: (1) College Aspiration; (2) Academic Planning for College and Career Readiness; (3) Enrichment and Extracurricular Engagement; (4) College and Career Exploration and Selection Process; (5) College and Career Assessments; (6) College Affordability Planning; (7) College and Career Admission Processes; and (8) Transition from High School Graduation to College Enrollment (See Figure 1). At the elementary and secondary levels, school counselors and school psychologists can use an equity-based approach to prepare all students for various post-secondary options. Below are the NOSCA Eight Components of

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College and Career Readiness (NOSCA, 2010, p. 3) related to African American males with learning disabilities.

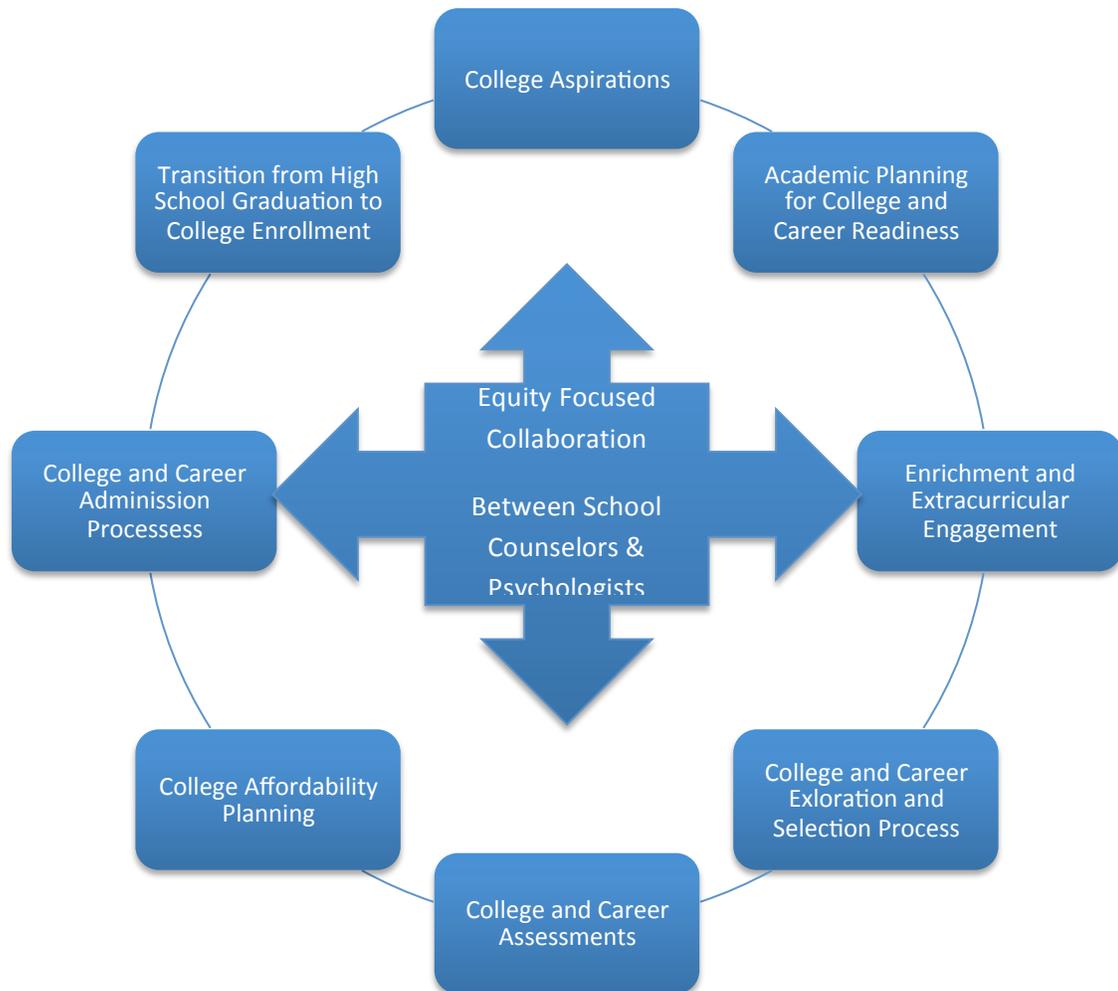


Figure 1: 8 Components of College and Career Readiness (NOSCA, 2010)

1. College Aspirations

Goal: Building a college-going culture based on early college awareness by nurturing in students the confidence to aspire to college and the resilience to overcome challenges along the way. Maintain high expectations by providing adequate supports, building social capital and conveying the conviction that all students can success in college.

