



# Turner Ashby High School

## Placement Description

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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

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- 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:**



*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 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.

### ***Spring 2020 - Hayley Becker***

My field placement experience this semester was with the counseling department at Turner Ashby High School located in Bridgewater, VA. It is the mission of the counseling center to "help students, parents, and families in any of the following ways: Personal Counseling and Development, Academic Advising, Career Counseling." During my time as an intern, I felt as



though the entire counseling team was dedicated to addressing the needs of these students by providing online and in person resources for students, being available to students when needed, and overall being knowledgeable about how to help any student with whatever need they might have.

Some of the things I was able to experience at TAHS was working closely with students who had recently transferred in as well as students who were failing a course. With the transfer students, I would meet with over 50 students during my time at TAHS and I would speak with them about the various challenges that transferring brings. We would talk about how classes and the academic side of school was going as well as how they had adjusted to making friends, getting involved, and how their life at home was. Some students responded very well and were extremely successful with their transition, making our meetings short. Whereas, other students struggled significantly both academically and socially. If that were the case we would problem solve through those issues and I would connect them to resources both in and outside of school that would potentially ease their transition. When meeting with students who were failing a course, I had a different approach. I would study their grades ahead of time before meeting with the student to see what area they could improve in. Some students struggled to turn things in where others needed to focus on understanding the content of the class. Then when the student arrived I talked them through what class they were struggling with, brainstormed solutions to bring their grades up, and even connected them to online resources that might help them at home.

Another area of the counseling center I assisted with was scheduling. In February the counselors at TAHS were extremely focused on scheduling all 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students for the following year which can be a daunting task. I was able to assist students in creating their schedule that best fit their academic and post-high school career goals by finding classes that interest them and would help them gain great experience. My favorite experience that I had at TAHS was the bi-monthly student study meetings. In these meetings I observed various school staff such as the assistant principal, school psychologist, special education teacher, regular education teachers, counselors, and much more meet with students and sometimes their parents about various issues the student may be having and if there are services out there that can help the student do better in school. I enjoyed this experience the most because I got to see the collaboration it takes within a school setting to help a child become successful and I always found it extremely interesting the way the team solved problems and was able to help the students who presented issues.

Overall, TAHS was a great site to work at. Some advantages of the site was that I had access to my own computer and meeting area so when I was meeting with students about private matters, such as failing grades, we were able to do so in a manner that made the student feel more comfortable. Another advantage to being placed at TAHS was the "hands off" attitude my supervisor had given me. She would approach me with a project that needed to be worked on or she wanted my input on and gave me a lot of freedom to take the project the way I envisioned it which was an exciting and interesting experience. Of course feedback was provided throughout my time at an intern, but majority of the time when I was working on something I had the ability to complete a project the way I viewed it without too many parameters. In addition, I never felt too overwhelmed with the workload that was presented to me by my supervisor or the other counselors and was excited when they asked for my opinion on various cases or topics.



I chose to be placed at TAHS because I have always had the dream and goal of becoming a school counselor. The semester before I had been placed in an elementary school counseling setting and was looking to gain more experience at a different level of the education system before starting graduate school. During my time at TAHS I would compare my experiences to the ones I had at the elementary school and I learned it's like comparing apples to oranges. The needs of the students at TAHS were vastly different from those of the elementary school I worked at in the past. This taught me the value of flexibility especially in a counseling setting. The ability to adjust to the needs of your client, your co-workers, and your school culture is a valuable skill that I will take with me moving forward in my career.

The part of my field placement experience where I saw the most growth was working on my contribution project. I became extremely passionate about reducing poor academic achievement and subsequent dropout rates because I had worked so closely with so many students who were struggling academically. Therefore, for my project I researched some social risk factors that negatively influence academic achievement such as trauma, mental health, and school mobility. By understanding and identifying these risk factors in students, educators can begin to explore options such as an early warning system, positive school climate, and accurate interventions that will address the risk factors within each student. The final portion of my project identified two research-based intervention strategies that have worked specifically for students with social risk factors. I wanted to bring more education on this topic in a cohesive presentation for the school staff members at TAHS in order for them to begin to reduce the amount of students with poor academic achievement. Overall, I enjoyed my time working with the TAHS counseling staff members and would recommend this site to others looking for a school counseling experience in a high school setting.

