

# Public Schools Placement – School Counseling

## Placement Description

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Placements available in school counseling. There *may* be opportunities for a school counseling student to briefly shadow a school psychologist, but this is not guaranteed.

## Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

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- Assist with in-class activities
- Help run groups
- Sit in on meetings with parents
- Attend consultations with teachers
- Attend staff meetings

Rockingham County:

Turner Ashby High School- Candy Martin  
540-828-2008

Email: [cmartin@rockingham.k12.va.us](mailto:cmartin@rockingham.k12.va.us)

Broadway High School – Matt Kinman  
540- 896-7081

Email: [mkinman@rockingham.k12.va.us](mailto:mkinman@rockingham.k12.va.us)

Elkton Middle – Mike Simpson  
540-298-1228

Email: [msimpson@rockingham.k12.va.us](mailto:msimpson@rockingham.k12.va.us)

Montivideo Middle - Cammie Weston  
540-289-3401

Email: [cweston@rockingham.k12.va.us](mailto:cweston@rockingham.k12.va.us)



Elkton Elementary- Cindy Hepner  
540-298-1511  
Email: [chepner@rockingham.k12.va.us](mailto:chepner@rockingham.k12.va.us)

Lacey Spring Elementary – Katie Greene  
540-433-7819  
Email:

Spotswood Elementary School - Angie Adamek  
540-434-3429  
Email: [aadamek@harrisonburg.k12.va.us](mailto:aadamek@harrisonburg.k12.va.us)

See also [Shenandoah County Early Childhood Program](#)

[Read student experiences at these sites](#) (PDF)



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## Broadway High School

### *Spring 2016 – Lauren Panek*

My field placement experience took place at Broadway High School in Broadway, Virginia in the Rockingham County Public School District. I worked in the Counseling Office at the school under the supervision of Matt Kinman, one of the school counselors. At the school, there are three school counselors, one career coach, one registrar, and one secretary.

The Broadway High School mission statement is “We, The Broadway Gobblers, with the support of each other, are learning to be curious explorers and fearless creators, risk takers and problem solvers, life-long learners and active collaborators, kind neighbors and responsible citizens. We respect each person. We act to keep each other safe. We each contribute to the success of the group through the accountability of the individual. We understand that our work at Broadway High School equips us to impact the world.” The mission of the school was clearly demonstrated during my time at BHS. The school faculty and staff truly care about the students attending the school, and offer programs and services to the students to ensure success.

At the counseling office, services like college preparation workshops, class registration help, and scholarship information are all provided. Counselors are assigned to students based on the student’s last name, and continue to have the same students all four years that they are enrolled at BHS. The counselors offer a variety of services, such as individual and group discussions about personal issues, college preparation workshops and class registration. The career coach also handles job and college search issues in addition to conducting a Reality Town educational program for 10<sup>th</sup> graders, providing information for FAFSA, financial aid and scholarships, and setting up informational sessions about colleges and visits to campuses. There were also student assistants in the office who run notes to teachers and a graduate intern from JMU, so I also was able to build positive relationships with those individuals.

At Broadway High School, I was fortunate enough to work with many students during different opportunities. My supervisor runs a leadership club called the ACES which is based on friendship, service, and the community. I was able to sit in on a few meetings for the club as well as interview and select new club members for the upcoming school year. I also decorated the bulletin board to promote the ACES application when students first started applying. The ACES



and my supervisor coordinated an 8<sup>th</sup> grade tour day and Young Leaders Conference with 5<sup>th</sup> grade students so I assisted with those events. Prior to the YLC conference, I researched leadership articles for the 5<sup>th</sup> graders to take home and use to become future leaders in the community. Both experiences were really positive and I enjoyed being able to interact with younger students as well. Some ACES students traveled to Plains Elementary to assist with Farm to School Day, so I was able to go and help guide the elementary students around the different farm animal stations. In addition to my time spent helping the ACES, I also helped the career coach supervise a field trip to Eastern Mennonite University to explore the campus with interested students. Another opportunity I had was volunteering at the Reality Town program which demonstrated to 10<sup>th</sup> graders the realities of paying bills and full time jobs. My supervisor conducted classroom workshops for college preparation and class registration with students, so I was also fortunate enough to sit in on those workshops and answer student questions. During the semester, I was able to meet with students who were new to Broadway High School to answer their questions and make their transition to the school more seamless. In addition, I met with students who needed help in the classroom. I discussed organizational techniques and study skills to help them succeed on future tests, as well as discussed any outlying issues that might be affecting their school work and how to deal with those issues properly. I also created an “Accepted!” frame for senior students to take pictures with, which included the logo of their future college. These pictures circulated on the school TVs for students, faculty, and parents to see.

My supervisor encouraged my independence and freedom to choose projects that interested me personally. I am very interested in building high school students’ self-esteem and positive body image, so I was able to use my research for tabling at lunches. I used a trifold and quizzes to start a discussion with the general school population about body image and bring awareness to the students about pressures from family, friends, and the media. I also designed a bulletin board outside of the counseling center titled “Why let Society define YOU?..BeYOUtiful” and had inspirational quotes from celebrities on positive body image and self-talk. Finally, I designed a group discussion and workshop outline that can be used when talking with groups of students to facilitate a positive discussion on self-acceptance and building self-esteem. I created a ball toss activity with different body image and general questions to be used in group discussions and in the counseling office with other students. I was really thankful for independence to choose the projects I worked on, and really enjoyed working directly with students through tabling.

Broadway High School was a great field placement site for my first experience in a school setting. The staff in the counseling office is so friendly and welcoming, and they really made me feel like part of the BHS family. My supervisor Matt is also so laidback and incredibly supportive, so he makes for a great person to work for. He was happy to show me the ropes and was always available for guidance and to answer questions about grad school, school counseling, and life. His support and guidance allowed me to work outside of my comfort zone and try things that I never imagined. I learned how to work with high school students, confidence in front of a classroom full of students, confidentiality, how to interview others, and how to facilitate conversations with students. This experience influenced my decision to pursue a career in school



counseling, specifically with high school students. I have always had a passion for working with children, but this experience has shown me that working with high school students and bettering their educational and personal lives is what I am meant to do.

### ***Fall 2015 - Lindsey Croft***

I completed my field placement at Broadway High School, which is one of the high schools in the Rockingham County Public School system. It is located in the town of Broadway which is about 20-25 minutes away from JMU. I particularly worked in the school counseling department. The counseling department has 3 counselors, a career coach, a secretary, and a registrar. My supervisor was Mr. Matt Kinman, who is one of the school counselors. He has been a counselor at Broadway High School for several years.

The vision of Broadway High School states: “We are many, preparing each one to impact the most, for the benefit of all.” The mission at the school states:

“We, The Broadway Gobblers, with the support of each other, are learning to be curious explorers and fearless creators, risk takers and problem solvers, life-long learners and active collaborators, kind neighbors and responsible citizens. We respect each person. We act to keep each other safe. We each contribute to the success of the group through the accountability of the individual. We understand that our work at Broadway High School equips us to impact the world.”

The mission of the counseling department at Broadway High School states

“The mission of the school counseling department at Broadway High School aligns with the school vision which is: Working together within a positive atmosphere to provide a foundation for lifetime learning. School counselors, as professional school advocates, will provide a comprehensive, developmental counseling program to address that academic, career, and personal/social needs of all students. In unison with the students, staff, parents, and community members, the school counselor will facilitate a positive, supportive, and culturally sensitive program that will ensure a school community that is a safe, healthy and nurturing environment for all.”

The counseling center provides services to all of the students enrolled at Broadway High School. Each student is assigned to a counselor, dependent on their last name. The students have the same counselor during all four years of their high school career. There is also a career coach that provides services to all students in the high school. The services that are offered include career and college counseling, scheduling, individual counseling, group counseling, and peer mediation. Career counseling and college information/help is a pretty large part of the counseling center’s job. The career coach and school counselors both meet with students with concerns in these areas. The goal is to set students up for successful futures. Scheduling is also a major part of a high school counselor’s job. During certain times of the year, this takes up a lot of the counselors’ time. The counselors are also able to meet with students individually and/or in



groups. Students are able to come to the counselors with a wide range of problems. The counselors at BHS are really good about having an open door policy.

During my time at Broadway High School, I was able to experience a wide variety of opportunities. Each experience showed me a different area of what is considered the job description of a school counselor. At the beginning of the semester, I sat in during ninth grade classroom presentations given by one of the counselors. Those presentations were helpful to me as a new field placement student because it was having like a crash course on BHS and their counseling department. Individual student meetings was a part of my job. I met with students that were struggling with their grades. I discussed with those students why their grades were low and how they could improve them by the end of the next grading period. Some students were very receptive to talking and my suggestions while others were not quite as receptive. I also met with many students of the senior class. We talked about their future plans for after they graduate high school. Some have goals of going to college and furthering their education while other students will enter the workforce immediately after graduation. I had the opportunity to sit in on one of the faculty/staff meetings after school one afternoon. It was a good experience to witness how all of the people at the school work together. I was also given the opportunity to attend a College Board workshop which focused on the changes to the SAT tests. The workshop was at the University of Virginia and was useful for the attending counselors. The information given at the workshop was helpful so the counselors could go back to their schools and relay the information to their students and parents. Each month, an all-county counselors meeting takes place at the school board office for all middle and high school counselors. I was able to attend a few of these meetings. The counselors came together to talk about issues affecting the whole county as well as troubleshooting issues that are happening at individual schools. It was also a time where professional development was able to take place. For example, two women from the Department of Social Services came to one of the meetings and gave a presentation. As a field placement student, I was able to be creative and do some things on my own. I created a counseling Jenga game. The game is played like the regular game of Jenga but each block has a question written on it. After the player pulls a block from the tower, they have to answer the question from the block before placing it on top of the tower. I also was able to make my own bulletin board display which was titled “Advice to my High School Self.”

Going into the field placement experience, my future plans included becoming a high school counselor. I thought that this would be a great way to have hands-on experience with the job and to see if I could see myself being a high school counselor as a future profession. The wide variety of experiences I had were invaluable. The lessons I learned in the field were things I could not learn sitting in the desk of a classroom. After the experience, I knew I had made the right decision wanting to pursue becoming a high school counselor. I am now more excited than ever to go to graduate school and start furthering my education in this field.

### ***Fall 2014 – Carolina Fuentes Arriaza***

My field placement was at Broadway High school. The mission of the school is “working together within a positive atmosphere to provide a foundation for lifelong learning”. I was able to see this statement in action; the counseling department, along with the administration personnel,

has definitely created a welcoming and positive atmosphere for their students. From the beginning, the staff warmly welcomed me and made me feel like a part of them. Matthew Kinman was my supervisor. Unlike many other school counselors, Mr. Kinman had built strong relationships with many of his students. I personally had the opportunity to observe how he interacted and advised his students. As my supervisor, he granted me an immense deal of independence, which allowed me to have a unique and personal experience. Throughout my experience at Broadway high school, I was given the opportunity to simply interact with students, but I specifically worked closely with the ELL students.

