Welcome to the school counseling profession! By this point in your journey toward becoming a professional school counselor, you probably feel not only a mixture of emotions, including excitement and anticipation, but also some trepidation. You may be lacking self-confidence, asking, “Can I really do this?” It is not unusual for us to hear school counselors in training say something like this: “I think I understand the theories, and I seem to be able to put them into practice in role play, but how am I supposed to know what to do when I encounter new situations?” The purpose of this text is to answer this common question.

The truth is that the journey toward becoming a professional school counselor will continue for many years to come. The journey starts with foundational course work that is often general and theoretical, but quickly becomes more real world oriented and pragmatic when a graduate counseling student gets to the practicum experience. This is often a student’s first experience with clients with real life problems. The culminating experience in most school counseling training programs is the internship, in which the student actually gets to live the life of the professional school counselor. Unfortunately, most interns have had limited exposure to the types of real life problems that school students and their families present with. In both the practicum and the internship, school counselors in training rely heavily on supervisors for guidance about the best ways to address student issues. In seminars, school counselors in training quickly learn that supervisors vary in experience, expertise, and favored approaches. As a result, some student issues seem easier to resolve than others, whereas other issues linger and may even seem impossible to resolve. Quality of experiences and supervision makes a huge difference in whether the student will be able to “hit the ground running” as a professional school counselor.

If all goes as planned, the school counselor in training will graduate and begin year one of a lengthy and fulfilling career. However, the rookie school counselor quickly encounters challenging new situations and circumstances that often require additional supervision and training. Sometimes these challenging new situations can become overwhelming and frustrating, and it is not unusual for the rookie school counselor to question whether the training received was adequate for the job. The truth of the matter is that no school counseling training can prepare a student for all of the new and dynamic
circumstances encountered; indeed, one who experienced most of the situations encountered during the training program would count himself or herself very fortunate! School counseling is a fluid and dynamic occupation because every student, guardian, teacher, or administrator who seeks the school counselor’s advice presents with a slightly different case and slightly different details. It is the responsibility of the rookie school counselor to assimilate all these details to address the issue at hand effectively.

By about the fifth year of experience as a full-time professional school counselor, one finally reaches the point of diminishing returns; the counselor encounters fewer and fewer truly “new” cases that have never been previously encountered and needs less and less consultation with and supervision from colleagues. Interestingly, at about the five-year mark most professional school counselors will decide whether they have reached their life calling and remain a school counselor for another 20 plus years. On the other hand, many professional school counselors (and teachers) leave the profession around their fifth year for a host of reasons, including poor training, burnout, unfulfilling work (expectations), poor compensation, or a mismatched person–environment fit. For the majority who do stay beyond the fifth year and through retirement, societal, systemic, and individual changes continue to permeate schools and school students. Therefore, they must continue to adapt to changing circumstances throughout the remainder of their careers. In other words, becoming a professional school counselor, from training through retirement, is developmental. All school counselors accumulate experiences that are generally similar to those of their colleagues, yet do so at somewhat different rates.

With this developmental trajectory as context, the purpose of this text is to expose students in training and new professional school counselors to numerous situations each is likely to encounter during training and the first five years of practice. It is our hope that this exposure, as well as attention to the diverse theoretical approaches that can be applied to resolve these student situations, will better prepare students in training to deal with each dilemma using a fluid, dynamic, and flexible approach to school counseling. In other words, we hope that using these cases and a flexible case conceptualization model early in your career as a professional school counselor will speed up your development, better prepare you, and give you confidence for meeting the trials ahead.

**APPLYING THEORY TO PRACTICE: IT’S NOT A CLICHÉ!**

Applying theory to practice can seem like a daunting task. School counselors in training thirst for real life stories of how to help students, families, and teachers using a viable and effective theoretical orientation. Specifically, graduate counseling students want to know what it is like to live the life of the professional school counselor. They often report disconnects between the theories taught in the classroom and the application of those theories in the school setting. Oftentimes their practicum and internship experiences are not enough to gain a sense of theoretical grounding, making it difficult to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Once working full-time in the field, school counselors are confronted with new cases daily and sometimes feel at a loss about how to proceed, how to theoretically frame the prob-
lems and issues they are encountering, and what action steps to take. In the early stages of training and practice, counselors are searching for concrete, grounded, real life examples of how to transfer and apply theory into practice for commonly encountered situations.