### ***Spring 2020 - Erin Hartin***

Turner Ashby is located in Bridgewater, Virginia and is home to approximately 1,000 students. The school consists of 51% female enrollment, 19% minority, and holds a 91% rate of student graduation. Turner Ashby's primary mission is to provide an environment for students which allows equal opportunity for them to reach their full potential. I witnessed these values being upheld through classroom visits which consisted of loosely structured classrooms and lesson plans meant to encourage discussion, socialization, creativity, and the sharing of ideas. Additionally, the school provides each student with a Chrome Book in order to access the school web page and homework assignments. The counseling center further champions this sentiment by helping the students, parents, and families through personal counseling and development, academic advising, and career advising. I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to work in the counseling center at Turner Ashby this semester, where I worked individually with students, teachers, and counselors.

My main responsibility while at Turner Ashby was meeting one-on-one with transfer students and academically at-risk students. These initial sessions with students operated as somewhat of an in-take interview style meeting, which grew my understanding of gathering useful and important information in a counseling setting. It was in these meetings that I was able



to apply many of the concepts that I learned in counseling psychology in order to address problems and find solutions. I was allowed a lot of independence and this encouraged me to be self-driven. Throughout the semester, I worked with another JMU student via email, by meeting with students on different days to get through our list of transfers and failing grades and maintaining an updated document containing notes and information and from this experience I grew valuable teamwork and collaborative skills.

Throughout the semester, I was also given some clerical obligations and projects such as cross-analyzing the Rockingham County and Turner Ashby course offering list, ensuring that video files on the school's web page were functioning, and inputting information from student meetings to share with the other field placement student. These tasks gave me insight into some of the behind the scenes work that is accomplished by school counselors on a regular basis. I also attended regular assemblies which addressed a number of topics such as PSAT scores, selecting courses for the upcoming school year, and career and college planning. I was thankful to have a gradual ease into working individually with students as well, as I felt that it gave me more insight into the atmosphere and experience of Turner Ashby before I was fully immersed in meeting with its students in a private setting.

In addition to my normal responsibilities, I had an ongoing project I worked on which consisted of categorizing the elective course page in congruence with the Holland's Codes personality types. During this assignment, I had the opportunity to seek advice from and work with the career coach located in the counseling office in order to more effectively provide a planning resource for the students. From this task I developed my computer skills by learning how to create hyperlinks, creating an inviting and user-friendly web page, and using Apple computer technology.

A big benefit from this field site is having your own office space to work in and meet with students privately. In addition to the personal space, I had access to the school database which allowed for me to create a schedule for my day to meet with students based off their class times. I was able to better assist them, as I had the ability to look into their grade book and notice any patterns or issues we could address to more effectively make a plan in order for them to improve their grade. Much of my academic advising for students consisted of pinpointing the problem, whether it was test scores or assignments, and then building a plan accordingly whether it was time management, managing additional workload such as after school tutoring, or making up missing assignments. I was able to reach out to many of the teachers of students whom were failing, so that we could more effectively assist the student in rectifying the issue. This also led to me visiting the classrooms of students on multiple occasions, wherein I would take observational notes on any behavioral issues I may have noticed, but also be better able to get a sense of the learning environment at Turner Ashby. Not only having access to an amazingly helpful resource such as an office and computer, but also the entire counseling office and the counselor's in it is another great benefit. Everyone is extremely helpful and open to sharing insight and advice with anything you may seek help with.

The only recommendation I would make to those interested in Turner Ashby's counseling center is to plan their schedule in way which would allow them to be present at their site twice a week. Turner Ashby operates on an alternating schedule, so it can sometimes be difficult to plan to meet with a specific student if you are only available to meet one day out of the week. In



addition to having an easier time with planning around a schedule, there are also greater opportunities to benefit from the entire experience when you can be present twice a week, including being able to connect better with the students and staff.

I feel that it is important to note that my internship occurred amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, and that my last day at the site was in attending the faculty meeting to decide what to do and how to best support their students. I was able to observe the faculty, both teachers and counselors, brainstorm how to effectively teach during the possibility of school closings and observe as they purposefully prioritized the student's safety and wellbeing above all other issues. I regretfully did not get to formally say goodbye to the counselors I worked along side this semester, but I am confident that they are working very hard to take care of their students. It is encouraging to know that even during a global crisis, Turner Ashby is upholding its mission statement.

