Cooperative Experience

This semester I had the wonderful opportunity through the cooperative education course to work with the counseling team at Cedar Falls High School, and specifically Andrew Eisenman. He was gracious enough to take me under his wing and provide me with hands-on experience in my future career field. The knowledge and experiences gained from this Co-op is priceless, and I will carry it with me through my graduate studies and beyond.

CFHS Mission Statement and Vision

“Educating each student to be a lifelong learner and a caring, responsible citizen.”

“Every student, every day.”

CFHS Counseling Team

Erin Gardner
Counselor

Andrew Eisenman
Counselor

Susan Langan
Counselor

Carrie Dieken
Counselor

Tracy Javellena
Counseling Office Secretary

Academic Interventions

A large part of a school counselor’s job is to help ensure the academic success of their students.

One of the ways that is achieved is through various academic interventions. 504 plans (accommodations), Individualized Learning Plans, and classrooms and periods in the day dedicated to a specific class with a faculty member available to help students called Academic Zone

After a discussion with Mr. Eisenman, I offered to help with academic interventions, specifically for students in Introduction to Psychology and AP Psychology.

Mr. Eisenman along with the psychology teachers gave me the freedom to establish some study sessions and Academic Zone hours in the counseling office to support and help students who were struggling in their psychology classes.

It provided me a great opportunity to work interdepartmentally with the staff and very closely with students.

Sexuality and Gender Acceptance (SAGA)

SAGA is the gay/straight alliance at Cedar Falls High School.

“We hope to create an accepting and safe environment for LGBT students, staff, and allies.”

Susan Langan is the school counselor who oversees SAGA. She graciously allowed me to attend their weekly meetings, lead discussions, and provide support for students.

One of SAGA’s missions was to create “safe spaces” around the School, the counseling team gladly agreed to make their offices available as safe spaces for LGBTQ+ students

Black Student Union

The Black Student Union is a new group as of September 2020.

“The big goal of this new club is to get a better base of black community in the school. We want to bring more of our culture to the school and celebrate black culture.”

I was able to attend, listen, learn, and act as a liaison between the students and the counseling team.

The group, along with the Waterloo chapter of Black Lives Matter, was able to organize a protest in response to a photo of a student featuring a racial slur posted to social media.

Course Scheduling

Another big part of a high school counselor’s job is to help students plan their course schedules, make sure they’re meeting their credit requirements, and ultimately keep them on track for graduation.

I had the opportunity to go to Pete Junior High with a few of the Counselors and prepare the 9th grade students for their transition to the high school building and plan out their schedule for their upcoming sophomore year.

I was also able to give scheduling presentations to the juniors about scheduling for their senior year, as well as have individual meetings with each of those students to finalize their course schedules.

I also had the opportunity to work with the Deans and Provost at Hawkeye Community College on concurrent course scheduling.

College and Career Planning

In meetings with next year’s seniors, we discuss what life after high school looks like for them and encourage them to pursue whatever is fulfilling to them.

Many students plan to attend college, and in that case we help them get registered for the ACT, explore scholarship opportunities, as well as connect them with admissions counselors from their schools of interest.

“Coffee With Counselors”

The Central Rivers Area Education Agency hosts once monthly “Coffee With Counselors” meetings for all the counselors within the agency to connect, network, and support each other.

In a normal year, these meetings are held in person, however, due to COVID regulations the meetings are hosted on Zoom.

During my time at CFHS, I had the opportunity to sit in and participate in these meetings. Networking with current counselors, and hearing their views on current events affecting their students was extremely valuable.

Acknowledgements

I want to give a huge thank you to Andrew Eisenman and the entire counseling team at CFHS, the principal, Jason Wedgbury, and assistant principal, Lindsey Spears, for welcoming me into CFHS with open arms and teaching me so much.

I would also like to thank Dr. Carolyn Hildebrandt for making this cooperative education experience possible.

Carol Dweck’s Growth Mindset

On my first day at CFHS, Mr. Eisenman gave me three books he thought would be important for my time at CFHS and my future school counseling career. The book he asked me to read first was Carol Dweck’s Mindset: The New Psychology of Success.

Essentially the idea of the book is that there are two mindsets that people have, a fixed mindset or a growth mindset. The fixed mindset states that abilities are innate and cannot be changed, whereas the growth mindset asserts that abilities can be cultivated through effort.

The fixed mindset can be very paralyzing and does not lend itself to fostering a good relationship with learning. The growth mindset, on the other hand, can make challenges exciting and fosters a lifelong learner.

I would argue that the most important aspect of Dweck’s research, is the assertion that one’s mindset can change from fixed to growth.

At CFHS the counselors, through conversations with students, use this idea to develop a growth mindset within the student body, or at the very least, a school environment that embraces the ideals of the growth mindset.

“Becoming is better than being”

References


