



SAMPLER

READY FOR COLLEGE AND CAREERS: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN POSTSECONDARY PLANNING

**I need a plan to chart my course
For college, work, or military force.**

**With teachers and family, I will find my voice.
Good partnerships will guide my choice.**

Across the country, educators are working to increase the number of students who graduate from high school—ready for college or careers. This goal requires attention at every grade level. College and career readiness is a cumulative process that reflects what students learn and experience at home, at school, and in the community as they move from preschool through high school.

Teachers and school counselors work hard to help students learn subjects and skills, complete requirements for grade promotion, identify their interests and abilities, graduate from high school, consider career options, and plan steps for postsecondary education and training. Along with educators, parents and community partners play important roles in helping all students take these basic steps toward college and careers.

Even young children have big dreams about the future. They play “grown-up” to imagine all kinds of work that they may do as adults. Children must continue to explore careers, expand their interests, and learn about the education required to enter college and the world of work. Parents in all racial, economic, and cultural groups report that they have high aspirations for their children. Yet, they also say that they need more and better information to help their children succeed in school and plan for the future.

**Improve Teachers’ and Counselors’
Connections with Families.** The activities in this *Sampler* were implemented by school-based

Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) to engage teachers, students, parents, and community partners across grade levels. The activities illustrate how these partners can work together to increase students’ career awareness and sharpen postsecondary planning so that, ultimately, students make better decisions about education and training after high school.

Individual teachers, grade level teams, and school counselors may adapt the activities in the *Sampler* to strengthen family and community involvement. For example, a teacher or counselor at any school level may invite parents, community members, and school alumna to discuss their careers with students and the education needed for initial and advanced positions on the career ladder, as in *Telling It Like It Is* or *Second-Grade Job Share Program*. Any teacher could initiate a project like *BES Goes To Work*, which sends a school or classroom mascot and disposable camera with a family or community volunteer to photograph the different jobs at particular work sites.

The partnership activities in this *Sampler*, arranged alphabetically, help students expand their interests, make plans for college or technical training, and take actions on their plans. They are a few of many excellent activities in annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices*. Find more examples at www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories. Click on a particular year’s book and then College and Careers.

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Review of Research: Partnerships with Students on Planning for College or Careers

Joyce L. Epstein, Director, NNPS

The “blueprint” for improving U. S. schools sets an important goal: Ensure that every student is ready for college or a career when they graduate from high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This requires excellent teachers for all students in all subjects at every grade level (Everyone Graduates Center, 2011). Studies indicate that more students will reach this goal if teachers, school counselors, parents, other family and community members, and the students, themselves, work together from preschool through high school to advance student achievement and plan for postsecondary education (American Council on Education, 2011; Education Trust, 2009).

Educators work, continually, to improve curricula, instructional approaches, and assessments for student learning. Too many schools, however, have ignored the need to organize, implement, and evaluate programs of family and community involvement. Most schools still leave partnerships to chance, without scheduled activities that engage all families and community partners in ways that increase students’ reading and math skills, attendance, and college and career planning (Fann, McClafferty-Jarsky, & McDonough, 2009).

Some parents get involved in postsecondary planning on their own. Many studies confirm that, regardless of family background, students with involved parents are more likely to continue their education after high school (SEDL, 2011). Parents’ expectations for education influence students to “assume” that they will go to college. Students who know and internalize their parents’ expectations are more likely to take required courses to graduate from high school, participate in extracurricular and leadership activities, and visit colleges to plan for the future.

Without their families’ involvement and press for success, many students avoid the courses they need to enter college. Others drop out of school despite their own high aspirations. Dropping out of school is not a good decision. Data across countries indicate that more years of education are associated with more options for employment, higher annual salaries, and dramatically greater lifetime incomes (OECD, 2011). Students who do not complete high school are at a serious disadvantage in all respects.

Most parents need more and better information from their children’s schools. Research on schools’ outreach to parents shows that when high schools conducted meaningful postsecondary planning activities, more parents talked with their teens about college planning than in similar schools that did not reach out in these ways (Simon, 2004). Further, students who talked about college plans at home were more likely than other students to enroll in advanced-level courses in high school in preparation for college and careers.

Several studies confirm that students go to their parents—even more than to school counselors—for advice about their life plans and education after high school (Bartini & Hesel, 2007). Yet, parents report that they have too little information, need more, and want to be able to guide their children. Parents are a ready, untapped resource to help teachers and counselors lead students toward their aspirations for college and careers (McDonough, 2005).

