Chapter 3

Utilizing ASE to Work within the School System

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Chapter 3 Abstract

The ability to fully join the student in their perception and advocate for them within the environment is heavily influenced by the structure of the school. An overview of key players, distribution of power, resources, referrals, and how the school counselor intervenes to build upon the capacities of school leaders to engage in activities that encourage co-regulation. Chapter 3 frames ASE through consultation efforts, focusing on skillsets to promote the development of internal capacities of school faculty and staff while also directly advocating for student needs.

Currently, counseling within schools is under enormous scrutiny, regardless if a school counselor or a school-based mental health counselor provides services. Herein lies the very rationale for this text: there needs to be an approach to working in the schools that systemically grounds all school system members that further aligns with the school's mission and vision. ASE provides that foundation as school counselors advocate for growth for their students and teachers, administrators, and family members. While ASE is a theory of practice, it is also a theory of being. By embracing the approach of ASE in all interactions, the school counselor can encourage a double feedback loop within the school, whereby growth is incurred reflexively through all interactions.

ASE is grounded in the tenant of systemic change. To make that achievable, the school counselor immerses themselves within the students' perception of their reality, which colors their perspective of their social circumstance. Understanding that perspective and how to function as an advocate for students is heavily influenced by the structure of the school– who are the key players, how is power distributed, whom to reference for topic-specific resources, and how to intervene to build upon the capacities of school leaders to engage in activities that encourage co-regulation. This chapter frames ASE through a leadership mentality, focusing on skillsets to promote the development of internal capacities of school faculty and staff while also directly advocating for student needs. When considering a school's structure, many influencing factors reveal the systems in which an individual school is nested. This chapter focuses on a singular school as a structure, utilizing terminology applicable within a distinct K-12 environment.

Who's who in the school, and what do they do?

Pulling from structural therapeutic techniques (Minuchin, 1972), Physically organizing the power structure of each subsystem can be incredibly helpful in understanding the school

environment and identifying areas that may need to be changed (see figure 3.1). Each subsystem is differentiated by a boundary, which differs within every school. These boundaries are experienced physically and emotionally as one considered accessibility to each subsystem. Within ASE, the counselor must understand the undercurrent of power that impacts environmental functioning. Such power differentials and boundaries determine how each sub-system communicates to one another, either discouraging or encouraging communal relations between groups. This foundational understanding of the system makes counselors better equipped to join and accommodate.

Unique to ASE, there is no ascribed curriculum whereby teachers or school counselors must read from a script. Instead, it is a foundational understanding of creating connection, communicating respect for individual experience, and cultivating a sense of community through joining the already established system. Through dialectical relational skillsets, school counselors permeate the system to create change within each school subsystem, working within current power structures or striving to change power distribution through the alignment of shared goals.

Schools have been seen to thrive when there is shared power and responsibility across stakeholders (Webster & Litchka, 2020). To decrease turnover rates within the school system, recommended changes include considerations towards compensation, preparation, support, and school leadership (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). School environments can intentionally be addressed through transparency of such boundaries, allowing for an equal flow of information, honoring perspectives, and engaging in dialogue with others.

To navigate the school and access resources to better advocate for the student, all school stakeholders, whether it be faculty, administration, parents, and student, need to understand who assumes which job titles, what their roles and responsibilities are, and where they are physically

located. Below is a list of common roles within a typical school structure organized by the administration, faculty, support staff, and external service providers. While not everyone a student may come into contact with is included (i.e., custodians, bus drivers, librarians), that does not diminish their role or contribution to the school. Instead, the individuals listed below are critical players in the decision-making process regarding student-based outcomes.

Administrators

Considering the structural map of the school in *figure 2.1*, administrators typically have power within the school setting. They are responsible for establishing and maintaining day-to-day operations, which largely dictate the culture of a school. Administrators must be on board to permeate the system and enact change throughout. The following provides a description of each role as well as ways to create collaborative and supportive relationships to begin environmental changes.

Principal. With a presence in every elementary, middle, and high school, principals are generally responsible for overseeing all school operations, including setting academic goals and providing teachers with resources and support to obtain those goals best. Often, principals are required to have a master's degree, usually in educational leadership. They are provided with the foundation of various leadership theories and skill sets that will aid in their development to lead others within educational settings. Numerous studies have investigated the efficacy of different leadership approaches on school outcomes (Chin, 2007).