Prior to my internship, I knew I wanted to become a school counselor. One of my goals for this internship was to work with the Latino students as well as the English Language learners (ELL). Since one of the roles of a school counselor is to work in collaboration with other professionals to discuss the well-being of students, my first experience at Broadway was to witness how this collaboration takes place. My first day, I sat in a meeting with the school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, and teachers. The meeting was to review students that could possibly need some intervention plans. In this meeting, I had the opportunity to see how everyone worked together and to hear any input that they might have had. I also had the opportunity to attend seniors' meetings. These meetings were intended to prepare students with their college applications and the financial aid process. These meetings were helpful for me because I was able to learn to conduct meetings and apply this knowledge with the ELL students that I was working with.

During this internship I also had the opportunity to collaborate with the ELL teacher. We worked together planning ELL club meetings and engaging activities for these students. I even had the opportunity to lead many of the ELL club meetings. For one of these meetings I planned a career exploration activity. The experience of leading these types of activities was amazing. It was very beneficial and informative for these students. In addition to leading activities for the club, I also had the opportunity to help the ELL teacher monitor those ELL students who had recently exited out of the ELL program. One way I helped the ELL teacher was to meet one-on-one with these students once a week to keep in touch with them and encourage them to seek assistance when needed. Working with these students definitely gave me the opportunity to strengthen my mentoring skills. It also gave me the opportunity to establish a relationship with these students. In addition to mentoring, I was able to plan a field trip to JMU for the ELL students to help inspire them to pursue higher education. This field trip was not only a good experience for students but for me as well. I was amazed to see how helpful this field trip was for the students. It was nice to see how students approached me to ask about my process getting into college and my personal experiences at JMU.

I also had the opportunity to work with newcomers. I worked with these students every week on strengthening their English speaking skills. One of my ultimate goals was to give hope to these students and encourage them to work hard in order to acquire English proficiency skills. In doing so, I provided information about all of the available online resources out there and encouraged them to seek assistance from their counselors. Although, these students were currently placed in an intensive English program, I thought I could help by allowing them to



practice their speaking skills in a non-frightening environment. Mentoring these newcomers has definitely been very rewarding for me because it gave me the opportunity to help them overcome the challenges that I once went through as an ELL student.

Overall, what I appreciate most about my placement was the trust and freedom that my supervisor gave me. I believe that this field placement has given me a head start in to my future career by helping me become more confident in my abilities to help students achieve their academic goals. My experiences at Broadway also confirmed my passion, desire to work with students and encouraged me to pursue a career in school counseling.

### ***Spring 2014 – Jenna Nealon***

The Broadway High School Counseling Department strives to go above and beyond for each of their students. The counseling center is responsible for the needs of over 1,000 students ranging from freshman to seniors in high school. The school counselors offer a variety of services for students to take advantage of. There are three counselors on staff, all of which have obtained at least a masters level education from an accredited university, that are each personally responsible for one third of the alphabet. Each counselor on staff is available for both individual and group counseling. Students can sign up in the counseling office at any time during the school day to meet with their counselor. Each member of the Broadway High School counseling staff works hard to advocate for their students to ensure they leave high school well versed socially, academically, and on the right path individually for the future. Students also have access to a career coach to aid them with post graduate plans whether it be entering the workforce or attending college.

Over the course of the semester, I was able to learn so much from each member of the counseling staff, particularly my supervisor Matt Kinman. The thing I enjoyed most about working at Broadway was how close the counseling department is. The family atmosphere immediately made me feel comfortable and at home. I never once had to hesitate to ask a question or be anything other than myself. Even the endless snow days at the start of my term did not stop me from immediately getting familiar with the students of Broadway High School. This is solely due to the counseling department's active involvement in all aspects of the school. Honestly it would be hard not to get to know students when they are constantly fluttering in and out of the counseling office. Most of the time students are not even there for official visits, they are solely there to say hi and chat with the secretaries and counselors. Students actively making social visits to the counseling office is a strong indicator of how close and comfortable the students feel with the staff. For good reason too. Whether it be a sporting event, spring musical or academic club, the counseling department does not pass up a chance to cheer on their students. Spring semester brings with it college acceptances and I can honestly say that there were some points where I thought the staff was more happy for the students that got accepted than the individual student themselves.

From shadowing Matt Kinman, I was able to see firsthand the inner workings of being a school counselor. There was no meeting or appointment I was not allowed to sit in on. As long as



students said it was okay, I was free to be involved in their individual sessions. As a field placement student, I met with seniors individually to discuss their post graduate plans. This was a very unique and interesting experience for me because it was the first time I was meeting with students one on one. I was able to help answer any questions they had about the college process and even offer up advice about finding scholarships that best fit their individual needs. If students were opting not to attend college, I would offer them advice about finding a job. If at any point, I felt overwhelmed or came across a student that I felt was not on the path they needed to be, I would give their name to Carrie Urso, the career coach on staff. Another unique opportunity I had was taking an active role in the process of selecting students to be part of an academic club ACES which Matt Kinman supervises. I handled everything ranging from organizing and scoring applications, conducting interviews and also had an active role in choosing the members that were admitted to become ACES.

Working at Broadway High School helped me develop many skills that are essential for becoming a school counselor. It taught me a lot about confidentiality and the key role it plays in earning students' trust. It also opened my eyes to the administrative aspect of being a school counselor that I had overlooked. During the spring, Broadway High School students must make their schedules for the following year. This all falls under the responsibility of the school counselor. While students can pick their classes online, the counselors are the ones that make the schedules and still have to meet with each student individually to make sure they will be on track for graduation.

There are so many opportunities for field placement students at Broadway High School. Matt Kinman and the rest of the staff do a great job of giving their field placement students the freedom and control to do what interests them, while providing the necessary resources to make sure the student succeeds in whatever direction they decide to go in! Working at Broadway High School is what made me realize that I definitely want my career path to lead me into school counseling!

## **Turner Ashby High School**

*Chloe Gay – Spring 2016*



Turner Ashby High School is located in Bridgewater, VA and is home to approximately 1,800 students. I was fortunate enough to be placed in the counseling department at Turner Ashby (TA). The mission of the counseling department states that it exists “to help students, parents, and families in any of the following ways: personal counseling and development, academic advising, and career counseling.” Throughout my semester at TA I have seen this mission statement exemplified by all staff members in the services we provide. TA has three full-time counselors, a career coach, a registrar, and a challenge coach who all work together to provide counseling and advising to every student who walks into the office. We also have two receptionists and this semester we had a graduate intern in the office at least three times a week.

During my time at TA I was able to execute many duties that are specific to the spring semester. I was given a list of all students who had failed a class at the semester point and I spent a large portion of my time meeting with these students individually. This was an excellent opportunity to practice my individual counseling skills and to learn how to suspend judgement of students who were not performing well academically. I would call in students on my list after checking which classes they were failing and gaining some background information on them from PowerSchool, which is our online report of all students. When students came in I would explain who I was and that they were there to discuss their failing grades. Then I would ask them to discuss their failing classes to see what was causing these grades. Usually students had test anxiety, were failing to complete assignments, or did not understand English well enough to pass the course. Based on the student’s particular issues we would come up with different ways to solve these problems, such as study techniques or incentives to do assignments. I would always end the meetings by telling them that I believed that they could pull up their grades and that I would keep meeting with them until their grades were at a passing level. These were some of my favorite responsibilities because I was able to get to know students on a very personal level. I love meeting with students one-on-one and coming up with solutions for each particular problem.

I also spent the month of February assisting with course selection and registration for the 2016-2017 school year. The career coach and I would pull students who had not selected their courses online but who had filled out the paper copy. We would call them down to the computer lab and help them select their classes electronically. We would then send them to the counselors who would verify their schedule. Eventually I would pull the students without the career coach and I would observe and assist the counselors in verifying student course selections. We met with every 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grader so it took us about a month to complete this task. This was a great task because I got to meet quite a few students who were not on my failing list and faculty that I may not have met otherwise. It was during this time that I started to feel respected around the school and that my students began greeting me in the hallways.

On top of my two major projects, I also performed many duties that are standard year round. I created a bulletin board for the counseling department on the FAFSA and I met with transfer students to check on their transition to TA. I attended a faculty meeting and a SOAR meeting for students who will need scholarships to college. I also gave classroom presentations



on graduation requirements and the courses that are available for each grade level, which helped me with my public speaking and professional presentation skills.

The counseling department at Turner Ashby is very much like a family. There is a sense of comradery and the unspoken rule is that we will do whatever it takes to help one another succeed. This sense of community is led by Ms. Martin, my supervisor, who is the head of the counseling department. She has an extraordinary sense of empathy and always puts everyone around her at ease. She is a quiet leader who doesn't like to give direction unless absolutely necessary, but she is so good at what she does that we defer to her judgement. She expects the very best from everyone in the office and she expects that once directions are given that the task will be completed to a high standard. This is a site where you need to be comfortable working on your own and seeking out the other counselors when questions or concerns come up. This is also a site where the entire staff wants to get to know you and will welcome you with open arms. If you are interested in school counseling this is a wonderful place where you can explore that passion. This is very much a constructive learning environment where you can ask questions and gain practical experience for this profession. I was always happy to arrive at TA in the mornings and I always felt encouraged with everyone else working hard and working together.

One of the biggest lessons that I learned from my time at TA is that counselors do not work alone. Our profession is one in which we can deal with quite a bit of baggage from others and it is important that we can come together as coworkers and help each other through that. Unfortunately, during my time at TA we had a student pass away unexpectedly. This was a time in which our department was tested but we all worked together in order to get through. I expected that each counselor would have their separate responsibilities and would work on their own projects, but TA makes sure that everyone has support in what they are doing. This made going through hard times and busy days that much more enjoyable because we were able to work together to reach common goals. My experiences at TA reinforced that this is what I want to do for my career. Ms. Martin and the rest of the department gave me plenty of real experience to ensure that I was making an informed decision as I committed to a graduate program. I am so excited to be continuing my education in school counseling and Turner Ashby will always have a special place in my heart for being my first real-world experience in the field. I cannot imagine a better foundation than the one Turner Ashby provided for me and I highly recommend this site to anyone interested in school counseling.

### ***Fall 2015 – Anna Lacy***

Over the past semester, I was fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to work in the counseling center at Turner Ashby High School (T.A.). The mission statement for the counseling center states that the department exists “to help students, parents, and families in any of the following ways: personal counseling and development, academic advising, and career counseling.” In my time at the school, I found that the counselors and other staff members in the center go above and beyond for their students and offer them a multitude of services in hopes that each student's journey both at T.A. and after is as easy and enjoyable as possible.



Throughout field placement at T.A., I experienced many different facets of the school counseling position. I spent much of my time aiding the counselors in completing some of the more tedious, organizational tasks associated with the position. Just a few of these included alphabetically organizing transcripts and other material information for class presentations, researching scholarships, finding individualized career information for students, and writing out rejection and acceptance letters to scholarship applicants. In addition to these organizational tasks, I spent a majority of my time working with PowerSchool. Through this site, I was able to look up students' schedules, grades, and historical academic information. In addition, I also spent time logging the dates and times of academic meetings between students and their counselors into the program.

