



school counselor insights

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BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

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- > Get answers to your school-counseling-related questions and concerns
- > Keep abreast of school counseling trends
- > Join state-specific subgroups

Membership on ASCA SCENE is open to all school counselors, regardless of whether you're an ASCA member or not.

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School Counselor Insights is published by the Washington School Counselor Association, a chartered organization of the American School Counselor Association. ©2011 Send address changes to WSCA, 8322 110th St. E., Payallup, WA 98373. For advertising inquiries, contact: Ken Cibroski, Ad Guidance, (877) 965 7492, (877) 562 9189 (Fax), ken@adguidance.com.

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THE COMMUNITY WE SEEK

BY DIANA GRUMAN

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School counselors are great community builders. We use our talents as listeners and collaborators to build relationships and develop trust. We create connections for our students, parents and coworkers so that they can obtain the information and support they need to be successful. We serve on teams, facilitate groups and design schoolwide interventions to build school communities in which people feel they belong and can thrive.

The WSCA Board recognizes that when you join our association you come in search of community – and not just any community. As highly trained, expert “community builders,” we know you have expectations about how you benefit from your membership in the association. I want to share how leaders in WSCA (Board representatives, committee members and the executive director) are striving to build a professional community that meets your expectations. Three statements, called Ends Policies, help define and guide us toward the community we seek.

1 School counselors are professionally competent and engaged at the highest level.

We strive to meet this goal so that school counselors can serve our students using the most effective, culturally relevant, ethical and comprehensive practices possible. One of the chief ways WSCA supports this goal is through the well-attended annual conference, scheduled this year for March 1-3, 2012, in Seattle. We also plan to support this goal in the coming year through onsite training, webinars, networking opportunities (Facebook and Washington SCENE) and the many resources located on two WSCA Web sites (www.wa-schoolcounselor.org and www.cgcpframework.org).

2 School counselors are seen as valued members of the educational community at the same level as other educational professionals.

We know this is a lofty goal but feel it should be a top priority in the current economic climate. We want school counselors to benefit from WSCA membership by being recognized for their training, expertise, leadership and unique contributions to the Washington educational community. To this end, we have increased our presence in Olympia by hiring a legislative advocate, Melissa Gombosky. Working with Gombosky this past year, the WSCA Advocacy Committee built partnerships with key government leaders, testified on school counseling issues and influenced an important dropout-prevention bill. As we head into our second year of advocacy in Olympia, we feel optimistic about our statewide efforts. The WSCA Board also is working to reach the local media, improve our public recognition and offer assistance to individuals and districts at risk of losing jobs.

3 School counselors across Washington State have access to an effective, innovative professional organization with the highest standards.

We strive to make our members feel that their professional organization is open and accessible through new member outreach, leadership-development efforts and frequent, high quality contact. In terms of innovation, we have been recognized by ASCA for our pioneering efforts to connect with our members. Most important, we want our members to feel confident that their organization is administered efficiently, ethically and with fiscal responsibility. One clear example: last year, when our revenues dropped and expenses increased in the middle of the year, the WSCA Board made good decisions about spending so that we maintained a balanced budget across the year.

Taken together, the three statements above provide a roadmap for WSCA leaders to help us provide exceptional professional development, advocate for our standing at the local and state levels and serve our members in innovative, responsible ways. We hope that you feel proud of the community we are building together. ■■■

Diana Gruman is the WSCA president and can be reached at diana.gruman@wwu.edu.



Ask yourself, “What are the actions I will concretely do today to manifest the community that I seek? I have come here in search of community. What am I going to do to build it?” - Bell Hooks

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STRONG RELATIONSHIPS = SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

Seven ways to build strong relationships.

BY JEANNIE BEIERLE

All parents want their children to be happy and successful in school. Even though many parents never contact me or volunteer in our building, they still have a strong desire to see their children do well. We need to remember that for many reasons, schools can be intimidating places for some people, and we must work hard to break down those barriers. We can work to build strong relationships with our families and eliminate their fears. Struggling students need support from school, but they also need support at home, and parents sometimes don't really know how to help. School counselors are in the unique position to work with the whole child and all of the people who affect his or her life. The stronger our connections to all of these links, the more likely the child will succeed.