I am so grateful to have had this chance at Turner Ashby and to experience what I hope to be doing in the near future. Although my career path is currently focused on clinical therapy, I feel that this site gave me knowledge which will prepare me for one-on-one settings in a therapeutic, problem-solving, and goal-oriented sense. This site is perfect for anyone who may be interested in counseling or therapy, especially school counseling. It is an amazing opportunity to learn hands-on, there is enough independence to feel encouraged to learn on your own, but enough resources and help available to not feel unprepared to do so.

### ***Fall 2019 – Bill Coombe***

This semester I completed my field placement experience at Turner Ashby high school. Turner Ashby is a public high school located in Bridgewater, Virginia; approximately fifteen minutes from JMU's campus. It is the primary goal of Turner Ashby to see that each student that comes through the school graduates. This is especially relevant for the guidance department that I specifically worked within. During my time at TA I was given the opportunity to work side by side with the three guidance counselors as well as the career coach within the department on a day-to-day basis. My responsibilities at the site ranged from individual work much of the time, as well as collaboration with the other professionals in the building. Some of my primary tasks and responsibilities include: meeting one on one with new and transfer students, holding one on one meetings with students to discuss academic performance, helping to organize a freshman field trip, lead classroom presentations, attend "student study" meetings, conduct mental health research, work within the PowerSchool system to locate and learn about students, conduct PSAT prep and proctor the exam, provide informational sessions on scholarship information, and other various tasks that may come up on particular days. As stated, here at TA there are ample opportunities to have a direct impact on the students and work done within the guidance department. I was given meaningful tasks that I know was of assistance to the individuals that I was working with each day I was on site.

This site as a whole really has a lot of advantages and lots to offer a student who may choose this school as their field placement site. One major advantage is that you are given your own personal workspace for the entire semester. This workplace is essentially a small office containing a computer and multiple chairs for yourself as well as a couple for students to utilize



when they are meeting with you. Having your own area to work is a great asset and allows you to better focus and make the most of your time during the day. Another advantage of this site is the freedom you are given. This is much to the credit of the supervisor and other faculty within the department. During my time at TA I was always asked if there was anything that I would personally like to do or if there was anything that I was not given the opportunity to do that I would like to during my time there. The staff was always open to hear my opinion and I always felt like I could voice my thoughts and that I would be heard and valued. It was made known during my interview that my position at the school would be very hands-on, in other words I would constantly be working or kept busy with something. This turned out to be very true and I appreciated the workload I was given. I typically always had a task or ongoing work to complete while I was there on site. I felt the workload was very fair. I was never overwhelmed or stressed out while working and I was also never bored or desperate for work either. I am very thankful for the individuals that I worked with on a weekly basis and many of these advantages that this site offers are due to a very strong group of people within the guidance department at Turner Ashby. It was a great experience to be able to contribute to the work done there during the semester.

My primary reason for picking this site in the first place was because of my intended career plans. It has been my goal for a while now to pursue a career as a school counselor, preferably at the high school level. Therefore, I selected Turner Ashby high school as my first choice, interviewed, and was fortunate enough to be offered the position. I went into this experience hoping to gain a good bit of knowledge about this profession, develop some skills that would be crucial for this kind of work, and really just get a feel if this is something that I could see myself doing in the future. After completing my field placement, I feel much stronger about my desire to work in this field. I really enjoyed each day I got to spend at TA and along with that I feel like I was able to develop and strengthen some of the primary skills that are needed and used everyday on the job. During my time there I improved on my organizational skills, I was able to develop the ability to adapt and work with very different and unique kinds of people, I was able to improve upon my public speaking abilities in both large and small group settings and lastly, I improved upon my ability to think quickly and make decisions on the spot. I definitely walked away from this experience with a vast array of knowledge that I can carry with me for the rest of my schooling and professional career.

The last part of my field placement involved my contribution project. For my project I chose to expand upon several of my meetings I had earlier in the semester with some of the new and transfer students. I selected three individuals to come back in for two more one on one meetings and see if, together, we could work through a specific issue or problem they have been having. Some of the main problems were academic struggles in a particular class or two, problems with their social life, organizational issues, etc. I decided to create a template for these additional meetings but I really put them in the student's hands in order to ensure they would get the most out of our time together that they possibly could. As they wrapped up I felt good about the progress that those particular students had made and I really think they benefitted simply from my advice and having someone they could talk things through with. These meetings for the project, along with the other meetings I held during the semester were not only a benefit for the students but me as well. Overall, I have nothing but praise and positive experiences to talk about coming out of my placement at Turner Ashby high school. For other students interested in a



career path in this field or anyone just looking for good useful experience completing work in an environment like this one, I would highly recommend it.

