School Counseling at Hansen Elementary

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**School Counseling at Hansen Elementary**

Addi Seybert, Psychology Major

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**Introduction**
Over the course of the Spring 2020 semester, I partnered with Hansen Elementary to fulfill my Psychology Cooperative Education internship. While there, I worked closely with the school counselor (Jen Alexander) to teach children K-6 about things such as emotional well-being, conflict resolution, making goals, and building healthy, lasting relationships. As one of the undergraduate interns, I was able to meet with students one-on-one as well as assist faculty in classroom lessons. Aside from working with students, I was also able to research trauma-sensitivity and its importance in the education system. My role at Hansen has opened my eyes to the world of school counseling and has inspired me to pursue a career in the field.

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**Hansen’s Mission**
- A curriculum that is differentiated and engages all students in 21st century, real-world, meaningful, rigorous and relevant learning opportunities where all students have the opportunity to achieve at high levels.
- Students and staff that are goal-oriented, innovative, collaborative, dependable, and respectful.
- A safe, nurturing environment where all students are successful, sensitivities and its importance in the education system.
- Responsive adults.
- Lunch and planning periods.
- Managed the daily schedule.
- Copied, printed, and sent papers to the print center.
- Updated the “New Friends” board with photos of new students.
- 9 students, K-6.
- Experience such trauma as a child “may directly affect memory, language, emotional, and brain development which interfere with mastery and acquisition of new skills” (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015).

**What I Learned**
This internship has taught me how much I truly love working with children as a role in developing lifetime skills, such as communication or maintaining relationships, is so rewarding. Thanks to my experience at Hansen, I have become much more informed on what it means to be trauma-sensitive. All children deserve the chance to succeed, no matter their backgrounds or past experiences. Likewise, no child should have to worry about dealing with their trauma alone. Schools are a safe space for so many kids, and therefore I hope to advocate for more schools to become trauma-sensitive. I also intend to further my experience in the psychological field by pursuing a master’s degree in school counseling. This internship has truly been the foundation of my future career, and I cannot wait to get started.

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**Position Responsibilities**
- Met one-on-one with assigned students.
- General framework: before meeting, got a run-down of the child’s situation (struggles, concerns, strengths) and discussed the best course of action.
- Course of action: What activity would be best for this child specifically?
- Once baseline was established, I decided how to approach the situation and connect with the child.
- No formal training on how to meet with students.
- Filled in weekly schedule.
- Parent conferences.
- Classroom visits.
- Lunch and planning periods.
- Communicated with parents about child involvement.
- Gained permission to work with their children.
- How the sessions were going, any concerns or questions, etc.
- Sat in on classroom lessons.
- Helped promote student engagement.
- Made “example projects” for reference.
- Maintained projects around the school.
- Sat in on classroom lessons.
- Hung student artwork in the hallways.
- Updated the “New Friends” board with photos of new students and faculty.
- Ensured “River of Feelings” was intact.
- Unboxed food from the food bank and dispersed it to students in need.
- Copied, printed, and sent papers to the print center.
- Helped promote student engagement.
- Made “example projects” for reference.
- Maintained projects around the school.
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**Hansen Pride**
- Positive and Accountable.
- Ready to Learn.
- Trust on My Personal Best.
- Dependable and Respectful.
- Encourage Others to do the Right Thing.

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**The Stats**
- Unpaid undergraduate internship.
- Approximately 7 hours a week for 15 weeks.
- ~105 cumulative hours in total.
- 9 students, K-6.

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**Trauma-Sensitive Schools**
- **Trauma** - "a distressing experience that threatens a person’s actual safety or perceived sense of felt safety to such a degree that it exceeds an individual’s capacity to cope in healthy ways”.
- 1 in 4 students have been negatively impacted by trauma.
- **Experiencing such trauma as a child “may directly affect memory, language, emotional, and brain development which interfere with mastery and acquisition of new skills”** (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015).
- **Trauma-sensitive schools** - provide support to all students so they can learn and thrive in the classroom environment, instead of focusing on their trauma.
- **Promo resilience and success**.
- **Without a trauma-sensitive approach, students are at risk of poor academic performance and increased potential for future absenteeism and drop-outs**.

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**STRIVE Framework**
- **Supportive Trauma Interventions for Educators (STRIVE)**
- **Framework**
  - Emphasizes the importance of...
  - Responsive adults.
  - Children’s ability to have choices and self-regulate.
  - An environment that encourages safety and trust.
- Based on resiliency instead of risk factors.
  - 3 levels of intervention.
  - The individual student.
  - The teacher.
  - The school as a whole.
- Core principles.
  - Increasing teachers’ understanding and awareness of trauma.
  - Providing teachers with concrete strategies and interventions for their classrooms.
  - Improving young children’s ability to access the curriculum.
  - Serves as a much-needed guideline for schools to follow when implementing trauma-sensitivity.
- It is important for educators to be able to recognize triggers and promote regulation within their classrooms.

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**References**

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**Acknowledgements**
I would like to thank Jen Alexander for being such a wonderful mentor. Without her, I would have been completely lost. She has served as an incredible role model, and I hope to one day be half as good a school counselor as she. I’d also like to thank Carolyn Hildebrand for providing me with this opportunity in the first place. She has also been a great source of ongoing support. Thank you both so much!