In addition to the clerical work I completed, I also received quite a bit of experience working one-on-one with students and staff at T.A. I aided the counselors and the career coach in giving presentations to all four of the grade levels. After I had attended a couple of the presentations, the counselors allowed me to present a portion of the material on my own. This was hugely beneficial in refining my presentation and public speaking skills. I also met with tons of the students enrolled at T.A. At first, I was meeting with freshman to discuss whether they wished to graduate with the standard or advanced diploma. Then, I began meeting with both transfer students as well as the members of the sophomore class to check in and see how their year was going. During these meetings, I would compare their grades current grades to those of previous years to determine how they are doing academically. I would also talk with them about how they are doing socially and whether or not they are having issues with peers. These meetings would allow me to determine whether or not the counselors needed to meet with a student one-on-one for a more in-depth checkup. At the end of the semester, I met with around 35 students who had failed a class during the first nine weeks. During these meetings, the students and I discussed what had impacted their receiving the poor grade and ways in which they could improve academically in the future. We also discussed the students' future plans and goals both academically and in terms of career options.

Another experience I engaged in at T.A. was proctoring the PSAT with another counselor. In mid-October, the students who were registered for the PSAT were split up among the three counselors at T.A. to take the test. Each counselor was assigned to a room and was in charge of proctoring the test for around 40 students. Due to this large number of students, the counselors needed help to most efficiently administer the test. Since I was present on the day of the test, I was assigned to one of the counselors and aided her in administering the test. For five hours, we worked with the students to ensure that they were in the most conducive testing environment possible to achieve academic success. We read off instructions, kept time, answered questions, and supervised the students both during the test and the breaks to ensure no one was cheating. It was a long, yet rewarding day, and I learned quite a bit through the experience.

One of my favorite things I did at Turner Ashby was attend the various staff meetings held throughout the semester. I took part in Student Study meetings, Student Assistance Program (SAP) meetings, and general T.A. staff meetings. In Student Study meetings, a group of school personnel would meet up to discuss individual students who they believed may be eligible for special education assistance. The individuals who attended these meetings included the school



counselors, nurse, school psychologist, vice principal, and school social worker. SAP meetings included many of these same individuals but other administrators were also present. During these meetings, each staff member would bring up any of the students they were worried about academically. The goal of this committee was to ensure that every student made it to graduation. T.A. staff meetings were conducted by an administrator and included all of the teachers and counseling staff members at the school. They focused on different topics based on current educational issues. One of the ones I attended was centered on sex trafficking and its prevalence in Harrisonburg. Through all three of these meeting types, I was able to witness how various staff members worked together to adequately accomplish tasks. Each member offered their own personal expertise in order to come to a conclusion or determine an intervention plan. Though I entered this field placement with the belief that I wanted to pursue school counseling as my future career, I have decided it is not the path for me. However, engaging in these meeting experiences with the staff members of Turner Ashby has been hugely influential for me. I believe that the experiences I have had and the skills I have cultivated at T.A. will benefit me in any psychology-related career I choose to enter into in the future.

Though I have ultimately decided that school counseling is not for me, I would not trade my time and experiences at Turner Ashby High School for anything. I could not have worked with a better group of individuals and it is an incredible feeling to know that my lack of interest in the career has to do with its components rather than being placed at a poor site. The staff members at T.A. have been so incredibly kind, welcoming, and helpful to me. They have become like a second family to me, and I fully intend to maintain my relationship with them well into the future. The experiences you are offered in this position are applicable not only to the school counseling position but also to multiple other psychology-related fields, and if you are interested in completing your field placement in school counseling, then you would be hard-pressed to find a better site than Turner Ashby High School.

### ***Fall 2015 - Kevin Di Fazio***

Turner Ashby High School's mission is to provide every student who walks through its doors with an opportunity to learn and experience education in a way that benefits them the most. The counseling center, the part of Turner Ashby that I worked in, specifically aims to provide both academic and emotional support in order to assist students in making the most of their time while at the high school. As an intern at this site, I was afforded opportunities I honestly could only have dreamed about as an undergraduate student. I was able to meet one on one with a number of students of differing backgrounds. From time to time it was just a routine check-in with students; get to know them, check their grades offer them some advice for improving their performance. But other times, I was tasked with making a more meaningful impact than that. One student that I worked with was especially disruptive, and I was given the task of making a connection with him. After getting to talk with him, I was given permission to arrange for the student to meet with a military recruiter in hopes of correcting some of the disruptive behavior. I was free to come up with the solution on my own and provided the resources to make that solution happen. I was also allowed to participate in Turner Ashby's



weekly Student Assistance Program meetings, which were meetings designed to bring attention to students that were struggling academically, emotionally, or occasionally had extenuating out of school circumstances and formulate plans on how to best help these students. When I would attend, I was taken seriously when I brought up suggestions or asked questions, and I felt like I was an equal among my peers rather than just “the intern”.

One of the things that I found myself enjoying the most in my time at Turner Ashby was the freedom I was given in my work day. While occasionally Mrs. Martin or the other counselors would provide me with work that they needed help with out of the blue, for the most part it was up to me and me alone to decide how and when I got the work done that I needed to, as well as searching them out to see if there was anything that they had that needed to be done. While at first the amount of work that needed to be done was overwhelming, the autonomy I was afforded really made me feel like I was learning. It was not the kind of experience where I would go in and take notes as someone with far more experience than me did all of the work. I was asked to be a contributing member of the counseling center as part of my internship and not just another body in the building. One of the other positive experiences that I got from my time at Turner Ashby was simply the approachability of everyone who worked there. There was not a time where I felt like I would be inconveniencing someone simply by asking a question or if I needed help, and when I would ask for help or offer my opinion, the entire staff was very considerate and friendly. I knew that if I needed anything, the door to Mrs. Martin’s room would always be open for me to stop in. The only real negative that I experienced with my field placement was the amount of work over time. I had my field placement with one other student on a different day than myself, and we found that as the year went on, there was a serious struggle to balance the work to do between us. There were a few times where I had to create my own work or would be asking all day if there was anything anyone needed help with because the other intern and I had completed almost if not all of the work we needed to get done well in advance of when it was needed by. But all in all, having too little work is certainly not the worst drawback I could have experienced.

One of the biggest things I learned is that you have to check your problems at the door. This is the case with any job, but especially in a field like this. I talked to students that were emotional and had their own set of problems and they needed someone to talk to about them. If I am concerned about what is going on in my personal life when I walk through the doors of that school, I will never be able to be the most effective counselor that I can. No matter how stressed out I am, or how much work I have to do, or how many personal problems I have, they do not exist inside of that school. It sounds like a lot to hang up when you go in, but if anything it reaffirmed that this is what I want to do. The importance of not bringing my own problems to work has shown me just how important this job is. Students will always need someone to talk to and as long as I know I can come into the school with a clear head and an open heart, I know that I want to do this for the rest of my life and I know that I’m capable of that too.

Turner Ashby is a phenomenal site and I would recommend it to anyone who is even considering pursuing school counseling. The one catch is you have to be willing to be independent. You can’t go in to Turner Ashby expecting to be told what to do at every step of the way. Somewhere along the line you have to be willing to take charge of your own experience.



This is not a site where you can observe and learn and if you aren't able to work on your feet or learn on the fly, I definitely would avoid this placement. But if you are capable of adapting to situations as they arise and want a hands on work experience that gives you the freedom to make of it what you will, then this site will give you everything you want and more.

### *Spring 2015 - Lindsey Boggess*

This mission of Turner Ashby High School is to create and maintain an environment that allows opportunities for all students to work to their potential, prepare all students to fully enter the work force or college, and to recognize that everyone learns in different ways and to prepare our faculty to implement lessons and activities that reflect various learning styles. The counseling department at Turner Ashby High School helps students, parents, and families through personal counseling and development, academic advising, and career counseling.

I began my field placement experience at Turner Ashby High School during the second semester (spring) of my senior year at JMU. My main job at the beginning of the semester was to help with the registration process. At first I had to become familiar with the requirements of the standard and advanced diplomas and which classes counted for what. After that, I was able to take students to the computer lab and help them pick their classes for the following year. The majority of the class registration process was online, however it was a requirement for students to fill out a paper form, called "green sheets". I filed the green sheets alphabetically in binders to have them as a back up.

Another large responsibility I had as an intern in the counseling center was to meet with students individually. I mostly met with transfer and F-List students. I received a list at the beginning of the semester of students who had recently transferred to TAHS and it was my responsibility to meet with them and see how they were adjusting to their new school environment. I also met with students who were failing a class or classes. These meetings consisted of checking in with their progress in the class, seeing what was causing them problems, and finding a way to resolve those problems. By meeting with all these students individually, it significantly helps the counselors since they have so many other tasks that need to be completed throughout the workday.

Over the course of the semester, I collaborated with the career coach and the graduate assistant on various projects. We prepared various career related activities for students to participate in during class. Our first project was going into an at-risk classroom and having them use a program called Naviance, where they could take career interest questionnaires. We took the students into the computer lab and had them fill out two questionnaires. Then, we asked them to identify a career path that they found interesting and asked them to explore that a little more (i.e. find out what training was needed, additional schooling, salary, etc.). They wrote down that career on a piece of paper to turn into their teacher. The next time we visited the class, we had them fill out a goal-oriented worksheet centered on the career they chose. The worksheet asked them to identify what training was needed for their desired career, personal obstacles they face,



and the resources they had access to. It was a great experience to work with a group of students over the course of a few sessions.

Another activity that the career coach, graduate assistant and myself did was an activity called “flash forward”. This activity was adapted from another career coach within the area but was redesigned by myself. The premise of this activity was for students to see what it would be like to live 20 years down the road, potentially married and with a family, off of one month’s salary. We went into three classrooms for this activity. The first class was a child development and parenting class, so the careers the students had were centered on that field. The other class was an individual development class and the last class was an introduction to food operations. We researched the Virginia average salaries for the corresponding jobs, and deducted state and federal taxes accordingly. Then we walked the students through the PowerPoint where they had to make choices about their expenses (i.e. the type of car, house, insurance, groceries, vacation, etc.). At the end of the activity, we had the students evaluate their experience to see what they would change and what would they keep the same. Many students really enjoyed this activity because they were really able to picture what it would be like in the future.

Finally, I was also able to observe faculty meetings, college presentations, Challenge seminars, and even attend some field trips. This experience provided me with a wide range of opportunities throughout the entire semester.

There were many advantages working at Turner Ashby High School as my field placement site. First, TAHS is not a far drive from JMU’s campus. That was definitely appealing since I would be commuting there two days a week. Another advantage was that the counseling department has been hosting interns for a long time and therefore was very knowledgeable about the requirements I had to meet. In addition, the staff was extremely welcoming, friendly, and knowledgeable. I felt very integrated into the school and felt that I could ask anyone in the office for help or a task to complete. There were times where I did not have a specific project I was working on, however if I ever needed something to do in my down time, I could always find something if I just spoke to any of the counselors.

Over the course of the semester I developed various skills, knowledge and abilities. Through meeting with students I learned to become more open-minded, especially regarding decisions on students’ future. I developed strong communication skills on an individual level and when presenting to a large group of students. In addition I learned to take initiative and to make the most out of my time at the site. I also developed patience, vital skill to have while working with children and students. And overall I learned the role of the school counselor. After learning more about the role of the school counselor, I am now able to make more informed decisions about my future career. I also learned about the educational system and have now realized that I want to work in education in some way.

