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School Social Work Core Concepts (SOCW-678-A)

6 February 2022

School Visits Summary

For this assignment, I visited a public elementary school as well as a private high school. The name of the public school was Red Bank Elementary in the Hamilton County School System located at 1100 Mountain Creek Rd, Chattanooga, TN 37405. I arranged with Bradford Goodridge to visit on February 2, 2022, at 9am. I was also able to arrange with Derrick Collins to visit a private school in the Georgia Cumberland Conference called Georgia Cumberland Academy, on January 25, 2022, at 9am. This school is located at 397 Academy Dr SW, Calhoun, GA 30701.

Bradford Goodridge serves as the School Counselor at Red Bank Elementary School. He does individual therapy sessions, group counseling sessions, teaches classes one week out of the month, as well as spending time with the children in the cafeteria, on the playground, and at other school events. Derrick Collins works at Georgia Cumberland Academy as the Guidance Counselor and a Religion Teacher. He does individual therapy, assessments, career counseling, SAT, ACT, and PSAT testing, and referrals for other mental health resources.

The climate of each school was different in some ways but remarkably similar in other ways. Both schools were cheerful and inviting and somewhere I could see myself sending a child because each school has staff that genuinely care about the children there and are looking out for them to make sure they can reach their full potential. Georgia Cumberland Academy's mission is to "equip students with skills necessary to be successful in college and beyond while focusing on eternity" (2022 Georgia, n.d.). The mission at Red Bank Elementary similarly is "to inspire individuals to be seekers of knowledge, empowering them to be confident and creative builders of their future" (2022 Hamilton, n.d.). I would say that Georgia Cumberland Academy had more diversity than Red Bank Elementary within their students and staff. However, I think that this could be due to Georgia Cumberland Academy being a boarding

school whereas Red Bank Elementary is serving the children in their immediate area. This gives Georgia Cumberland Academy an advantage to be able to get students from all over rather than just their area.

The facilities at Red Bank Elementary School are clean and well-kept both inside and outside. The classrooms, cafeteria and gym are all in the same building which makes it easily accessible for all students. The playground was located right beside the school building. The outside of the school had neat landscape which made the building look inviting and well maintained. Once inside the building, it was filled with colorful, encouraging posters, pictures, and quotes to encourage the students throughout the day. Bradford Goodridge was privileged to have a whole classroom to himself which doubled as his office. This allowed him to be able to accommodate having whole classes there every month. His classroom was decorated with age-appropriate posters and encouraging quotes to encourage students' mental health.

Georgia Cumberland Academy's campus was larger and had multiple buildings that housed the classrooms, guidance counselor's office, cafeteria, and gyms. Their buildings were very well maintained with two of the buildings being newly built. They had two large gymnasiums as well as a soccer field, baseball field, basketball court, volleyball court, football field, tennis court, outdoor track, and weight/workout room. The classrooms were inviting and well-kept with age-appropriate posters and pictures. The guidance counselor's office was simple yet inviting and was conveniently located in the student center to provide easy access for students and staff.

Classes at both Red Bank Elementary and Georgia Cumberland Academy start at 8am. However, Red Bank Elementary gets out at 2:55pm while classes at Georgia Cumberland Academy go until right before supper. Georgia Cumberland Academy is unique in that students attend classes half the day and work somewhere on campus the other half. So, while classes run all day, students' schedules are set up that freshman and sophomores have classes in the morning and juniors and seniors have classes in the afternoon.

Red Bank Elementary school offers a variety of during school and after school clubs and sports programs such as robotics, Spanish, arcade architects, soccer, track, cross-country, basketball, and

softball. Likewise, Georgia Cumberland Academy have soccer teams, basketball teams, a volleyball team, and a gymnastics team. In addition, they provide nightly open recreation and intermurals such as flag football, soccer, basketball, floor hockey and volleyball.

After visiting the schools, I was extremely impressed by both schools for varied reasons. Red Bank Elementary has an amazing number of resources at their fingertips for helping children. In their building alone they have a full-time school counselor, a school psychologist, a part time school social worker and part time family preservation specialist. In addition, they have bridge programs for children who are struggling with behavioral issues or need more specialized education. Bradford Goodridge is an asset to their school. He is excellent with the kids and uses different cartoons/movie references to help the kids understand concepts as well as connect with them. It is obvious the children at the school love him and look forward to seeing him in the halls or in the cafeteria. I would give this school a grade of 9/10. While there are always ways to improve, this school is doing an exceptionally decent job at making sure the children have what they need to be successful in life.

I was impressed with Georgia Cumberland Academy's campus the variety of activities they can offer the children there. Their buildings and grounds were excellent, and it was obvious that they had put a lot of money into keeping it up. However, it was sad to learn how little resources the guidance counselor has to be able to help children at their school. Since he doubles as a religion teacher, he struggles to find a balance between the dual relationships with the children. Due to his limited time and resources, he ends up referring many of the children to outside resources for help. However, this adds barriers of transportation, money, and the parent's following through to get things lined up for the child. Derrick Collins sees and is frustrated by the broken Adventist system and the limits it puts on him to be able to help these children adequately and effectively. It saddens me that the Adventist system appears to care more about how fancy they can make their buildings than the emotional and mental needs of the students that are in their buildings. This school could benefit from having a full-time school social worker to aid and provide some relief for the guidance counselor. A school social worker would be able to work with students, their teachers, parents, and the community to help the students be successful in school and

beyond. I would give this school a grade of 6/10. While the facilities and classroom experiences are high quality, their resources for children who are struggling could use significant improvement. This is no fault of the guidance counselor, but more a reflection of the broken Adventist school system.

References

2022 Georgia-Cumberland Academy. (n.d.). Where knowing, loving, and service God is at the heart of all we do. GCA Georgia Cumberland Academy. Retrieved from <https://gccsda.org>.

2022 Hamilton County Schools. (n.d.). About us. Red Bank Elementary: Collaborate, Create, Engage. Retrieved from https://rbe.hcde.org/about_us.