Within the public school setting, academic goals are largely influenced by standards set forth by the district. The principal oversees such implementation and ensures teachers have all materials needed to administer programming successfully. Principals are also responsible for overseeing the well-being of all members within their schools. For example, efforts to support

teachers often include providing mentorship, opportunities for professional development, and overseeing remediation or potential retention. These efforts have a trickledown effect on improving students' lives; teachers feel supported in their roles in the classroom, and students are provided with a conducive learning environment.

Principals are encouraged to work collaboratively with school counselors for the betterment of students, sharing essential goals rooted in student success (Dahir et al., 2010). However, there has been a historical lack of understanding regarding the school counselor's role within the school system. For example, principals often assign non-counseling-related activities to the school counselor, leaving them with the burden of attending to overwhelming administrative tasks (Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006). These tasks typically include scheduling, testing administration, or discipline (Lowery et al., 2018). Research on principals' perceptions of the school counselor's role shows that those perceptions are typically reflected within the actual school counseling role (Lewis et al., 2022). The power a principal yields within a school is to the magnitude that their vision is often encapsulated into practice. The more aligned these perceptions are with the ASCA National Model leads to a successful school counselor/principal collaborative relationship (Lewis et al., 2022).

Assistant Principal. Assistant Principals (APs) interface with all school stakeholders, often engaging directly to mediate conversations between teachers, parents, students, and the community. They perform administrative tasks as well as assist in the development of the master class schedule and evaluate teacher performance. APs support teachers, ensuring that the materials taught in the classroom align with curriculum standards set forth by the district and principal. APs engage with students far more than the principal. They mediate the relationship between faculty, administration, family, and community.

Most larger schools have a position of an assistant principal (AP) to aid the principal in overseeing and facilitating day-to-day operations. However, these roles and responsibilities differ nationwide as schools and districts have different needs. Because there is so much variety in how this role is assumed, it may be challenging to provide formal training for APs. Much of the day-to-day decisions made by the AP are related to their previous experiences, whether direct with the student, teacher, or parent. Alternatively, other APs note how decisions may contradict their interpersonal styles, attempting to assimilate into the school system. These contradictions are often most noted in their role working on disciplinary infractions. From teacher instruction in the classroom to student behavior, assistant principals' roles revolve around ensuring compliance.

Regarding the role of disciplinarian, APs often comply with teacher demands which center around removing the problematic student from the classroom. However, in engaging in this compliance on top of balancing the day-to-day responsibilities of school operation, APs often neglect the diverse needs of each student, feeling forced to get the job done rather than take the time to explore the context behind each situation (Williams III et al., 2019). From an ASE perspective, the school counselors must support APs, providing consultation on discipline and encouraging exploration of the underlying issues that may present, promoting the ability to advocate for the student within the environment. Simply engaging in disciplinary action without gaining contextual information regarding the student, joining them in their lived experience, often results in cultural blindness and disparities between how different groups of students are treated. Receiving support from the school counselor using ASE can promote equity across all students while improving connection and outcomes.

Administrative Assistants. While the title of this role changes from school to school (administrator, secretary), the general role functions remain the same – the administrative

assistant is in charge of directing the flow of people and information in and out of the school. This person or multiple people are the first you engage with when entering or calling the school. They provide information, give direction, and make connections. Some oversee creating and distributing newsletters or emails regarding upcoming events. They communicate with parents, teachers, principals, and the community. The administrative assistants are essentially the school's gatekeepers, some ensuring outsiders follow safety procedures that enable them to enter the school. They track when students arrive on time and if they need to leave early. They are the ones parents speak to when their student is sick or has a doctor's appointment.

Depending on the school size, many administrative assistants may serve under various administration members. For example, a larger school's principal and assistant principal likely have an administrative assistant to help with tasks related to coordination, planning, and organization of the tasks that make up daily school activities. They may have crucial roles in implementing and reporting all fire or lockdown drills or organizing student bus transportation. Whenever there is a need from a student, teacher, or parent, the administrative assistant is the one who connects them or directly provides them with the information needed.