Here are a few positive steps you can take to build strong relationships in record time.

- 1 Have a warm and welcoming office. You want both the child and their parent to feel comfortable in your office. Organization is a calming influence.
- 2 Make positive phone calls to share something a child did well. All



Counselors are in the unique position to work with the whole child and all of the people who affect his or her life.

parents like to hear that someone has noticed their children in a positive way.

- 3 Reach out to the parents who won't reach out to you. Many parents stay away from school out of fear. You need to make that first contact as early in the year as possible.

- 4 Be interested in listening. Put those counseling skills to work. Let them know you genuinely care about their child and their family's well being. Offer resources for other needs the family may have.

- 5 Invite parents to the school frequently to share what is happening. If you are at a secondary level, ask them to chaperone a dance. Let them know they can come for a short time if they want.

- 6 Encourage the student's teacher(s) to make connections to the parents as well. This shows that many people at the school care and want to help, not just the school counselor.

- 7 Make sure every parent has your office number and your e-mail address, and encourage them to contact you for any questions or concerns they have. Sometimes they just need the reassurance that it is OK to contact you.

Follow these steps to build strong relationships with your families that last for years to come; it has a positive impact on all of your students. ■■■

Jeannie Beierle is the WSCA president-elect and can be reached at jbcounselor@live.com

MAKING PROGRESS

We still have hope in troubled times.

BY NITA HILL

On the eve of my first day of school and I find myself excited for the year to come, the projects I have planned and the students and families I have the pleasure of working with this year. I hope that you found time to rest and rejuvenate as you head into what is sure to be a busy year filled with many adventures and opportunities.

A highlight of my summer was spending time with the elementary school counselors in the Puyallup School District as they work toward the development of a comprehensive school counseling program. Their energy, excitement and ideas helped me gear up for a great year. This experience also reminded me that even in this difficult time while impacts have been felt in our profession, there is

progress being made and places where advocacy is paying off. I look forward to the opportunities to meet more of you, my elementary school counselor colleagues and hear the exciting stories of success you encounter this year. ■■■

Nita Hill is the WSCA elementary vice president and can be reached at jhill@bethelsd.org.

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INCREASE GRADUATION RATES

Use these resources to start dropout prevention before high school even begins.

BY CYDNEY BACON

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No Child Left Behind has put tremendous pressure on students, parents, teachers and school counselors. Those of us in middle schools work hard to make sure our middle school students are ready to move on to high school, but too often the emphasis from the state, districts and even parents is on early education and high school graduation. At middle school, we have a huge impact on high school graduation rates. Below are links to several articles that address factors identified at the middle school level that focus on early dropout prevention.

Making Middle Grades Work

www.sreb.org/page/1080/making_middle_grades_work.html

This article focuses on the need for rigorous academic core in middle school to

prepare for high school. It provides best practices for rigor and transition to high school and includes recommended reading and research statistics.

Putting Middle Level Students on the Graduation Path

<http://web.jhu.edu/bin/u/l/NMSA%2Obrief%20Balfanz.pdf>

This report identifies the various elements each student needs to be successful in high school. It identifies risk factors and defines best practices.

Who Will Drop Out From School? Key Predictors From the Literature

<http://esd113.org/uploads/documents/studentssupport/Dropout%20Prevention/Drop%20out%20Key%20Predictors.pdf>

This article looks at risk factors as far back as elementary school. It identifies

risk factors by elementary, middle and high school. Starting dropout prevention early is the key focus.

Resiliency Skills and Dropout Prevention: A Review of the Literature

www.scholarcentric.com/images/pdf/resiliency_skills/SC_Resiliency_WP_FNL.pdf

Students with more resiliency skills are more likely to be able to handle the ups and downs of life and school. Another site to research resiliency skills is the Search Institute at www.search-institute.org.

Cydney Bacon is a National Board Certification school counselor from Toppenish Middle School and can be reached at cbacon@toppenish.wednet.edu.

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NOMINATE YOUR PEERS

Recognize school counselors in Washington State.