My field placement experience was a wonderful time of personal and professional growth. While I did face challenges, it was extremely rewarding to overcome them and learn in the process. I developed skills that I am able to carry with me in whatever my future endeavors



may be. I learned so much through the relationships I made with the school counseling staff and would not have wanted to work at any other site.

### *Fall 2014 – Alexis Morse*

I completed my field placement experience at Turner Ashby High School in rural Bridgewater, Virginia. This local high school supports 1,100 students and 70 teachers as well as 3 school counselors on staff. I specifically worked in the school counseling office but had multiple opportunities to interact and collaborate with general education teachers, administrative staff, special education teachers, and students in grades 9-12. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience and would recommend this site to anyone looking to make an impact on a student's life.

Turner Ashby's faculty and staff strive to provide all their students with the opportunity to receive a quality education and achieve their full potential so they may function effectively as responsible citizens. The counseling department specifically aims to provide an approachable environment for all students and accommodate student needs either academically or personally. My supervisor, Mrs. Candy Martin, has referred to her role before as "mom on duty", as there are a variety of reasons students may come to see their counselor. In addition, the school counselors at Turner Ashby strive to provide academic, career, and personal counseling to students depending on their circumstances and plans for the future.

In my field placement experience I have had the opportunity to become involved in a variety of roles and responsibilities that allowed me to better understand the duties of a school counselor. I was responsible for meeting with 45 transfer students who came from surrounding school districts, other states, and even other countries. My job was to meet with them 2-3 times during the semester to discuss the transition and potential resources that might help integrate them into the school community. I would often learn about their background, goals for the future, and how they each found their place at Turner Ashby. In addition, I met with many students from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade class in order to gather information regarding their diploma status and in doing so, had the chance to talk with these students about their transition to high school. When the first term grade reports came out I met with over 50 students who received an F letter grade to discuss the poor grade and the reasons why they were falling behind in the class. We also discussed study strategies they could employ to improve the next term and their approach to the class work. With all these student meetings I screened my conversations for students that may need more individualized attention from their counselor. When this was the case, I would have a conversation with that student's counselor to discuss my concerns.

Another big role of my experience at Turner Ashby was presenting in classes regarding grade-related topics. For example, I talked with 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes about the types of diplomas they could work towards and visited 12<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms to discuss the college application process and career counseling available to them. I joined one of the school counselors and either helped them present the material or helped coordinate handouts and transcripts for easy facilitation of the presentation. My final contribution project required me to present in



classrooms so I also had the opportunity to visit some of the elective classes and present on interview skills and professionalism. This taught me how to control a boisterous classroom and design content to facilitate volunteering and discussion from students. I learned more about the material school counselors are responsible for informing students of and realized the task of presenting this information to students sometimes unfamiliar to the counselor.

In addition to the work I did with students directly, I also was able to see a lot of the administrative side to the school counselor position. I attended a student services meeting that set up an academic plan for a 9<sup>th</sup> grade student needing special accommodations in the classroom. I also had the chance to observe a student assistance program (SAP) meeting where members of the administration, counselors, the school resource officer, and others discussed and updated each other on students they believed to be at risk for dropping out, struggling at home, or engaging in problem behavior at school. This meeting was even more interesting to me, as some of the students discussed were students I had met with in my office so I was knowledgeable about some of the topics discussed. Smaller projects I performed consisted of my contacting and collecting quotes from faculty in order to design a new bulletin board outside the counseling office. I also filed and performed various paperwork tasks for the counselors in my down time between meetings with students. I would file transcripts or note students' GPA in binders to keep on top of record keeping in the office. Finally, I also attended monthly staff meetings on Mondays that were run by the principal, Mr. Walk and other central office staff when necessary.

The biggest advantage to fulfilling my field placement experience at Turner Ashby is the extent to which I was taken seriously and treated like the other members on staff. There are numerous opportunities to know students and be of support to them. If the school counselor profession is a career path one may be considering, the experience at this site will offer the full gamut of responsibilities. Most importantly, the school counselors are nothing but supportive and available to help. The only limitation that may hinder this experience is the tricky class schedule. This can create delays when trying to meet with students, especially if they cannot make a meeting. This problem, however, is one the school counselors deal with too and is part of the job.

While I don't plan to enter this profession specifically, this has benefited my future career (as I pursue school psychology). I am better equipped to work closely with school counselors and be aware of their role with a student in comparison to others on staff. I understand the diversity of tasks in this job and how emotionally draining it can be at times. I also learned how important interpersonal skills are in the workplace and the need for a cohesive staff. I had the opportunity to help students and make an impact on my site. That opportunity alone encourages me to recommend Turner Ashby to other field placement students.

### *Spring 2014 – Kerin Sweezey*

I am extremely thankful for the wonderful experience I had this semester in the counseling office of Turner Ashby High School. The mission of the counseling center at TAHS is that they aim to help students, parents, and families in areas such as personal counseling, academic advising, and career counseling. The counseling office consists of nine dedicated



faculty members, including the three TAHS counselors. There are also two receptionists, a career coach, a challenge program coordinator, and a registrar. There is also a counselor for the Crossroads Counseling Center who helps students access resources in the Bridgewater community. It is obvious that TAHS is a tight-knit community, and it is apparent that those who are in that community truly care about one another and take pride in their work.

Turner Ashby High School provides a number of different opportunities for field placement students, so I feel as though I had a very well-rounded experience. The main responsibility associated with this position is meeting with students in a one-on-one setting. Many days consisted of sending out passes to meet with transfer students and students failing classes. I was also asked to meet with a student on a weekly basis because she needed some support in terms of managing stress and friendships at school. The counselors left instructions for the one-on-one meetings very open ended, so I was able to speak with the students about whatever I felt was necessary. The majority of students I met with were currently failing a class, so many of my discussions with these students consisted of tutoring options, study habits, and ways to speak to their teachers. Having the opportunity to meet with students one-on-one was an extremely valuable learning experience. I was able to use some of the concepts I have learned in classes such as counseling psychology. By the end of the semester I was much more comfortable in terms of my abilities as a counselor. I also had the opportunity to lead counseling lessons for at-risk students in a program at TAHS known as the CORE Program, along with observing the CORE Program math class. My favorite responsibility as a field placement student was leading the CORE class lessons. It was such a great experience to interact with this specific group of students and by the last lesson, I feel as though they had been impacted by what they had learned from the lessons.

One advantage of working at TAHS was how the staff allowed me to work very independently. I had my own office and was able to make my own schedule for the day based on the students I needed to meet with. I feel as though I really had the chance to experience the role of a school counselor. What I liked most about TAHS was the staff and the supportive and friendly environment they have created. They throw birthday lunches and I was even lucky enough to be a judge in a dessert contest they had during lunch. It is nice to see that many of the staff members have been at TAHS for a number of years and they still come to work with a great attitude and a smile. I am happy to say that I did not experience any disadvantages during my time at TAHS. I honestly was excited to come in every day.

Throughout my time at TAHS I learned a great deal about the profession of school counseling, along with other professions that are associated with that field. I applied to the field placement program because I was not sure what career I wanted to pursue. After this experience, I am definitely interested in having a future in school counseling.

### ***Spring 2014 – Rachel Calire***

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## Elkton Elementary School

*Spring 2016 – Olivia McCormick*

This semester I worked at Elkton Elementary in the school counseling department. The faculty there works hard to provide a safe environment for the students to learn. The school wants to provide their students with a strong foundation of technology and problem solving skills. By giving them a safe environment with faculty who are eager to teach, the students will be able to pass their SOL tests and become valuable members of society.

I'm very happy to say that I was able to have a variety of different experiences at Elkton. My main job was to mentor six students individually, on a weekly basis. During our 30-minute meetings we would play with some toys and talk. I let them pick whatever toy or game they wanted. Then we would sit down and play together or side-by-side and talk. During the first few meetings, I would ask them questions about their family, their pets, and what they like to do for fun, just to get to know them better. After a few weeks, I got to know each one of my students very well. Eventually, I would ask how their mom was doing, or if they were doing better in math. Because we met on a weekly basis, I was able to keep up with their life and their performance in school.

Another one of my jobs at Elkton was to help facilitate the lunch groups and help with classroom management during guidance lessons. Once a week my supervisor held a lunch group for a small group of students on topics like anger management or anxiety. During this time, the students would complete worksheets, share their stories, and reflect on other students' experiences. This gave the students an opportunity to feel comfortable enough to express their feelings, as well as help out their peers. I also helped my supervisor manage the classroom during her guidance lessons. My job was to pass out and collect materials, as well as walking around to facilitate during group work.

Finally, I was able to observe and participate in ASSIST and Student Study meetings. These interdisciplinary meetings were held for certain students who needed extra help or attention. Multiple different people would gather to meet, including the principal, school psychologist, teachers, parents and special education department. Usually my job was to just observe, but sometimes I would have the opportunity to speak about one of my students.

I loved getting to know my students throughout the semester and seeing them grow. I really did have fun with them and I looked forward to meeting with them. I also really liked observing the lunch groups because I felt like I could hear from students that wouldn't normally participate in a bigger classroom setting. One of my favorite parts about my time at Elkton was observing the ASSIST and Student Study meetings. I liked seeing the "behind the scenes" aspect of what goes into helping the students. During these meetings I was able to see not only how much work the faculty do to help the students, but also how much they care. I also really like interdisciplinary careers, because I think it's important for professionals hear from many



different perspectives, especially when it comes to getting a child the help they need. Another thing I liked about my field placement was the school itself. Elkton Elementary is a really great school, with wonderful students and great teachers. I felt very welcome there by the faculty. Eventually, I would walk throughout the halls and say hi to the principal, teachers, and some students that I got to know.

I think Elkton is a great place for students to be if they are considering being an elementary school counselor. My supervisor was great because she gave me plenty of instructions for what I need to do, but also plenty of room to figure things out on my own. Because I was able to experience the many different aspects of being an elementary school counselor and see what it's like for them on a day-to-day basis, I have validated my decision to become a school counselor. At first, I wasn't sure if I would like working in an elementary school. But now after being at Elkton, I am more open to being an elementary school counselor.

### ***Fall 2015 – Sarah Sweatman***

The mission of Elkton Elementary School is as follows, “we believe that all children can succeed. It is our goal to provide the children of Elkton Elementary with a strong foundation of basic skills, basic technology, and problem solving skills. Armed with these skills, the students can pass the SOL tests for their grade level, and work towards becoming positive and productive members of society. We believe that effective education is best achieved through a safe environment and an active partnership of school, home, and community.” In addition to Elkton's mission, they offer a variety of services to children to facilitate the promotion of a healthy learning environment. One of which being counseling services provided by my supervisor and the school counselor, Cindy Hepner.

