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## Hansen Elementary School Counseling

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## Interning at Hansen Elementary School

- Ten hours a week
- Unpaid
- Shadowing/helping Jen Alexander (the school counselor)



Hansen Elementary School

## School Counseling

School counselors have a wide range of responsibilities. Elementary school counselors assist in helping children develop social skills, improve learning strategies, improve self management and regulation skills, and help them understand the emotions they feel.

“The program teaches knowledge, attitudes and skills students need to acquire in academic, career and social/emotional development, which serve as the foundation for future success.” (American, 2019).

School counselors work with teachers and parents to identify social or emotional issues early in order to help the children at school.

Through my experience, Jen Alexander’s main roles were meeting with and counseling children as well as teaching lessons in classrooms. Some of her lesson topics included safe choices, bullying, empathy, and information about how the brain works.

## My Responsibilities



Play Room

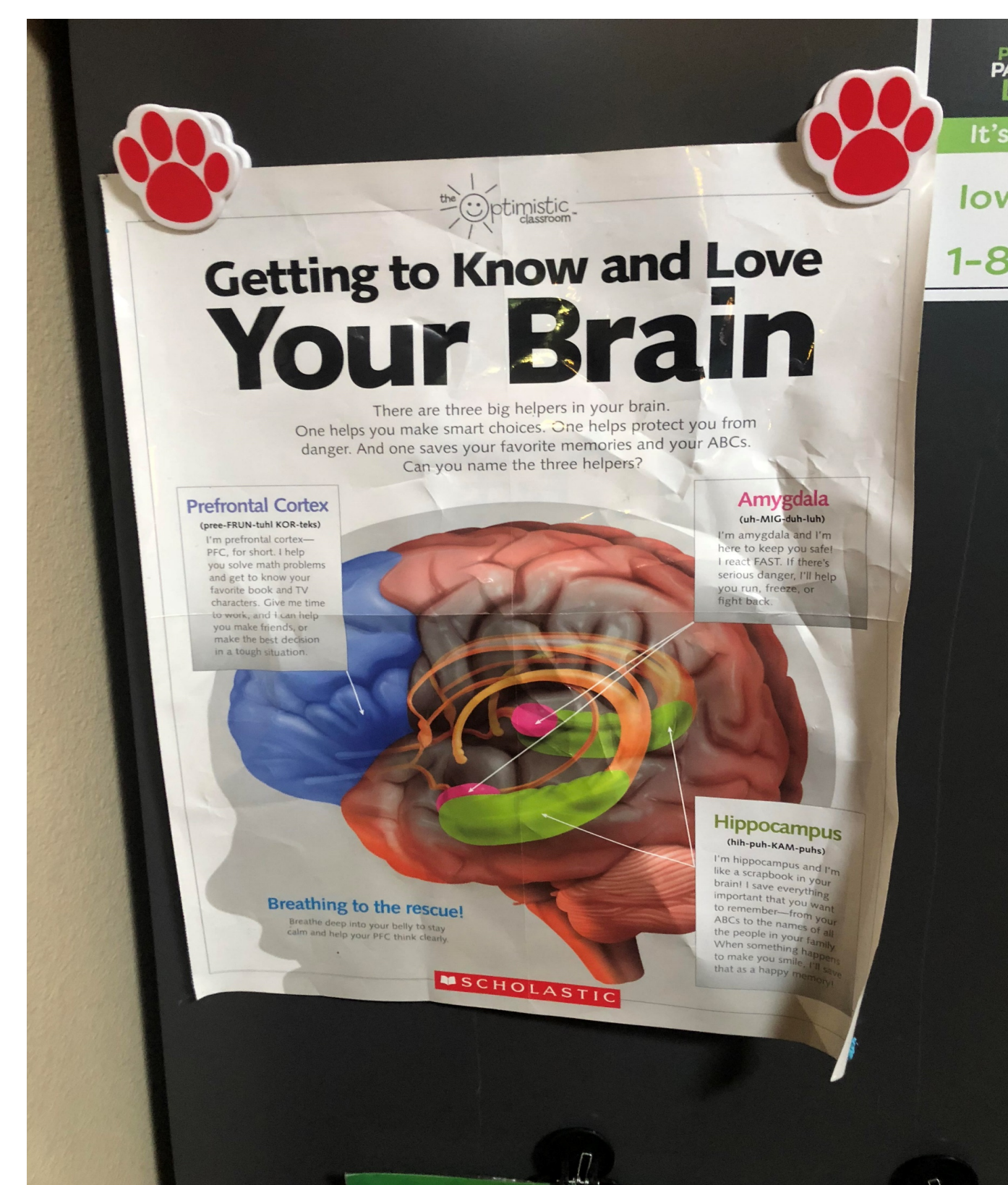


Melvin (puppet used to teach kids)

- Mentoring students
- Creating bulletin boards
- Organizing Jen’s schedule
- Creating Mentoring Program with Holmes Middle School
- Grading pretests
- Organizing winter coat needs

## What I Learned

- What IEPs (individualized education plans) are and why they are important
- How to organize and prioritize a busy schedule
- How to call parents and psychologists to discuss issues children may have
- All the staff members are extremely passionate and dedicated to helping children
- How to mentor students and build a safe, trusting relationship
- Communication is a very important aspect of being a school counselor
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can affect children in many ways



Brain Poster (used to teach kids during lessons)

## Best Part of the Experience

The best part of this experience was working with the kids. It was very rewarding to see the students I met with get so excited to see me every week. Each student was unique in their own way and I feel grateful to have been able to build relationships with them.

I felt like I connected with each one of them and could be a friend or mentor to them if they ever needed it. Through this experience I realized that I want to become a school counselor. Seeing the way Jen connected with and helped every student she met with inspired me.

I will be grateful for this experience for a long time and I will miss each student I mentored.

## Most Challenging Part of the Experience

The most challenging part of the experience was taking the initiative to do things on my own. At times, Jen would give me tasks to do and tell me the general premise of what to do but let me figure out how to do it.

