



Elkton Elementary School

Placement Description

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

Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

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

Contact Information

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Read about students' experiences at this site below:



Spring 2019 – Alexis Grias

Elkton Elementary is an elementary school in Rockingham County that serves over 490 students. Their mission statement is *“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.”* The staff at Elkton Elementary works hard every day to ensure that each child is given a proper education in a fitting environment. They provide support, both inside and outside of the classroom. The school guidance counselor has many responsibilities that she must fulfill. She provides one on one counseling, group counseling, specific therapy groups, teaches guidance classes once or twice a month, does psychological and behavioral testing. On top of this, the guidance counselor works together with other members of the community that interact with children, such as doctors, parents, CPS, and Social Services. They also attend monthly ASSIST meetings, which help determine which services a child might need.

During my time at Elkton Elementary, I was given many opportunities to expand on certain skills and knowledge that I have. My main duty was to mentor nine children who either had severe academic or behavioral issues, some type of disorder (ADHD or Autism), or a troubled home life. I visited with them for 30 minutes each, and they decided what they wanted to do during that time. Another goal is to try and set goals with each of the children and try to meet them by the end of the semester. I did not have to explicitly tell the children about these goals, but would simply subtly work on them. This site also gave me the opportunity to teach and assist with guidance classes. I would prepare documents, ensure the classroom was ready for classes, and assist with many classes ranging in age group. I also was given the opportunity to teach one of the guidance classes by myself, which helped to improve my skill of managing over 20 children at once. Every week, there are lunch groups, which is group therapy for a specific topic, such as anger or anxiety. While I could not facilitate these discussions, I did help in preparing the necessary documents and worksheets for the children. I was also allowed to comment during these sessions when appropriate. On occasion, the school counselor allowed me to sit in when making phone calls to Child Protective Services. She would explain the process of reporting and opening a case for a child. Lastly, I was in charge of two bulletin boards that the guidance department does for the Character Counts traits. I had to plan, prepare, and execute an idea for two boards about Fairness and Trustworthiness.

This site was truly an ideal fit for me. The site supervisor was extremely friendly and helpful while I was there. She was receptive to my ideas and always gave me opportunities to expand on my knowledge and skills. Her management style is fairly laid-back. You have a set schedule for the days that you are there, and sometimes she will leave a note about things that need to be done for that day. However, she does not hover over you all day, but instead gives you the freedom to do these things on your own. She will check in to ask about things are going with your mentees and will make helpful suggestions. She was very good at including me in things that are related to school counseling, such as letting me join her during a county counseling department meeting. Everyone else at Elkton Elementary was extremely kind and receptive to



having an outsider in their school. They all helped me when I needed it and treated me as one of their own. Sometimes, you have to change the schedule of one child to accommodate for another. It was also hard juggling the different schedules of nine different children, especially when I had to see all of them in one day due to days off or snow days. There were quite a few days where I had to visit with all nine children in one day, so it became hard to do other things during the day, such as eat or work on other things that needed to be done. However, this is rarer in the fall time. Some kids might not seem interested in the beginning, but you can't let this discourage you. Over time, I noticed that children who seemed unenthusiastic in the beginning were asking when I was coming to get them again. It is also crucial that if you miss time with a child for whatever reason that you make it up as soon as possible. For some children, it might not be a big deal to them, but for others, this time means a lot to them so it's hard for them going a week or more without seeing their mentor. Overall, Elkton Elementary is a wonderful and welcoming site that is good for someone who tends to be more independent but is open to suggestions. Any complaints that I have about this site are miniscule and can be easily solved.

Once I graduate, I plan to get a job as a mental health technician at a hospital within the child and adolescent unit. This site provided me with a lot of valuable information and skills that will hopefully prove helpful within this job realm. This site placement really helped me to develop my communication skills, both with children and with adults. I had to learn how to change my dictation to be more fitting for children. I also had to learn things about nine different children: family life, hobbies, favorite games, best friends, favorite treats, etc. This, in particular, will help me as a mental health technician, since I will be responsible for looking after up to 20 children and adolescents at one time. Being at EES also improved my communication skills with people who are higher ranking than me. This is a necessary skill for any job that requires you to interact with people who are above you. Communication is key for a job like mental health technician, so I am glad that I got to improve upon it while at Elkton Elementary.

