In this article, four vignettes are presented and deconstructed in order to demonstrate that school counselors are advocates, collaborators, and leaders when engaged as consultants. School counselor consultation appears to be a complex process based on a student advocacy disposition shared by consultees, and the process is a collaborative one resulting in recognition as leaders. Many skills are required if one is to be competent across the initiation, prescription, provision, collaboration, and mediation consultation modes.

Historically, consultation has been a function within the school counselor’s role from the time it was viewed as an ancillary role consisting of “guidance” services (Baker, 1981) to the present emphasis on professional school counseling programs that are “comprehensive in scope, preventative in design and developmental in nature” (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2005, p. 13). Although a number of different definitions of the consultation process may be found in the professional literature, the definitions appear to have a common thread that was captured by Dougherty (1990): “Consultation usually involves three parties: a consultant, a consultee, and a client system. The consultant delivers direct service to the consultee, who delivers direct service to a client system” (p. 8). Therefore, by providing direct assistance to consultees, consultants can indirectly provide valuable assistance to client systems.

Referring to the process as school counselor consulting, Baker and Gerler (2008) pointed out that consultees are drawn naturally to professional school counselors for assistance. Their being drawn to school counselors for consultation is caused by a myriad of challenges that prospective consultees encounter in school settings and by the availability and perceived expertise of their counselor colleagues. Chief among those who may become consultees in the school counselor consulting process are teachers, parents/guardians, administrators, and students.

In the ASCA National Model® (2005), consultation is presented as a responsive service within the delivery system component of the framework: “Counselors consult with parents or guardians, teachers, other educators, and community agencies regarding strategies to help students and families. School counselors serve as student advocates” (p. 42). Within the system support aspect of the delivery system component, consultation is associated with collaboration and teaming: “Through consultation, partnering, collaborating and teaming, school counselors provide important contributions to the school system” (p. 43).

As cited above, direct quotations from the ASCA National Model (2005) link consultation with advocacy and collaboration, and leadership is linked with advocacy and collaboration elsewhere in the framework: “ASCA incorporates the four themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change as part of the framework of the ASCA National Model” (p. 24). The goal of this article is to describe and analyze the relationship of school counselor consultation with advocacy, collaboration, and leadership. We attempted to accomplish this goal by presenting and deconstructing four school counselor consultation vignettes in order to provide evidence of the relationship between the consultation function and the advocacy, collaboration, and leadership themes.

DECONSTRUCTING THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Consultation behaviors of school counselors can be categorized into five different consulting modes that may occur between consultants and consultees during the consultation relationships. The prescription, provision, initiation, and collaboration modes were introduced by Kurpius (1978), and the mediation mode was introduced by Baker (1981). Each of the five consultation modes will be discussed below.

Prescription Mode
When engaged in the prescription mode, consult-
ants share their expertise by presenting response plans to consultees based upon analyses of challenges the consultees are trying to address with third parties such as students. For example, a teacher has requested assistance from the school counselor with a student who is acting out in her elementary school classroom. The counselor observes the student in the classroom setting and thereafter presents the teacher with a plan for addressing the student’s behavior. In this example, the school counselor consultant is prescribing a strategy to the teacher.

Provision Mode
There may be occasions when consultees are unable or unwilling to apply the strategies that are derived from consultation or recommended by the consultant. In these instances, the consultants may be engaged with the third parties or client systems directly in order to administer the agreed-upon interventions. For example, if the teacher lacks confidence, experience, or time to personally deliver the plan recommended by the school counselor in the case cited above, and the counselor agrees to appear in the classroom to carry out the plan, then the counselor is a consultant who is engaged in the provision mode.

Initiation Mode
There are times when school counselors who notice circumstances that are not being addressed successfully by prospective consultees will attempt to initiate consulting relationships when they believe they have something of value to offer. In the case of the acting-out student described above, the initiation mode would have occurred if the counselor had overheard the teacher complaining about the classroom situation while not asking for any assistance, and the counselor had approached the teacher to initiate a consulting relationship.