During my time spent at Elkton, I was able to complete a variety of tasks that exposed me to the profession of school counseling. For a while now, I have had an interest in school counseling and needed this experience to reassure me that I am in the right field. My supervisor has been a school counselor for fourteen years now, thirteen of those being at Elkton. Although she has a lot on her plate, she is more than willing to help out and answer any questions you have. One of my favorite aspects of this placement is that she gives you a lot of independence. In the beginning, this is a little nerve racking because you are still trying to find your place at the school. Once you get into the swing of things, however, it is nice to complete tasks on your own and have flexibility in managing your time. Specifically in the morning she will give you a list of tasks to complete, in which you can work at your own pace throughout the day. However, it is important to keep track of everything you have to do because sometimes it is difficult to find down time.

A day at Elkton is usually very jammed packed with responsibilities all throughout the day, sometimes even from minute to minute. In a job like this, you need to be able to work at a fast pace while maintaining efficiency. Some of the responsibilities I have as an intern include mentoring my children every week. Mrs. Hepner stresses that regardless of what you do, make sure to see your kids! This semester, she assigned me eight at-risk students who I mentor once a



week for thirty minutes. During this time, we will usually play board games, with arts and crafts, and sometimes work on homework or reading. At first, you might not think that you are making a difference, but if you are not at school for whatever reason they will make a point to ask Mrs. Hepner where you were. They will also ask you when you return, and usually say that they missed you! Next to mentoring, another large part of the job is to assist in classroom management during guidance lessons. She usually teaches two to three guidance lessons a day and likes if you are in the room helping her when she needs it. This could be anything from passing pencils and other materials out, making sure kids are staying on track, and intervening when a child is being distracting to others. I also assist in the facilitation of group counseling lunch groups. These lunch groups last about six weeks, and might include topics such as divorce/family change, friendship skills, anxiety, grief, impulse control, anger management, and study skills. Going along with that, I participate in some clerical work such as creating and preparing the small group booklets used during the lunch group. Some other clerical tasks I do are making copies, running errands, and creating bulletin boards. Lastly, I was able to participate in some scheduled opportunities such as a field trip to the Massanutten Tech Center with the fifth graders, multiple assemblies, and observe student study meetings for the kids I am mentoring.

There are plenty of advantages, one being that everyone is very sweet and friendly. At first, it might be a little overwhelming learning where everything is in the school, meeting all the teachers, and getting to know the kids you are mentoring. It gets much easier a couple weeks in, and now, it just feels like home. Teachers and students will always smile and say hello. Mrs. Hepner will ask you what you want out of this placement, and if you feel like you have not gotten to experience this, then she will do what she can in order for you to be able to. Communication is important, because she may never know if there is something you would like to do. As far as disadvantages, I would say that this site is a little bit further location wise compared to the other sites. Since it is about a half an hour away, I have heard in the past that there are a lot of issues with cancellations due to the weather. Luckily, I have not run into this issue during my fall semester, but just a precaution to the future spring interns.

I would say that my favorite part of this placement was the feeling I got every time I left EES. I would leave with a very rewarding feeling, knowing that I have done something to better someone else's life. Being around these kids makes it very easy for you to fall in love with them, and they make it obvious that they enjoy spending time with you too. Being an intern and feeling this way every time I leave the building, I can only imagine how rewarding it will be once I am actually a counselor. Although, I am aware that this is not always the case and there will definitely be difficult times. This brings me to the negative aspect of the job, because many of these kids are dealing with situations that they should definitely not have to at this age. It is important to note that these setbacks just make you want to serve as a constant support system to them, as well as an advocate to fight for them and ensure their well being.



Elkton's mission is to make every child a law-binding citizen. Their goal is to entrust core values within each child that helps them live a positive and healthy life. Their mission statement online states "We believe that all children can succeed. It is our goal to provide the children of Elkton Elementary with a strong foundation of basic skills, basic technology, and problem solving skills. Armed with these skills, the students can pass the SOL tests for their grade level, and work towards becoming positive and productive members of society. We believe effective education is best achieved through a safe environment and an active partnership of school, home, and community."

During my field placement I assisted with guidance, met with students one-on-one and assisted with administrative work varying from making copies to creating bulletin boards. One advantage of this site is the one-on-one interactions interns have with at risk students. I felt that these interactions and being able to learn how the school counseling department operates in an everyday basis were huge because you don't learn things like that in textbooks. I also learned how and what exactly school counselors do on a day-to-day basis. One take away from this experience is acknowledging how much you can impact a person's life. When I first started meeting with students, they seem uninterested. However, after I missed a day from being sick, I was told that all of the students were requesting me during the day I was sick, wondering where I was. This helped me realize that these students do care about our time together and made me want to work harder at making a bigger impact on their lives. This helped me understand where I would fit in at a school setting and cemented my desire to work in a small town for the closeness of a community. This site taught me how to be professional when working with children and to keep your heart open but your personal issues private, meaning that as a mentor you are there for the child and to be in the moment with them. The overall learning experience from Elkton Elementary was great, it not only taught me a lot about myself professionally, but also the knowledge of working as a school counselor within an elementary school setting.

### **Spring 2014 – Sophia Dixon**

This semester I had the opportunity to work at the Elkton Elementary site. The school's mission statement states that its goal is to provide students with a foundation of technology and problem solving skills in order to help students pass SOL tests and become productive members of society. I was supervised by the school guidance counselor Cindy Hepner. She aids the school mission by teaching children problem solving skills like conflict-resolution techniques, helping the students become good citizens by teaching them "character pillars" such as trustworthiness, fairness, respect, and responsibility, and by providing counseling services to promote the psychological wellbeing of students.

Although Cindy is very willing to offer hands-on opportunities for field placement students to teach certain guidance classes, I chose to have a mostly observational experience. At Elkton, my main responsibility was mentoring children. I met with eight children each week for 30 minutes. After mentoring, I would observe guidance classes for various grade levels. I also had the opportunity to observe small group sessions at lunch, staff meetings, and a parent-teacher conference. With regards to the lunch sessions, I observed a small group of children discuss



anger issues as well as groups for children with stress issues. The group sessions were similar to guidance classes because the students learned skills to cope with life challenges. However, these groups are more of a counseling experience during which sensitive information is shared, making this type of observation a much deeper experience. Finally, I was asked to create a bulletin board, make copies, and calculate volunteer hours.

After my time at Elkton I have a favorable impression of this site. Although the school is not as racially diverse as others in the RCPS system, the students of Elkton have very diverse backgrounds and experience a wide variety of challenges in their home life. These students will teach you a lot about empathy and learning to connect and communicate with people who are different than you. Similarly, Elkton's staff is incredibly welcoming and willing to help if you need it. The disadvantages to this site are its distance and the amount of snow days. Elkton is a 20-35 minute drive from Harrisonburg depending on traffic. Similarly, those at this site can lose a lot of hours due to snow days. These are both manageable problems if you are willing to be flexible to schedule changes and you can afford gas money.

This site provided me with new opportunities to see the various roles of the elementary school guidance counselor, to observe the process of Child Protection Services (with limitations), and to understand how school staff and administration work to facilitate parent involvement under very difficult circumstances. After working here I am certain I want to pursue a career that involves counseling children. If you are interested in a career in the public school system, this site can teach you a lot about systems-change and the delicate balance between schools, parents, and administration. Similarly, I learned that elementary school guidance counselors can take on roles that I had previously learned were the roles of school psychologists. If you prefer to have more interactions with students and parents I highly suggest looking into this site. Cindy Hepner is very knowledgeable about Child Protection Services, family dynamics with regards to problems like substance abuse and child abuse, psychiatric disorders, and so much more. She has a lot of experience and is willing to share what she has learned if you are willing to ask questions.

Spring 2014 – Kara Shifflett

This semester for my field placement I worked at Elkton Elementary school located east of Harrisonburg in Elkton, VA. The school, its administration, staff, and faculty hold to the belief that every child can succeed if given the proper tools, skills and direction to do so. Their mission statement works from this belief. It states “it is our goal is to provide the children of Elkton Elementary with a strong foundation of basic skills, basic technology, and problem solving skills. Armed with these skills, the students can pass the SOL tests for their grade level, and work towards becoming positive and productive members of society. We believe effective education is best achieved through a safe environment and an active partnership of school, home, and community.”

I worked in the counseling department at Elkton under the supervision of Cindy Hepner, the school counselor. During my time at Elkton I was able to have a lot of learning experiences



in the things I was able to do. My main responsibility at the site was mentoring nine students. I would meet with each student individually for half hour increments once a week. There was a wide range of activities we could do while together. Most of the students enjoyed playing with the many toys and games Mrs. Hepner has in her office. We also were able to do art projects such as coloring, drawing or using lots of glitter. I was fortunate to have at least one student from each grade level, kindergarten through fifth grade. This allowed me to see how interacting with students of different age levels varies and how the relationship with them looks differently. While I wasn't working with students individually I was able to observe Mrs. Hepner teach guidance lessons to whole classes. I was very intrigued by the way she was able to teach the same lessons to all age ranges, tailoring them to the specific grade level being taught. They all received the same information, yet it was presented in a way they could best understand. I also had the opportunity to sit in on group counseling sessions. I was able to observe second and third grade anger management as well as second and fifth grade stress groups. This allowed me to see how Mrs. Hepner related to the students differently in class and in group counseling. Since classroom guidance is geared toward prevention and group counseling is more intervention the atmospheres were quite different.

There were numerous positive aspects about working at Elkton. The ability to have students to mentor each week made this experience very personal. I felt I was a part of their journey, if only for a few short weeks. The love and sheer joy they brought to each meeting made me want to return each week. Seeing the students' progress during our time together made it all worthwhile. I also appreciated Mrs. Hepner's ability to make me feel a part of the counseling department. She was very willing to include me in the ins and outs of each weeks' happenings. She was open and allowed me to see exactly how counseling at an elementary school level works. I also appreciated the trust she had in me from day one. Although she would give me tasks to complete and she assigned me students to mentor, she gave me freedom to work out of my strengths and learn more about my weaknesses and limitations. She gave me great guidance and checked in daily to see how things were going. She allowed me to make the experience my own, while still giving me the opportunity to be involved in numerous aspects of the school. The only limitation of this site, which is most likely true of all school sites due to privacy issues, was not being able to observe her counsel individually. However, the other experiences and opportunities far outweigh this limitation.

I have already been on the path of pursuing school counseling in graduate school, but this experience solidified and affirmed that decision. Working with the students at Elkton forced me to learn how to relate to each age, personality, and gender in the way they needed. Some students needed guidance, some needed a friend, and some just needed someone to sit with them. What this has taught me is that no two students are the same and you must learn to interact with them each differently. There isn't a magic formula used for interacting with children; you must get to know them and their individual needs. Being able to see progress in these students in just sixteen weeks made me excited to pursue this profession as my career. I feel that this field placement is a great first step in my school counseling career.



I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Elkton Elementary School this semester. Not only am I able to walk away with influential and meaningful experiences, but I am also able to walk away with an appreciation for our school systems. It was evident everywhere I looked in this school, from the administration, to the teachers, to the counselors, to the custodians, these people genuinely care about their students and their success. They don't simply care about their success in school, they also care about their success in life. Beyond the hands on experience I was granted at this site, I will take with me the life experiences I have gained. It was a great experience working with professionals that truly care about their jobs and the students they serve each and every day.