*Spring 2018 – Marybeth Ward*

During the Spring semester of 2018, I was allowed the opportunity to complete my field placement experience at Turner Ashby High School in Bridgewater, VA. The mission statement of Turner Ashby High School is to “create and maintain an environment that allows opportunities for all students to work to their potential; prepare all students 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.” This mission is essential to the entirety of the high school, but especially to the counseling department. The department serves a diverse set of students who strive for a diverse set of goals. Whether work or college is the student’s end goal, the counselors at Turner Ashby help their students reach their full potential in order to achieve those goals.

During my time at Turner Ashby I was given a large array of duties to carry out every day. One duty that I did almost every day was meeting with students who were failing classes. I met with each student at least twice during the semester. At our first meeting I would help them get down to the reason that they were failing the class, whether it was not completing the work or difficulty with the course material. I then suggested strategies they could use to help improve their grade including turning in late work, getting organized, or meeting with teachers after school to get help with the material. Our second meeting involved seeing where the student was in the class and whether their plan was to either pull their grade up, take summer school, or retake the class next year. It was important to find out what each student’s plan was in order to ensure that they were thinking about how they would like to handle the class. I also had the opportunity to meet with some transfer students. I would discuss how they were adjusting to the new environment, if they were making friends, and how classes were going. I also got to meet with 3 students whose parents had reached out for help with organizational skills. Each of the students was doing more poorly than usual in some of their classes and their parents felt that if they got organized they may be able to perform better in their classes. I got to meet with those students multiple times throughout the semester and got to form relationships with them. We worked on organizational strategies for writing down and completing homework, as well as studying for tests and turning in late work. I really enjoyed getting to know these students because I felt like I was able to make an impact not only on their academic performance, but also in their lives. I enjoyed building rapport with them and talking about their interests with them while also helping them with school.

At the beginning of the semester I was also able to help with presentations about class registration. I got to do a portion of the presentation that explained graduation requirements for the standard and advanced diploma. I also got to answer students’ questions about registration. This opportunity was especially helpful for my public speaking skills. It allowed me to get much more comfortable presenting in front of a small crowd. I was also able to go to Wilbur Pence middle school to help register 8<sup>th</sup> graders for classes. I helped make the registration process as



easy as possible for the counselors by organizing the way students came to meet with the counselors, preparing materials for the students to bring with them to the meeting, and answering any questions they had about their classes. I also got to observe a class called study skills. Study skills is a class for 9<sup>th</sup> graders who are at risk for failing their classes that gives them the opportunity to learn life and school skills, as well as time to work on homework for classes they are not doing well in. I got to help answer questions for students and present two 20-minute lesson plans I prepared about healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships.

This placement allowed me to work on one-on-one communication with students in an educational setting. I enjoyed how hands-on the position was. While I did observe meetings and perform some administrative duties such as organizing files and making spreadsheets, the majority of my work consisted of direct interactions with students. I was also given a lot of freedom in my position. I was given lists of students to meet with and then was left to meet with them whenever I felt it was necessary. I enjoyed the ability to structure my own day to meet with as many students as possible. While I was given freedom, I was also offered guidance. All of the counselors at Turner Ashby support and help each other, and they did the same for me. The whole department was always open to offering help and advice when I needed it. I am so thankful that I felt truly welcomed as part of the community in the counseling department.

One of my favorite things about this experience was the variety of students I had the opportunity to work with. I enjoyed the different personalities I encountered throughout my experience and learning how to build relationships with each different student. I went into the experience afraid that students wouldn't want to listen to me because I felt I looked too similar to them in age, but I found that it helped me relate to them in a way that was different from their relationships with other adults. I got to use my recent experiences in high school to relate to their problems and express strategies I used in my own experience to help them with their work. This helped me gain confidence in my ability to interact with students while holding a position of authority. My ability to relate to students even ended up being one of my favorite parts of the experience.

My experience at Turner Ashby taught me what the field of school counseling is like. It's fast-paced and everyday is different. Through my experience, I also learned that school counseling is a possible future career for me. I learned that I enjoyed building relationships with students and the duties involved with being a school counselor. I learned how much I love the sense of community in the counseling department. Everyone shares duties and helps each other as much as they can, and I would like to build that same type of community in my own future career, whether that ends up being as a school counselor or some other career path. I recommend this experience to anyone who is interested in the school counseling field, especially if they have never worked with a high school aged population before. It gave me true insight into the daily life as a counselor and had a large impact on my future career choice.

