

School counselors provide important role

As a faculty member in the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs at Western Kentucky University, I particularly appreciated the front-page article in last Sunday's Daily News: "Opening Doors: School counselors play key role in kids' futures."

Laurel Wilson did an exceptional job capturing the essence of one of the most important responsibilities assigned to school counselors; i.e., helping students understand the mounting importance of higher education to their future.

But school counselors are capable of much more than providing career guidance, scheduling standardized tests and developing student schedules. They constitute the front line in our ongoing struggle to ensure that students are able to successfully negotiate the increasingly convoluted road to adulthood.

Depression, suicide, addiction, child abuse, promiscuity and eating disorders – not to mention loneliness, alienation, poverty, bullying and teen pregnancy – are all realities faced by growing numbers of students.

School counselors constitute some of the most highly trained professionals working in our public schools. In order to be certified as a school counselor, individuals are required to take a variety of courses designed to teach them how to effectively intervene in students' lives.

Classes include Counseling Theories, Techniques of Counseling, Human Development, Social and Cultural Diversity, Counseling Children and Adolescents, Group Counseling, Classroom Guidance, and Research and Program Evaluation in Counseling.

In addition to content and skills courses, those who successfully complete the 48-hour graduate preparation program must also demonstrate mastery of core concepts and applications in a Practicum and two Internships.

The need for professionals with expertise in dealing with the kinds of emotional, social and behavioral problems that are distressingly common in adolescents has never been more widespread or acute.

Superintendents, principals and other educational administrators need to utilize their capabilities to the fullest extent.

We need more school counselors.

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