Practicum and internship experiences are intended to serve as opportunities to integrate and apply classroom-derived knowledge and skills to field-based experiences. However, school counseling students frequently find themselves struggling to navigate a particular school system and meet with students the required number of hours. They are challenged to find the time and to obtain the supervision needed in order to draw a conclusion about what is happening in a student’s life and then apply it in the midst of a pressured situation. Additionally, graduate school counselor supervisors find themselves struggling to meet the demands of their school as well as to discuss every “teachable moment” with their intern. Often professional school counselors are so busy striving to meet the needs of their extremely large caseloads, school responsibilities, and requirements as a supervisor to their practicum/internship student that there is limited time left for adequate supervision.

Supervision is also an extremely critical aspect of the professional school counselor’s career, training, development, and success. As a field, we understand that supervision is imperative for ethical decision making, growth, and the prevention of burnout (Remley & Herlihy, 2010). Supervision could take place in the school if other school counselors are available to discuss ethical and legal aspects of cases and to consult with the new school counselor. Supervision is also available outside of the school with licensed professional counselors trained specifically to supervise. Additionally, staying in touch with one’s supervisor from graduate school provides a means for supervision and consultation in the field.

Continued professional development throughout one’s career is also an important aspect of professional identity and ethical practice. As students change, so does relevant and up-to-date research on working with children, adolescents, and special populations. Therefore, professional school counselors must stay abreast of current research and trends in the field (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012) not only for assessing changes in the field but also for maintaining their ethical practice, conceptualization skills, and intervention techniques. Continued professional development is sometimes offered at the school; however, at times it may not be specifically geared to the professional school counselor’s role and responsibilities. Local and state counseling organizations, local colleges and universities, national counseling associations, and online resources also provide continuing education for counselors. Such training is essential for continued development, competence, and enhancing one’s professional identity (Remley & Herlihy, 2010).

This text seeks to bridge an existing gap between theory and school counseling practice by offering a collection of applications-based, school counselor experiences. These case scenarios show how actual school counselors in their own voices explain and handle similar real life situations. This text represents the combined wisdom of about 60 current and former school counselors across the nation who have confronted real life student problems; thought deeply about how to conceptualize the concerns using one or more theoretical models or frameworks; and implemented appropriate strategies, techniques, and interventions to address the presenting concerns in an efficient, culturally sensitive, ethical, and professional manner. It teaches school counseling
students how to deal effectively with common, real life problems before they encounter them in practice.

It is important to be mindful that many school counselors do not have the time or resources to spend on each issue covered in this text. Also, in many of the scenarios, stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and others acted cooperatively. Although this does happen in real life, there are also situations in which this type of open assistance does not occur or is sabotaged in some way. Regardless, these case studies are true and certainly invite us to think critically about similar situations in which we may be involved. Our hope is that readers of this text will gain vicarious experience with the pragmatic, effective solutions applied to help vulnerable students, families, and educators.

**STRUCTURE OF THIS TEXT**

The bridge between theory and practice begins in Chapter 2 with an overview of the primary theories of counseling used by school counselors today. These theories were grouped by paradigm: psychodynamic, humanistic/existential, behavioral/cognitive-behavioral, family systems, and emergent theories. This paradigmatic presentation then serves as the organizational structure for how school counselors draw a conclusion about each case. Most important, there are many ways to address student concerns, and the approaches chosen by the authors of each case scenario are not the only ways to resolve an issue. Indeed, often school counselors will need to approach a student concern from several different angles and use a number of strategies to resolve it. Thus, Chapter 2 strives to provide “choices” for how school counselors can frame, approach, and resolve myriad student concerns.