BY WENDY DOLAN

Each year we have the opportunity to recognize amazing school counselors in our state. At the annual WSCA conference, school counselors are celebrated for their dedicated work. While award winners are not announced until February, we recognize the following school counselor professionals nominated by their peers.

Marie Cousey, Hazelwood Elementary School

Debbie Harrigan, Discovery Primary

Val Kjack, Lincoln Heights Elementary

Rosemary Paresa, Seahurst Elementary

Lisa Cleveland, North Pine Middle School

Carol Johnson, Alderwood Middle School

Eron Maltos, Toppenish Middle School

Myke Pace, Alki Middle School

Toni Sugi, Gray Middle School

Jeannie Beierle, Yelm High School

Matthew Burns, Wilson High School

Laura Lindle, Foster High School

Jean Lubken, Foss High School

Steve Rhodes, Prairie High School

Kaley Mitchell, Seattle Pacific University

Justine Smith, University of Puget

Sound/Mt. Tahoma High School

Tim Church, Ph.D., Washington State University

Sherry Clark, University High School

Sue Goerger, Downing Elementary

Diane Gruman, Western Washington University

Denise Harvey, Battle Ground School District

Olga Lay, Point Defiance Elementary

Mary Panther, Heritage University

Mona Griffin, Gonzaga University

David Bilides, Washington Middle School

Mary Brown, Gonzaga University

Chris Sink, Seattle Pacific University

Marty Slyter, Ph.D., Eastern Washington University

Karen Toler, City University of Seattle

Joe Raniero, Wilson High School

Chris Swanson, Bremerton High School

Thank you to those who submitted nomination forms. If you are interested in nominating a fellow school counselor or joining the award and recognition committee, please visit the WSCA Web site at www.wa-schoolcounselor.org or contact me. ■■■

Wendy Dolan is the WSCA Professional Recognition chair and can be reached at wdolan@fpschools.org.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW FOR THE 2012 WSCA CONFERENCE

School Counselors: Empowering Students, Changing Communities
Doubletree Hotel and Conference Center, Seattle Airport, March 1-3, 2012

Rosalind Wiseman



THURSDAY PRECONFERENCE AND FRIDAY KEYNOTE SPEAKER

ROSALIND WISEMAN

Rosalind Wiseman is an internationally recognized expert on children, teens, parenting, bullying, social justice and ethical leadership. Wiseman is the author of "Queen Bees and Wannabes: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends and the New Realities of Girl World," the groundbreaking, fully revised edition of her bestselling book that was

the basis for the movie *Mean Girls*. Her follow-up book, "Queen Bee Moms and Kingpin Dads," addresses the social hierarchies and conflicts among parents and is now being made into a major motion picture by New Line Cinema. Her latest endeavor is the young-adult novel "Boys, Girls & Other Hazardous Materials," which follows heroine Charlie Healey as she navigates the good, bad and ugly of her freshman year of high school.

SATURDAY KEYNOTE SPEAKER

KEVIN HAGGERTY

Kevin Haggerty is assistant director of the UW Social Development Research Group (SDRG), a nationally recognized, interdisciplinary team of researchers united in a common mission: understand and promote healthy behaviors and positive

Kevin Haggerty



social development among diverse populations. Haggerty brings a researcher's eye to the creation and implementation of evidence-based school interventions. He understands how educators, parents and community partners can unite to promote academic success and positive development and reduce drug abuse, delinquency, risky sexual behavior, violence, mental health problems and school dropout.

For more information visit www.wa-schoolcounselor.org. ■■■

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RESPONDING TO STUDENTS IN NEED

Responsive services can include everything from a hug to a food bank referral.

BY JEN HAGGERTY

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Last winter, *New York Times* reporter Michael Winerip contacted me about local families who have been hit by the recession and the resources the school and community have provided in response. Winerip spent the day talking to families, teachers and students about their struggles and interventions to help. This article was inspired by the fact that even a suburban school district such as mine, hit by job losses, has seen an increase in students who qualify for free and reduced lunches. He interviewed me on the services I provide for students in crisis as well as for those whose parents lost their jobs. In school counselor lingo we call this *responsive services*.

As a school counselor for more than 870 students within two buildings, I find most of my day is devoted to responsive services. In our city schools, elementary school counselors tend to spend 35-45 percent of their jobs on responsive services.