Elkton Elementary is a perfect site for anyone who wants to go into a profession dealing with children. While this isn't exactly what I want to do as a career, it provided me with so much valuable knowledge and experience that I feel prepared to go off and use that in whatever field I pursue. The best part of the whole program was seeing all of the kids blossom by the end of the 16 weeks. The change becomes evident, and it is the greatest feeling ever as a psychology major.

Fall 2018 – Elizabeth Spare

This semester I interned at Elkton Elementary School with the guidance counselor Cindy Hepner. Elkton has Head Start, Preschool, and K-5 grades. Elkton's mission statement is, "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."



Mrs. Hepner is the school's only guidance counselor and has a plethora of duties, the first being individual and group counseling. I was able to attend and observe group counseling. The first group I observed was the divorce group with third grade. Before leaving, I also had the opportunity to observe a few of the grief group sessions. For the groups, I helped copy and put together the activity booklets that the children worked in each time we met. I also picked up the children from class, took them to get their lunches, and then after the session take them back. After the sessions, if there was something worth noting Mrs. Hepner would point out group dynamics or behaviors that she noticed to me.

Another one of Mrs. Hepner's responsibilities is responsive services. When a child is having a meltdown or issue in a classroom, Mrs. Hepner is often a responder and goes to calm the child and deescalate the situation. She also makes many of the Child Protective Services (CPS) calls. This is because she often knows the child's history from the time they arrived at the school, whereas their teacher has only known them since the beginning of the school year. Unfortunately, there is a lot of poverty in the area and many of the children that come to Elkton Elementary are underprivileged and have difficult home lives. Therefore, Mrs. Hepner makes a number of calls to CPS. One of the opportunities through this is that I was able to sit in and listen on the phone calls to see how they go, what information is told, and when or when not to make calls to CPS. Mrs. Hepner also helps send food home with children over weekends and holiday breaks to ensure they have food to eat.

Mrs. Hepner also teaches guidance class once a month to all the grades. Additionally, she teaches fifth grade guidance class every other week. I am able to help Mrs. Hepner prepare for classes by sharpening pencils, making copies, making sure the classroom is straight, and occasionally making posters. I made two posters this semester. The first was attention grabbers for when the class gets chatty or rambunctious she can get their attention through the different sayings on the poster. The other poster I put together was an emotions chart Mrs. Hepner created to help the children learn to distinguish between different levels of emotions. I also help Mrs. Hepner during class by keeping the students on task and passing things out as needed. She is also open to letting you teach a class, all you have to do is ask! Mrs. Hepner teaches based on the six character pillars: Citizenship, Responsibility, Caring, Respect, Trustworthiness, and Fairness. She has a bulletin board showing the children nominated from each classroom for that character pillar. I was able to design the Caring bulletin board, so I did "Sharing the Gift of Caring" and put the children's faces on presents.

Furthermore, Mrs. Hepner attends many meetings. She is in constant communication with administration, teachers, and parents. I was able to attend the ASSIST meetings for kindergarten. Those attending the meeting include vice principle, teachers, guidance counselor, TDT, and special education teachers. During these meetings, children's behaviors of concern or academic problems are discussed to determine what resources the child may need.

At this site, one of your main priorities will be the children you are mentoring. I mentored seven children weekly for about thirty minutes. I would pick them up and drop them back off for class or the place they are supposed to be. For the first few weeks, you will start getting to know the children and building bonds with them through playing games and having conversations. About halfway through the semester you will work with Mrs. Hepner to set goals to work towards with the children. To me, this was one of the most rewarding parts of attending this site. I had not had the opportunity previously to work one-on-one with children, and therefore this



allowed me to confirm that I do want to work with children in my future career. I enjoyed getting to know the children individually and building a bond with them. To know that I had a positive impact on their lives is such a great feeling.