Collaboration Mode
Collaboration implies a process of mutually seeking ways to understand and resolve challenges. Collaborative consultation occurs when consultants and consultees engage in a process of trying to identify possible solutions to problems that consultees are experiencing. This may occur via steps such as defining the problem, identifying prospective solutions, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the prospective solutions, seeking further information if needed, selecting what appears to be the best solution, implementing the selected solution, evaluating the outcomes, and determining whether the implementation is working or alternative prospective solutions need to be identified. In the example that has been cited above, collaboration would have occurred if the counselor and the teacher had worked their way through the steps listed above in order to arrive mutually at what appeared to be the best way to respond to the student who was acting out in class.

Mediation Mode
When engaged in mediation, school counselors may find themselves working with two or more individuals who need assistance in resolving disputes. In these encounters, the consultant/mediator attempts to keep the lines of communication open between the disputing parties in order to try to achieve a mutually agreed-upon compromise. Consulting mediators may offer suggestions for mutual consideration by the disputants and are not responsible for dictating solutions. If one student requests that a school counselor mediate a dispute with another student, the first student is essentially the consultee and the second student the client system. In another case, both students might have been referred to mediation by an assistant principal who then becomes the consultee.

The following sections present vignettes describing real-world school counselor consultations illustrating the consultation function and the advocacy, collaboration, and leadership themes. Four cases that have been experienced by coauthors of this article are presented, and each coauthor is identified by her initials in the first sentence. The vignettes follow as described by the consultants in the first-person tense.

THE TROUBLESOME ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BOY

Summary
I (R. E. S.) had an opportunity to collaborate with a teacher who was new to the school. She started in the middle of the year and was dealing with a very challenging class. One student in particular was very troublesome. Following a student support team meeting about another student, she shared information about the troublesome student with me, and I volunteered to help her (initiation mode). The teacher listed several concerns and was not sure where to begin. To clarify and help prioritize the concerns, I observed him for a day (provision mode).

I created a chart with all of the teacher’s concerns in the columns across the top, and each row represented a 5-minute interval in which the teacher’s concerns could be recorded. Her concerns included his being off task, not doing assignments, not paying attention, angry-frustrated outbursts, withdrawal, and inappropriate interactions with peers. The data indicated that the student was frequently off task when the teacher was in front of the entire class.
He rarely self-started a task and usually waited for the teacher to approach him to begin assignments, and she would have to approach him several times to redirect him to the work he was supposed to be doing. His interactions with peers were often negative (i.e., they tended to exclude and negate him).

I shared my findings with the teacher (consultee) who also shared other challenges in her classroom. Her primary goals for the student were to help him to become a self-starter on assignments, to stay on task, and to improve his peer interactions. My observations indicated that the student was able to pay attention to lessons that interested him. The occupational therapist observed him to determine whether motor-skills difficulties could be associated with his lack of time on task, and that possibility was ruled out.

Thereafter, I recommended several suggestions to help her achieve the goals (prescription mode). Then we cooperatively developed an implementation strategy (collaboration mode) that consisted of the following components. The teacher would use a chart I had developed listing targeted behaviors such as eyes on teacher and beginning a task on his own and give him a sticker if he engaged in the targeted tasks for a short period of time. Upon obtaining a designated number of stickers, the boy received rewards he really enjoyed such as going to the library to check out an extra book or receiving extra time on the computer. Additional strategies that resulted from my collaboration with the teacher included her assigning him to classroom groups with more patient students who were less reactive to him and encouraging students to include him in games during recess.

I offered to start a friendship group (provision mode) that would include the student. Other students who might benefit from the group were recruited from teachers of the same grade, and the group had been meeting for 5 weeks at the time of this report. The consultation experience helped me realize that listening to the consultee responsively helped her to feel empowered and that I possessed the knowledge and skills to help her.

Analysis
The elementary school counselor (R. E. S.) used four different modes (initiation, provision, prescription, and collaboration) over the duration of her consultation with the teacher, each of which was evidence of a range of consultation competencies that the school counselor possessed. When working together, both the counselor (consultant) and the teacher (consultee) established goals that indicated their advocacy for the student. They obviously engaged in a collaborative relationship with each other and with others as well in order to implement the responsive program, and evidence of the school counselor’s leadership role was exhibited throughout the vignette.