Sometimes it is the little things in life that help a student who is going through a transition or crisis. I offer students who want them hugs of support, worry dolls to tell their worries to before they fall asleep, worry buckeyes to rub in their pocket, colorful rocks to carry and touch when they feel bad, worry journals to write or draw in, paper



Stories can help students understand their feelings.

remote controls to help remind them to focus, anger or worry scales to help them deal with strong feelings, scented smiley faces and stickers for making good choices and humor if they need a good laugh.

I have done cartwheels when students have made goals, performed a cheer, sung a song, acted in a role play and shared funny rhymes to help students understand their feelings and make good choices. These tangible things can help students put what is going on at home

out of their minds so they can be good learners at school.

Responsive services come in all shapes and sizes. The most important thing I can do is be emotionally present for that child for that moment in time. That is priceless—and sometimes the only thing that really matters. I strive to provide that service and to model that to the interns I supervise. ■■■

Jen Haggerty can be reached at jhaggerty@worthington.k12.oh.us.

WHAT ARE RESPONSIVE SERVICES?

- Community resources for a student's family to meet basic needs:
 - Food banks
 - Social services referrals
 - Private counseling referrals
 - Local nonprofit organizations to provide material goods
 - Contacting/coordinating with the school community for goods and support
- Seeing students individually and providing solution-focused sessions

to help them find ways to handle and solve their problems

- Small groups to help students:
 - Get Organized Group: academic concerns
 - Volcano Group: anger-management strategies
 - Chicken Little Group: coping strategies for anxiety and worries
 - Family Changes: separation, divorce, relationship termination, remarriage
 - Grief Group: dealing with the loss of a loved one
 - Deployment Group: military kids dealing with changes in the family
 - Girlfriends or Guys Group: working on social skills and bullying behaviors

- New Student Group: helping new students easily transition into their school

- Transition new students during the school year
- Safe School resources for students to help them navigate safe-school practices such as Internet safety, bullying, child abuse and neglect
- Crisis Intervention for students in emotional distress:
 - Cutting
 - Suicide
 - Abuse
 - Neglect
 - Eviction or lack of basic resources for the student's family

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SUPPORT FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

With the right information, parents are their child's strongest advocate.

BY LINDA LUEDTKE

Being the parent of a child with a disability can present many challenges. The entire CWD (child with disabilities) education process can be overwhelming and difficult to understand. Just learning the language, such as *child with disabilities* (CWD), *cognitive disability*, *emotional behavior disability* (EBD), *learning disability* (LD), *individual education plan* (IEP), *building consultation team* (BCT) and *placement*, can be difficult for many parents. Often they know their child is in "special ed," but not in what category.

Some parents have unrealistic expectations or lack a clear understanding of their child's limitations. More than once I have been at an IEP meeting where parents have asked of their child with significant cognitive disability, "If he stays in high school until age 21 will he learn enough to go away to college?"

So how can school counselors offer support to these parents? Meet with the parents in advance of initial screening to explain the process, introduce them to the terminology and provide them with any relevant brochures. Explain in advance who will be part of the team and what each member's role will be. For first-timers, going to a team meeting with all the teachers, the school psychologist, perhaps occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech and language therapist, social workers and others can be very intimidating. Often parents aren't sure what questions to ask, so don't feel you are providing too much information.

FOLLOW UP

After the IEP team meeting, meet individually with the parents and try to summarize what has happened; ask if they have questions. It may be appropriate to give anonymous examples of limitations and abilities that other students with similar disabilities have and what types of services have helped those students. But remind them that every child is unique, and you will all work together to help their child reach his or her full potential. In a few days do a follow-up call to ask if they have any other questions once they have had some time to think



Keep abreast of the resources and support groups in your community that address the needs of children with specific disabilities.

about what happened at the meeting. Make another call after the child has been in the program for a few weeks to ask the parents if they feel the services the school provides are beneficial or if they have other questions.

FIND RESOURCES

Keep abreast of the resources and support groups in your community that address the needs of children with specific disabilities. During these tough economic times, funding for agencies is volatile; it is important to keep current on what services are available. Provide an updated list of services and contact information every year as families' needs change from year to year. A service that was not of interest last year may be beneficial this year.

