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Turner Ashby High School

Placement Description

Public High School placement that offers practical foundational experience working with students. TAHS seeks to give students a full picture of the high school counseling career. Our Field Placement students will enjoy a very “hands on” site and will leave with practical knowledge and experience to take into their graduate studies.

Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

- One on one meetings with students to assist transfer students and for academic support
- Possible group counseling
- Meetings with parents and teachers, professional development meetings/workshops
- Testing assistance
- Opportunities for large group instruction
- Assist career coach
- Assist with scheduling and enrollments

Contact Information

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Read about students’ experiences at this site below:

Fall 2023 – Allison Mullan



Turner Ashby High School (TAHS) strives to create and maintain an environment that provides opportunities for students to reach their greatest potential. Faculty and staff also prepare students for college or the workforce. In addition, TAHS recognizes everyone learns differently. Faculty and staff work together to implement activities and lessons that reflect and support various learning styles. The counseling department at TAHS employs three school counselors, a challenge program coordinator, a career coach, a school psychologist, a behavior support assistant, a school social worker, an early intervention clinician, a secretary, and a registrar. This department supports students, parents, and families by offering personal counseling and development, academic advising, and career counseling.

When the semester began, I completed a lot of clerical work such as data entry, organizing, scheduling, typing, and word processing. TAHS operates comparably to universities, specifically James Madison University (JMU). Students have the freedom to add and/or drop classes until a certain point. I reviewed each student's class schedule to ensure that they were all enrolled in the appropriate number of classes. In addition, I observed informative presentations tailored to each grade level. I also met with first-year students to discuss their transition to a new school. I helped any struggling students to the best of my ability and referred them to their designated counselor when necessary. I met with these students throughout the semester to ensure they continued to adjust well, maintained good grades, and made friends. As the semester progressed, I would observe student-study meetings, comparable to Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings. As the end of the semester approached, my focus shifted. I began to meet with students who were failing one or more core classes. I held one on one meetings with each student to discuss why they were struggling and different strategies to improve their grade(s).

TAHS presents many advantages. First, my own office space was provided. I was able to meet with students privately and was not expected to bring my computer to and from the site each day. Also, I was surrounded by a very friendly and supportive staff. Everyone was always willing and able to help me. In fact, the career coach reviewed and revised each of my graduate school essays. Most importantly, my supervisor was extremely accommodating. Throughout the semester, a few schedule conflicts surfaced. My supervisor acknowledged these conflicts and was more than willing to help me adjust my schedule. In addition, through work at my site, I have developed a stronger idea of the career path I would like to pursue. During my time at TAHS, I ran into one disadvantage. It is expected and preferred that interns spend two full days at their site each week. Considering I spent the greater part of my Mondays and Wednesdays at my site, I had to schedule all five of my JMU courses on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This led to packed days and long weeks.

Unfortunately, there were a few limitations I encountered at TAHS. While I enjoyed having my own office space, at times it was isolating as it was not centrally located. Also, while I enjoyed chatting with students, at times I found it difficult to find time to meet with them that did not interrupt their classes. In addition, some of the students I met with spoke and understood little to no English. Fortunately, I used Google Translate to communicate with these students; however, I do not believe communication was as effective or strong as it should have been.



Lastly, although I observed many Student-Study meetings, my schedule did not always align with them. No one is at fault for this; however, I would have enjoyed observing more of these meetings.

During my time at TAHS, I have acquired many skills. During my first few weeks at TAHS, one-on-one meetings with students intimidated me. I have developed new skills that have enabled me to hold these meetings confidently. I have improved my communication skills, my body language and responsiveness, and am better at active listening. Throughout the semester, I developed a rapport with some students, which eased my nerves before meetings. I have realized, while it was nerve-racking at first, that individual counseling is something I am interested in. I have also realized there are so many different career paths and opportunities for Psychology students within schools alone. As I mentioned, I have observed and worked with school counselors, school psychologists, and early intervention clinicians to name a few. While I assumed my options were limited prior to working at my site, I now know that the opportunities are almost limitless. I am eager to continue exploring these careers soon.