THE RAMBUNCTIOUS MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRL

Summary
When I (T. A. R.) appeared at the language arts classroom of one of the seventh-grade girls in my anger management group, the teacher requested an opportunity to speak to me about the student. While sharing her challenges as a new faculty member, the teacher (consultee) described out-of-control behaviors the girl was exhibiting in class that were contributing to a chaotic situation. The goal derived from the discussion was that the girl would start controlling her behavior (collaboration mode).

As a member of the anger management group, the girl was also my client. So, when I asked about her behavior in all classrooms, she admitted being more rambunctious in the language arts class, which she attributed partly to being excited after the physical education class that preceded language arts. In our conversation, she expressed an understanding of the importance of controlling her behavior in the language arts class.

I arranged a meeting with the student’s core team teachers, including the consultee, in order to discover how the student was behaving in all her classes (initiation mode). During this brainstorming session, other members of the core team shared their strategies for dealing with the student’s behavioral challenges, and this information was helpful for the consultee (collaboration mode). The session led to a cooperative behavioral contract strategy involving all of the student’s teachers. The primary objectives for the student were facing the front of the classroom, not talking socially in class or stopping when asked to do so, not touching other students, and desisting from writing and passing notes to classmates. I agreed to meet with the student individually about her progress in meeting the objectives and to contact the teachers prior to my sessions with the student in order to get their feedback on her progress (provision mode).

During our counseling sessions, the student presented complaints about how the teachers had been treating her, and I agreed to share that information with the teachers (mediation mode). In addition to the satisfaction of witnessing the student’s progress toward controlling her rambunctious classroom behavior and the consultee being in control of her classroom, I found that the core team teachers seemed to have a higher regard for me as a consultant and colleague.
Analysis
Collaboration, initiation, provision, and mediation consultation modes occurred in the vignette. There were several ways in which the counselor (T. A. R.) was an advocate for the student. For example, the student was a counseling client and a member of her anger management group, and the counselor was willing to mediate the student’s complaints about the teachers. Collaboration occurred among the core team teachers and the counselor, and throughout the process, it was the counselor’s leadership that caused the consultation process to occur and held it together.

WALKING IN MY STUDENT’S SHOES

Summary
At the beginning of the school year, one of the new students who I (V. C. W. D.) enrolled was a 15-year-old freshman living in a group home in my school district. I realized that he had bounced around a lot in the past year and a half (six middle schools and three group homes in one year), so I tried to put myself in his shoes, imagining what it would be like enrolling in a school for the first time accompanied by a caseworker rather than a parent. I took some extra time to show the student around and help him to view me as a potential advocate in the school.

About halfway through the first quarter, I was approached by a teacher who was concerned about the student’s academic performance. The teacher expressed concern about the student’s time management and study skills and asked me if I would consider talking with the student about possible strategies to help him perform better in her class (provision mode). I did just that, and after our session, I felt that this student was probably experiencing the same challenges in his other classes. I decided to check with his other teachers to assess his performance and offer my help (initiation mode). Each teacher responded similarly about the student’s poor study habits and academic performance while also expressing a desire to help him succeed.

I set up a meeting with all the student’s teachers (consultees) and invited his caseworker (consultee) from the group home. One goal in this meeting was to help the student perform better in class by reinforcing organizational skills and increasing his level of engagement while in the classroom. Another focus of the meeting was to help establish a support system for this student who seemed to lack a connection with the school due to his past mobility in and out of various county systems. All parties brainstormed possible ideas to help this student adjust to his new environment and find success in the classroom (collaboration mode). It was evident to me that the common theme was how we as a team could support this student so that he could learn effective study habits that would lead to more academic success while also achieving some confidence and stability for him.