### ***Fall 2017 – Hannah Dowdy***

This past semester I was afforded the opportunity to shadow the school counselors at Turner Ashby High School (TA). TA is located in Bridgewater, Virginia, and serves roughly



1000 students annually. The school consists of 19% total minority, 32% economically disadvantaged, and 48% female student enrollment. The school wide mission statement is as follows, "To create and maintain an environment that allows opportunities for all students to work to their potential; To prepare all students fully to enter the workforce or college; In recognizing that everyone learns in different ways, to prepare our faculty to implement lessons and activities that reflect various learning styles." The counseling center's mission statement is to, "Help students, parents, and families in personal counseling and development, academic advising, and career counseling."

The school counselors at TA have seemingly an abundance of diverse and essential responsibilities with a variety of populations. Some of their primary obligations include short-term counseling, enrollment of new and transfer students, scheduling, college and career preparation and advising, parent, student, agency, and teacher consultations, grade level presentations, test-proctoring, and informational and educational seminars and meetings. They act as messengers, advocates, problem solvers, and of course, counselors. Some necessary skills and traits they embody include ability to empathize and communicate effectively, engaged and active listening, critical thinking, and collaboration.

Some of my responsibilities included meetings with transfer and failing students, clerical work such as alphabetization, organization, and data input, test proctoring, and chaperoning. My meetings with transfer students consisted of discussion about their transition, options for further engagement in the school community such as clubs and sports, and oftentimes discussion about life in their previous home and the difficulties that have come along with starting over. Meetings with failing students consisted of pinpointing problem behaviors, namely not studying or completing homework, and then brainstorming options for improvement, such as after school tutoring or simply turning in late assignments. I really enjoyed these meetings because I was able to build rapport with students through vulnerability and understanding and then provide resources and advice to help them succeed. Clerical work occurred primarily on the school wide database called PowerSchool and consisted of graduation tracking. Test proctoring occurred for students who had missed the original date for PSAT. Lastly, in the middle of the semester, I chaperoned a field trip for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students to Massanutten Technical Center, the alternative education program for students interested in technical or trade professions.

My favorite aspects of my position as an intern included shadowing conflict resolution between students and a counselor, weekly intervention meetings between the administration, several teachers, and the counselors for at risk students, and lastly, my participation in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade study skills class in which I was able to present two lesson plans I designed. The conflict resolutions consisted of the listening, documentation, and mediation of issues between two or more students while the intervention meetings involved brainstorming solutions for individual students that were dealing with issues ranging from struggling severely in academics, to mental illnesses, and dysfunctional home life environments. Lastly, the 9<sup>th</sup> grade study skills class, designed for students at risk for failing or dropout, sought to foster productive study habits and life goals to promote academic and personal wellness. The lesson plans I created aimed at increasing student motivation and consisted of a combination of teaching and group activities.

My position at TA was active and I was able to work directly with students and staff to learn more about what it means to be a school counselor. My experience was especially



advantageous because I learned immense and invaluable information about the public school system from a perspective beyond that of a student. It was interesting to become informed about the issues of secondary education systems in Virginia and in Rockingham County specifically, such as student under-preparedness for life after high school and an unexplained apathy for academic success. In addition, it was fascinating to witness real life examples of student issues and the ways in which a school reacts and responds to best provide care for the student. A limitation of the site was that because of the nature of my age and qualifications (or lack thereof), I was not able to sit in on or provide one-on-one counseling to students in distress or in need of assistance.

From my time at TA I learned to have confidence in a position of authority, I fine-tuned my public speaking skills, and as mentioned, I learned a lot about the ins and outs of a school counselor's responsibilities and about the public school system. The school counselors at TA were incredibly kind and offered wisdom and guidance for me as I considered and deliberated my future and career endeavors and perhaps unknowingly helped confirm my career goal to become a school counselor. Some days I sat in their offices to discuss life plans and options, to learn more about certain topics mentioned in counseling meetings, and even get their perspective on how to handle and navigate proposed situations one might encounter as a school counselor. It was so helpful and informative to talk to them about their experiences and receive insight on my own and I am incredibly thankful for those moments! Overall, their investment and knowledge about their students and their concern for their development and well being was inspiring, and I was encouraged by the tangible opportunities to make a difference. I am extremely grateful for TA and my experience as an intern in the counseling center and am eager to continue my pursuit of becoming a school counselor. I recommend TA for anyone interested in school counseling; the site is everything you might need to learn more about the profession and more.