Administrative assistants can be crucial in aiding the school counselor in gauging the school's temperature. Their support can be essential in addressing ancillary duties that may detract from direct student intervention. With this position also came a need for training and continued support by the school counselor. Administrators must understand the importance of confidentiality regarding students, whether protecting their private educational information to behavioral or discipline incidents. Understanding how information is shared and how such information significantly impacts the school's functioning is crucial. Providing training and continued support of administrators, whether by training principals and APs to oversee their

staff, modeling appropriate communication skill sets, or providing professional development, school counselors can intervene with administrative assistants to change how information is shared throughout the school system and all related stakeholders.

Student Support Personnel

The following personnel work to coordinate efforts between all stakeholders to benefit all students. While the school counselor oversees all students' academic, social and emotional, and career development needs, student support personnel specialize in supporting specific populations from students struggling with mental health-related disorders, support for learning difficulties, and physical health concerns. While administrators oversee the school's general operations, student support personnel work directly with students to meet their needs.

School Counselor. This text is written from the perspective of supporting school counselors and school-based mental health professionals. A section on the school counselor is warranted as the need to understand the ideal of the position and how that role navigates the system is essential in being able to advocate for the role and those served. Traditionally, the school counselor is tasked with directly supporting student development in academics, career aspirations, and social and emotional skillsets (ASCA, 2019). School counselors accomplish these activities by directly interfacing with students through individual counseling, small group counseling, classroom guidance, and consultation to implement comprehensive guidance curriculums.

To ensure the support given to the student is effective, school counselors are also charged with engaging in data-driven decision-making whereby they use student information to guide the programming offered within a multi-tiered system of support. For example, a needs assessment may indicate that students struggle significantly with test anxiety school-wide. The school

counselor then focuses a component of their comprehensive guidance curriculum on stress reduction, mindfulness-based activities, or student success skills (Brigman & Webb, 2010). School counselors engage with all students through tier 1 intervention and classroom guidance lessons. Should they notice students continue to struggle after engagement in that format, school counselors may form small groups with those who continue to struggle, intervening at the tier 2 level. Should the small group not suffice for some, school counselors utilize tier 3 intervention by engaging in individual counseling sessions. At that time, the school counselor would have ample data to make an informed referral should the student need outside support.

While most of the work focuses on direct contact with students, the school counselor serves as someone any school member can turn to for support, including working with teachers, parents, and administration. School counselors mediate parent-teacher conferences and meetings, utilizing counseling skill sets to encourage all members to feel heard and validated in their unique perspectives. The school counselor approaches these relationships to better the student outcomes. Should a teacher come to the school counselor regarding stress from a specific class, the school counselor's efforts to support that teacher directly benefit the students within that class.

While the description above is ideal, the school counselor is often assigned ancillary duties, including testing coordination, student schedules, and other clerical duties. This, coupled with limited classroom access due to teachers' stressors to meet mandated standards, decreases the school counselor's ability to access all students. The school climate also dramatically impacts the school counselor's ability to implement ideal programming, whether there is support from faculty and administration or the communal needs of the school is nested in. Numerous factors impact school counselor efficacy in the school.

School-Based Mental Health Counselor. Mental health needs amongst school-aged children continue to increase, especially in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. While these needs may continue to rise, access to mental health care can be limiting for children, dependent on parents to arrange and provide transportation to appointments after school hours. Given the demand and high caseload experienced by school counselors, meeting students' mental health care needs is not feasible. Therefore, schools will often contract or hire mental health counselors to serve in the school. School-based mental health counselors are trained in clinical mental health and usually specialize in working with children and adolescents.

School counselors and school-based mental health counselors are encouraged to work together in a collaborative relationship. As school counselors ascribe to implementing a comprehensive guidance curriculum, it is unrealistic to meet the mental health needs of all students. Often, those who have worked through all three tiers of intervention are ready for an outside referral for further support (Christian & Brown, 2018). Rather than having that referral be to a community counseling agency, school counselors can work closely with the school-based mental health counselor to ensure the transfer of services, consult on background information, and make a seamless transition. Furthermore, these services offered at the school allow all students to receive adequate mental health-based services, removing common barriers such as access and affordability.

