



Plains Elementary School

Placement Description

Rockingham County Elementary School placement that offers practical foundational experience working with students.

Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

- One-on-one mentoring with 4-8 students (ages 5-12)
- Group counseling experiences (with counselor)
- Consultation with parents and teachers
- Classroom instruction assistance (Guidance Classes PK-5)
- Student Study, ASSIST, and other team service coordination meetings

Contact Information

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Read about students' experiences at this site below:



Fall 2021 - Megan Enright

For field placement, I was placed at Plains Elementary School in Timberville, Virginia. My time at Plains Elementary was full of experiences that I will carry with me into my career. The mission statement at Plains is to “help students acquire the desire and the skills to take an active role in their own learning and to assume responsibility for their own behavior.” They also state that they “are committed to assuring that a safe, positive learning environment is created in which all students feel accepted and appreciated.” During my time at Plains, I have found these statements to be true. While the school provides an academic education, students are also provided with a social-emotional education and a positive community. My supervisor was the school counselor, Mr. Tyler Orebaugh. He provides individual, small group, and in classroom counseling. He has strong relationships with the families at Plains and always goes above and beyond to make sure that students have the resources that they need. He provides students with school supplies and runs a program that provides food to students in need. He also works with local churches who want to sponsor students and families at Plains. Through the services he offers, Mr. Orebaugh has shown me the importance of connecting with students and families when working in a school.

During my time at the site, I got to experience a wide range of school counselor activities and roles. One of the biggest parts of my experience was Morning Meetings. Morning Meetings are classroom meetings focused on social and emotional learning. Topics can include social skills, public speaking, well-being, positive relationships, emotional identification, and more. They are typically 30 minutes long, and they are interactive. I attended weekly Morning Meetings in a 5th grade classroom, and I got to independently run a few of these meetings. I also got to participate in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade small group counseling sessions on social skills. By the end of my field placement, I ran the 1st grade and 3rd grade groups completely independently. Over the semester, I also observed a lot of individual meetings between my supervisor and the students. Though it can be challenging to see young children going through difficult situations, watching my supervisor help them was extremely eye-opening and educational. I learned various counseling techniques, how to best express empathy, and how to practice my own self-care when situations are emotionally heavy. I got to observe a few CPS calls, which can be challenging for the same reason, but are very important to learn how to do.

Plains Elementary was a great match for my field placement experience. One of the biggest advantages to this site was working with Mr. Orebaugh. He always wanted to make sure that my experience was positive and exactly what I wanted it to be. He also stresses the importance of self-care, because the job of a school counselor can be emotionally draining at



times. I was able to experience every aspect of school counseling at my site and I got tons of practice working with students individually and in groups. One of the things that I found challenging about my site was how quickly things would come up during the day. It took some time to get used to constantly being on the move and changing tasks, but it was wonderful practice for when I start my career in a school setting. The only true disadvantage to the site is its distance from JMU. The drive would take me about 25 minutes, and I had to increase my budget for gas this semester. However, I got used to the drive quickly and it served as a good time to decompress from the day.

As I mentioned, a big part of my field placement experience was Morning Meetings. One of the problems that I identified at my site was issues with behavior and emotional identification, potentially caused by last year's distance learning and mask wearing. For my contribution project, I wanted to examine the influence that Morning Meetings can have on students' social and emotional learning. Through my research, I found that Morning Meetings can help build a positive classroom community and can help students feel safe. They can also improve social-emotional learning, academic achievements, and well-being overall. I created two Morning Meeting lesson plans, one for social needs and one for emotional needs, for groupings of grades. These groupings were PreK and Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade, 3rd and 4th grade, and 5th grade as its own group. I got to implement a few of these Morning Meeting lesson plans, specifically in 5th grade. I ran meetings about public speaking, diversity, empathy, and classroom community. The 5th grade students provided me with feedback on my activities, as did my supervisor. Mr. Orebaugh also mentioned that he could send out my lesson plans to teachers and other counselors. I enjoyed researching and creating these Morning Meeting lesson plans, but my favorite part was seeing them in action in the classroom.

Another interesting part of my field placement experience was getting to apply concepts I learned in class to real world situations. The classes I found most applicable to my site were developmental and abnormal psychology. Learning about how children behave at different ages and what they can cognitively understand was helpful while I was at my site. Since there is a wide range of ages at elementary schools, it was important to know how to interact with each grade. This class was especially helpful when I was planning lessons because I had information about which activities would be best suited for each grade. Taking abnormal psychology also prepared me for some experiences at my site. Knowing potential signs and symptoms of mental disorders helped prepare me for seeing them in real life. That background knowledge helped me feel more confident when interacting with many different students. Specifically, learning about anxiety and sensory disorders helped me interact with students at my site.