### ***Spring 2017 – Sam Henkel***

The mission of the Turner Ashby High School counseling department is to help students, parents, and families with personal counseling and development, academic advising, and career counseling issues related to the student. Many students will come in to meet with counselors and for many reasons. A lot of them are seeking academic advising such as registering for classes and getting help with study techniques. Another common reason for counselor visits is when students are seeking personal counseling when dealing with personal issues.

My experiences and opportunities at the site varied over the semester. I met with many students throughout my time at Turner Ashby. For example, I met with two students every other week to help them learn how to study for tests and organize their time well in order to complete their homework when they get home after school and practice. Another big experience I had was working with a class of about 20 students called "study skills". In this class, I got to work on activities with the students that helped them set and prioritize life goals, work on study habits, and finish homework they needed help with.

Something that I really liked about Turner Ashby High School and interning in the counseling department was that the counselors, teachers, and administrators were so helpful. One



major advantage was that they put me right into the middle of everything right away. On my first day, I was immediately meeting with students and learning the ropes of school counseling.

I learned how to meet with students individually and present in front of big classes. Both of these skills will help me in school counseling in the future, and I had many opportunities to work on both of these skills. It was very valuable for me to practice these skills because they can be weaknesses for me. I am excited to continue to learn how to be a school counselor!

### *Fall 2016 – Samantha Rohrbacher*

During the fall of 2016, I had the opportunity to work as an assistant in the school counseling office at Turner Ashby High School in Bridgewater as my field placement position. At Turner Ashby, it is our mission to serve every student, parent, or other family member with personal counseling and development, advise them of academic opportunities and necessities, and aid in their career counseling. Each of the women whom work in the counseling department has a special quality, and I believe I have been lucky to work with each of them. In the counseling department, there are three school counselors, one career counselor, a registrar, a challenge coordinator, and a secretary. There is a motto we share in our office, and one that is followed every day: “We are a team. We are all counselors for all TAHS students. We understand that students may prefer a counselor other than the one to whom they are assigned. We work together to make sure student needs are met!” I have been fortunate to help in the production of this belief by working with students to accomplish what they need if their assigned counselors are not available, and vice versa.

During my time at Turner Ashby, I had a wealth of responsibilities, every day held a new opportunity, and still, I never felt overwhelmed. My most common responsibility was to meet with students one-on-one for a variety of different topics. One reason for meeting was to review which type of diploma the new freshmen were seeking to achieve so that I could put this information into PowerSchool (the system the school uses to keep track of student demographic information and grades) and so the students were aware of exactly which classes and credits they need to graduate to receive their diploma. Another reason that I met with the students is if they had recently transferred to Turner Ashby. Since I was a fall field placement student, there were a significant number of students whom I met with who had just began their first year at Turner Ashby. During the time that the students came in, I had the chance to ask them how they felt about the new school, what they liked or disliked, and we brainstormed opportunities for them to make their experience at Turner Ashby the best it could be. Lastly, about halfway through my time at Turner Ashby, the first quarter grades for the students were released and part of my responsibility was to meet with certain students who received a failing grade. While meeting with these students, we spoke about what they think happened for them to have received that grade, and developed strategies to avoid this from happening in the future. At the beginning, when I was told one of my responsibilities was going to be meeting one-on-one with students, I was nervous; I was not sure how I was supposed to lead the conversation with students and aid in



their production of positive goals to improve their performance academically and socially. Luckily, after the first meeting, I grew instantly confident in my abilities to help the students. I realized that I was able to use my past experience in school to not only help them achieve better outcomes in their own academics, but also in social settings. Overtime, I became excited when I had the chance to meet with students to help them better themselves, and I no longer became nervous when doing so. Throughout these one-on-one meetings with students, I received the opportunity to get to know students on a personal level and help them with any problems they were having in the school. By doing so, I feel as though my skill levels have grown, and I am now more confident in my ability to lead meetings and help students to find productive goals for the improvement of any problem.

Furthermore, during my time at Turner Ashby, I was asked to assist in a class called "Study Skills". The purpose of this class is to provide an outlet for students with behavioral problems so that they have a chance to have a break during the day to participate in simple lessons, go outside, and make up missing homework or tests. Another part of this class for me, was to develop lesson plans for the students for every other Wednesday; this could have been anything from a team building exercise to goal setting. Through this class, I was able to help the students find ways in which they could set and accomplish goals as a way to motivate themselves. At the beginning of November, I led an activity in which the students were asked to set goals for the next week, next month, and by the end of the year, and as each deadline approached we reviewed those goals to see if they accomplished them, and what we could do to make sure that they did for next time. It was exciting to see students achieve new goals in their lives!