School counselors and school-based mental health counselors are fully equipped to utilize ASE throughout their practices. While both professionals are considered mental health experts, each has a unique experience that can be beneficial in consulting and collaborating. Considering that clinical mental health counselors may not have extensive experience in the school setting, the school counselor can take the opportunity during onboarding to provide background on ASE

and how to work within the system. A common background and similar language can ease the transition, allowing for an opportunity to share insights into navigating the system. Both recognize the shared goal of meeting students' social, emotional, and mental health needs. Establishing that collaborative relationship will allow for success.

Exceptional Student Education Coordinator. Between 2020 and 2021, 15% of all public school students received special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The exceptional student education (ESE) coordinator oversees all ESE students and ensures the services each student receives best meet their educational needs. In order to do so, ESE coordinators work with students, parents, counselors, and other stakeholders to prepare individual education plans (IEP) for each student and ensure accommodations are put into place. The ESE coordinator continuously monitors student progress to ensure those accommodations that are put into place are effective and allow the student to meet their identified goals. ESE coordinators must comply with national laws consistent with the individuals with disabilities act.

ESE coordinators work closely with all student support personnel to ensure students receive equitable opportunities as their general education peers. Such supports include ensuring access to external supports and resources. School counselors working from the ASE perspective understand that students with individual education plans have unique experiences and needs, often struggling socially, emotionally, and academically. Collaborating on the IEP process allows consultation efforts to be applied with all supporting the student, including the parent, teacher, school counselor, and all other external support. Utilizing ASE in this process promotes the opportunity to allow each stakeholder to share their experiences and model a dialogue

connection. Everyone at the table can feel heard in a process often overwhelming for parents and teachers.

Nurse. The school nurse is a registered nurse who helps students with the treatment and prevention of medical issues and ailments and coordinates routine health assessments. The school nurse is a resource for all things physically related to students. They aid in medication dissemination should medications need to be taken during the school day and fix up scraped knees from the playground. The nurse provides health education to students and coordinates vision, hearing, and speech assessments.

While a school nurse's role may be self-explanatory, they are often an underutilized resource within the school system. The school counselor can consult with the school nurse on situations whereby a student's physical health may impede their ability to perform. The school nurse can also assist in identifying students struggling with underlying mental health struggles as children experience emotional distress through somatic complaints (headaches, stomach aches, exhaustion, etc.). Student support personnel can work together to ensure students receive access to all supports within the system, increasing access to social and emotional support and mental health services.

Faculty

Faculty are the heart of a school. Faculty work with students all day, often knowing what is going on in their lives inside and outside school. It is through the faculty-student interaction that learning occurs. Within that interaction comes the opportunity for co-regulation. Within ASE, co-regulation is a foundational factor referring to the interaction of two self-aware individuals. Becoming self-aware requires intentional reflection on ones self as well as reflection on those around you. School counselors can aid faculty and students to enhance their self-

awareness, students through the comprehensive guidance curriculum, and faculty through professional development and consultation. Through support, faculty can genuinely change the environment and encourage the development of optimal student outcomes.

In practice, the ASE consultation model has been seen to increase teachers' awareness and attention to the present and decrease stress within the classroom (Molina et al., 2022). As teachers increase their self-awareness, they can better engage in a co-regulatory relationship with their students, changing the nature of the environment. Acting with co-regulation within the classroom environment allows teachers to see beyond the student's behavior, identifying that such actions extend beyond the student's capacity and speaks to a myriad of factors. Teachers reflect on their own experiences within each moment and how their experiences impact their students. Similarly, as students engage in their own ASE curriculum, they also experience increased self-awareness, promoting the ability to engage in the co-regulation process. The impact ASE has on teacher satisfaction is profound, especially considering the high rate of teacher burnout, decreased perceptions of self-worth, and depressive symptoms (Méndez et al., 2020). School counselors using ASE as a model for consultation and professional development allows for repeated exposure to ASE, providing that foundation through professional development and continuous reinforcement through modeling and encouragement within the consultation.