At first this was hard for me because I wanted someone to tell me exactly what to do and explain exactly how they wanted it. I am a perfectionist and wanted to do everything exactly how Jen would want it in her mind. But Jen would just say she trusted me and to get it done.

This was challenging at first because I did not want to do anything wrong or mess up but eventually became very helpful because I had to step up and take initiative to figure it out on my own.



Jen Alexander and I

## Advice for Future Interns

I would tell future psychology interns to come to the school motivated. Some of the tasks can be challenging or scary, especially when you feel like you are not sure what you are doing because it is a new experience. But in the end, it teaches you how to step up and figure things out on your own.

You also learn so much and can connect to so many great kids. So, coming to the school motivated to learn and challenge yourself will be very beneficial

The last piece of advice I would give would be to ask questions. Jen is an extremely knowledgeable and incredible school counselor. She is very busy, but when there is down time to talk to her she is very open to being asked questions about the way to handle certain situations, research she has read recently, and anything else you want to know.

## Research into ACE Scores

ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) scores are taken in order to discover the amount of trauma one has experienced in childhood. ACE scores investigate neglect, abuse, and other trauma that can occur.

Different types of questions are asked in ACE questionnaires. Some of these questions may concern types of abuse, such as physical, emotional, or sexual. Other questions might concern substance abuse, violence in the home, divorce, mental illness at home, and criminal members in the family (Frampton, 2018).

The more a person has been exposed to each of these categories, the higher their ACE score will be.

Previous studies have shown that those with higher ACE scores are two times more likely to have depression and other mental health issues (Frampton, 2018). Many school counselors use ACE scores in trauma informed schools. Knowing how these adverse experiences can affect a child’s learning, growth, and development is important. Finding ways to reduce these experiences and buffer their affect could greatly help the child.



New Student Board

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jen Alexander for her amazing help during this experience. I learned so much more than I thought I would by observing Jen’s work every day and being able to ask her questions. I will miss seeing Jen and going to Hansen very much. I would also like to thank Dr. Carolyn Hildebrandt for all her help during this experience. If she had not told me about this class I would have never gained as much knowledge about school counseling as I did, and I am very grateful for her help throughout the semester.

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