School counselors and school psychologists can create an environment where African American males with learning disabilities know that there is a college for them. For example, school counselors and school psychologist can encourage self-determination among African

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American males by getting them to be actively involved in the transition planning process (Morningstar et al., 2015; Trainor, Morningstar, & Murray, 2015). School counselors and school psychologists should encourage African American males to take responsibility ownership of their learning educational process by making choices about their future, specifically postsecondary education (Milsom & Dietz, 2009).

2. Academic Planning for College and Career Readiness

Goal: Advance students' planning, preparation, participation, and performance in a rigorous academic program that connects to their college and career aspirations and goals.

School counselors and school psychologists can infuse college readiness activities into their IEPs to coincide with academic planning and preparation (Joyce & Grapin, 2012; Morningstar et al., 2015). In particular, these school personnel can work with parents to insure designated study times during hours at home in addition to providing additional resources such as tutoring to help student achieve and compete for postsecondary opportunities. To aid with identifying academic strengths and growth areas, using assessments such as the Study Skills inventory to assess test taking, time management, and self-regulation skills (Milsom & Dietz, para 29).

3. Enrichment and Extracurricular Engagement

Goal: Ensure equitable exposure to a wide range of extracurricular and enrichment opportunities that build leadership, nurture talents and interest, and increase engagement with school.

School counselors and school psychologist can provide information to African American males about the myriad of extracurricular activities provided in and out of school (Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason, 2014; Morningstar et al., 2015). Specifically, these school personnel can work with various academic and athletic clubs to ensure these students get the resources needed to be active and engaged.

4. College and Career Exploration and Selection Processes

Goal: Provide early and ongoing exposure to experiences and information necessary to make informed decisions when selecting a college or career that connects to academic preparation and future aspirations.

Such activities can include school personnel working with students to understand that their disability is not a barrier to college enrollment and identifying strengths to aid them in college readiness (Milsom & Dietz, 2009). As such, positive identities need to be nurtured regarding student disability status as well as other aspects of their identity (e.g. race, gender) and integrated into exploration. Further, school counselors and school psychologists can assist African American males with learning disabilities understand their personality types and careers match through assessments such as the Myers-Brigg Type Indicator. Additionally, placing student in career groups to talk about career choices as well create peer support for developing a plan for college and career readiness (McEachern & Kenny, 2007). Further, school counselors and school psychologists can invite local college faculty and staff to talk about the various

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services they offer for students with learning disabilities as well as discuss the success stories of students who achieved a college degree despite learning challenges.

5. College and Career Assessments

Goal: Promote preparation, participation, and performance in college and career assessments.

In keeping career exploration and selection in mind, school counselors and school psychologists can help African American males identify the assessments that are needed to gain entrance into their prospective postsecondary educational endeavor. Once proper assessments (e.g., ACT, SAT, ASVAB, etc.) are identified, African American male students with learning disabilities may need support in registration and securing appropriate accommodations for testing day as well as preparation for the test. School counselors and school psychologists to help students and families use the test scores from these assessments to identify skill gaps and integrate strategies for skill development and course selection in IEPs (Milsom & Dietz, 2009).

6. College Affordability Planning

Goal: Provide students and families with comprehensive information about college costs, options for paying for college, and the financial aid and scholarship processes and eligibility requirements, so they are able to plan for and afford a college education.

With the rising cost of college, many families are concerned about how to afford such an educational endeavor. Parents and their children must compare the cost of college to the salaries and lifestyle benefits (Freeman, 2005). Without a sound plan to pay for college, many may opt out from perceived lack of affordability. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to explore different financial aid opportunities, like scholarships and grants, with families. School counselors and school psychologists can increase students' financial literacy and skills so that they are prepared to plan and manage their finances to ensure their financial success. This can be easily incorporated into individual and group college and career readiness counseling experiences for African American males with learning disabilities, and included in family financial aid workshops.

7. College and Career Admissions Process

Goal: Ensure that students and families have an early and ongoing understanding of the college and career application and admission processes so they can find the postsecondary options that are the best fit with their aspirations and interests.