I was very nervous coming into my field placement experience because I had no prior experience working with children. I left Plains on my last day proud of all the things I was able



to achieve and how much I grew. My supervisor's support and the relationships that I made with students are the biggest highlights from my time at Plains. The biggest thing that I learned was the true impact of relationships. I built a relationship with a student in kindergarten who started out very shy. By the end of the semester, he would talk openly, wave to me, and call me by name. I got to see how my hard work helped this student open up. Realizing that I can have an impact on students in this way showed me that I want to work in an elementary school in the future. I would absolutely recommend Plains Elementary School as a field placement site to anyone who is interested in school counseling or working with children. My experiences at Plains helped me cultivate a new confidence as I move into graduate school and my future career.

Spring 2021 – Lauren Alexander

Plains Elementary describes their school to be “a family consisting of students, parents, community members, and school staff. All members of our school family support the principles of respect, responsibility, fairness, trustworthiness, caring and citizenship as we care for and learn from each other.” Their mission statement affirms, “We are committed to assuring that a safe, positive learning environment is created in which all students feel accepted and appreciated. Our mission is to help students acquire the desire and the skills to take an active role in their own learning and to assume responsibility for their own behavior.” Plains is an Elementary School with Pre-k through 5th grade students, located in Timberville, VA, with 423 students enrolled for the 2020-2021 school year. I was specifically placed to work alongside the school counselor, Mr. Tyler Orebaugh. Mr. O works to support the students in their emotional and social development by providing group and individual counseling, crisis intervention, and daily classroom guidance lessons.

The school website also notes, “We truly believe that the student always comes first.” After my 80 hours spent at Plains Elementary this semester, I can affirm that this mission is evident in how the teachers and staff go above and beyond for each of their students. Even in the midst of a Pandemic, a mix of hybrid learning, and a transition back to school, the staff showed their deep dedication and care for the students and created a family environment throughout the school. The teachers all showed care and intention in including me as part of the “Plains family” and I watched them do little things to support the students each day such as dance parties, good morning songs, and fun spirit days. I saw how much these students trusted their teachers and how the teachers were involved in creating a good environment for their students.

This site allowed me to really experience what a typical day looks like as an elementary school counselor, which is completely different and flexible every day as situations arise. Every day we would have a morning and afternoon counseling lesson and the rest of the time was spent meeting with students and or teachers and planning. In the beginning of the semester, I observed Kindergarten and 1st grade lessons, and at the end of the semester we switched to 3rd and 4th grade lessons. I started out with observing and co-teaching lessons with Mr. O, then completely led my own lessons and even planned lessons on responsibility and growth mindset. I also observed



counseling sessions and crisis management with Mr. O. He let me mentor a 4th grade girl who I met with each week about her family struggles. At the end I started planning activities and meeting with her on my own. We also organized a few small groups to have lunch with which allowed me to experience both one-on-one and group dynamics in my time at Plains.

One of my favorite parts of my experience was the way in which Mr. O allowed me to fully become invested and involved as an intern. He would introduce me to students as a “future school counselor” instead of the term intern, and he gave me plenty of opportunities to try new things and grow. He allowed me to feel capable in leading and the staff and teachers included me like I was one of their own. Although Mr. O would always make sure I was comfortable, he would also challenge me with things he knew I could handle. He always gave great feedback and affirmed me in what I was doing and how I was growing during my time there. He also provided opportunities to debrief heavier sessions and think about what had just occurred with students, since things often happened suddenly within the school day.

I would say a harder part of the placement is just the unexpected nature of the work; things can come up quickly and sometimes you just have to jump into situations that you do not expect or feel prepared for. However, this was great experience in flexibility and something I know I will have to get used to as a school counselor. You get to experience a wide range of situations because you never know what will come up within that day or what a student will need help processing. Other than that, the only other thing that could be viewed as a challenge would be the 20–25-minute drive to the school. Although it required more gas money, I welcomed the drive as a space to process and debrief from the day on my way home. There may be hard topics and situations to deal with, but Mr. O is quick to make sure that you yourself can process them adequately and encourages you to practice self-care. He cares so much about you as an individual and your growth as a counselor, which just adds to the impact of this placement.

