

N433 Active Learning for School Nurse Shadowing Experience  
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1. How does this clinical site relate to the course?

The clinical site used was Sandburg Elementary School, within Charleston, Illinois. According to the school nurse, it is an elementary school for grades first through third, serving roughly about 530 children. Throughout the various grades, the average ages of the children are six to nine. Within this range, various developmental levels were observed. Interaction with first graders was quite different than with those from grade three. The third graders were much more assured, knew what they were there for or wanted to speak about, and sometimes even a bit more rebellious, with several talking back to the nurse and other administrative personnel. It was a new experience to be around so many younger school-age children, as my elementary school was tiny, only having one classroom per grade.

2. How were you an engaged nursing professional today?

For the first portion of the visit, the nurse was off-site helping with COVID tracing, so we were in the nurse's office ourselves. As children came in, we greeted them and asked their names and what they needed to be seen for, a basic triage. If they needed medications, the assistant principal came in to unlock the medication cabinet. One student, realizing we were new, decided to give us a verbal tour of the room and where things are kept in case we would need specific items, such as where bandaids were held and about the medication cabinet. I also volunteered to sit with a child with Rett syndrome that had come in to benefit from a rest period while the staff needed to step out to assist another child. Sitting by her cot, she could relax with some "quiet time" and be under her blanket. Once the nurse was present, we could converse more with the children while they received their treatment or medication. Most were very open and wanted to share news, questions and inquire who we were.

3. How did you contribute to the service provided by the school nurse today?

Under the nurse's supervision, we did pass out a few bandaids and fill some water cups for medication administration. We openly explain that we were nursing students here to observe a day of school nursing. We also assisted in COVID tracing/tracking, helping to update documents of when children could return to school. It was amazing to see how many children were actually out of school at this given time. Many of the children did not mind wearing a mask, especially with prints and colors and designs on them. Some needed masks changed, as the ones they had were very dirty or soiled.

Most of the nurse's work was to administer scheduled medications for children who had to have scheduled medication, mainly for ADHD. That was what most of the medicines were classified as.

4. Name three ways this clinical site impacts Pediatric health?

Many aspects of pediatric health and wellness can be seen, addressed, and advocated for within the elementary school. A direct impact is the early identification of problems. One example was a child complaining of a stuffy nose, but upon assessment, it was learned he had fallen the day before and hit his neck, which was bothering him still. The child's parent was contacted and notified to make sure she knew and could follow up with the child after school. Another impacting aspect was administering medications. Many of the children are on medications for ADHD and must have scheduled doses at certain times to function better in the classroom. If students did not show up on time for their scheduled doses, the nurse would inquire and find the child to ensure they were caught up on medications. The school nurse and other administrative personnel also advocate for the needs of the children, such as proper nutrition. An example we observed was a child with gluten sensitivity who had a packed lunch that contained items that were not deemed appropriate for her diet considerations. It was learned the child had packed her lunch that day. The nurse and other school personnel were discussing lunch options for her to have and also to get in contact with the parents to discuss nutritional planning.

5. What are the health risks of the population served during today's clinical based on your observations today?

In discussing this question with the school nurse, some of the most significant health risks identified were COVID and the spread of infectious agents. So many children were currently out of school, having to be traced and tracked. In addition, schools are known to be a breeding ground for germs, with things like the flu. Children are still learning the proper way and importance of covering their mouth, washing hands, etc. Another risk identified was falls. Multiple children came in either from physical education or recess and had cuts/gashes on elbows, knees, arms from the blacktop. These scenarios also provided some teaching moments, as some children did not have proper clothing/footwear, as one student in flip flops came in saying he was playing soccer on the blacktop. Another health risk is malnutrition or imbalanced diets. The example of the student with gluten sensitivity stood out, as she either wouldn't have options to eat from what she packed or what she had packed would not be good choices for her system. School lunches are provided at this time, but food allergies are a significant component that must be considered. When discussing with the nurse, the most extensive food allergy at this school was peanuts, followed by other nuts, then dairy products. Lastly, a sad but genuine health risk for school-age children is child abuse. The nurse mentioned how many of the children had been "drug babies," resulting in their need for continual medication or lack of development.

6. Choose one of the health risks identified in question 5 and develop a plan of care to address this. Include a Nursing diagnosis, a measurable goal, and at least 3 Nursing interventions to achieve this goal.

The health risk I was most interested in was the malnutrition and imbalanced diet, as I have diet restrictions/precautions. I know how hard it can be to find gluten and dairy-free foods, especially when eating outside the home. My nursing diagnosis would be at risk for imbalanced nutrition related to food allergies, as evidenced by the packed lunch brought by the child. A measurable goal would be to assess the child's height, weight, and BMI and see how it relates to the appropriate BMI. Children in this age range should have a BMI below the 85 percentile, considered a healthy weight (Ricci et al., 2021). A starting point for nurse intervention would be to assess both parent and child's education and develop a plan from there. Then the child and parent could meet with a dietician and compile a list of food options that the school could provide. Even if the child were to pack a lunch from home, with random things, the school would have items to make an adequate meal for the child instead. This list could be implemented at the school, with categories such as proteins, side courses, snacks, etc., that would fall within the gluten-free requirement. With nursing interventions, a priority would be to contact the parents and make them aware of the child's meal for school. Perhaps they didn't overlook what she packed or even knew she had packed a lunch. The next step would be to provide education to both parents and children on food allergies. Some items to touch on would be bad results of not adhering to "safe" things and signs and symptoms to be aware of for a reaction. Lastly, the nurse might have to intervene and do daily lunch checks, especially if the child or parents are new to finding and shopping for gluten-free products. The nurse could look over the items brought from home and see what could be eaten, as the school nurse even mentioned she might have to check some food labels of some cafeteria snack products.

7. How will your experience during the School Nurse job shadowing impact your Nursing practice?

Not having much experience with children, I was amazed to see how easily many wanted to converse and explain what brought them to the nurse's office. It was an enjoyable experience to interact with them in a less intense situation. My prior experience in the medical field interacting with children was either with an EMS crew or in the emergency room. It made me think how much patience one must have to interact with children, as they can be stubborn and have a slower approach to getting their point across. The experience overall helped shed light on school nursing, as I had never witnessed that. It also helped add insight into where I would or would not see myself working as a nurse. I do not see myself wanting to be a school nurse, as I would like more variety starting in my career. However, I enjoyed the opportunity to experience this area of nursing, as it could be a good area to work in later in a nursing career.

## References

Ricci, S. S., Kyle, T., & Carman, S. (2021). *Maternity and pediatric nursing* (4th ed.). Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer.