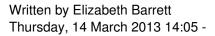
Written by Elizabeth Barrett Thursday, 14 March 2013 14:05 -



Counseling topic of Stakeholder meeting
Bullying, social networking issues and much more fills the days of school counselors.
Sometimes in mediating conflicts, counselors learn more than one side of a story.
But at the end of the day, Goth-enburg High School counselor Jerry Wiggins said counselors are there—first and foremost—for students.
Wiggins and middle and junior high school counselor Pam Glodowski and school psychologist Danielle Nguyen shared the role of counselors and some of the issues faced by students at a March 6 Stakeholders meeting.
Stakeholders, a group of community members who meet to learn about different topics in the school district, gathered in the community room at the Gothenburg Public Library.
Wiggins described the school as a microcosm of the community.
"We're what's happening, good or bad," he said.
During an initial contact with students, counselors assess:
Is the student in immediate danger or being harmed, harming others or self?



Is the issue affecting the student's academic performance? If so, how?

What are the family dynamics?

Does the child have other resources such as outside agencies, strong parental influence, etc.?

Wiggins said counselors walk a fine line in trying to assist students with personal and social issues and still respecting family boundaries, cultures and more.

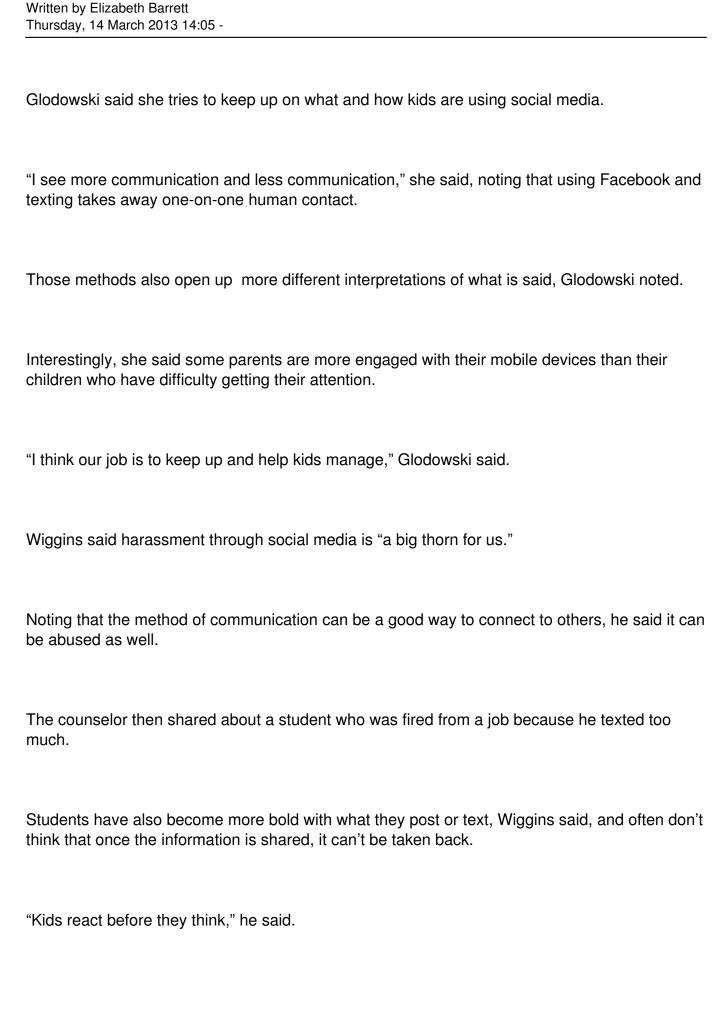
In addition to dealing with what comes up for students in grades 9-12, socially and academically, Wiggins also spends a lot of time with seniors as they make post-secondary plans.

Glodowski said she sees students dealing with more personal and social issues while Nguyen, who works with students in grades K-3, said much of her contact is through screening, observing, assessing and providing recommendations.

During a question-and-answer period, counselors were asked about the impact of social media on students, particularly bullying.



Nguyen said they're still trying to figure out how to navigate through social networking and how to use devices with integrity such as staying away from dangerous sites.



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Superintendent Dr. Mike Teahon said that younger staff members are quite involved in social media.

Both Teahon and Wiggins said the district has boundaries when it comes to social media relationships between students and staff.

For example, Wiggins said he doesn't text students or friend them on Facebook. He said they can call him at home on the family's land line.

Glodowski said she constantly works on bullying issues, noting that some students don't recognize when it's happening.

She said she has strategies to help students recognize and deal with the problem and learn how to stand up for themselves.

Wiggins noted that bullying also happens in adult workplaces.

Asked whether or not the district had considered an alternative school for high schoolers, Teahon said the board is currently looking at the district's organizational structure.

Teahon said board members plan to travel to schools in eastern Nebraska which are structured differently than conventional high schools.

Several years ago, when an alternative school with a non-traditional curriculum was discussed, Wiggins said district officials didn't feel there were enough students who could benefit from such a setting.

He noted that a credit recovery program was put into place that helps students who are failing