## **Lacey Spring Elementary School**

*Spring 2016 – Laura Sylke*

This semester, I worked alongside the school counseling department at Lacey Spring Elementary School, which is within Rockingham County Public Schools and is about fifteen minutes away from the JMU campus. The mission of the Rockingham County Public School system is “Educating Today’s Learner, Developing Tomorrow’s Future.” Lacey Spring Elementary School is a fairly small school with about 250 students during 2015-2016 school year. Because of this, each child gets the individual attention he or she needs in order to reach academic success, as well as gain the skills that foster growth as a good student, friend, and leader. Mrs. Brenda Robey, the school counselor at Lacey Spring, dedicates herself to interact with every single student to set forth in Lacey Spring, whether it be a brand new student in preschool, or a transfer student in the fifth grade. She makes every effort she can to make the children feel at home and welcome, and it definitely shows.

Mrs. Robey has a very busy job as a school counselor at Lacey Spring, but it’s a job she obviously loves and enjoys every single day. She sees students on an individual basis most of the time. In addition, she holds group counseling lessons and classroom guidance lessons. She also talks a lot with parents with children who are having troubles in school or at home. In my experience here at Lacey Spring, I was able to observe all of these services as well as take some on of my own. As a part of my practicum experience, I mentored thirteen students between preschool and fifth-grade for thirty minutes every week. In addition, I aided Mrs. Robey in quite a few lunch groups that focused on good academic achievement (Good Grades Club), leadership (Lacey Leaders), and a Death and Dying group that one of my Field Placement classmates took part in. Through my contribution project, I was able to plan and facilitate my own counseling group that dealt with children and the divorce of their parents that we called “Banana Splits.” I



also had the opportunity to observe many classroom guidance lessons for preschool, kindergarten, and fifth-graders, as well as had the opportunity to plan for and lead the classes in guidance lessons about various topics such as personal safety, sharing, telling the truth, and even drugs. Also, every month, Mrs. Robey hosts a Grandparents Meeting at Lacey Spring after school hours. This is a group counseling session regularly lead by the local hospital counselors at RMH, and targets the specific audience of grandparents raising their own grandchildren due to the parents not being able to care for the children themselves due to mental instability or incarceration. These meetings usually last about two hours, and begin with dinner provided by the hospital and a transition into the discussion on various topics such as types of parenting and different challenges faced as a grandparent taking care of children on their own without the parents' guidance.

Lacey Spring Elementary School was the perfect place to have my practicum experience. As soon as I interviewed with Mrs. Robey, I knew that Lacey Spring is where I would belong. She has been the most helpful supervisor that I could have ever asked for, and her trust in me made me feel very confident in the work that I was doing at Lacey Spring. There were a lot of moments I felt I was on my own, but it was rewarding because I knew Mrs. Robey trusted me with her students. In addition to the warming and welcoming personality of Mrs. Robey, the whole staff at Lacey Spring has been such a joy to work with. From scheduling children during the days to meet individually to having conversations about a child's needs, they have been nothing short of extremely helpful and cooperative. I was so nice to walk into the halls of Lacey Spring in the mornings and see nothing but smiling faces of staff and students welcoming me at the door. It's incredibly difficult to pick one single thing that I liked the most about Lacey Spring. I definitely enjoyed having the opportunity to lead classroom guidance lessons to the younger kids in preschool and kindergarten. Those kids were the most fun to work with because they always looked forward to my lessons and were never afraid to have an open discussion. I also really liked that I had the opportunity to lead my own group at Lacey Spring. I really got to know the children in the "Banana Splits" group, and I know that I made a mark on their development in moving past the negative effects of their parents' divorce and helped them gain a more positive outlook. Finally, I really enjoyed having Mrs. Robey as a supervisor - she has been super helpful and open about answering any and all questions I have about school counseling, the specific students, or even questions about my own future goals. There were a couple times where I felt like I was being pushed a little outside of my comfort zone, but I know Mrs. Robey wouldn't have pushed me if she felt I wasn't capable enough. She made me feel more and more comfortable with the kids as the semester went on, and that alone was a great experience. Through this practicum involvement, I have truly gained a mentor and friend in Mrs. Robey.



Before this practicum experience, I had a gut feeling that I wanted to be an elementary school counselor. I had gone through many phases of possible careers in my head all throughout college, but school counseling was the one that stuck after delving more into the idea over the summer of 2015. Since then, I couldn't stop thinking about what a great opportunity Field Placement would be for my future. I didn't know until I finished my first week at Lacey Spring Elementary School that school counseling is definitely the career I want to attain and pursue after college. This experience has proven to me that I really enjoy working with children, especially those who might need some extra help. School counseling is definitely where I feel that I belong, and I know I can make a difference in children's lives through working in this field.

### ***Spring 2016 – Taylor Williams***

There are different aspects to the mission and philosophy at Lacey Spring Elementary School; the school believes that every child is entitled to a well-planned and organized instructional program in a supportive classroom setting. There is also a large focus on building the children's self-confidence; giving them opportunities to not only grow in their education but also in their human relationship skills, leadership skills and communication skills. When it comes to the counseling program at Lacey Spring there are many different resources and activities involving the counselor. Mrs. Robey and the next counselors to come, work with all different grades to give guidance lessons on a variety of topics from drug awareness to sharing, to telling the truth. One mode of counseling that is offered is individual counseling sessions; the student could be sent to see Mrs. Robey or they can ask to visit the counseling office. A variety of activities can be utilized while having an individual counseling session such as playing in the rice tray, drawing a picture or playing with the dollhouse to role play different situations. Students can also participate in a variety of group dynamic counseling situations such as lunch groups or good grade clubs.

I had numerous opportunities during my field placement at Lacey Spring! There was never really a dull moment; whether I was shredding old case study notes or making posters for different groups that were meeting during that specific nine weeks. I thoroughly enjoyed my time meeting one on one with the eleven students that I was assigned too! I spent lunch with a few students and with others we spent time working on schoolwork from their classroom or simply playing games and talking. I also loved leading a lunch group for my contribution project; it was such a great experience meeting for six weeks with the same kids talking about one topic and building off of each week to the next. It gave the students a safe place to talk about what they wanted and they could ask questions and allow themselves to be curious! I also really enjoyed leading and co-leading guidance lessons throughout the semester on a variety of topics! It was fun to interact with the students on a more professional level and to have them look up to me as an adult. I really enjoyed relating the different lessons to the students to make it personal for them and relatable!

The feel as I walked into Lacey Spring every morning was like I was walking into my house, the secretaries would smile and greet me and there would be kids and teachers moving



throughout the hallways before school started; it was nice to see the children enjoying themselves at school! One of my favorite things about working at Lacey Spring was my interactions with Mrs. Robey; although she is leaving and won't be there next year, it is a special bond created with one's supervisor! She was always so ready to take on the day and work with me and answer any questions I may have had! I also really liked working with two other interns; we were able to get to know each other throughout the semester and also help each other create different activities and also present lessons together. It was nice to have the support of someone in the same boat as me in our journey with school counseling! One thing that was kind of frustrating to me but really wasn't able to be affected but to a certain extent was the fact that sometimes the students wouldn't want to talk that much; especially at the beginning of the semester because here was a new stranger that they were supposed to spend time with every week; I am sure that could have been a little scary at first.

One of the biggest things that I learned was the fact that some of the students that I was working with were going through things in their home lives that I could never imagine experiencing; yet I couldn't really control it. I learned that there are going to be things in peoples' lives that you cannot change but if I can make any type of positive impact on someone's life then I will consider myself successful! At the beginning of the semester I was reading through some previous notes on the students I was working with and it broke my heart to read some of the things in their files; but I had to just focus on building a relationship with them and show them that there was someone in their live that they could trust and talk to; me. This entire experience and this important lesson really solidified my passion for working with children in my future; I want to be able to help them in any ways that I can to make them be able to enjoy their day and teach them to find the joy and laughter in each day!

### ***Fall 2015 – Hannah Everton***

Lacey Spring Elementary is a school that provides each student with the resources needed to develop and grow as students and ethical members of society. First and foremost, Lacey Spring provides students with an academic foundation that encourages each student to develop and explore their unique skills and abilities. Students are encouraged to explore their skills and abilities in both the classroom and among other domains such as art, music, and physical education. These supplementary learning environments enable them to develop into well-rounded students. The school's small population of students also fosters academic success. Due to its size, teachers and other staff members are able to establish caring and supportive relationships with each of the students over the course of their time at Lacey Spring. These warm and caring relationships help motivate students to do their work and provide an open and supportive environment that gives students the confidence they need to believe in their skills and abilities. Lacey Spring also supports students academically by emphasizing parental/caregiver involvement in their child's education. Teachers and staff are in constant communication with parents about their child's academic development and provide caretakers with ways to support their child at home.



Not only does Lacey Spring challenge and support their students in the classroom, but they also hold their students accountable for developing character traits that will help them to succeed as they move on to middle and high school. My supervisor, Brenda Robey, is the school guidance counselor. Her guidance counseling curriculum aims at helping students develop into ethical members of society by teaching them about the character traits of citizenship, responsibility, caring, respect, trustworthiness, and fairness. Mrs. Robey focuses on a specific character trait during each classroom guidance lesson and encourages the teachers to remind the students of these traits whenever possible. Fortunately, I was able to help Mrs. Robey teach these pillars of character by leading my own classroom guidance lessons. Before conducting my own lesson, I was given the opportunity to observe Mrs. Robey teach several lessons before tackling it on my own. These observations helped prepare me for my future lessons and provided me with the added knowledge and tools to learn how to be as effective as possible. Teaching my first lesson was slightly nerve-racking, however, I quickly became more confident in my abilities through the students' participation during my discussions. I learned how to maintain control of the classroom by reminding the students of my expectations at the beginning of each lecture. I also learned how to use different techniques during the lesson to create an environment that facilitated learning. I did this by reinforcing good classroom behavior and providing students with positive affirmations that communicated to them my appreciation of their feedback.

In addition to teaching guidance lessons, I gained experience and knowledge on how to counsel individual students. Over the course of the four months at Lacey Spring, I worked with a total of twelve students each week in which I mentored eight and tutored four. Under the domain of mentoring, I acquired a variety of counseling skills that will benefit me as a counselor. One of the most important skills I gained was knowing how to tailor my counseling to the needs of the child. It is vital to the success of the counselor's therapy to be able to have an array of therapeutic techniques for being able to tackle any number of issues that students may have. I have also learned how to create age appropriate lessons that focused on helping students develop specific social, emotional, and behavioral skills that they lacked. Many of the younger students that I mentored benefitted from play and color counseling, whereas older students did better when just talking about their feelings and problems. Furthermore, my experience in counseling individual students reminded me of the importance of having unconditional positive regards for each of the student's thoughts, feelings, and actions. Each child must feel supported, accepted, and loved at all times.