My contribution project idea is to provide more mental health resources, specifically-resources that are catered to English Language Learner (ELL) students. While TAHS has always educated a few ELL students, the fall of 2023 offered an influx of students who do not speak or understand much English. Students of all ages migrated from many countries including Bosnia, Honduras, and Ukraine to name a few. While the counseling department did all they could to help and support these students, the language barrier created less direct and effective communication. The additional materials I created for my contribution project focused on students' existing mental health knowledge. While it is unrealistic for TAHS to hire counselors and staff who speak every language possible, it is important for the counseling center to provide mental health resources, both online and in-person (if possible) for these individuals. Transitioning to a new school is tough, but migrating to a new country and adjusting to daily life here is even more difficult. The additional materials I created for my contribution project focused on students' existing knowledge of mental health. I asked questions such what mental health means to you does, why is it important, and so on. These materials would be completed by the students and reviewed by each student's assigned counselor. The counselor(s) would then meet with any students who provided negative or worrisome responses. While providing mental health resources for ELL students is easier said than done, the TAHS counseling center staff are aware of the increasing number of ELL students, and I am confident that they will be able to help these students in all ways possible.

Overall, participating in Field Placement at TAHS was an exciting and informative experience. While I worked directly with the three school counselors, I was also able to observe and admire the work of other employees in the counseling center. As a soon to be JMU graduate who is attending graduate school in a few short months, it was very enlightening to work with a career coach, early intervention clinician, and school psychologist to name a few. It is evident that every staff member at TAHS, more specifically- the counseling department, cares deeply about each student and works hard to set them up for success. For anyone who is considering



school psychology or wants to work in a school, I recommend selecting TAHS. Throughout the semester, I learned a lot about the field and various departments and about myself. I have a better understanding of what I would like to study throughout graduate school and which career path(s) I would like to pursue.

Spring 2022 - Kristina Michel

My placement this semester was with the Turner Ashby High School Counseling Department. It is their mission to help students, parents, and families in any of the following ways: “personal and development, academic advising, and career counseling”. The counseling department helps students to work through their academics, plan their future, and navigate any struggles they may face during their high school career. The department is made up of three counselors, a secretary, a career interventionist, a school psychologist, a social worker, and an early intervention clinic. This gave me lots of opportunities to learn about each aspect of the department. At the beginning of the semester, I was even able to attend a faculty meeting with speakers from the Sheriff’s Department and Child Protective Services to expand my horizons in that area of the profession and gained lots of important information about the maltreatment of children. During my first weeks at TA, I was able to assist the counselors in scheduling underclassmen for their classes for the following year. This gave me the ability to dip my toes in interacting with students before meeting individually with them, along with learning more about the school’s structure and culture in general. For the remainder of the semester, I had the opportunity to meet individually with students about academics, adjustment to the school, and even some future planning. In these meetings I was able to connect with students about their struggles with their classes and transferring to a new school, along with assisting them in navigating their future goals. It was really nice being able to meet with students one-on-one and connect with them to get a sense of what the counselors do on a daily basis.

One of the biggest advantages of interning at TA is having access to such an amazing faculty. Turner Ashby portrays such a tight-knit community of people truly trying to build each other up. The school's atmosphere is comforting and welcoming from the first step through the doors. The resources that this department offers are endless, they work together and team up their different abilities to create the best care for their students. The counselors are very approachable, not only in relation to their position, but each of them supported me and gave me advice regarding my own future plans which was incredibly helpful. I feel that their dedication to their students carried on to me as well, I felt very appreciated and supported throughout my entire experience. Another huge advantage of the site is having my own office space to meet with students. I was given my own office and able to decorate and rearrange it to make it as comfortable for students as possible. I hung posters that promoted healthy study habits, better self-care, and future planning advice. I feel that without this space, students would not have been as open and comfortable during their meetings with me. With so many great things about the site, I think the one that stands out to me the most is the outstanding connections I was able to make with students. High Schoolers were difficult nuts to crack but once I gained my footing and found the best way to get them to be comfortable and open up to me, my one-on-one time with



them became extremely rewarding for both them and I. I quickly learned why these counselors are so dedicated to their jobs.

