

Field Experience at Catalyst High School

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Spring, 2018

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To complete the Field Experience requirement, I choose to volunteer at the alternative high school in Newberg. While there I mentored students, helped in classrooms, and shadowed one of the counselors every week. I heard of Catalyst from another psychology major, and from another student who was doing her internship there for the social work major requirement.

Placement and Activities

As stated above, I heard about Catalyst from other students who were already doing work at the high school. Before officially deciding on the site, I shadowed one of the other interns. This allowed me to get a feel for the atmosphere of the school, and while I was there, the environment of the school was over flowing with support. There were multiple encouraging posters that were made by the students on the walls and the teachers/staff themselves were all welcoming and more than happy to answer any questions I had.

Once I experienced the positivity of the site, I knew that it was where I wanted to complete my hours. The activities I did there included weekly mentoring meetings with students. We would sit together for 30 minutes to an hour depending on how comfortable with missing class they were. Conversation topics ranged from issues with friends all the way to helping them apply for jobs. I also helped in classrooms, and shadowed one of the counselors. I choose to shadow a school counselor because I was interested in seeing if being a school counselor was something I was interested in.

Reaction to Experiences

By being at Catalyst, I had multiple experiences that I wasn't expecting to happen. One of these instances was when one of my mentees came out as trans. I was surprised but I listened to what they had to say about their experience. Afterwards, I met with one of the school

counselors and my professor to discuss how I handled the situation. I wanted to make sure that I responded correctly and correct any mistakes if I had made any.

On a more general level, I learned and grew in my personal strengths and knowledge by being at the school. From minor interactions with the students to big events, I learned that I can't be afraid to speak up and ask questions and to seek support from supervisors. The staff at the school was supportive and understanding when I had questions or concerns and gave answers with no judgment or annoyance like I was afraid they would. I also learned to be self-motivated by finding tasks I could do in the school without relying on someone to tell me what to do with my time there.

Field Experience Goals

I feel that my goals were pretty well met while being at Catalyst. One goal I had was to work on having students, both the students I mentored and any that I tried to assist in class, feel comfortable with interacting with me. This took patience and empathy over the course of the semester that I was there. At first I struggled to interact with the students because I didn't want to force the interactions on them, and so when they snapped at me or pushed me away I quickly left the interaction feeling hurt. Over time, I came to be able to better read the students and to figure out which ones actually didn't want any interaction, and those that were too afraid to approach me. The most rewarding thing for me, was when the students would approach me in the halls on their own to greet me, or just have a quick conversation.

Influences of Other Coursework and Faith

Two of my courses that stand out the most as being influential were the adolescent development and counseling courses. The adolescent development class gave me a better understanding of the age group I was working with. Counseling connected because it gave me a

better idea of how to communicate with the kids I work with such as asking open ended questions, or focusing on the cognitive content.

I did not grow up in a very religious household so I'm not entirely sure how the Christian faith ties into my perspective on my field experience. I think it makes me question things because I wonder why the students have to go through what they do, but I try to just be positive and help them where I can. I also do my best to stay understanding and not act on judgements just because those I interact with might have different views or choose different lifestyles than what I would personally choose.

Future Plans

My future plan, is to hopefully become a marriage and family counselor, but I chose to do my field experience at Catalyst because I was also interested in looking into the school counseling career. To do this I shadowed one of the counselors at the school once a week, and learned that she does more jobs than what I thought a school counselor did (making schedules for both the school and kids, handling conflicts, etc.). This experience didn't change my mind, but it did broaden my view of what kinds of careers there are in the field. It also helped me to learn that I enjoy working with teens, and maybe in the future I can continue volunteering with the age group.

Conclusion

Over all, I believe that being at Catalyst was the best place for me to have completed by field experience requirement. I had a lot of personal growth happen, and learned how to apply skills that I learned in classes to real life situations. I also learned that while I haven't changed my mind about pursuing a career in marriage and family counseling, I did learn that I have a passion for working with teens and hope to continue to do so in the future.