When I interviewed at Elkton I felt as though it was the right fit for me. It was able to offer me opportunities for the things I wanted to learn about and I just got a good feeling from the atmosphere. Although Elkton is not racially diverse, the children are diverse in socio-economic status and family backgrounds. This offered me many opportunities to learn about different situations and the outcome they can have on the child. One skill I was able to build upon was working independently. Mrs. Hepner is often very busy, and some days I would not see her as often as others. Another skill I acquired how to communicate effectively with the staff in the school. If you need to reschedule a child's time, you will need to be able to talk to the teacher and figure out a good time. I also learned how to recognize behaviors of concern in the children I was mentoring. If there was anything out of the norm, I would tell Mrs. Hepner about it to keep her up to date and in case she needed to get involved. Also, as I mentioned previously I was able to learn about group dynamics in group therapy, such as level of involvement over the course of the therapy, as well as the different roles the children can take on within the group. Additionally, part of the field placement class is to give back to your site through a contribution project. For my project I helped Mrs. Hepner put together and organize a list of socio-emotional bibliotherapy books as a resource for teachers to use.

I came to Elkton Elementary not knowing exactly what route I wanted to go in the psychology field, clinical or counseling. Through this internship and mentorship, I learned that I want to do counseling with children. My ultimate career goal is to work with children with chronic illnesses and their families. I will be able to take all of the things I have learned from being at this site and apply them to my graduate studies. Mrs. Hepner was wonderful to work with and I enjoyed all of my time spent at Elkton Elementary School.

Fall 2018 – Katherine Landes

The mission of Elkton Elementary is “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”. As a school counselor we focus primarily on bridging the gap between school, home and community. In addition, our services include teaching guidance class as well as counseling specific students. The guidance counselor also responds to emergencies in the classroom. The guidance counselor is the designated person to call CPS when necessary and coordinates with other types of counselors and psychologists in the building.

At Elkton I had the opportunity to prepare materials for guidance class and then assist in teaching guidance class. I also put up bulletin boards throughout the year in order to show off the children whose teachers picked them as exemplars in whichever pillar of guidance we were teaching at the time. There are six pillars to teach throughout the year and I helped in teaching three of them. These included citizenship, responsibility, and caring. I was also given the



opportunity to mentor six students once a week for half an hour at a time throughout the year. This entailed using child-centered play therapy in order to help them improve on a specific, individualized goal throughout the year. In addition, I helped to facilitate three different focus groups. I facilitated a fourth grade divorce group, a first grade emotional skills group, and a fifth grade grief group. The purpose of these groups was to educate rather than to have a group discussion as you would with adults in a focus group. For children, just seeing that there are other children going through the same thing and then being given coping skills is what is most important.

One advantage of working at Elkton is that every day is different. There are some weeks in which we are teaching guidance and other weeks where we are working on preparing materials for guidance. The constant is that everyday you are there a certain amount of time is allotted to mentoring students, which is the most rewarding part. Seeing your students grow throughout the semester is remarkable. One student started out as shy and anxious about his parents divorce and being at a new school, but in the end was comfortable at school and with his new routine at home. Another advantage of working at Elkton is that Mrs. Hepner is very good at her job and has years of experience working with kids from which to draw from. The only disadvantage to working at Elkton is that it is slightly far away compared to other sites.

For my contribution paper I researched all the different ways that yoga can benefit students in addition to all the different populations that can benefit from practicing yoga on a regular basis. Some of the benefits include better emotion regulation, self-esteem, anger management, social skills, resilience, and sleep quality. In addition to the benefits yoga has for the general population of students, it can also help student with ADHD, Down Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and many others. I also found that the best way to structure a yoga program in a school setting is by making it voluntary and avoiding adding it to the physical education curriculum. It is also important to get teachers, parents, and students on board with enthusiasm for yoga in order to maximize the benefits. As part of my contribution project materials, I created a set of yoga cards in order to facilitate yoga during guidance class and later during yoga club meetings at Elkton. To make these I found images to represent each pose that Mrs. Hepner does on a regular basis and printed them out along with the name of each yoga pose. I then glued the image and name of the poses to cardstock paper and had each card laminated. I made them big enough so that Mrs. Hepner could hold them up for the kids to see from across the room. This way she could use them in her classroom and in the room yoga club is held in.