As students are learning more about their career interests, it is important that those interests be matched with postsecondary educational opportunities. This should happen as early as possible to maximize overall preparedness and planning. School counselors and school psychologists should work with African American male students with learning disabilities and their families to identify postsecondary opportunities that match their interests, lifestyles, personal and family commitments (Trainor et al., 2015). For example, it may be important to locate postsecondary educational opportunities that have had success with retaining and

graduating African American males and students with disabilities, as well as the student's specific field of interest (Banks, 2014; Bonner, 2014). To help facilitate this, application checklists and school wide initiatives like College Application Week and a school level reviewing of applications are recommended.

8. Transition from High School Graduation to College

Goal: Connect students to school and community resources to help the students overcome barriers and ensure the successful transition from high school to college.

As students explore their interests and make connections with training opportunities, it is important to also make sure that students have the skills and resources necessary to be successful once they get to college (Morningstar et al., 2015; Trainor et al., 2015). For example, the transition to college can often be difficult as students leave familiar surroundings and people. As such, African American males need to understand that these personal changes are normal and identify what they will need to make a successful transition (Banks, 2014; Bonner, 2014; Flowers, 2014). To help with this transition, school counselors and school psychologists may help students to locate campus resources and organizations that can support this transition (e.g., African American student organizations, multicultural centers, academic support center, counseling center, disability support services, etc.).

It may be helpful for African American male students with disabilities to participate in precollege or summer bridge programs to start with the transition process and help students to build connections prior to college (Bonner, 2014). Finally, it would be important that school counselors and school psychologists help African American male students with learning disabilities and their families understand the legal protections and rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (Milsom & Dietz, 2009). As they learn about their legal rights, it is important that self-advocacy skills be developed and nurtured as well (Banks, 2014).

Implications for Policy and Practice

There are various implications for both school policy as well as practice for school counselors and school psychologists.

Policy Implications

- Since race has been shown to determine compliance with IEP participation requirements and quality of transition planning (Landmark & Zhang, 2012), greater accountability is needed to ensure that schools are including parents and students in the process as well as exploring their postsecondary interests and needs.
- Policymakers should develop community-based programs that help parents better understand what is required to strengthen their children's readiness for higher education (Harper, 2012). Additionally, parent education should include knowledge of postsecondary options for their children with disabilities and the availability of disability services for college students.
- School funding formulas must be reevaluated, as students from underserved backgrounds tend to be overrepresented at low-resourced schools (Palmer, Davis, Moore, & Hilton,

2010). The school a student attends may have strong implications for access to advanced courses, more restrictive placement in special education, and the quality of transition services.

Practice Implications

- There is a need for the development of partnerships in various areas, including partnerships with families to increase participation in the special education process, including transition planning; partnerships among K-12 and postsecondary institutions (e.g., community college, four-year universities) to facilitate readiness for college; and partnerships between K-12 schools and employers to facilitate entry into the workforce.
- As discussed throughout the paper, school psychologists and school counselors have skills that play a significant role in the college and career readiness experience of African American males with learning disabilities, thus schools need to capitalize on their skill sets and expertise.
- School psychologists and school counselors can work with parents to communicate their son's IEP and how it is tied to his preparation for college. School psychologists and school counselors can identify higher education institutions at the college level that are accommodating to their son's needs.

Conclusion

Provided the importance of college and career readiness, more research is needed to increase the body of knowledge on current collaborative efforts of school counselors and school psychologists. To this end, qualitative interviews conducted with school counselors and school psychologists would unearth their experiences and the themes associated with positive outcomes for African American males in special education. Additional research that would be beneficial to the current body of knowledge would be around the training that school counselors and school psychologists receive to facilitate such college and career readiness in African American males in special education. While college and career readiness is popular topic across disciplines, change to preparation programs has been slow moving, in terms of content and learning experiences being infused throughout the curriculum. Identifying the programs that have successfully interwoven such concepts in their programs would be informative for other training programs to do the same, and would lead to further study around the outcomes of such programmatic changes.

Provided the challenging experiences that African American students with learning disabilities may have to navigate, it is of the utmost importance that these students have allies and advocates to support their educational endeavors. Both school counselors and school psychologists are well suited to collaborate with each other to create the supports and opportunities need to help African American males thrive in any educational environment. Further, through this collaboration systemic strategies and interventions can not only promote the success of African American males, but all students through the development of a college-going culture to ensure that every student is college and career ready.

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