To engage all families and assist more students, middle level and high schools need to provide timely information and opportunities for parents to understand the courses and credits required for high school graduation and college admission; discuss tests and test scores with their children; make family decisions about financial plans for postsecondary education; and guide their teens to visit and apply to college or training programs (Wimberly & Noeth, 2004). This can be done best in well planned, goal-linked partnership programs (Epstein, et al., 2009).

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BES Goes to Work

*Ballentine Elementary School
Irmo, South Carolina*

BES, the bear, goes to work. And nearly every week she has a different job—fire-fighter, nurse, construction worker, office manager. BES is a busy bear. Just ask the students at Ballentine Elementary School who keep track of BES's travels and adventures.

BES is a miniature version of the school's mascot, and BES Goes to Work is a program designed to involve hard-working parents in the school and also showcase the parents' diverse careers to its student body. Ballentine Elementary encourages them to take turns each week bringing BES to their workplaces. Each parent photographs BES at work, whether she's donning a construction cap, standing at a lecture podium, or sitting at a television news anchor's desk, and writes a short summary of what BES saw on the job.

"BES had fun learning about all the cool jobs in a bank," reported a parent who is market development manager of a bank. "BES went to class and saw how college students take notes. The students were curious why BES was there," reported another parent, who is a professor of criminology.

Inspired by a similar idea shared at a counselors conference, BES Goes to Work was developed as an extension to Ballentine's career program. The guidance office sends out a questionnaire about the program several times each year. Interested parents respond and the guidance office works out BES's busy travel schedule. Families from all grades may participate in the program, but, because of high demand for BES, only one parent from each family may participate.

The week that BES goes to work, the participating child receives a special blue bag that contains the bear, a T-shirt, a disposable camera, and a BES Goes to Work folder with a sheet that the parent fills out to tell students at the school about his or her job. The child wears the T-shirt to school so everyone can see whose family has BES for the week. When the student returns the bag, he or she has a photo taken in front of Big BES, the school's full-sized bear mascot. Once all the pictures of BES at work are developed, they are pasted into a collage along with the parent's write-up. Everyone can enjoy the collages, which are displayed prominently in the mini-theater.

Since the program began, BES has visited high schools, churches, hospitals, police stations, a local television station, and many offices. The program has effectively improved the home-school connection at a small-town school where many of the working parents commute 30 minutes or more and cannot take time off to visit the school.

In addition to providing busy parents with an opportunity to involve themselves in the school, BES Goes to Work teaches students about various jobs and careers and gives them another reason to take pride in what their parents do. The program is a definite community builder—increasing school spirit and enhancing Ballentine's image.



Business Partnership Breakfast

*Bridgeton High School
Bridgeton, New Jersey*

Students at Bridgeton High School got a taste of the business world last year during a boardroom-style meeting complete with PowerPoint presentations and power-breakfast fair. The Business Partnership Breakfast brought 20 community leaders into the school to listen to students pitch their career placement programs and internships. The presenters hoped to entice more local businesses to partner with the school.

Two years ago, members of the school's Action Team for Partnership (ATP) decided to target postsecondary planning as a goal in their One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships. Bridgeton recently adopted a reform model that placed a strong emphasis on career academies. The goal of this model was to open career pathways for students in grades 10-12. ATP members felt additional activities could support the reform model. They decided to bring local business leaders to the school for a meeting designed to showcase the real world skills of Bridgeton students.

ATP members held a very successful breakfast for teachers and local business leaders in 2007. For 2008, they decided to dazzle the guests by letting students deliver most of the presentations.

The school's career coordinator took the lead in organizing the event this year, sending out dozens of e-mails to area businesses, community organizations, and the local chamber of commerce. ATP members followed up the e-mails with personal phone calls. School administrators also announced the breakfast in the local newspaper.

All of the effort paid off. In May, 20 business leaders sat in the school's media center. Students and teachers worked together to give impressive PowerPoint presentations on several career-oriented programs. Speakers described the major projects and accomplishments of their marketing and entrepreneur club, their computer-assisted design program for budding

architects and engineers, and their Microsoft Office Systems Certification. They displayed sample work completed by students in each of these programs.

Guests enjoyed a breakfast of bagels, fruit, coffee, and juice while listening to the students. At the end of the presentations, business leaders asked the students and teachers questions and provided feedback on the programs. Administrators made sure that every guest received informational handouts about the school's career fair, internship program, and job placement center for graduating seniors.