I learned a great deal from working at Elkton. I learned how to communicate with teachers about scheduling and about how students were doing in the classroom. In addition, I learned how to work with children from all different populations. I worked with students who had Autism Spectrum Disorder and one who likely had ADHD. I also worked with specific groups of students who had lost a loved one or who were struggling with their parent's divorce. These students often need different attention than do the rest of the students and I learned that becoming familiar with the needs of each individual student takes time. This is why developing a rapport with the child you are working with is important. I also learned a great deal about the child protective services process. When calling from the school it is often taken more seriously because the school is usually an unbiased third party that gives reliable information. In addition, it is very rare that a child is taken from the home and this should not be expected after making a



cal. It is also likely that the parent or parents realize that the school called CPS on them and this infuriates them and causes them to be difficult to work with. Altogether, there is much more that goes into the CPS process than I previously realized. I was fairly unsure about what I wanted to do after graduation before I started, but after working at Elkton I have decided that being a school counselor at the elementary level is something I could see myself doing in the future.

Spring 2018 – Carly Glinowiecki

This semester I had the privilege of being placed at Elkton Elementary School working closely with their school counselor. Elkton Elementary serves about 350 students from PreK to 5th grade, while also housing a Headstart program that is separate from the school itself. Their mission statement is “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.”

I worked with Cindy Hepner, the school counselor, who started working at Elkton in 2002. She is the only counselor at the school and is actively involved in the school. She has four overarching responsibilities: individual/group counseling, consultation/coordination, responsive services, and teacher and social work duties. She does lunch group counseling sessions for students who all could use counseling in a specific area. In my experience, I was able to observe a divorce and anxiety group. Once a month she teaches guidance lessons to all the grades based on 6 character pillars that the school follow. There are some grades that receive guidance classes every week or every other week. She has to constantly stay in contact with teachers and the administration to make sure everyone is on the same page about students. Under responsive services she is usually the one who makes all of the Child Protective Services (CPS) calls for the building. If a student is having a major breakdown, she usually is one of the staff members who will go down to help calm them down. She also does a Christmas program, along with others, to help get donations from churches so all students can receive presents. Ms. Hepner is involved in many staff meetings. One meeting called ASSIST happens once a month and every grade has this meeting. The meeting is to discuss students who are having academic or behavioral problems and whether or not they should be moved to student study.

My main priority at Elkton was mentoring 6 students. I met with each student once a week for 30 minutes. Mentoring students consists of playing games with them, setting a goal for them, and working towards that goal. I made genuine connections with each student and looked forward to seeing them every week. I also was able to assist a kindergarten teacher once a week with her class. I would hang up artwork, file papers, read stories to the class, and help supervise the whole class as well. In that kindergarten class I worked more closely with two boys, who both had behavioral issues. I really enjoyed being in the kindergarten class because it gave me a different perspective and I was able to observe students in the classroom. I also observed most of the guidance lessons that my supervisor taught, and assisted in any way that I could. There is also an opportunity to teach a lesson yourself, if you decide that interests you. Towards the end of the semester I became more involved in the lessons and would answer student’s questions or



help them with worksheets. I even got to observe some of the students that I mentored in the guidance classes and it was helpful to see them in a different setting.

Each of her guidance lessons relate to one of the character pillars from a program called “Character Counts!” The 6 pillars are fairness, trustworthiness, respect, caring, citizenship, and responsibility. Along with those pillars, a bulletin board is up in the hallway that reflects one of those pillars. I would create the board, put it up, and take it down. The board consists of pictures of students who have been nominated by their teachers who possess one of those character traits. As in any schools there are school duties that you do such as making copies, getting lessons ready, and preparing the classroom for lessons.

The staff at Elkton is very friendly and made me feel welcomed every day. Ms. Hepner was also very helpful and around if I had any questions about what to do. However, I did have a lot of independence at my site. In the mornings Ms. Hepner would give me a list of tasks to do for the day. I learned how to manage and prioritize my time but you have to be comfortable with being independent and working alone at times. Ms. Hepner is usually very busy and some days I didn’t see her very often. The school is on the smaller side, so it makes it easier to form connections with students and other staff members. The population at Elkton is not very diverse but many of the students are underprivileged and have tough family lives. The school is predominately white, but about half of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, which means their family has an income below at least \$21,000. As I said earlier, the school is not very diverse in race or ethnicity which could be seen as a downside. However, the students are diverse in their family backgrounds and the different experiences they have been through. Being at Elkton elementary really opened my eyes up to what families can go through and how a student’s family life can really affect them. I learned a lot about different student’s background which helped to give me perspective about the area and the population.