Thinking about what I will take with me from this experience going forward, I have learned so much about myself and my future work. I have always known I wanted to be a school counselor, but typically imagined myself working with high schoolers. I thought that high schoolers would have bigger and “more important” problems as they figure out their adolescence and future path. After spending my semester at Plains, I have fallen in love with elementary school counseling and am now very interested in pursuing this as the future population which I could work with. It is heartbreaking to see such small children go through such big issues they should not have to carry, but it is also so important to be there to help them process and cope. Seeing the resilience and joy these children have was so inspiring and gave me purpose. Additionally, I loved the way in which we could teach them important topics in our classroom lessons, but also have fun, such as ending the day with the cha-cha slide. Overall, my Intro Field Placement experience at Plains affirmed my decision to pursue a Graduate degree in school counseling and helped me build and practice skills that I can take into my future within this field. Mr. O is an outstanding supervisor who cares deeply about his students and his interns and works hard to give you the best experience possible, even in a Pandemic. I am so grateful for this experience and all that I have learned from it.



Fall 2020 – Mikayla Cox

The mission statement at Plains Elementary School is, "To help students acquire the desire and the skills to take an active role in their own learning and to assume responsibility for their own behavior." The staff at the school says that the mission, "Is best accomplished when school personnel maintain high expectations for all students, take responsibility for professional growth, monitor students' progress on a frequent basis, and promote effective home-school communication and involvement." During my time at the school I saw how much the staff cared about all of the children there. They treated them like family and really worked to make sure they would all succeed. The staff at the school, especially Mr. O, also make sure to include the parents in everything going on with their children during the day and tips on how to help them succeed at home as well. The school counselor, Mr. O., made it a point to tell teachers to call him when a child was having a problem in class so that he could be as involved as possible and help guide the students towards success in their school and future career.

My experience was a little different than most semesters due to the Covid-19 pandemic. For the first few months of the semester Plains Elementary School wasn't allowing any visitors into the school, so I couldn't get any in person hours. Luckily, Mr. O was very flexible, and gave me some work to do at home that would help me get an understanding of what a school counselor does without actually being at the school with him. I mostly worked on lesson plans, which I found to be very helpful because a big part of a school counselor's job is to teach lessons to classes. I was given the freedom to choose what topics I wanted to make lesson plans on, and possibly teach to the student's when I was allowed in the school. I chose topics that I felt I needed when I was in elementary school like bullying, mental health, and anger management. When I was able to go to the school I got an even better feel of what it would be like to have a job as an elementary school counselor. I learned that you have to be very organized and good at multitasking because you are always being pulled in different directions. While at the school I got to watch Mr. O teach lessons, and even help co-teach a few at the end of the semester. I also got to sit in on a few one-on-one meetings and talk to a few students on my own. Throughout the entire experience Mr. O did a great job balancing pushing me out of my comfort zone while also making sure I was confident in what I was doing.

One big advantage of interning at Plains Elementary School is you get a very hands-on experience. You are able to actually teach classes and work with students instead of just observing everything. Having Mr. O as a supervisor is also a big advantage because he really cares about you and wants you to get the best experience possible. He gives you tips and constructive criticism that will help you in any future job, even if you decide school counseling isn't for you. I can't really think of any disadvantages at the school besides its location. It is about



half an hour from JMU, so if you don't have reliable transportation it might not be a good choice for you. If you do have transportation the drive is worth it because it is a great school and the drive time gives you an opportunity to decompress from your day at the school because sometimes you run into difficult and sad situations.

Before I started this internship, I was going back and forth between wanting to go to graduate school to become a school counselor or a school psychologist. I have always wanted to work in a school, but I knew I didn't want to be a teacher, which is why I was going back and forth between these two jobs. I was leaning more towards school psychology at the start of the semester because I like giving tests and interpreting their results, but after my experience at Plains Elementary I think I am leaning more towards becoming a school counselor. I really liked how everyday was different, so you never really know what to expect. I also liked how much you get to interact with the students on a daily basis and form relationships with them. I never realized how much the school counselor interacts with the students and how much of an impact they can have on their life. I remember my elementary school counselor coming into my class, but I don't remember having a relationship with them. At Plains Elementary School, almost every student seems to know Mr. O and are excited to see him in the hallways. This is what I want in a job because I love working with children. I learned how important it is to create a relationship with as many of the children as possible because you never know when something will come up in a student's life that they will need to talk about. Establishing a relationship with them from the beginning will help them realize you are always there for them and they can talk to you about anything. One thing Mr. O does during his time in the classrooms is he always ends the lesson by doing a different dance with the class. This shows the students that he can be silly with them and is approachable so they will want to come talk to him when they have a problem. This is a skill I will carry into my job in the future and I was really glad to learn about it so early.

