



# Elkton Elementary School

## Placement Description

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

## Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

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- 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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- My Website: <http://schoolcounselingees.weebly.com/>

**Read about students' experiences at this site below:**



### *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 5<sup>th</sup> 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-4<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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.