I did my field placement in a school because I was interested in becoming a school counselor and wanted to get experience in a school setting. While being in a school I saw how important it is for all the staff in the school to communicate with each other about the students. I got exposed to many different aspects of school counseling, which gave me a better understanding of what it entails. I also learned about different jobs within the school system and what each consists of. I really enjoyed being at Elkton elementary and had a great experience! After my placement I am still interested in pursuing a career in school counseling.

Fall 2017 – Hope Dormire

During the past semester, I completed my field placement experience at Elkton Elementary School with the school counselor. Over the course of about fourteen weeks, I formed important relationships and participated in unique experiences. Elkton is a small school where each child seems genuinely cared for by the staff. They serve grades pre-kindergarten through fifth, and they also have a Head Start program. The mission statement of EES is “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.”

I worked mainly with the head of the guidance department, Cindy Hepner, who has been the counselor at Elkton for fifteen years. Her responsibilities are extensive, and categorized into four main components. Most of her time is spent on “responsive services”, which includes individual and group counseling, referrals to outside counseling and services, and running the mentorship program. Group counseling is categorized by grade level and topics like grief, anxiety, divorce, and more. The mentor program consists of adults in the school and community pairing with a child experiencing an issue, and Ms. Hepner organizes all of this. The second component of Ms. Hepner’s job is consultation. She has to keep constant communication with other faculty members, parents, and sometimes outside resources for students in need of help. The third part of Ms. Hepner’s role in the school is coordination. Along with leading the mentor program, Ms. Hepner runs a student “caring club”, serves on a variety of school committees, and participates in the school ASSIST program which is an intervention prior to putting children in Student Study. The fourth part and one of the more time-consuming roles that Ms. Hepner plays is being the guidance teacher. She teaches the Character Counts curriculum to grades Kindergarten through fifth, and teaches a more introductory guidance curriculum to the Pre-Kindergarten classes.

I was fortunate enough to experience almost all the services that the Elkton counseling department has to offer. My main role was my participation in the mentor program where I had weekly 30 minute meetings with six individual students. I got to know the students by helping them with schoolwork, playing games, and doing art activities. I was able to form meaningful relationships and set small goals with each of my mentees and I left my fieldwork experience glad to have met them. Another one of my responsibilities was creating the school bulletin board that went along with each of the Character Counts units. I designed each of them based on the month and put pictures of students that were nominated by their teachers to represent the character trait. One of the most valuable experiences I had was participation in classroom guidance lessons and the small group counseling sessions. Since these activities are so much of what a guidance counselor does, it was important for me to take part in them. I got to see how Ms. Hepner designed curricula from the same topic for different grade levels to meet each student at their current stage of development and cognition. The group counseling was very interesting to watch, because there were so many similarities and differences between the different grade levels and genders in participation. The group I worked with for the majority of the semester was a fourth grade “anger management” group consisting of both boys and girls who either had trouble with anger at school or home. Another group I worked with was a girls’ “friendship” group which mainly focused on bullying behaviors between girls. After observing and helping with these groups, it was easy to see why interventions such as these are needed in elementary schools. One of my smaller roles was sitting in on ASSIST meetings with each grade level’s faculty and administration to discuss students having issues. I did not previously know how much went into getting students the individual help that they need in school, and it was very inspiring to be a part of.

I loved my experience at Elkton because it kept me on my toes. With a fluctuating school calendar and unexpected issues popping up all the time, no two days were alike. Ms. Hepner is very organized and gave me a detailed calendar of when I would have my mentees or when



groups or classes were, so although the schedule changed a lot I always knew where I was supposed to be. Besides being organized, Ms. Hepner is also a wonderful person to work with. She clearly cares for each student in the school and she is also willing to answer any questions you may have. The school itself is small but still busy, and an advantage of the size means that you get to know the students fairly easily over one semester. One of the disadvantages of the school being in such a small town is that there is not much diversity, so Elkton Elementary might not experience some of the issues related to diversity that other elementary schools may. Other than this drawback, the school was a wonderful place to learn and the students made the 30 minute commute very worth it.