I would one hundred percent recommend interning here with Mr. O to anyone who is even a little bit interested in school counseling or a related field. He makes sure that you learn everything you can to have a successful career in the future and to work on skills without pushing you to try things you aren't comfortable with. I would say that even though Mr. O won't make you do anything, you should definitely try everything you can. He will be there to help you when you need it so it's best to jump into things that make you uncomfortable and see what happens. I get very nervous about speaking in public, so I was nervous to have to get up in front of a class, but once I did it I realized it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be and I was really glad I tried it out in a setting like this, rather than waiting until graduate school or later on. If you have the opportunity to intern at Plains Elementary School, take it, you won't regret it!

Spring 2020 – Megan Ludwig



My experience at Plains Elementary School was unique and unexpected. There were highs and lows, but the overall experience was something I will never forget. According to Plains Elementary School (2008), their mission statement is, “our school is a family consisting of students, parents, community members, and school staff. All members of our school family support the principles of respect, responsibility, fairness, trustworthiness, caring and citizenship as we care for and learn from each other. We are committed to assuring that a safe, positive learning environment is created in which all students feel accepted and appreciated. Our mission is to help students acquire the desire and the skills to take an active role in their own learning and to assume responsibility for their own behavior.” The overall services of the site were to educate children, not only in the academic atmosphere, but the social one as well. I worked closely with the school counselor and the services provided from this area of a school system differ from the others. School counselors help students with their personal and social development by supporting them and helping them through anything they might experience.

My supervisor, Mr. Tyler Orebaugh, was very flexible in what we were able to do and what we wanted to do. To start off with, we were able to observe Mr. Orebaugh teaching lessons to classrooms and sit in on one on one sessions with students. Eventually as we became more comfortable, he allowed us to teach our own lessons and meet with students by ourselves. It was a great experience having a supervisor that was happy to have you no matter what your comfort level was. In the beginning of the internship, I was honestly terrified of teaching a lesson or meeting with the students individually. Although, Mr. O was very patient and would never force you into doing something you felt like you were not ready for. This allowed me to take my time and get comfortable with my environment before I decided to step out on my own. It was nice to be in an atmosphere where the pressure was not so high that it became overwhelming. Rather, it was low pressure, but it pushed me to want to get past my comfort zone and try something new. Mr. Orebaugh was a hard-working school counselor and he wanted us feel important. Therefore, instead of calling us his “interns,” he called us “future school counselors.” He took the time out of the day to talk with us and see how we were feeling about this process. He also wanted to make sure that we were taking part in self-care because of how important that is in this field of work.

The first few weeks that I was at Plains Elementary, I just acted as a shadow to Mr. Orebaugh, but as time went on, I eventually developed the courage to start meeting with students one on one. I first met with one student, who was very sweet, but she was known to be the cause of some girl drama. Mr. O thought it would be nice for her to have someone to talk to. It was really fascinating to see how these students make connections with the adults in their lives. After I met with her, I began to feel more confident in my abilities to work with young children, so I would start going to lunches and sitting with a new student each time. Eventually, towards the last few times I went to Plains, I would walk into the lunch room and students would be calling my name and they would be excited to talk to me. This was a real confidence boost and showed me that being a school counselor is something that I would love to do in the future. I also co-taught a class with one of the other interns and that was interesting to be a part of and watch how the children reacted to me and how they interact with each other.



Plains Elementary School is one of the most kind, compassionate, and welcoming places I have ever been. The faculty and staff really care about their students and want what is best for them. I was very impressed when I started at Plains Elementary because the Assistant Principal and many others remembered my name, which was heart warming to hear. It showed that they were very intentional with their work. The main advantage of this site is that you create many bonds with the students at this school. Another advantage of this site is that you not only see the counseling side, but also the school side because you are counseling students and teaching them. I honestly believe that there are no disadvantages to this site. This school works hard to make sure their students succeed and even though my time there was cut short, it was one of the best experiences of my life. I loved working closely with the students and developing relationships with them. It made me feel like I was making an impact on them. Although, I disliked not having enough time at this site. I felt like if I was there for a longer amount of time I could have learned more and experienced more.

