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Internship Report

Herman Badillo Academy
Jane Burgio; SLP (K-8th)
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My internship encompassed a multitude of my interest and it also provided several new learning opportunities that allowed me to explore additional options for a new possible career path. Herman Badillo Academy is a bilingual (English and Spanish) school from grades kindergarten through 8th grade. My host, Jane Burgio, is the school’s speech pathologist and she provides therapy to around thirty children varying in age and degree of speech/language development.

Every morning the school doors open at 8:00 am, students arrive by either bus, their parents/guardians, or they commute by walking. One of the things that I really enjoyed was that every single morning, teachers and staff would greet the children (in both languages) as soon as they got off the busses and when they entered the school. Most of the teachers knew the kids by name even if that particular child was not their student. I just really appreciated the effort that the teachers put forth in relating and sharing with the students. This is something that I wish was expressed more when I was in elementary school, by doing this; I believe it creates an overall more welcoming feel so early in the morning. The kids have 15 minutes to get situated and ready for the day before actual classes start. During this time frame, they can grab breakfast from the cafeteria, organize their lockers, and chat with their classmates in homeroom. At 8:15 the morning announcements is presented by a group of students. Since Herman Badillo consists of both English and Spanish speakers, the announcements were also presented in both languages. Usually the announcements began with identifying what day it is (days A-E), the pledge of allegiance, the school pledge, and then an inspirational quote of the day. If there were certain student or teacher achievements, those were presented as well.

The students leave their main classes for an extended period to come to therapy which is dependent on what day it is. Some sessions consist of individual students and some sessions can consist of 2-5 children at once. Each session is about 30 minutes long and every student is expected to participate. On the days that I intern, I come in at 8:00 am and monitor the halls in front of the therapy room until the announcements begin. In the hallway, I greeted both teachers and students and just ensured that students were getting to where they need to go. After announcements, Jane would let me know the itinerary for the day and assigned me my tasks. Every day was slightly different; however, some things did remain consistent. For example, it would be my job to go to the teachers’ lounge and print and copy materials that were needed for
the day. I also had the responsibility of communicating with the staff in the main office whenever Jane needed additional supplies or needed information about one of her students. For some of Jane’s younger students, her first graders, I would walk them back to their class after their speech session. This gave me an opportunity to talk to them for a little bit, many times they were shy, but, over the semester, they opened up to me.

In the beginning of the semester, Jane had me doing things that were not necessarily “non-speech” related, but I could tell that they were tasks to help me get acclimated to her schedule and to the general layout of the school. I reorganized the entire supply closet in the beginning; however this was useful because throughout my internship I would need to be able to find certain games, books, craft supply, vocabulary cards, etc. One of the particular things that I did enjoy was creating “Grandma Grammar”. In my second week of my internship, I recreated and in my opinion improved “Grandma Grammar”, a constructed tool that the kids could use to learn basic grammar rules. I created “Grandma Grammar” out of construction paper, fabrics, pipe cleaners, and string. On her, I wrote out grammar rules regarding the differences between comparatives and superlatives, the environments in which to use plural “s”, and the distinctions between the parts of speech (verbs, adverbs, nouns, and adjectives). Now every time the kids come in, they can use this source to remember some of the basic strategies to use when reading and writing, the kids especially loved it because I had created “Grandma Grammar” to be about the same size as the average student. I was able to use my creativity to fabricate games and props that matched the theme that Jane was using to condition new speech and language strategies and skills.