I was able to use these newly acquired skills when helping Mrs. Robey facilitate group sessions with students during lunch. These groups focused on a specific topic such as friendship, bullying, and stress and consisted of eight to ten students that felt they would benefit from being a part of a group. I quickly learned that many students feel more comfortable talking about their feelings when they are in the company of their peers or friends. Additionally, many students are more willing to open up when they see that other people their age feel confident in doing so. With Mrs. Robey's encouragement, I was able to create and lead my own group for fifth grade girls that were struggling with their self-esteem and feeling good about themselves. The group met a total of six times over the course of six weeks, beginning in early November and ending in the middle of December. Through this experience, I learned how to develop a set of lesson plans and create a workbook that the students would use during each session. Over the course of six weeks, these girls were able to talk and write about the importance of focusing on their own, as



well as other peoples, inner qualities. The lessons incorporated discussions about self-esteem, positive self-talk, and the benefits of healthy eating and exercise.

My time at Lacey Spring Elementary was filled with personal growth and development and a better understanding of the demands and responsibilities of a school guidance counselor. It was the perfect fit for me, and strengthened and affirmed my desire to become a guidance counselor. The atmosphere of the school was welcoming and supportive from the moment I began my time at Lacey Spring. Each staff member treated me as an equal and as if I was just as qualified as they were to be working within a school setting. Mrs. Robey also provided me with numerous opportunities to develop and strengthen my skills as a counselor. Through individual counseling sessions, small group sessions, and classroom guidance, I was able to act as a guidance counselor in a variety of settings. Mrs. Robey also provided me with constructive feedback after each lesson that I taught and made it a point to supply me with unconditional support, guidance, and encouragement as I journeyed through my time there. Although the student population lacked ethnic diversity, I felt that there was enough diversity between each student that I was still being challenged as a counselor. Furthermore, due to the small population of students, I was able to develop relationships with a large number of students, in addition to the twelve students I mentored each week.

Through my time at Lacey Spring, I learned that I have the aptitude to be an effective school counselor. Not only do I have the aptitude, but I also have a passion for working with elementary aged children. The confidence that I gained in my abilities was ultimately a result of the changes I observed in the behaviors and attitudes of the children that I worked with each week. Additionally, their comfortability in opening up to me and their excitement in working with me by the end of the four months confirmed my belief that I can make a purposeful difference in their lives. Mrs. Robey and the Lacey Spring staff provided me with an experience that strengthened my desire to continue improving the lives of children.

### ***Spring 2015 – Emily Wingate***

This semester I worked in the counseling program at Lacey Spring Elementary School. The mission of Lacey Spring's counseling program is to assist in the developmental process of all children, work with other professionals to make education meaningful to students, and to promote healthy social, emotional, and educational growth. The school counselor provides a variety of services through several different avenues. These include individual and small group counseling, classroom guidance, consultation, and coordination. The school counselor meets with individual students in need of counseling, students who request to see the counselor, groups of students in need of mediation, lunch groups of students with a particular goal—such as friendship and good grades groups, parents who are interested in learning about their child's school needs or who have been asked to provide an at-home perspective, and parents who participate in child studies to identify ways to help their child progress developmentally. School counselors consult other professionals so that they may share ideas and develop strategies to best assist children in need. Further, the school counselor leads guidance lessons to help foster life skills and promote good character.



I was able to be a part of each element of the counseling program during my placement. My main role at Lacey Spring was to serve as a mentor to 16 students. I met with each student once a week for a time period of 20-30 minutes. Sessions were centered around the specific needs of each student such that for some students, sessions consisted of tutoring or assisting with classwork, while other sessions consisted of play and discussion with the child. Additionally, I attended and participated in lunch groups. During my placement, I attended two different groups: Lacey Leaders and Good Grades Club. Lacey Leaders are students selected by their peers to serve as role models and “helpers” for the school. The majority of the Lacey Leader meetings consisted of looking back at injustices of the past and learning how to be fair and strong leaders today. My role in these meetings was to observe and add input when appropriate. The other group I was able to attend was the Good Grades Club. These students signed up to join this group with the goal of raising some of their grades. I was with these students from the beginning until the end of the group and was able to offer input about effective study strategies and provide support to these students as they worked towards their specific goals. Finally, my third major role at Lacey Spring was to lead guidance lessons. At the beginning of my placement, I spent time observing Mrs. Robey as she led various lessons to different classes. After observing, I gave Mrs. Robey feedback on how I thought the lesson went and gave her suggestions for future lessons. Eventually, I began to lead my own lessons. I started with a Kindergarten class and continued to lead lessons for that age group consistently throughout my placement. In addition, I led preschool, third grade, and fifth grade lessons. Each of my lessons was observed by either Christina—another practicum student working at Lacey—or Mrs. Robey. After the lesson, we discussed my feelings about how the lesson went and I received their feedback and suggestions for future lessons. In this way, I was able to learn what techniques I was using that were useful and what techniques I could implement to make future lessons more successful. By the end of my placement, I accumulated knowledge about a variety of effective counseling strategies and how these strategies operated at different grade levels.

A major advantage of working at Lacey Spring was the opportunity to work under an experienced and caring supervisor. Brenda Robey has been working at Lacey Spring for 25 years. She has had many practicum students in the past and understands how the process works. She is very organized with the way she runs the program and is very attentive to her practicum students. She constantly checked in to see how everything was going with my mentees and was more than available to answer any of my questions. Additionally, she provided constructive feedback including positive reinforcement for each of my guidance lessons. When I wanted to incorporate a cooperative game in place of a standard guidance lesson, she was open to the idea and offered her opinion as to what grade level and content area I should utilize. Mrs. Robey was also aware that I ultimately want to be a school psychologist. She informed me of opportunities to observe the school psychologist, such as in child study meetings. Personally, I grew accustomed to the routine of the site, which consisted of meeting with students at their scheduled time each day. For students less interested in following such a routine, this may be seen as a disadvantage of the site. However, as mentioned, Mrs. Robey is open to hearing the ideas of her practicum students and encourages students to take initiative, thereby making the structure of the placement less limiting. Further, the practicum student is in a place to use the materials available to make sessions with his or her students as creative as desired, again lessening what might be seen as a limitation of the site.



As an aspiring school psychologist, working in the counseling department of an elementary school allowed me to become more acquainted with the school setting as well as taught me valuable counseling techniques that I plan to incorporate in my future work. I learned about the importance of using “I messages” and positive reinforcement in my guidance lessons. Mrs. Robey’s focus on the positive as a means to change or reinforce behavior has inspired me to do the same in my work. Additionally, I have gained experience interacting with a variety of professionals such as teachers, para-educators, the school counselor, and the principal. Completing my placement in an elementary school helped to solidify my interest in working with this population in the future, as I am interested in prevention and early intervention. I believe that this experience has allowed me to develop an understanding of the perspective of a school counselor. It is my hope that in the future, this understanding will serve to enhance cooperation between the school counselor and myself as a school psychologist, which will ultimately benefit students in our care.

### ***Fall 2014 – Blakeney Hadden***

This semester I worked with a school counselor at an elementary school. More specifically, I worked with the experienced and compassionate Brenda Robey at Lacey Spring Elementary School, which is about twenty minutes from JMU. I went two days a week and experienced the same schedule each week. However, I experienced a variety of elements that are involved in the school counselor’s role in an elementary school.

Lacey Spring Elementary School has a very strong guidance program that is well integrated into the system. The school holds strong values of child development of various skills through high quality instruction. Mrs. Robey teaches these values through her roles as counselor, administrator, teacher, and colleague. Most of her day is spent with students on an individual basis, figuring out what can be done next to help them. She also spends a great deal of time preparing and teaching guidance lessons. Mrs. Robey has many other responsibilities including organizing special events and assemblies, coordinating the 5<sup>th</sup> grade Lacey Leaders, running lunch groups for essential topics, and a variety of administrative tasks that help support the principal.

As a practicum student I got to observe all of these tasks and also take on a few myself. I met with fourteen students for thirty minutes over the two days I was there each week and they ranged from preschool to fifth grade. I met a few of them in pairs, but mostly individually. We would get to know each other through play and conversation and I would help them with specific problems that they faced. It can be hard to get very much information from an elementary student, especially in kindergarten and so I collaborated with the teachers a lot to figure out what they thought I needed to work on. Some students had certain social or classroom skills that they needed work on while others needed a role model or friend while they were dealing with issues at home or at school. I even developed a behavior management program with one student that ended up developing into my contribution project for the site.



Although individual meetings took up most of my day, I had many other tasks as well. I got the challenging task of teaching guidance lessons once a week. Unfortunately, the days that I was at the school did not have a huge quantity of lessons to be taught, but I still got great practice from the ones I did. The school uses a biweekly system meaning there is an A week and a B week and the schedules differ between them including guidance lessons that are given to each class once every two weeks. Therefore, one week I would teach two 2<sup>nd</sup> grade lessons in a row and the other week I would teach one 1<sup>st</sup> grade lesson. This started after I observed Mrs. Robey first to get an understanding of what a lesson should look like and the variety of tools I could use including videos, discussions, songs, puppets, stories, and games. These lessons were a little intimidating at first, but they became really fun and felt more natural by the end of the semester.

My final biggest role involved helping out with some of Ms. Robey's lunch groups. We had two 4<sup>th</sup> grade and two 5<sup>th</sup> grade groups of six to ten students throughout the semester and the topic was stress management. During the twenty-five minute weekly sessions, we worked through a booklet and also watched parts of a video with them. The group was educational, but also just a safe place for them to talk about their stresses among their peers who usually shared similar experiences.

Throughout the days at Lacey Spring, Mrs. Robey had me doing some administrative work like filing or copying various documents for lessons or groups. I also took a lot of time documenting all of my meetings with students. Most of the papers I filed away were Mrs. Robey's own documentation of student meetings. It quickly became clear that documentation is vital in this field and I developed the skill of writing what was most important without writing more than was necessary. Another skill I learned through this experience was determining the different developmental stages that children have and using this knowledge to best interact with and help them. This came from practice and through constant collaboration with and support from Mrs. Robey and especially the teachers that I worked with.

I loved having a schedule and being a weekly mentor for the kids that I worked with. We really got to develop relationships and I got better at helping them throughout the semester. The only downside of this was that my weeks could seem a little repetitive sometimes. This is definitely something that is hard to avoid as a practicum student, but I know, from observing Mrs. Robey, that if I were to be a school counselor that would not be the case. Mrs. Robey has a ton of variety in her days and sees different students for a variety of things. I, as the practicum student, was an extension for her to reach as many students as possible and give them special attention that she might not be able to with her busy schedule.

Personally, I thoroughly enjoyed my experience at Lacey Spring and gained knowledge about children and counseling that I know I will use in the future. However, I discovered that I do not personally seek a career in elementary school counseling and other experiences outside of my field placement have pulled me towards the field of higher education where I wish to work in student affairs. I will definitely use the counseling skills I learned, but will transfer them onto the much different college student population. A placement at Lacey Spring offers an abundance of experiences and knowledge about the school system, counseling, child development, and



collaboration that can be transferred to other fields and life in general, but will be extremely useful for someone interested in becoming a school counselor.

### *Fall 2014 – Katie Werner*

This past semester I completed my field placement at Lacey Spring Elementary School working under the supervision of Mrs. Brenda Robey, the school counselor. Lacey Spring Elementary is dedicated to providing students with a high quality education, a setting that fosters the development of social and leadership skills, and an environment where students can feel safe. Mrs. Robey provides students, faculty, and staff with overwhelming support through individual counseling, mediations, student study meetings, groups, and classroom guidance instruction, among many other things. As a practicum student, I was able to be a part of all of these experiences.