General Education Teachers. As defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a teacher's role is to instruct students in various basic subjects that prepare them for future schooling (2022). The homeroom teacher is your student's main point of contact in an elementary school setting. They are engaged in their daily learning activities and exposed to their social growth and developmental milestones. At the high school level, a student has exposure to

numerous teachers, all of whom have different experiences and perspectives on the student. Teachers work with all other members of the school system, especially parents and other support personnel, to best meet their students' needs. Teachers work beyond the time they are in the classroom, using evenings and weekends to prepare lessons or grade papers. They utilize classroom management skills and ensure lessons align with a developmentally appropriate curriculum. As with many other school professionals, teachers are often tasked with ancillary duties within an ever-changing educational environment. Given such, it is found that many teachers are plagued with burnout, leaving the classrooms for more favorable work environments with increased accessibility has given advancements in technology. This is more true for teachers with fewer than 11 years of experience in teaching (Kim & Seo, 2018), teachers with a specialty in STEM, or special education teachers (Nguyen, 2020). Overall, teacher satisfaction, commitment to their jobs, and feelings of self-efficacy are all impacted by the environment set forth by leadership in school administration (Cansoy et al., 2020; Kim & Seo, 2018).

Special Education Teacher. Special education teachers work with students who struggle with unique learning abilities, emotional and behavioral disorders, and physical disabilities (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). While general education teachers use a standard curriculum, special education teachers must modify instruction to best meet the needs of their students, often in one on one or small group settings. In working with students whose needs constantly change, special education teachers must continuously monitor their student's progress to make informed decisions about their individualized education plans and communicate any changes with parents, other teachers, and outside service providers. Considering the intense stressors of working with a high-needs population, there is a shortage of special education teachers and a high rate of burnout (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; McLeskey et al., 2004).

Teacher Aides. Also titled a paraprofessional or instructional assistant, a teacher aide is in place for students with special learning circumstances to provide academic, social, and behavioral support (Howard & Ford, 2007). The structure of schools has shifted significantly over time, especially with consideration to meeting the needs of special education students. Rather than pulling out those with special learning needs and placing them into exclusion classrooms, schools now practice from an inclusive setting, ensuring all students have access to the same structures and supports regardless of their unique learning needs. This shift in learning structures leads to a need for more hands in classrooms where students may need increased support that exceeds the classroom teacher's capacity. For example, students that struggle with emotional or behavioral disorders (see chapter 6) benefit significantly from having someone they trust to help them manage difficult situations. Instructionally, teacher aides support students through direct instruction, such as reviewing specific concepts discussed in class, and indirect instruction, whereby they monitor students' completion of work (Howard & Ford, 2007). Teacher aides may have a more robust and detailed perspective of a student that differs from the classroom teacher, given the time and intensity by which they connect to their students.

External Supports

The following include support services that may float between multiple schools. This personnel may not be included in the day-to-day interactions; however, it is vital to know that such services are accessible to any student who may need them. Faculty and student support staff must communicate with these individuals to track progress and meet student needs. Since these external service providers float between many schools, they may not have the opportunity to engage in professional development opportunities to receive direct training on ASE. Regardless, these providers are essential in providing necessary services that promote growth in human

capacity, further promoting the student's ability to self-advocate. All student support personnel needs to be aware of these services so they can be utilized to best meet the needs of all students.

School Psychologist. The primary duty of a school psychologist comes into the realm of testing and evaluation for students in need of special services. Such assessments may be conducted by pulling a student from their classroom to complete valid and reliable assessments or observe student behavior in various learning environments. School counselors then communicate their findings to the school during an individual education planning meeting. In asking for feedback on roles and responsibilities, school psychologists reported their primary role as conducting student assessments but wished they could engage in more counseling-related activities (Agresta, 2004). Newer school psychologists find their consultation efforts did not align with problem-solving consultation models, preventing effective collaboration to support students through a multi-tiered system of support (Newman, 2018). Feedback on each effort included a need for collaboration between all members of the school system, working towards the betterment of the students in need. Supported students lead to supported teachers, improving classroom environments and transcending into school environment improvements.

Social Worker. In the school setting, social workers are mental health professionals who provide direct and indirect support services to students regarding their social, emotional, and life circumstances (School Social Work Association of America, 2022). More specifically, social workers conduct mental health assessments, respond to crises in emergencies, and connect students and their families to community resources such as emergency housing, food programs, or healthcare (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). School social workers report feeling overwhelmed by caseloads and culturally diverse school environments, making it challenging to implement empirically supported practices (Horton & Prudencio, 2022). Recommendations for

best practices include increased training for social workers to take a more collaborative role within the schools, understanding the dynamics of the various groups, and how to work together to make systemic change.