When thinking back on my time at Turner Ashby, I can genuinely say that I felt like a part of the family. The staff, especially my supervisor, Candy Martin, welcomed me with open arms and truly wanted to see me grow through this experience. Candy is also the director of the school counseling department at Turner Ashby, but you could hardly tell that she is anyone's boss. She treats each of her employees as an equal and always makes sure to ask their opinions on issues to make sure the best possible solution can be made for students. Each of the staff members was there for me if I ever had a concern or question. Through each of the women's friendliness, I was never afraid to ask for help if I needed it because I knew they only wanted to see me achieve in this position. Even with this level of comfort, I was able to learn how to work more independently than I ever have. Sometimes, there were days in which neither Candy, nor the other counselors, had any work for me to do. During days such as these, I had the opportunity to think of my own tasks, which I believe aided in my growth as an intern. From having this chance to grow, I became more excited and eager to go to Turner Ashby throughout the semester because I knew I would be learning more about the field I love. Now that my time is done, I feel as though my JMU experience will not be the same; Turner Ashby and the staff there have become a significant part of this experience.

Through my time at Turner Ashby High School, I have only seen positive changes in my outlook on my career goals. I came to JMU thinking that I wanted to be a guidance counselor, and I am extremely happy that I have had this experience in my life. While I am still interested in



school counseling, I have also opened my mind to a few other occupations, and I am excited to see what my experience at Turner Ashby will help me achieve in my future careers!

### *Spring 2016 - Chloe Gay*

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

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

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



may not have met otherwise. It was during this time that I started to feel respected around the school and that my students began greeting me in the hallways.

On top of my two major projects, I also performed many duties that are standard year round. I created a bulletin board for the counseling department on the FAFSA and I met with transfer students to check on their transition to TA. I attended a faculty meeting and a SOAR meeting for students who will need scholarships to college. I also gave classroom presentations on graduation requirements and the courses that are available for each grade level, which helped me with my public speaking and professional presentation skills.

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

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

*Fall 2015 – Anna Lacy*



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

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

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

Another experience I engaged in at T.A. was proctoring the PSAT with another counselor. In mid-October, the students who were registered for the PSAT were split up among the three counselors at T.A. to take the test. Each counselor was assigned to a room and was in charge of proctoring the test for around 40 students. Due to this large number of students, the counselors needed help to most efficiently administer the test. Since I was present on the day of the test, I



was assigned to one of the counselors and aided her in administering the test. For five hours, we worked with the students to ensure that they were in the most conducive testing environment possible to achieve academic success. We read off instructions, kept time, answered questions, and supervised the students both during the test and the breaks to ensure no one was cheating. It was a long, yet rewarding day, and I learned quite a bit through the experience.

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

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

*Fall 2015 - Kevin Di Fazio*

Turner Ashby High School's mission is to provide every student who walks through its doors with an opportunity to learn and experience education in a way that benefits them the



most. The counseling center, the part of Turner Ashby that I worked in, specifically aims to provide both academic and emotional support in order to assist students in making the most of their time while at the high school. As an intern at this site, I was afforded opportunities I honestly could only have dreamed about as an undergraduate student. I was able to meet one on one with a number of students of differing backgrounds. From time to time it was just a routine check-in with students; get to know them, check their grades offer them some advice for improving their performance. But other times, I was tasked with making a more meaningful impact than that. One student that I worked with was especially disruptive, and I was given the task of making a connection with him. After getting to talk with him, I was given permission to arrange for the student to meet with a military recruiter in hopes of correcting some of the disruptive behavior. I was free to come up with the solution on my own and provided the resources to make that solution happen. I was also allowed to participate in Turner Ashby's weekly Student Assistance Program meetings, which were meetings designed to bring attention to students that were struggling academically, emotionally, or occasionally had extenuating out of school circumstances and formulate plans on how to best help these students. When I would attend, I was taken seriously when I brought up suggestions or asked questions, and I felt like I was an equal among my peers rather than just "the intern".