My largest role was as a mentor to twelve students at all grade levels through the school's SOARS program (Save Our At Risk Students). I worked with the children individually for 30 minutes each week doing various activities. This ranged from reading to and coloring with preschoolers to homework help and counseling-like discussions with 5<sup>th</sup> graders. For many of the kids, I had no background knowledge or guidance from teachers as to what to do in my time with them. This was daunting, but allowed me to observe the child, assess their needs, and build a plan off of that. This also led me to do a lot of research into different types of counseling methods in working with children, which I then employed in our sessions together. Among my students, I spent a great deal of time working with a 4<sup>th</sup> grade girl on social skills and appropriate behavior. I created many activities for her, working on goal setting, self-image, etc. The second half of the semester I created an appropriate behavior booklet to complete with her where a situation was proposed, and she would tell me the appropriate behavior. For each category (in the classroom, at recess, with friends), together we came up with a shape, color, and a positive word or phrase to help her remember the appropriate behaviors for that section. These were then taped to her desk as helpful reminders.

As a practicum psychology student I prepared for and conducted guidance lessons in various classes. This required facilitation of a lesson, classroom management, critical thinking, and also being able to adapt to different developmental stages based on the grade level. I was also given the opportunity to plan and lead a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade girls friendship group. I developed a six-week plan for the group, created materials and a booklet, and lead two classes of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade girls during the semester.

Although a school setting is not where I plan on taking my career, it was an incredible opportunity. For one, being able to work with children individually across various different developmental levels was a priceless experience. I was able to learn first hand what children of a particular age range is like, what they need, what language to use, what activities are developmentally appropriate, etc. Also being able to see these kids in their school environment was invaluable to my work with them. At Lacey, it is very much a collaborative effort between Mrs. Robey, the teachers, and the administration to best help each child. This not only helped my



direct work with the children, but also gave me a lot of experience in communicating with other professionals involved in a child's life. Being able to built relationships with the students was one of my favorite parts of this experience. Having four-year-olds excited to see you, having kids feel comfortable confiding in you, and being in a position to make a difference in their lives was absolutely priceless. Being able to work with Mrs. Robey was by far the most valuable part of this experience. In 25 years as Lacey's school counselor, the knowledge, experience, and wisdom she has is incredible. Learning from her stories, her insights and suggestions is what will stick with me most from this placement.

My career aspirations are to become a clinical mental health counselor. I chose Lacey Spring for my placement site because I wanted to answer my own question, "Do I want to work with kids?" This site was the perfect opportunity to answer that. After 13 weeks at Lacey Spring, I can confidently say I do want to work with children. In an elementary school, I was able to encounter all different types of children from all different backgrounds. I was able to see first hand how a child's family impacts their entire lives – social, academic, physical, psychological. At times, this placement was extremely difficult. As someone with a big heart, it was often hard to hear a small child tell you about horrible things that are happening at home. But this gave me valuable insight into the field I want to enter into and help prepared me for that.

I would strongly recommend this site to anyone interested in school counseling or any work with children. There is so much to be learned from working under Mrs. Robey's supervision and being able to have so much directly interaction with children. This is without a doubt the most incredible experience I've had in my undergraduate college career.

### ***Spring 2014 – Suzanne Huffine***

This semester, I had the privilege of working at Lacey Spring Elementary with the school counselor, Mrs. Robey. Lacey Spring is a school of about 240 students in Rockingham County, and throughout the semester it was apparent that the teachers and staff care about all of the students and work hard to help them succeed. Mrs. Robey runs the guidance program, which teaches students about the pillars of character and general life skills, such as conflict mediation and goal-setting. She teaches guidance lessons to students from preschool through fifth grade, runs small groups during lunch to focus on specific issues like academic achievement or leadership, and provides individual counseling to students. In addition, she is an administrative designee and does all of the work that goes along with that role.

My experience at Lacey Spring has been incredibly positive. Mrs. Robey is welcoming and encouraging and allowed me many learning opportunities during my time. The main focus of my work was mentoring thirteen students, from Pre-K to fifth grade, for thirty minutes each per week. I did different activities with each child, depending on their individual interests and developmental abilities. A typical mentoring session could be anything from purely academic tutoring, to playing with toys and board games, to creating social stories or self-esteem boosting books. As the semester went on and I got to know each child's personality better, I tailored some



of my ideas for activities to better suit them. My mentoring work has been extremely rewarding, and allowed me to build positive and supportive relationships with the students I spend time with.

I also had the opportunity to teach guidance lessons to third grade, kindergarten and preschool about topics such as honesty, fairness, and diversity. For preschool and kindergarten lessons, I typically brought the lesson materials to their classroom and taught there. I used a variety of techniques such as songs, story books and puppets to engage the students and facilitate discussion. With the third grade classes, I would begin the lesson in the guidance classroom, usually with a video and discussion about the topic for the week. Often there would also be a puppet scenario I would act out to allow the students to apply what they have learned. Afterwards, I would bring the children back to their classroom to complete a worksheet that reviewed and reinforced the concepts they had just learned about.

I was also able to observe individual counseling sessions as well as some lunch group meetings. Students understood the concept of confidentiality in each setting and it was interesting to see counseling techniques applied in each setting. Mrs. Robey is an experienced school counselor, and I learned a lot from simply watching and listening to her interactions with the children.

In addition, I attended several Student Study meetings. Student Study is a biweekly meeting after school where a faculty team including Mrs. Robey, the principal, the school social worker, the school psychologist, and several special education teachers meet with a teacher to discuss concerns or progress of individual students. Parents are invited to attend the meeting about their child, although parent attendance was irregular. The team discusses the issues that the child is facing as well as ideas for solutions and help. I enjoyed the opportunity to sit in on these collaborative meetings, and appreciated the variety of viewpoints and insight that different staff members offered to the discussion.

Lacey Spring would be a wonderful field placement site for any student interested in being an elementary school counselor. Mrs. Robey is an experienced supervisor, and provides useful advice and timely feedback about jobs and assignments. I gained confidence in my abilities to mentor and teach while working under her supervision and am grateful for all the responsibilities she entrusted me with. At the end of my time at Lacey Spring, I would have to say that I equally enjoyed mentoring my students and teaching guidance lessons. While I have enjoyed getting to know my students all along, teaching lessons was something I initially felt hesitant about, but the more experience I gained, the more I found that I felt comfortable and happy during lessons. I am glad that I was able to be stretched outside of my comfort zone in this way at my site.

I came to this site interested in learning more about the work of a school counselor and pursuing an interest in school counseling as a potential future profession. My time here has only strengthened that interest, and I feel that my work with Mrs. Robey and the students at Lacey Spring has given me realistic and helpful insight into the field and all that the work entails.



## Spotswood Elementary

*Fall 2015 - Jordan Skowron*

Spotswood Elementary School, located in Harrisonburg, VA is an elementary school devoted to teaching students and teaching them well. The mission at Spotswood is “Where Learning has no Limits.” Though Spotswood was my site, I specifically spent my time working with the School counselor. I had the opportunity to shadow Angie Adamek, who was a “Double Duke” and has been in Harrisonburg ever sense. Through shadowing this position I saw the many “hats” that need to be worn when being a counselor in a school of 400+ students. The services of the counselor vary daily, but mostly focus around meeting with students, teachers, parents, and administration, teaching the guidance curriculum, and being a part of committees like the Olweus Bullying Prevention Committee.

When I first began at Spotswood, I was unsure of what my experience would be like. I was unsure of my expectations and was not very prepared for helping with elementary aged students because my previous experience had been with high school aged students. I was quickly put to work and introduced to so many amazing children who were always excited to get to know me and learn why I was at the school.

Being at Spotswood for an entire semester really helped me get a grasp on what the daily routine could look like for a counselor at an elementary school. I learned so much from my supervisor. I got a lot of hands on experience with helping children with problems and conflicts, being involved in social skills groups, shadowing meetings and assisting with teaching lessons on different positive characteristics for the guidance lessons. I did a lot of administrative tasks, like filing, organizing, decorating bulletin boards and distributing materials to specific teachers. My favorite opportunity I had throughout the semester was being able to mentor specific students. I was fortunate enough to mentor a few girls in different grade levels. I would meet with each of these girls during one of their lunch times or content time once a week. I had the chance to feel like I was really making an impact in their lives by being a friendly face that they would see every week. Throughout the semester, I saw incredible growth among these students. I saw each of these girls gain more confidence in herself, become happy at school and build relationships with other students in their classrooms and with me.

I had an overall, amazing experience at Spotswood Elementary. There are many advantages to doing a field placement at Spotswood. I loved learning from my supervisor, Angie, who has been at the same school for over 15 years. I gained so much knowledge about what she does and why she does it. Angie is passionate about the students and will do anything to make sure they are safe, happy and at school to learn. I am so happy that I got to learn from someone who loves what she does.

Being a student at JMU makes it very easy to get caught up in the JMU bubble. Unless an effort is made to “pop” that bubble, there is a chance that JMU students will never truly know the people of Harrisonburg. Being at Spotswood, my eyes were opened to the true nature of



Harrisonburg and the people who live here. I gained a desire to know and care for the refugee community, in addition to individuals living in poverty.

I also had the advantage of seeing different organizations impact the students of Spotswood, specifically Big Brothers Big Sisters and Rise Church. Rise Church provides food bags for certain families for the weekend, and I was able to help with the distribution of these food bags on some Fridays. One last advantage of working at Spotswood was having the opportunity to see a lot of different areas of being a school counselor. I experienced meetings with people from the school district of Harrisonburg City Public Schools. Having different experiences with different people taught me a lot about the value of seeing the “big picture” for a school district and the students are a part of that.

I think having undergrad opportunities in the field that I want to pursue are very valuable opportunities. The only limitation that I faced was not being able to do more at my site. In order to counsel students there needs to be an amount of certification and knowledge of counseling to do things well. This limitation was sometimes frustrating but overall has given me the drive to pursue a future degree in school counseling so I will have the foundation to continue to help students. I hope to soon go to graduate school for school counseling and to also start a non-profit for students in refugee/ low-income areas to have resources to making a better life with personal development skills and leadership development skills.

Everyday I learned something new. Everyday looked completely different. School Counseling is a profession that requires a lot of flexibility and adaptability. Depending on the actions of the students, a counselor could have a really low-key day or a really intense day. I gained many skills from this experience. I learned the value of patience and how important that is when dealing with children and with adults, too. I gained the ability to uphold a positive and professional attitude when interacting with people with different personalities. I also gained skills of multi-tasking and understanding child development in underprivileged areas.

I learned more in this semester than I could have imagined. Having the opportunity to have a hands on experience as an undergrad has helped me learn where my passions truly lie. This semester has helped me filter through different career paths and helped me solidify my desire to pursue school counseling. Being at Spotswood showed me what it feels like to have a job where I feel purposeful and that I am truly making a difference and making an impact. My field placement showed me that I can be the change wherever I go to whomever I meet.