Helping to facilitate the meeting, I summed up what I had heard from all sides and offered what I considered to be the common threads in the ideas expressed. From these common threads, I suggested several strategies that could be implemented in all his classes and reinforced at the group home (prescription mode). One strategy that was discussed involved the use of a planner to be carried by the student to write entries for each class about assignments due. The teachers agreed to remind the student of important information to be written down, and the caseworker agreed to check it at the group home. Another strategy was to provide incentives for the student to increase time-on-task behavior. Each of the teachers set up an incentives system for their class designed to reward increased time of engagement by the student. The teachers and the caseworker decided on the strategies they felt would be most appropriate, and the team established an observation schedule for evaluating the student’s progress (collaboration mode).

The student benefited from these newly implemented strategies to the extent of passing two of four classes that semester. Working with these stakeholders to achieve a common goal was a privilege. I benefited considerably from hearing their observations and ideas, and we all developed mutual respect.

Analysis
In this vignette, the counselor (V. C. W. D.) used four of the consultation modes (provision, initiation, prescription, and collaboration). The counselor’s efforts to help the student adjust more easily to the school environment when he enrolled serves as evidence of establishing an advocacy disposition toward the student at the outset of their relationship that continued during the consultation process. Bringing all the teachers together for consultation created a collaborative environment, and being the initiator of the collaboration and serving as clearinghouse for all of the collaborative efforts placed the school counselor in a leadership role.

THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR AS AN ADVOCATE/CONSULTEE

Summary
When I (S. C. W.) began working with an 18-year-old who had just moved out of her home, I knew I was going to need help from other professionals. She was worried about being pregnant and did not want her father to know where she was living. My goals were to help her find out if she was pregnant
and have access to the resources available to her while also being clear about my obligations to and relationships with the student, her parents, and my school district. Achieving these goals placed me in the role of a consultee with two different consultants.

My first act as her advocate was to meet with the school nurse (consultant) in order to find out how the student could go about learning whether she was pregnant. The nurse informed me that she could administer the pregnancy test in the school because the student was 18 years old (provision mode). I shared this information with the student who agreed to meet with the nurse, and I accompanied her to the testing session. The three of us then brainstormed about what to do next (collaboration mode).

Next, I consulted with the county school counseling program coordinator in order to determine what actions were appropriate for me to engage in as a school system employee. The coordinator informed me that I was not required to inform the student’s parents about the results of the pregnancy test and cautioned me that I needed to monitor the student’s health status closely (prescription mode).

The nurse informed the student and me that the results of the test were inconclusive and an appointment should be made with a doctor. The nurse provided names of local doctors and inquired about the name of the student’s doctor. The student agreed to meet with the nurse and me the next morning. I then asked the nurse about services that were available to the student if she were indeed pregnant, and she informed me about several options covering a variety of scenarios (prescription mode).

The student eventually learned she was not pregnant and shared that information with both the school nurse and me. According to the county school policy, the nurse and I discussed the merits of abstinence with the student, and we recommended that she meet with the doctor again to discuss future sexual activity in more detail (perhaps to receive information about birth control). We also helped her acquire more information about health insurance options because she was certain her father would drop her from his policy because she was 18 and had moved away from his home.

Being able to consult with other professionals who had expertise beyond my own was enlightening and allowed me to be a more effective advocate for the student. In turn, my relationship with the student served to make the consultations with the nurse, who was a stranger to the student, more effective.

Analysis
Provision, prescription, and collaboration consultation modes were depicted in this vignette. The counselor’s (S. C. W.) willingness to be a consultee enhanced her ability to be an advocate for the student. Collaboration was achieved independently with both the school nurse and the county school counseling program coordinator, and, even though the school counselor was the consultee, her leadership was evident because the consultations would not have occurred if she had not initiated them as an advocate for the student. Her willingness to learn from and collaborate with others in order to help the student client may have left a favorable impression about her leadership capacities with the school nurse, the county school counseling program coordinator, and the student.

DISCUSSION
Consultation and the School Improvement and Student Achievement Missions
Recent contributors to the professional school counseling literature have highlighted the importance of demonstrating school counselors’ impact on school improvement and student achievement to various stakeholders (ASCA, 2005; Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Stone & Dahir, 2007). By demonstrating an impact on school improvement and student achievement equal to that of teachers and school administrators, professional school counselors engage in collaborative activities with their professional colleagues; assume leadership roles, especially when initiating the collaborations; and are perceived as advocates for their students. Stone and Dahir have recommended a process for achieving these goals in which school counselors align themselves with the school’s mission (e.g., to reduce the dropout rate), identify critical elements of available school data that are important to the school’s mission (e.g., using existing data to identify which students are most likely to drop out), identify stakeholders with whom to collaborate and bring them together in order to identify an action plan, and cooperate with the stakeholders in a joint effort to resolve the problem.