I learned many things being placed at Plains Elementary School. I believe some of the more important ones are confidence, understanding, and patience. When I started at this site, I was very anxious because I am a little bit more on the introverted side. Although, as I worked with Mr. O, the faculty, and the students, I developed more confidence in myself and my abilities. These children taught me so much about understanding one another. Every individual is going through something different. Some may be experiencing scarier and more severe situations, but it is important to understand that people are the way that they are because of experiences that they have had. Finally, I learned how to be more patient with people. Working with children can sometimes test your patience. Although, I worked closely with many people to overcome difficulties surrounding patience. I think learning these aspects in my internship at Plains Elementary School showed me that school counseling is something that I would really love to do in the future. It allowed me to see that I love working closely with children and teaching them about life aspects that they need to know. If I had the chance to work at Plains Elementary School again, I would do it in a heartbeat. Although it did not end the way that I wanted or expected, it was an excellent experience and one that I will never forget.

Spring 2020 – Molly Lynch

Plains Elementary School's mission statement states, "We are committed to assuring that a safe, positive learning environment is created in which all students feel accepted and appreciated. Our mission is to help students acquire the desire and the skills to take an active role in their own learning and to assume responsibility for their own behavior." My role at PES was shadowing the guidance counselor, Tyler Orebaugh. Mr. Orebaugh has many roles in the school. Some of these include observing and facilitating one-on-one student mentoring, group counseling and peer mediation, he assisted with crisis intervention and grief processing, and he also had daily classroom lessons and activities. One of my favorite things about my time at Plains was how much Tyler allowed me to participate in all of his daily roles. If the student was



open to having me in the room, I was always allowed to sit in on the conversation. This gave me the opportunity to be exposed to many different situations and learn so much.

Much of our daily routine varied by the day. Every day we had at least two classes we met with in the morning and one in the afternoon. The daily lessons included activities that taught the students different life and social skills such as self-love, giving compliments, technology etiquette just to name a few. Mr. Orebaugh always worked very hard to create lesson plans that were engaging for the students, which always led to participation from many of the students. Tyler planned these lessons, but also allowed me to come up with ideas and plan my own lessons. He facilitated co-teaching lessons where I would be able to help him teach until I was comfortable teaching on my own. This was a really great learning experience for me. I was not comfortable standing and teaching in front of a class before this internship, and Tyler was extremely encouraging but did not rush or push anyone out of their comfort zone until he knew they were ready. For me this was really helpful because if a professional had faith that I could stand up in front of a class and teach a lesson, it gave me the confidence I needed to do it.

The other big part of our daily routines was individual counseling sessions. There were students we met with weekly to keep up with whatever situation they might be going through, but there were also students we would have in the counseling office only on random occasions when they wanted to talk with Mr. Orebaugh. For me this was my favorite part of being at Plains. I am headed to graduate school to be a clinical mental health counselor, so being able to work one on one with children was a really important part of my learning experience. It allowed me to get to know student's personalities and stories. It also taught me how to effectively use my interpersonal skills to work with students through difficult, and oftentimes uncomfortable situations. It also was my favorite because I was able to form friendships with many of the children, therefore, I would eat lunch with them, check on them in their classrooms, and even play at recess with them. This internship was the first experience I had in an elementary school, and these are the parts that made me fall in love with it.

While at Plains, many of the children we worked with weekly, and some even daily, had been exposed to adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs. This was definitely something that took time to get used to for me. It ended up being an extremely beneficial learning experience, but it also took time to get used to sitting in a room listening to a child tell such horrible life circumstances, many of which I had never been exposed to or gone through myself. Tyler was extremely good at helping me process some of the things I heard, and to learn not to "take it home with me," or let the sadness of the situation hurt my own well-being. He always emphasized my personal self-care in order to be able to show up for the students. Through these conversations with children experiencing adverse childhood experiences, I was able to enhance my ability to empathize with children who are experiencing situations I have not personally gone through. One of the biggest lessons that I gained from these conversations was that we cannot fix children or the sad home lives they may come from with one conversation or even within one school year sometimes. This was hard for me to understand at first because I so badly wanted to change what the student was feeling or how awful their home situation was, but Tyler helped me to understand that most of that is out of our control. Sometimes in the worst situations all we can



do for the student is love them and listen to them. This takes time to learn how to do, but I was able to witness just how powerful it truly can be.