Spring 2017 – Morgan Grant

For the spring 2017 semester, I completed my field placement experience at Elkton Elementary School in the school counseling program. The mission of the school is to give children the tools to successfully prepare them to pass their SOLs and to create outstanding citizens. Elkton Elementary's school's mission statement is "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." The school hosts grades Pre-K to 5th and also provides a Headstart program. The school provides library, art, music, computer, P. E. and guidance as specialty programs. Additional resources the school provides include special education, reading, speech, and a gifted education program (aka as Challenge).

My experience involved working under the supervision of the school counselor, Cindy Hepner. A majority of my duties included mentoring students, assisting with the guidance class, observing lunch group and TDT meetings. My main responsibility was mentoring eight children on a weekly basis varying from grades K-4th grade. I met with each of my mentees for thirty minutes and got to know them by playing with table top games, making arts and crafts and assisting them with academic help. The purpose of the mentorship was to have them reach a goal and to provide positive companionship. Goals for each child ranged from boosting self-esteem to increasing pro-social behavior. As the semester progressed I was able to see improvement in many of my mentees and was able to develop a relationship with them. During guidance class I assisted my supervisor by helping to manage the class and to help students with their worksheets. I was able to witness the differing developmental abilities across the various grade levels. I was able to see many of my mentees in guidance class so it was neat that I got to see how they behave and interact in a group setting. I also learned about the curriculum used as well as the media supplies and academic resources that was used to teach these lessons. For the semester I was able to observe the 3rd grade anger management lunch group. This was an interesting opportunity because I was able to witness how my supervisor guided the discussions and encouraged confidentiality. I was also able to see how these children differed compared to their



peers with their emotional regulation. Lastly, I was given the opportunity to watch TDT meetings where student behaviors were discussed. These meetings helped me to understand some of the problems that were going on with a student as well as the steps the faculty were attempting to implement to correct the issue.

An advantage with working at Elkton is that there are various things to do and no day looks exactly the same. Another advantage is that because I was the only intern in the school counseling department on my designated days, I got to experience a variety of different opportunities. I was also able to get individualized time to ask my supervisor questions regarding Elkton and my contribution project or advice regarding the behaviors of particular students. I was able to observe TDT meetings where the TDT counselors, my supervisor and administration talked about behavioral problems and potential ways to change them. One disadvantage of working at Elkton is that it is further away compared to some of the other field placement sites located near JMU. The commute is not too long as it is 30 minutes away, but weather, traffic and class scheduling could potentially become a minor problem. A limitation at Elkton is that the student population is not racially/ethnically diverse compared to some of the other schools in the Harrisonburg area. Another limitation is that mentees may end up moving unexpectedly and sometimes you may not get to say goodbye. What I really liked about the site was the small population and the sense of community as one could tell that the faculty and staff cared for the students. I liked observing the lunch group as I found the concept very interesting. It was encouraged to see the kids learn to discuss their problems and brainstorm efficient ways to solve or handle them.

Throughout my experience I have further developed my experience working with children of various grade levels and working with at-risk students. I have realized building relationships with at-risk kids may take more time than children who are not at-risk. I have learned how the same theme or topic in a school counseling class can be applied to students of different ages. For example for the theme “respect”, the Pre-K class would learn about facial emotional recognition in oneself and others while in the 5th grade class the focus would be on bullying and harassment. I was also able to perform independent work and to ask appropriate questions regarding the side assignments I was allocated with. Overall, I was able to sharpen many skills and to learn to think quickly on my feet to help solve unexpected problems. I was also able to learn more about CPS reporting procedures and was able to witness a few calls.

This site definitely allowed me to see a good portion of the everyday tasks and responsibilities of an elementary school counselor. I had lots of hands on experience and interaction with children and staff on a daily basis. I was able to see the rewards and obstacles of working as a school counselor and it helped me to rethink what the job entails. Nevertheless, I am still passionate about becoming a school counselor. I recommend this site to any field placement student who would like to become a school counselor or would like to work with children in the future.

Fall 2016 - Sarah Leiserson

This semester, I completed my field placement experience at Elkton Elementary School. The mission statement at Elkton Elementary School (EES) is “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.” At EES, there are students of all grade levels from Head Start to fifth grade. As outlined by the mission statement, the main goal at EES is to prepare students for success by teaching them the skills necessary to do well on SOL tests and then become positive members of society.