After the meeting, business leaders complimented the student presenters on their oratory skills. One local bank owner offered to visit the school's finance class and provided several students with internship opportunities. Another local employment agency offered to conduct a mini job fair for graduating seniors.

The breakfast cost the school \$140. Bridgeton used School, Family, and Community Partnership funds from the district to cover the expenses.

ATP members plan to make the Business Partnership Breakfast an annual event. Next year, they will invite the local media to report on the event.



Career Portfolio Night

*Glenmary High School
Peace River, Alberta, Canada*

My son now has a better idea of what he needs to do to reach his goal. It was interesting and helpful to both students and parents. I learned how important it is to keep talking to my son about his future career.”

This is the way one parent described Career Portfolio Night, an event that takes place in January and June of each school year at Glenmary High School. On Career Portfolio Night, eleventh-grade students in the compulsory Career and Life Management Course (CALM) showcase for their families their portfolios that describe a specific career path. In making career portfolios, students research a career choice that interests them and talk with a professional in that field to get feedback and firsthand knowledge of the job.

The goals of this practice are to showcase students’ completed portfolios, give students an opportunity to talk with someone who is actually engaged in the career they have chosen, and to strengthen the partnership between students, parents, community members, and counselors involved in career choices.

Students at Glenmary have been completing portfolios for a number of years. However, not all students saw the value of

completing a portfolio and parents did not have the opportunity to see what their student was doing. Career Portfolio Night gives students something to work toward and enables parents to see the work their teen has done. Putting each student in contact with someone who is presently working in his/her chosen career adds another dimension to the career education program.

Students complete their portfolios during ten to twelve CALM class sessions. Then, teachers prepare information for community members and give this information to career counselors, who match a community/business member with each student. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) calls parents to invite them to Career Portfolio Night.

On the evening of the event, students display their portfolios in the courtyard. When community members arrive, they are given assessment sheets and expectations for the evening. Community members then speak to students and parents, evaluate each portfolio, and share the evaluation with the student. Parents also view the portfolios.

Career Portfolio Night has great benefits for students. Students build contacts for future employment, dialogue with someone actively involved in a career of interest, identify courses that will build the skills required for certain jobs, and connect their skills and talents with the jobs that use those abilities.



College and Career Guide

Naperville North High School
Naperville, Illinois

For students on their way to college, getting there is not necessarily half the fun. Navigating the SATs and ACTs, the Common Application, college-specific applications, essay questions, and dozens of deadlines can provide a daunting challenge. The journey has become a little less perilous at Naperville North High School, thanks to *The College and Career Planning Guide*, a joint project of the school's guidance department and the College and Career Planning Committee of the School Family Community Partnership (SFCP) team.

The SFCP team undertook the guide in response to parents who were concerned about planning for college and asked for more information on how to start a college search. Parents met during the breakout sessions at SFCP meetings to brainstorm ideas for topics, chapters, and information they wanted to include. The parents continued their work outside of regular meetings, developing an outline, researching information, and writing the chapters.

The parents submitted their work to the guidance department for review and editing. The principal also approved the guide, which was printed by the district's printing service. The SFCP team spent about \$400 to print the guide—the only cost involved.

Because about 98 percent of North's graduates go on to college, the college search is a topic of great importance at the school. The guide is intended to be a tool and resource for all, even to assist the guidance counselors in their work. Among the guide's features are:

- A month-by-month checklist for college

and career planning

- An outline of a student resume
- A college application organizer
- Tips for writing an effective essay
- Financial aid information

The guide also includes chapters on students with special needs, addressing accommodations for entrance exams, various levels of support colleges offer, resources for parents, and suggested questions to ask college admissions staff.

Distributed to all North students in September, the guide won rave reviews. "What a great resource—good for you, the SFCP team continues to do wonderful things for parents and students at North," wrote a school board member. "What a really GREAT informative college brochure you put together. Pat yourselves on the back for a job really well done," commented a parent.

With responses like that, there is no doubt that the SFCP team is proud of its guide. The team is already working on the next edition, surveying parents about what information they would like to see in the future. The next one will include chapters on scholarships and other topics parents have suggested—all in the interest of smoothing out some of the bumps on the road to college.



D.A.D.S.: COLLEGE BOUND OR LEFT BEHIND?

MAIN STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LAKE CITY, SOUTH CAROLINA

Picture an elementary school gymnasium filled with fathers, sons, grandfathers, uncles, pastors, male district leaders, mentors, older brothers, friends, school board members, and community leaders. Now imagine that all of the men gathered to work toward the same goals—help African American male students identify their long-term goals, teach them strategies to succeed in life, and keep them from becoming victims of underachievement.