Invite several parents of children with varying disabilities to serve on your district's School Counseling Parent Advisory Board. It is important for everyone on the board to be aware of the needs and services of all children. It also gives

parents on your board the opportunity to network with one another.

When parents are convinced the school counselor is their ally and are comfortable seeking the school counselor's advice, they will have a better understanding of how to access services in the school and community and will feel empowered to help their child.

PLAN AN EVENT

Consider approaching the agencies in your county to develop a transition fair if your community does not already have one. Invite representatives from Human Services, Social Security, an attorney who deals with guardianship, aging and disabilities resource centers, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, sheltered or supported employment agencies, Goodwill, the disabilities coordinator from a local college and any other agencies. Ask parents of your students to be on the planning committee; this will encourage them to be involved, and they will be your best promoters of the event with other parents.

School counselors are always advocating for their students, yet parents are the child's best advocate. By educating and supporting parents of children with disabilities we are giving these parents the tools they need to be the strongest advocates possible. ■

Linda Luedtke can be reached at lindaluedtke@lakefield.net.

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HIGH SCHOOL FROM A SPECIAL VIEW

How can school counselors support special ed students in high school?

BY CHRISTINE VANDERGEEST

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Like all high school students, special education students have a wide spectrum of abilities and have the capability to be extremely successful if we give them the right tools. Comprehensive school counseling programs stress that school counselors take an active role in student achievement for all students.

State and federal law requires that all students be provided with an equitable education. According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the professional school counselor's role with special education students may include, but is not limited to:

- Provide classroom guidance, individual and/or group counseling to students with special needs within the scope of the comprehensive school counseling program
- Consult and collaborate with staff

and parents to understand the special needs of a student

- Advocate for students with special needs in the school and in the community
- Contribute to the school's multidisciplinary team, which identifies students who may need to be assessed to determine special education eligibility within the scope and practice of the comprehensive school counseling program
- Collaborate with related student support professionals such as physical therapists, occupational therapists, special education, speech and language pathologists in the delivery of services
- Provide assistance with developing academic and transition plans for students in the individual education-

al program (IEP) as appropriate. College-bound special education students who will be taking the ACT or SAT may need to request accommodations and provide documentation of their disability. Learn what accommodations are available at: www.act.org/aap/disab/index.html and professionals.collegeboard.com/guidance/tests/disabilities.

Although there can be some gray areas as to where the case manager's role ends and the school counselor's role begins, it is important to communicate and work together to advocate for appropriate accommodations for a student with a specific learning disability. It is through collaboration and working together that students benefit the most. ■■■

Christine VanDerGeest can be reached at christine.vandergeest@racine.k12.wi.us.

ATTENDANCE: THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Research shows that attendance is the single most important factor in a child's school success.

BY ANGELA TOTTY

As educators, we know that a child's success in school depends on having a solid educational background – one that can only be gained through regular school attendance. Studies show that kids who are absent more often achieve less. Being late for school does affect a child's learning. A student who is 10 minutes late every day misses 30 hours of instruction every year.

Students can copy notes or make up assignments when absent or late to school, but they can never get back what is most important: the activities, the questions, the explanations by the teacher and the thinking that makes learning come alive.

Poor attendance affects academic performance as well as school funding. Some states provide funding for schools based on daily attendance numbers as

opposed to enrollment numbers. That means that every day a child is out of school, the school loses funding whether the absence is excused or not.

MAKE GOOD ATTENDANCE A PRIORITY

- Encourage parents to talk with students about the importance of attending school regularly.
- Recommend that parents avoid family trips or doctor appointments during school hours.
- Students need to stay healthy by eating nutritious food and are encouraged to get plenty of exercise so that sleeping at night is not a problem.
- Parents should not accept excuses for why their child "must" miss or be late for school.
- Inform parents about the importance

of their support of school rules and consequences for skipping class and being tardy.

- We are examples for all of our students. If children see the adults in their lives working hard to be on time for school and not taking off work for no real reason, they will know the same is expected of them.