While working with students that experienced ACEs, I realize that some students were so much better at “bouncing back” or returning to their life equilibrium after experiencing trauma than others. This means that some children are more resilient than others. Research states that a trusting relationship with a parent or adult is a crucial part of childhood resiliency, but oftentimes the children that are maltreated do not have parents in their lives to provide the needed support. Therefore, these children often turn to teachers as mentors. This is a very good resource for many children, but teachers are not always trained in trauma-informed intervention. They are not trained in building resilience for children that have experienced adverse life events. Because of this, my project idea was to create a resilience handbook for teachers. I compiled research on childhood resilience and presented not only the facts for teachers, but the ways in which they have been proven to be effective in helping children. I also provided children’s protective factors, ways that they might struggle in the classroom after experiencing trauma, and overall useful information for educators working with children experiencing ACEs. I think this handbook could be very simple and basic, yet useful to teacher that don’t always know how to handle life situations that they have not been through.

Fall 2019 – Hayley Becker (Intro Field Work)

Plains Elementary School’s mission statement is “to help students acquire the desire and the skills to take an active role in their own learning and to assume responsibility for their own behavior.” Plains Elementary makes it a priority to establish a family environment through inclusion of students, parents, community members, and school staff in upholding the values of a safe and positive learning environment. The school staff have a collaborative approach in supporting students in all aspects of their lives. Not only do the professional staff provide rich learning environments both in and out of the classroom, but they also strive to support students through effective home-school communication and involvement. Plains Elementary School educates children from pre-K to 5th grade, averaging a little over 400 students total enrolled. In addition to a typical school staff such as general education teachers, special education teachers, specialized teachers (art, music, gym, library), and administrators; Plains welcomes teaching assistants which provide extra support to current professional staff. My specific placement was within the school counseling department, working alongside and shadowing the school counselor Mr. Tyler Orebaugh. Mr. Orebaugh’s mission at Plains elementary is to aid and support the emotional, mental, and physical well-being of all students at Plains through a variety of services.

During my time at Plains I had the opportunity to experience multiple hands-on activities mirroring the life of a real school counselor. There was no such thing as a “typical” day at Plains, as students’ needs varied from day to day. Some repeated experiences I was able to observe were individual counseling sessions, group counseling sessions, and classroom counseling. During individual counseling sessions, I observed Mr. Orebaugh establish relationships with students, problem solve through issues, and provide emotional support. In addition to simply observing, I



was encouraged to speak up and provide my own counseling experience to students as well as establish relationships. By the end of the semester, I was able to independently meet with students who I had established a rapport with for individual counseling. In addition to honing and perfecting my individual counseling skills, I was able to experience planning and teaching classroom counseling lessons to grades Kindergarten to 5th grade. I have taught lessons ranging topics such as emotion regulation, establishing positive peer relations, and tolerance of others differences. I was able to practice classroom management while also utilizing resources such as videos, books, and various activities to captivate the attention of the students. Additionally, I had the opportunity of co-running a lunch group with Mr. Orebaugh for 3rd and 1st grade students. During these lunch groups we would check in with the students as well as work on identifying prosocial behaviors among peers. I was able to provide them with problem solving examples of what do in social situations where a conflict may arise and how to solve it. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to observe and participate in some more administrative roles that school counselors are required to fulfill. For example, I was able to observe the process of a Child Protective Services call and an interview with a student who may require their services. I was also able to assist Mr. Orebaugh in providing meals for families of students in need as well as organizing donations for a winter clothing drive that provided coats and other various clothing items to students who are unable to afford them.

Plains is a great option for students who are looking for an opportunity to experience a real “day in the life” of school counseling. I frequently found myself working alongside Mr. Orebaugh on many issues and gained an abundance of experiences that I did not have going into the course. One of Plains most valuable aspects as a school to a student seeking field placement is their overall mentality when approaching working with children. The administrators, teachers, and staff work tirelessly to provide a safe and comfortable space for the students and professional staff. I always felt extremely welcomed and valued while working alongside the professional staff. Moreover, the professional staff and students were excited to work with me to help me gain knowledge and skills as well as establish meaningful relationships. The only disadvantage is the 25-minute drive to the school, which is hardly a disadvantage as it provides ample time for you to practice self-care which is another extremely important skill I learned this semester.

What I will take away the most from this semester at Plains is how important a school counselor is to the well-being of a student and a school. I was awestruck at the amount of serious and profound problems students of this age are dealing with. However, with the support of their school counselor and their own resiliency, I have seen students overcome some of the darkest situations and have gone on to be happy and productive in their learning environment. This experience has only solidified to me that I absolutely want to continue pursuing the school counseling profession by attending graduate school to be a school counselor. Before coming to Plains, I did not have a rich knowledge of how to support students emotional and mental well-being through various services provided through the school system. Through my previous experience in the school system I felt comfortable around children, however, I did not have the knowledge to advance the development of students through services provided by the school system. This experience has made me more empathetic and passionate about advocating for student’s welfare and happiness as they often do not have the means to advocate for themselves.