While connecting with struggling students, I noticed a trend in students having a hard time readjusting to in-person learning after the pandemic. For my contribution project I created infographics for teachers and parents on how to assist their students through this unnavigated territory. Specifically, I found that students struggled most with anxiety, sleep, readjusting to in-person instruction, and developing a healthy daily routine in general. In addition, I also reached out to freshman students and those who were retained during online learning and began meeting with them weekly. During our meetings we discussed their routine habits, upcoming schoolwork, future planning, and self-care practices. I was able to gain and maintain close relationships with these students and feel they benefitted me as much as I hope I benefitted them. I continued meeting with the same students frequently which gave me the opportunity to be an active part of their school day. A couple weeks in, students began really showing interest in meeting with me and some even requested additional time with me which made me feel incredibly valued. At the beginning of the semester, the students I met with created short-term and long-term goals. I took notes during each encounter with them and was actually able to track their grades and see that my academic advice was paying off. I feel that through my contribution project I was able to successfully help students that struggled with the transition back to the classroom to regain their confidence and self-sufficiency in the school setting, which was incredibly rewarding. Being able to visibly see that I was impacting students and hearing how much they appreciate me was the verification that I belong to this field that I needed.

Overall, Turner Ashby High School gave me such a comforting place to call my second home for my last semester. The staff's dedication to both me and their students promoted personal and professional growth in myself and gave me much more knowledge about their position and confidence in my abilities in this field. I have learned so much not only from shadowing the faculty but from connecting with my students as well. Specifically, I feel that I have expanded my understanding of the role of a high school counselor, improved my communication abilities in one-on-one settings with students of various ages, and gained more confidence in my professional abilities within the mental health field. Though I am straying away from the school setting in my first position post-graduation, leaving Turner Ashby has assured me that I will find myself in this role again someday. This school truly is such a warm and welcoming environment and I feel so lucky to have had the opportunity to connect with its students and faculty.

Spring 2021 - Stephanie Kellenberger

The site that I had the opportunity to intern at this semester was Turner Ashby High School in Bridgewater, Virginia. The mission statement of the site is to "create and maintain an environment that allows opportunities for all students to work to their potential; prepare all students fully to enter the work force or college; and recognize that everyone learns in different ways and preparing their faculty to implement lessons and activities that reflect various learning styles." Specifically, I was able to work with the counseling center at the school. The counseling center offers numerous different services; they provide mental health assistance, academic and scheduling assistance, career and college coaching, help with adjustment for transfer and new



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students, and additional enrichment opportunities. During my time there, I was able to work mainly with one of the three guidance counselors. My main responsibilities were meeting with transfer students to discuss how they were adjusting. I also was able to meet individually with a student who was experiencing organizational issues and another student who was experiencing stress. My other responsibilities included data collection and documentation, mainly regarding seniors to ensure that they were on the right track to graduate on time. This would sometimes include meeting individually with them to get a sense of what they wanted to do next if they haven't already informed the career counselor, mainly in case they wanted to pursue college, so that they would not miss the deadline to apply. I also was able to meet with various students to discuss what electives they want to take in the upcoming semester to assist with scheduling. A lot of the experience I gained involved clerical work; I was able to make phone calls, send emails, and input and cross-reference data. I also had the opportunity to sit in on staff meetings with the other counselors and faculty.

There were many advantages to working at this site. A main advantage of working at this site was that I was able to have my own office space for the semester. It was beneficial to be able to have a private place to work independently and meet with students when needed. I also was able to gain experience meeting individually with students for various different reasons. I did not previously have any experience with this age group, so I found this to be very beneficial to learn and a valuable challenge. Another big advantage was the staff; my supervisor and all of the counseling staff were extremely accommodating and always willing to help. The environment was always positive, and I never felt uncomfortable asking questions. A slight disadvantage was that there were many times where there was not much for me to do or help with. However, it was a difficult situation because of COVID; throughout the semester, many changes were happening to the school (like students coming back on alternating days, and then four days a week) that the counselors had to adjust to, so it made complete sense that there were times that they weren't sure what I should help with. I was not able to do as much hands-on involvement as I would have liked to due to this, but I am thankful I was able to get any in-person internship experience at all, so I do not consider this to be a major disadvantage.

At this site, I was able to learn how a counseling center works in a high school environment. I did not realize how many resources are available to students and how many different roles are present in just the counseling center alone. For example, I did not realize that the Career Coach was a role specifically to help with college and the workforce; I thought it was only the main guidance counselors that assisted with those subjects before this internship. This broadened my ideas for a future career. Since I know that I would love to work with adolescents or children in a future career, I was encouraged to learn more about roles that I didn't know much about before that exist in a school environment. Overall, even though I am still unsure if school counseling is the right career for me to pursue, I am grateful that I was able to gain this experience. I did not know anything about school counseling before this internship, and I was able to learn so much from this experience. It was clear how much all of the counseling staff cares for their students and want to do their jobs to the best of their ability, and it was an incredible experience to be a part of that environment.