Next, Chapters 3–45 present cases thematically clustered into sections:

- **Section II: Social Justice and Diversity Issues in School Counseling** Chapter 3: Social Justice; Chapter 4: Advocacy (and the Use of Small Group Counseling for Students with AD/HD); Chapter 5: Multicultural Counseling in the Schools; Chapter 6: Immigration; Chapter 7: Racism; Chapter 8: Existential-Spirituality in School Counseling; Chapter 9: English Language Learners; Chapter 10: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Issues in School Counseling

- **Section III: Academic Considerations in School Counseling** Chapter 11: Motivating the Unmotivated Student; Chapter 12: Working with Gifted Children; Chapter 13: College Access; Chapter 14: Counselors in Alternative Schools: The Last Line of Defense; Chapter 15: Transitions and Student Attendance

- **Section IV: Relational Aggression, Bullying, and Violence in School Counseling** Chapter 16: Bullying (Relational Aggression); Chapter 17: Bullying (Physical Aggression); Chapter 18: Helping Students Who Are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ); Chapter 19: Dating and Relational Violence

- **Section V: Individual Issues/Coping in School Counseling** Chapter 20: Chronic Illness; Chapter 21: Helping Students with Grief and Loss Experiences; Chapter 22: Addressing Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom Using an Ecological Approach; Chapter 23: Social Isolation; Chapter 24: Working with Students Displaying Defi-
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ant Behavior; Chapter 25: Helping Students with Anxiety; Chapter 26: Helping Students with Depression; Chapter 27: Self-Injury

- **Section VI: Parental/Family Issues in School Counseling**  Chapter 28: Working with Families; Chapter 29: Children of Deployed Parents; Chapter 30: Children of Divorce; Chapter 31: Helping Children of Incarcerated Parents; Chapter 32: Children of Parents who Abuse Substances; Chapter 33: Physical Abuse; Chapter 34: Helping Students Living in Poverty; Chapter 35: Working with Samantha, a Homeless Child

- **Section VII: Risky Behavior and Crisis Intervention in School Counseling**  Chapter 36: Substance Use; Chapter 37: Adolescents, Sex, and STDs; Chapter 38: Helping Students with Eating Disorders; Chapter 39: De-escalating Extreme Behaviors/Emotions; Chapter 40: Gang Involvement; Chapter 41: Suicide Prevention; Chapter 42: Helping Students Who Experience Disasters and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- **Section VIII: Legal and Ethical Considerations in School Counseling**  Chapter 43: Responsible Technology Use (Social Networking); Chapter 44: FERPA Issues in School Counseling; Chapter 45: Confidentiality with Minors

### CASE SCENARIOS

School counselors in training will encounter each case’s presenting problem or concern during their training and certainly during their first few years in the field. This text helps to raise the self-efficacy levels of counselors as the underlying dynamics of the situation are explained from one or more theoretical perspectives. Specifically, each case scenario follows this outline:

- **Case Background**: The school counselor describes a brief case scenario and background.
- **Initial Process Questions**: Initial process questions help the reader react to and process the specific case before proceeding further. They also can point to related issues to address.
- **Addressing the Issues**: This section explains the theoretical frameworks/models and any techniques specific to the theoretical orientation the authors applied to the situation. A table that addresses multiple theoretical techniques by grade level broadens understanding of the issue as it presents interventions for children at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.
- **In Session**: A brief transcript of essential portions of the actual intervention gives an idea of what a counselor actually said and did in session.
- **Outcome**: This is a summary of how the intervention turned out.
- **Final Process Questions**: Final process questions facilitate deeper exploration and understanding of the issues.
- **Resources**
Conclusion

The purpose of this text is to expose you to numerous situations you are likely to encounter during training and the first five years of practice. It is our hope that this exposure as well as attention to the diverse theoretical approaches that can be applied to resolve these student situations will better prepare you to deal with each dilemma using a fluid, dynamic, and flexible approach to school counseling. As you delve into your training, we hope that using these cases and a flexible case conceptualization model early in your career as a professional school counselor will speed up your development, better prepare you, and give you confidence for meeting the trials ahead. You have chosen an admirable, honorable, and respectable career path full of challenges and rewards. While embarking on your journey to becoming a professional school counselor, we hope this text aids you in addressing some of these challenges so that you can hit the ground running!