Before carrying out therapy that catered to the individual needs of her students, Jane first introduced this year’s theme which was a story called “The Snow Queen”. At one point, each session was Jane sharing this story, which is very similar to Disney’s Frozen, and she would ask comprehensive question at the end to make sure that the students understood the characters, the plot, and the main idea of the story. To evoke responses, Jane used a “Candyland” inspired board game that I designed to bring the story to life and to also make therapy more enjoyable for her students. The kids would take turns rolling a dice after each “Wh-” (Who, What, Where, When, Why) question and then move their piece to the corresponding number they rolled. It was these types of activities that I really enjoyed partaking in because it allowed me to see my hard effort
put to good use in a purposeful manner and that feeling was truly motivational. Jane recently moved into a new room which is significantly smaller than her last her room. Many times, she would have me organize the children’s work on the wall or post up rules, vocabulary, or cues that could aid the children. Before parent’s night, where the parents are welcome to meet their children’s teachers and view their child’s academic progress, Jane asked if I could cover the room with pictures of her students. These pictures were accompanied with each child’s personal interests including their favorite color, role model, movie, and what they want to be when they grow up. While doing this, it gave me a chance to learn about the students that I would be working with and ironically, I found some common interests between myself and some of the other children.

Interestingly, may of the tasks that I was assigned during my internship under the speech pathologist correlated with the subjects I was learning in speech and hearing classes, specifically in my diagnostics class. I recall the day before my internship learning about IEP’s or Individualized Education Plans, in lecture. These are crucial and a must in developing a treatment plan for students with some degree of disability or special education services, in this case speech/language impairment. IEP’s are specifically designed to meet the needs of children and spell out how that child will receive those required services through the school. I was able to aid Jane in creating the outline and format all of her students IEP’s. Each IEP needs signatures from all the teachers of each child and it was my responsibility to find each teacher and obtain their signatures. This was a tedious task, however, I learned just how important these signatures were because it directly affected how each child was progressing through therapy. It also highlights the schools responsibilities in providing adequate services for their students. In addition to learning about IEP’s, I also learned how Jane carried out tests and scoring. In the middle of the semester, Jane picked up a new student for therapy and needed to administer several tests. Her student, who I will initial G.S. for confidentiality purposes, was tested using the CELF-4 (Clinical Evaluations of Language Fundamentals-Fourth Edition) in order to assess his overall language capacity and to identify any identifiers that may be proponents to a speech delay or disorder. It assesses the four key aspects of language including morphology and syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and phonological awareness. There were multiple subtests that made up each core test and G.S. was prompted to respond both verbally and with the use of gestures when it came to identifying speech components that involved illustrations. The scoring process for this
particular test is complex; however, I understand that each test comes with a manual that instructs clinicians how to score the different portions of the test. These numbers that are acquired are then compared to various standardized norms depending on the child’s age. Based from these results, Jane was able to come up with a treatment plan to improve G.S’s overall language skills.

There are also many components to speech therapy than just sitting down with a student and having them recite sounds and syllables over and over. Jane taught me that. The student receive therapy, however, Jane makes sure that the skills that are acquired are put into practical use even outside the therapy room. All of her students were asked to write a poem regarding drugs and how destructive illegal substances could be. Using the main idea and character references from “The Snow Queen”, the children were prompted to write these poems and enter them into a poetry contest that was being judged district wide. Two of Jane’s first grade students actually took home first place for their age category and received prizes. This is the type of positive reinforcement that I think really reflects how well students can do when they are receiving therapy. In addition to the poetry contest, every year Jane puts together a play to be presented at the end of the year for the family and friends of her students. This made so much sense to me and at the time; I was baffled why other programs didn’t do this more often. In the play; Jane’s students need to be able to vocalize and create clear dialogue to broadcast to the audience. All sorts of speech and language skills are needed, both verbal and non-verbal cues, intonation, pitch, frequency level, all things that may seem subtle during the show, but are all crucial elements that are needed in daily speech.

Lastly, I realized that Speech Pathology is something that I really want to spend my career doing. I was unsure if I wanted to work with the adult population or in pediatrics; however, the school environment is something that I can see myself working in. It’s also very rewarding to see the improvements in the children as therapy progresses. Jane mentioned countless times how she was so proud of her the students that “graduated” from therapy and the accomplishments that they achieved. Many of these kids have been working with Jane for years. I’ve come to understand just how important in-school SLP’s roles are in developing the fundamental principles of speech and language in children. This is something that the students
will need for the rest of their lives and I know that is something that I want to invest in to make happen successfully.