We applaud these efforts to achieve legitimacy for professional school counselors as advocates, collaborators, and leaders in cooperation with other stakeholders toward achieving common school improvement and student achievement goals. Our goal is similar, yet the focus is different. Instead of focusing on important relatively new roles for school counselors as was done by Johnson and Johnson (2003) and Stone and Dahir (2007), we call attention to the important traditional consultation role that may have been overlooked as a pathway to achieving recognition from stakeholders as advocates, collaborators, and leaders.

Common Features Across the Vignettes
The four vignettes displayed several common fea-
tures. Each of the school counselors demonstrated an advocacy disposition. They assumed responsibility for trying to respond to requests for assistance from consultees and clients in a receptive manner. Each counselor responded in a variety of ways or modes, being capable of initiating, prescribing, providing, collaborating, or mediating as the situation might demand. They were flexible and possessed the multiple competencies needed to meet the needs of a variety of situations as they occurred. If prescribing was necessary, they did it. If providing was required, they did that too.

Each of the school counselors collaborated with one or more professional colleagues to the degree necessary to try to achieve their common student advocacy goals. Whether the counselors were consultants or consultees, they initiated important collaborations in order to try to help both the consultees and student clients to achieve their goals.

All of the vignettes involved specific challenges that were related to student academic achievement and school improvement. The consultations for the acting-out elementary school boy, the rambunctious middle school girl, and the high school student living in a group home were clearly focused on interventions designed to enhance the probability of improved academic performance. In addition, the 18-year-old student’s potential pregnancy could have eventually led to her academic success being threatened. Therefore, it seems plausible to suggest that school counselors indeed contribute to school improvement goals and student academic achievement through their consultation efforts. These efforts are most often accomplished one case at a time, which is the nature of school counselor consultation.

In each of the vignettes, nothing of value would have happened if it were not for the leadership role of the school counselor. Leadership was manifested in several ways, indicating that it is a multifaceted construct. When professional school counselors are remanded to be leaders, leadership itself can be accomplished via a variety of roles and functions. Each of the counselors received direct or indirect feedback from consultants that indicated enhanced levels of professional respect due to the consulting relationships. It seems appropriate to assume that enhanced respect for one’s consultation accomplishments will generate an aura of leadership among various stakeholders such as teaching colleagues, administrators, parents, and students.

**Recommendations**

These findings suggest several recommendations for school counselor educators and professional school counselors. According to the standards of the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (2001), instruction directed toward achieving competence as a consultant is required in all entry-level training programs. In the courses and units devoted to consultation, school counselor educators are encouraged to point out to students that consultation is typically based on a disposition to be an advocate for consultees and client systems, that the consultation process is a collaborative one, and that the role places school counselors in leadership relationships with colleagues and other professionals. In addition to having or acquiring an advocacy disposition, school counseling trainees may need to be challenged to acquire the multifaceted competencies necessary for conducting consultation efforts in the initiation, prescription, provision, collaboration, and mediation modes. These students also should be informed that school counselor consultation efforts will more often than not contribute to helping students succeed academically and achieving the system’s school improvement goals.

Recommendations for professional school counselors mirror those offered to school counselor educators. The emphasis merely moves away from a training setting to a practice setting. Professional school counselors are challenged to realize that the consultation process is based on a student advocacy disposition shared by consultants and consultees, that the process is a collaborative one resulting in recognition as leaders, and that the requisite competencies are multifaceted. School counselor consultation is a complex rather than simple process. In addition to possessing an appropriate student advocacy disposition, one requires many skills if one is to be competent across the initiation, prescription, provision, collaboration, and mediation modes. The challenge is to be competent across all of the consultation modes, and the rewards can be impressive for consultants, consultees, and student clients.

**References**