Speech and Language Pathologist. Another professional that provides services outside school environments, a speech-language pathologist (SLP), plays a crucial role in the school setting. SLP work with students through prevention, assessment, intervention, and individual education planning input within the school setting (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2022). While SLPs are equipped to conduct student assessments, they often rely on outcomes from standardized testing to identify students needing service (Flucher-Rood et al., 2018). SLPs are another professional at the table to collaborate with faculty, student support services, and administration to meet students' needs.

Physical Therapist. While physical therapy might be a practice seen more often in hospitals, private practice, or rehabilitation centers, they are also viewed as a crucial member of school-based teams. School-based physical therapists provide appropriate services for students with disabilities to prepare them for future education, employment, and independent living (American Physical Therapy Association, 2022). Should students struggle with adapting to activities within a typical school day (i.e., using the playground, climbing stairs, walking over various terrains), a physical therapist may assess the student, identifying areas to intervene. Assessment results are communicated to the school in adapting a student's individual education plan, accounting for possible physical therapy services to aid the student in fully engaging in the school environment (Kaminker et al., 2004).

Occupational Therapist. Like the role of physical therapists, occupational therapists based in the school provide services to students in need to ensure they can take part in everyday

school-based activities. School-based activities related to fine motor development span from handwriting and scissor abilities to functionally using utensils or opening lunch containers. Occupational therapists engage in student observation, assessment, and continual evaluation. They develop recommendations and treatment plans which are then implemented into the student's individual education plan. Furthermore, they educate students, parents, and teachers about the needs of the students, providing recommendations for accommodations or educating on exercises and stretches that may be helpful outside of therapy sessions. Occupational therapists regularly consult with school teams to meet the needs of students and encourage positive student outcomes (Villeneuve, 2009).

Using ASE to Change the School Environment

Effecting change throughout the school environment begins with providing a foundation of ASE throughout the school system. Such can be accomplished through professional development workshops, then reinforced within consultation. The workshops provide a mindfulness curriculum in addition to social and emotional learning dialogue prompts (Molina et al., 2022), which is reinforced through consultation grounded in embracing curiosity, compassion, connectedness, and co-regulation through each interaction and modeled through dialogical connection within consultation. An embodiment of these tenants leads to full capacity of contribution.

Given that the principal usually yields the most power within the school system, the school counselor must utilize ASE to form collaborative relationships rooted in advocacy and shared goals related to student outcomes. School counselors can use their comprehensive guidance curriculum, which is informed by data and grounded in ASE, to demonstrate a plan for each school year. By being grounded in ASE, the comprehensive curriculum presents the theory

of change, identifying how each intervention tier relates to the student's experience in the here and now. Tier 1 intervention, seen through classroom guidance lessons, is focused on building students' internal capacities to promote the betterment of life outcomes. As discussed in chapter five, these internal capacities are linked to positive student outcomes such as increased attendance, academic achievement, and decreased discipline referrals. Those students who struggle with the tier 1 intervention are then encouraged to participate in tier 2 intervention, small group counseling, focused on continuing to build those internal capacities but allowing for more space to explore the student experience. Tier 3 intervention refers to short-term individual counseling. The school counselor embraces the 5 C's of ASE in each tier. Presenting a semester plan, as informed by school-based data, grounded in ASE, with identified outcomes related to student success, provides a tool to gain principal support and buy-in. When these plans are created collaboratively, the principal's contribution increases commitment.

In training others, counselors encourage school stakeholders to embrace curiosity. Curiosity relates to the counselor's empathetic ability, the willingness to be open with students and stakeholders, and comprehend unique circumstances related to the environment. In training others to be leaders within the school, counselors encourage leaders to engage in curiosity, listen empathetically to what others in the environment have to say, and fully understand that, regardless of truth, what is communicated is the truth of that individual's experience. Leaders can be taught to utilize language that encourages dialogue of other experiences. For example, a principal may ask a teacher, "What did you do differently that led to successful outcomes this week?". While dialogue can change, the key component is that leaders utilizing the ASE modality care about the response, leading to compassion.