Overall my experience at Plains has been extremely rewarding. I have learned the value in empathy, flexibility, and openness to new ideas in my position as an intern. I built strong relationships with both students and staff that were especially hard to leave behind, however they are still extremely valuable to me. Any student would be extremely lucky to be placed at Plains Elementary School because of the ample opportunities for growth and learning both personally and professionally.

Fall 2019 – Liza Rowe (Intro Field Work)

At Plains Elementary, their mission is to “help students acquire the desire and skills to take an active role in their learning and assume responsibility for their own behavior.” They do this by helping students reach their full potential with a support system right there with them. It is a very positive and growth-inducing environment. It is a typical elementary school with grades ranging from Kindergarten through 5th grade with three teachers per grade level. In addition, they do have two preschool classrooms for kids to attend and one morning class for kids under the age limit for PreK who still want to start to get a school experience. Plains has lots of help around the building with aides, student teachers, special education teachers, and a behavior specialist. My specific field work experience was in the school counselor’s office under the supervision of the one school counselor. He has an open-door policy where students, faculty, and sometimes parents are free to walk in the door at any time and come talk to him. He welcomes conversations about anything ranging from celebrating wins at softball games to discussing current struggles. Once the conversation turns more serious, he shuts the door as a courtesy to the person in the room to show that whatever is said in the room “does not leave the room,” and each person knows their confidentiality is secured.

My experience under Mr. Orebaugh, the school counselor, was very enriching and typical for what a day in the life of a school counselor is like. I personally interned once a week on Wednesdays for a full day during the semester. That being said, no day was the exact same. Each day did have at least one counseling lesson taught to a class of kids. For the first and third nine weeks, teachers in 3rd-5th grade departments fill out a Google Doc to show when they are free for a classroom counseling session each week. For the second and final nine weeks, teachers in the Kindergarten-2nd grade departments do the same thing. Starting around halfway through the semester, myself and the other intern were given the opportunity to teach our own lessons. I co-taught with my supervisor and had the opportunity to teach a classroom lesson by myself. Other typical experiences were one-on-one sessions with kids on a needs basis, lunch groups with kids focused on specific issues like social skills, and administrative meetings. I was also given the opportunity to conduct personal one-on-one sessions with various kids throughout the semester as Mr. O saw fit.

At the beginning of the semester, I worked with a 3rd grade girl who was working through anxiety. We met during lunch once a week to set up a relationship, talk about what was currently going on and how myself or Mr. O could help her. Towards the middle of the semester, the other intern and I started meeting with a 5th grade boy who was struggling with anger and we would



work through and process his emotions from various situations. At the end of the semester, I worked with a 5th grade girl who had been through a lot and needed a positive female figure in her life. We worked through her past, the current situations going on at home, and anything else that came up in our meetings. This was my favorite aspect of the internship because I was able to create meaningful relationships with these kids who made such a strong impact on my life. Their faces would light up when they saw me in the hallways and it always made my day.

Working at Plains was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Prior to starting at this internship, I was very worried about teaching lessons to classrooms. Mr. O was very receptive and pushed me to be the best I could be while also allowing me space to wait before I was completely comfortable. He loves talking to his future school counselors/interns and works with them to make it the best experience that he can. This was such a big advantage for me because there is always room for growth and he really pushes you to be the best you can be. One of the most helpful things that we did was debrief after one of us taught or had a session with a student. He understands that this internship can be very emotional, and it was always really nice to sit with him and debrief. We would go over what just happened, and it was nice to have another perspective to see how you could handle things differently or just see things in a different light. Some of these kids have gone through unimaginable trauma at such young ages and it can be very hard to process but Mr. O is great about helping you work through it.

Mr. O is one of the best at his job and he is really good about building trust with students, while also being professional and silly at times. It was incredible getting to learn under his supervision and really blossom into someone who is more confident in their abilities after this internship. I would have liked to prepare a lesson by myself, but I had not given myself enough time in the semester to observe Mr. O, build up the confidence, and teach myself. I would tell future interns before they start, to sit down and try to create a timeline of when you want to accomplish everything.