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

One of the biggest things I learned is that you have to check your problems at the door. This is the case with any job, but especially in a field like this. I talked to students that were



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

Turner Ashby is a phenomenal site and I would recommend it to anyone who is even considering pursuing school counseling. The one catch is you have to be willing to be independent. You can't go in to Turner Ashby expecting to be told what to do at every step of the way. Somewhere along the line you have to be willing to take charge of your own experience. This is not a site where you can observe and learn and if you aren't able to work on your feet or learn on the fly, I definitely would avoid this placement. But if you are capable of adapting to situations as they arise and want a hands on work experience that gives you the freedom to make of it what you will, then this site will give you everything you want and more.

### ***Spring 2015 - Lindsey Boggess***

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

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

Another large responsibility I had as an intern in the counseling center was to meet with students individually. I mostly met with transfer and F-List students. I received a list at the beginning of the semester of students who had recently transferred to TAHS and it was my responsibility to meet with them and see how they were adjusting to their new school environment. I also met with students who were failing a class or classes. These meetings



consisted of checking in with their progress in the class, seeing what was causing them problems, and finding a way to resolve those problems. By meeting with all these students individually, it significantly helps the counselors since they have so many other tasks that need to be completed throughout the workday.

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

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

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

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



working on, however if I ever needed something to do in my down time, I could always find something if I just spoke to any of the counselors.

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

My field placement experience was a wonderful time of personal and professional growth. While I did face challenges, it was extremely rewarding to overcome them and learn in the process. I developed skills that I am able to carry with me in whatever my future endeavors may be. I learned so much through the relationships I made with the school counseling staff and would not have wanted to work at any other site.

### *Fall 2014 – Alexis Morse*

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

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

In my field placement experience I have had the opportunity to become involved in a variety of roles and responsibilities that allowed me to better understand the duties of a school counselor. I was responsible for meeting with 45 transfer students who came from surrounding school districts, other states, and even other countries. My job was to meet with them 2-3 times during the semester to discuss the transition and potential resources that might help integrate



them into the school community. I would often learn about their background, goals for the future, and how they each found their place at Turner Ashby. In addition, I met with many students from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade class in order to gather information regarding their diploma status and in doing so, had the chance to talk with these students about their transition to high school. When the first term grade reports came out I met with over 50 students who received an F letter grade to discuss the poor grade and the reasons why they were falling behind in the class. We also discussed study strategies they could employ to improve the next term and their approach to the class work. With all these student meetings I screened my conversations for students that may need more individualized attention from their counselor. When this was the case, I would have a conversation with that student's counselor to discuss my concerns.

Another big role of my experience at Turner Ashby was presenting in classes regarding grade-related topics. For example, I talked with 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes about the types of diplomas they could work towards and visited 12<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms to discuss the college application process and career counseling available to them. I joined one of the school counselors and either helped them present the material or helped coordinate handouts and transcripts for easy facilitation of the presentation. My final contribution project required me to present in classrooms so I also had the opportunity to visit some of the elective classes and present on interview skills and professionalism. This taught me how to control a boisterous classroom and design content to facilitate volunteering and discussion from students. I learned more about the material school counselors are responsible for informing students of and realized the task of presenting this information to students sometimes unfamiliar to the counselor.

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

The biggest advantage to fulfilling my field placement experience at Turner Ashby is the extent to which I was taken seriously and treated like the other members on staff. There are numerous opportunities to know students and be of support to them. If the school counselor profession is a career path one may be considering, the experience at this site will offer the full gamut of responsibilities. Most importantly, the school counselors are nothing but supportive and



available to help. The only limitation that may hinder this experience is the tricky class schedule. This can create delays when trying to meet with students, especially if they cannot make a meeting. This problem, however, is one the school counselors deal with too and is part of the job.

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

### *Spring 2014 – Kerin Sweezey*

I am extremely thankful for the wonderful experience I had this semester in the counseling office of Turner Ashby High School. The mission of the counseling center at TAHS is that they aim to help students, parents, and families in areas such as personal counseling, academic advising, and career counseling. The counseling office consists of nine dedicated faculty members, including the three TAHS counselors. There are also two receptionists, a career coach, a challenge program coordinator, and a registrar. There is also a counselor for the Crossroads Counseling Center who helps students access resources in the Bridgewater community. It is obvious that TAHS is a tight-knit community, and it is apparent that those who are in that community truly care about one another and take pride in their work.

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



students and by the last lesson, I feel as though they had been impacted by what they had learned from the lessons.

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

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

### ***Spring 2014 – Rachel Calire***

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