Considering curiosity specifically from the context of the school system, the school counselor needs to understand what drives each system member's behavior. For example, APs often report feeling that discipline-based decisions are consistent with the system as opposed to their training or prior professional experiences. Supporting APs in understanding the school system's environmental context and their own experiences and training is essential for change. An AP can have every intention of bettering the environment for students, but getting swept up in an often overwhelming role can lead them towards assimilation rather than advocating for change and taking action to see that change occur. Without these supports, the system cannot evolve, remaining homeostatic as people of power enter the system and assimilate to the current standard.

While in practice, compassion, leaders validate the various experiences communicated to them by those within their environment. However, in that validation does not come blind acceptance. A leader can understand each side of a "he said, she said" argument that leads two students to the assistant principal's (AP) office. Each student had an experience whereby they believed they were justified in their responses. While validating that experience is essential, so is mediating the information. Considering Rapoport's rules, a conversation may look like this:

> Student 1: They started it! They said mean comments, and his arm came flying towards me!
>
> Student 2: I did not. They started it! They wouldn't stop talking! And they hit me first!
>
> AP: It sounds like you both have different perspectives on how this fight evolved and who should be responsible. Rather than focusing on who is responsible, we need to understand what led each of you to respond with violence.
>
> Student 1: Because they attacked me!

AP: When we feel attacked, it is natural to respond with strong feelings. Sometimes we can feel attacked just by words. This leads us to feel sad and angry. Before you both started physically fighting, what was happening in the classroom that led to such strong emotions?

As seen within this vignette, the AP communicates curiosity and compassion, even in a situation that typically results in punitive measures. If both parties feel supported and validated, they are more likely to view their roles in the situation and identify personal goals centered around their strengths. Leaders must also be mindful of co-regulation and aware of their social and emotional capacities to regulate. For example, counselors and leaders utilizing an ASE leadership modality can also increase their social and emotional learning skillsets to better coregulate within their environment. That is, they can internally practice and strengthen capacities of emotional intelligence, which includes identifying thoughts and emotions, understanding these emotions, and managing them within us and others (Mayer et al., 2000). This reflexivity encourages leaders to consider their practices, evaluate their efficacy, and make necessary changes.

Should most situations be approached with this spirit, members of the school environment would inherently feel more connected to one another. Connectedness allows leaders to assess the school environment adequately. Students thrive when in an environment in which they feel safe and secure. Alternatively, when disconnected, students are often disengaged, fearful of not feeling rooted in their environment, and often display maladaptive behaviors such as not doing homework or acting out. Connectedness allows the counselor or school leader to know what areas within the environment warrant intervention. For example, disconnection between students and teachers may result in students acting out behaviorally within the classroom and teachers' increased dissatisfaction. Seeing this disconnect, counselors and

principals can intervene to mediate the relationship between these two highly connected groups, advocating for student needs within the environment while attending to the needs of teachers and supporting their ability to provide quality experiences for their students.

Finally, the culmination of these consultation efforts results in contribution. The base of any leadership endeavor is foundationally supported by the desire to improve the school environment through curiosity, compassion, coregulation, and connectedness. Contribution is not motivated by inherent wants and needs. Instead, it is informed by the needs of the students, leading from a socially just capacity.

Conclusion

Counselors are encouraged to work with other members of the school environment to aid in the creation of safe and stable social conditions by which effective learning can take place (Lemberger -Truelove & Bowers, 2019). Counselors can provide professional development workshops and consultation efforts to key stakeholders outlined in this chapter to aid in their personal actualization of internal capacities, fostering the development of co-regulation, which is the crux for environmental change within ASE. When working for the betterment of students, all stakeholders need to be on the same page. All school system members must be allowed to practice skillsets that highlight their strengths. The environmental impact of ASE promotes the delicate balance of responding to the complex needs of the environment as well capacities of all members within that environment (Bowers & Lemberger, 2018). This chapter explored the various subsystems within the school environment, identifying how ASE can encourage environmental change. While there is an inherent focus on co-regulation, the following chapters will dive further into the concept of internal capacities, which speaks to the areas of growth for all stakeholders.

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Figure 3.1: Structural Map of a School