Research shows that attendance is the single most important factor in a child's school success. The tips listed above are only a few strategies to encourage positive attendance in students and ways that parents can promote attendance at school from within the home. Together we can point toward the future by providing a path of success for our students. ■■■

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The SAT Counselor Resource Center



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PREVENTING TEEN PREGNANCY AND STDs

School counselors can make a difference.

BY SHEILA OVERTON, M.D.

“It just happened.” Or, “I never really thought it would happen to me.” Chances are, as a school counselor, you’ve heard a pregnant teen say something similar. In the U.S., almost 750,000 girls between 15 and 19 become pregnant every year. And undoubtedly you’ve seen firsthand the social, educational and economic reverberations of teen pregnancy in your offices: The teen who was showing promise is now going to drop out; the father of the baby has quit coming to school, too. You scramble to find resources for a pregnant teen who has little or no family support, no income, no way to buy diapers. You hear the story of the teen who developed serious, even life-threatening pregnancy complications, or who had a very low-birth-weight baby.

School counselors occupy a unique and strong position in the effort to reduce teen pregnancy and STDs. They hold the trust of teens and their parents. Parents often come to school counselors looking for guidance or solutions. Messages about the consequences of teen pregnancy and STDs that may be ignored otherwise carry additional weight when coming from a school counselor.

I can say this with certainty for two reasons: First, as a physician who has cared for pregnant teens and their families for more than two decades, I well understand that parents, educators, and health care professionals must collaborate to reduce teen pregnancy and STD infections. None of us can do it alone. Second, I am the daughter of a retired school counselor. My mother, Marilyn, to whom I dedicated my book on teen pregnancy prevention, spent more than 40 years working with youth. I often call on her experience and wisdom.

PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

Just as teens engage in “magical thinking” about pregnancy and STDs, believing it will never happen to them, I’ve also witnessed a similar disbelief among parents who ask, in shock, “How could this happen?” when they learn their teen is pregnant or that their teen is infected with an STD. Many parents believe they are well-acquainted with the facts about



Sometimes parents are very reluctant to talk about sex with their kids because they’re afraid of what they might hear.

teen pregnancy, but are stunned to learn that one in four teen girls is infected with one of five STDs – HPV, chlamydia, gonorrhea, herpes, or trichomonas.

This knowledge gap impelled me, after more than 20 years of caring for teens, to write *Before It’s Too Late: What Parents Need to Know About Teen Pregnancy and STD Prevention*. I wanted to provide parents with accurate medical information in a straightforward, easy-to-read format. *Before It’s Too Late* helps adults clarify their own values about teen sex and pregnancy, and gives clear, straightforward talking points. For instance, the section called

“Eight Things to Say to Your Teen” helps parents sort through their own feelings and deliver direct, unambiguous information to guide their teen toward responsible and healthy decisions.

As my mother recently observed, “Sometimes parents are very reluctant to talk about sex with their kids because they’re afraid of what they might hear.” The book helps parents to become realists, whether or not they want to be. Along with a realistic view of trends in teen sexual behavior, parents also need encouragement and support as they educate their children about sex, pregnancy and STDs. I reassure parents that they have the skills they need to meet this important responsibility, and I urge them not to expect perfection from themselves or from their teens.

WHAT TO SAY, HOW TO SAY IT

Before It’s Too Late provides a resource for school counselors as well, in their role as liaison between teens, parents and teachers. Matched to meet middle school and high school standards for growth, sexuality and development in many states, the book can form the centerpiece of a lively and informative presentation to parents, teachers, or both.

This school year is an opportune time to organize a brown bag lunch or other gathering with school counselors, teachers and parents to discuss their shared role in helping teens avoid unplanned pregnancy, and the poverty, low educational achievement and health risks that accompany it.

Do you have questions about teen pregnancy or STDs, possible topics for a parent-teacher meeting, or want more information about *Before It’s Too Late*? Please see my website at www.DrOverton.org. I welcome your comments, and I’m available for presentations to counselors, teachers, parents, and students. ■

Sheila Overton, M.D., FACOG, is an ob/gyn practicing in Maryland. She ran a teen pregnancy prevention program in Los Angeles for more than 10 years. She can be reached at drsheilaoverton@gmail.com.

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