My field placement experience was centered on working with the school counselor, Cindy Hepner. My supervisor’s responsibilities include working with students individually, facilitating group counseling sessions, and teaching guidance class. As a field placement student, my main responsibility at EES was mentoring seven at-risk children from various grade levels. I met with each child for a thirty-minute session each week, created an individualized goal for them, and then worked to help each student achieve this goal. For example, I worked with one student on developing better sportsmanship skills. In doing so, while we played games during our mentoring sessions I placed less emphasis on winning, and focused more on having fun. By the end of the semester, this student did not think about keeping score while playing games, but instead was happy just to play. Over the course of the semester, I was able to see gradual changes in each student and work with them to achieve their goals. This aspect of my role at EES allowed me to improve my mentoring skills and learn how to best interact with students at various developmental levels. Mentoring these students made it possible for me to help foster their personal growth and strengthen my leadership skills.

Additionally, I was able to improve my classroom management skills and observe while my supervisor taught guidance classes for various grade levels. During guidance class, I helped students with worksheets and activities. By observing the lessons taught on the same topic to different grade levels, I was able to assess the similarities and differences in lesson plans, which I found interesting. Another unique opportunity that I had at EES was observing ASSIST and Student Study meetings in which teachers from each grade level, administrators, and my supervisor discussed whether or not children should be tested to be placed in the Special Education program. Observing these meetings allowed me to see how a school counselor collaborates with other teachers and administrators at the school in order to do what is best for the student.

Throughout the semester, I worked on various projects and helped with small tasks whenever I had a free moment. For example, some smaller tasks that I worked on regularly include making copies, sharpening pencils, preparing the classroom for students, etc. On the other hand, a larger project that I worked on was helping create two character pillar bulletin boards. After my supervisor helped me create the first bulletin board, I was able to create the



second one on my own. I enjoyed this project because it gave me a lot of independence, allowed me to be creative when coming up with an original idea for the bulletin board, and work at my own pace.

One of my favorite opportunities that I had at EES was sitting in on group therapy sessions on various topics (divorce, grief, stress management, etc.). This allowed me to observe how my supervisor facilitated lunch groups to help students cope with these difficult issues. I compiled workbooks for the students to use during these sessions and was able to observe while my supervisor read many books about the topic of each group, facilitated discussions with the students, and guided students in completing pages from the workbooks.

An advantage of working at EES is that I had the opportunity to work with students one-on-one and watch as they developed and achieved the goals that I set for them. Another benefit of working at EES is that it is a small school, so I was able to get to know many students and teachers through the various guidance classes, lunch groups, and the children that I mentor. I was also able to see many different aspects of what an elementary school counselor does, such as teaching guidance class, facilitating lunch groups, attending ASSIST and Student Study meetings, etc. Moreover, I always had a variety of projects to work on that were engaging and meaningful, so I always felt like I was being productive and contributing something to my site. One limitation of this site is that the student population is not as ethnically diverse as some other schools in the area. However, the student population at EES is unique in a different way because many students come from a low socioeconomic status. Another disadvantage is that EES is located farther from JMU than some other school sites that are offered, so this may be an issue for students in the spring because snow days may affect scheduling.

The most important skill that I developed while working at EES was learning how to be a good mentor to students. Developing rapport with some students was difficult at first, but learning how each student is unique made it challenging and fun to create ways to keep students engaged during the mentoring sessions. Going along with that, I learned how to relate to students of various ages because each mentee was at a different level developmentally, socially, and academically. Learning how to be a good mentor influenced my career goal of becoming a school counselor because it gave me a preview of how I could find innovative ways to keep children engaged while having a counseling session with them and find activities for children to do in class that are appropriate for their developmental level.

Overall, my experience at EES has taught me a lot about the role of an elementary school counselor. I have really enjoyed learning various skills and was able to gain a lot of hands-on experience working with students individually, in small groups, and in a classroom setting. I was able to consider the differences between what elementary school counselors do compared to middle or high school counselors. For example, one of the main responsibilities of an



elementary school counselor is to teach guidance class, which school counselors at the other levels do not do. This experience as a whole has been beneficial and I feel that I have learned a lot not only about what a school counselor does, but also more general skills such as being a good mentor, which can translate to many careers. I would highly recommend this site to future field placement students.

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.