Last semester I knew that I wanted to be a school counselor, but I was not sure what level of kids I wanted to counsel, whether it was elementary, middle, or high school students. My parents suggested an internship and I applied for the introductory field work experience course. I am so happy that I did so. It was a life-changing experience. I gained the confidence to teach lessons to classrooms of kids, discovered my knack for building relationships with kids and helping them work through their current issues. I still have not worked out which level I want to pursue, but I know for sure that this is the right path for me. I am also happy to admit that I cannot cross elementary school off my list. I was worried because a large part of the tasks of an elementary school counselor is teaching lessons to classrooms but after this experience, I feel that I can tackle anything.

Spring 2019 – Rachel Miller

At Plains Elementary School, their mission is to “Educate Today’s Learner, Develop Tomorrow’s Future” and the school does this by promoting a safe and positive learning experience. The administration and staff make sure that their students know they are appreciated



and accepted to provide a family atmosphere. The school teaches students pre-K through fifth grade with an average of three teachers per grade. There are many teacher assistants throughout the school who help with classroom management and extra services needed by some students. The school also has “specials” which are the traditional art, music, and library classes. My specific placement was in the school counseling department working alongside the one school counselor. His goal is to have an open door policy where students, staff, administration, and parents are welcome and encouraged to speak with him about any problems going on.

The opportunities working with Mr. Orebaugh are very hands-on and accurately represent the life of a school counselor. In a given day a student could observe individual counseling, group mediation, and classroom lessons. I personally interned a couple days a week and there was never a dull day where nothing was going on. Classroom lesson schedules are mapped out on a Google Document sign-up among the teachers, but situations need attention quite frequently throughout the day. Mr. Orebaugh lets you plan your own classroom lessons and activities, and is open to you teaching them to the students. I met with a couple individual students on a weekly basis to form relationships with them and to be their mentor, which was a very rewarding experience. For my capstone project, I designed and ran a five week program for some fourth-grade girls. Each week was focused on a topic such as self-esteem, boundaries, drama, and positive coping. Running my own focus group taught me management skills and how to form relationships to support students outside of the classroom. As the supervisor, Mr. Orebaugh is always interested in offering supervision and promotes a great learning environment. The only downfall with working within the school counseling department is listening to the challenges some children have to go through and observing how they process situations. During my time at the school I personally never had to report to Child Protective Services but I was aware of calls made and situations going on with specific students. Mr. Orebaugh was very good about processing and debriefing through supervision when these situations occurred, and answered any questions I had. The only limitation to report about my role is that some situations were very serious and it was not appropriate for me to sit-in during those, but that is to be expected. These situations were usually debriefed during supervision, as long as it was appropriate to do so.

Plains overall as a site placement is a great option for students engaging in field work as the school is very accepting of student learners. When I walked around and observed, I could see the many student teachers and volunteers the school allowed to help them gain knowledge and experience. The only negative thing about the school, and it is hardly negative, is the drive out to the school. It is about a thirty minute commute but the time can facilitate self-care processing after a busy day. My favorite part about doing my field work at the school was developing the relationships with the teachers and the students. It always brought me happiness in the morning when students would acknowledge me with a hug and by my name. Teachers were also accepting of me teaching their students and were excited to have me in the classroom.

Before engaging in field placement, I had my mind set on clinical mental health work in an out-patient counseling firm. I had an internship previous to this year working in a firm and I liked the idea of a set client list with the flexibility of the hours depending on booked appointments. After working in a school setting with the young children planning lessons, I have become fond of the school system setting working within the counseling department. I could see



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myself going back for another Master's degree in school counseling to try as a profession after working in out-patient for a while, or alongside it. I learned a lot about myself during this process and I also confirmed that I love working with children, and I definitely want to work with children during my career. Some of the skills I learned were how to manage a classroom setting, how to help children dealing with grief and mourning, and how to manage a day-setting working with numerous children at once. My observation at Plains was under the only school counselor so his days are always busy and I saw first-hand what that looked like, as well as the expectations placed on the counselor. Before coming to Plains I had solid general knowledge of how to work with children but through this experience I got to see how to deal with individual crisis situations. I was not as familiar with how to manage crisis and anger management, therefore that experience helped me grow with more skills. Even with the school counseling experience I received, there is always more to learn about the different grades besides the ones I worked with. My experience was limited to an elementary school type of counseling so I would have to learn about situations middle school and high school students go through, and how to counsel those as well.

Anyone who interns here, whether it be with a teacher or with the school counselor, will have a rewarding experience. Leaving the school and the children was hard since I have spent a lot of time with them and built special relationships. Being a young intern brings a fun dynamic to the classroom that might not be there and the kids are very responsive to extra help around the school. I never once felt uncomfortable at the site placement, with my responsibilities, or with the expectations of working with mental health within the school system.