Main Street Elementary School began the D.A.D.S. (Dedicated, Active, & Devoted in Schools): College Bound or Left Behind? after hearing startling statistics that fewer than half of black males graduate from high school, few are college ready, and few who enter college graduate within six years. One estimate by author Mychal Wynn is that, overall, only “3 out of every 100 Black males graduate from college.” Teachers and administrators began to think about the African American students in their school and how to help these students take ambitious education paths that will lead to success in college.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) developed the event. They sent invitations to a male family member or contact for each boy in grades 3–5. The personalized invitations had pictures of every 3rd–5th grade boy at Main Street Elementary with a caption that asked: will this student go to college, graduate from college, or be left behind? The ATP, teachers, and administrators followed up with phone calls and home visits.

At the April event, the keynote speaker, Mychal Wynn, welcomed the participants. He asked the adults to raise their hands if they would like to go back to elementary school and do things differently. Almost every man raised his hand. At the end of the address, each family received a copy of Wynn’s book, *Teaching, Parenting, and Mentoring Successful Black Males*.

Then, the fathers and others attended a

whole-group session on how to prepare their boys for college. At the end of the presentation, each boy received a bookcase to build with his father or mentor. Teachers challenged the boys to fill it with twice as many books as video games. Dinner and breakout sessions followed. School board members and administrators led several workshops:

- » *It Takes a Village* focused on home, school, church, and community connections led by community leaders and pastors.
- » *When Discipline Issues Affect Academics* focused on strategies that mentors could use to teach boys self-control and self-discipline techniques to use in school.
- » *Young, Gifted, and Black—Average is Overrated* focused on bright students who sometimes perform below their capabilities due to peer pressure to fit in.

The evening ended with the keynote speaker challenging the boys to be successful. The advisor of the school’s Gentlemen’s Club stated, “Many powerful relationships were built here tonight. This was the perfect kickoff for our mentoring program that will challenge our boys to be college bound by providing them with positive role models who believe in them.”

As a result of D.A.D.S., 100 students and 100 male role models better understood the importance of elementary school and education beyond. One teacher noted that the boys’ demeanors changed after attending the conference. One student said that he learned, “Believe in yourself and others will believe in you, too.”



Family College Conference

*Families in Schools
Los Angeles, California*

Giving students and their families a firsthand look at college is the goal of the Family College Conference, which takes nearly 500 fifth- and sixth-graders and their parents to a local campus for a half-day of information sessions and tours. The conference, held this year at the University of Southern California and California State University at Los Angeles, is the culminating event of a year-long introduction to college planning, called Going on to College! (GOT College!). It was developed and supported by Families In Schools (FIS), a non-profit organization that works with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

Besides a tour of classrooms, dormitories, sports arenas, and the all-important cafeteria, the students and their families hear a variety of speakers on different aspects of college life and have an opportunity to ask questions about campus life and career options. Local school superintendents, elected officials, college students, and young graduates who are in the work world participate in various panels and presentations. Breakout sessions cover the college admissions process, financial aid options, and course and testing requirements. All sessions are offered in English and Spanish.

The conference was open to all first-generation low-income students and their families in selected local districts in LAUSD. More than 480 students from five schools and their family members, along with four district administrators, 25 school staffers, and 50 community members participated. Often students and parents who have not had previous college experiences do not recognize the importance and opportunities that college creates. FIS holds the conference to promote a desire for higher education among these students and to remove some of the roadblocks they might encounter.

In addition to acquainting students and families with colleges, FIS aims to help parents understand how they can support their children

through elementary and secondary school so they will be *prepared* for college. For some parents, the conference clearly met its goals: "I have a more open mind about having my children go to college," one parent said in a post-conference evaluation. "As parents, we have to work hard to motivate our children and help them go to college," said another.

In collaboration with LAUSD and the participating colleges, universities, and community and business partners, FIS coordinated all aspects of the event, arranged for campus facilities, and raised money to meet other expenses. Public funds, private donations, and in-kind contributions supported two conferences this year, which cost about \$10,000 each. FIS formed partnerships with private universities interested in recruiting students from underrepresented minorities. In the future, FIS plans to identify additional partnerships by encouraging colleges to host early outreach programs for students in elementary and middle schools.

This Family College Conferences cap the year-long program Going on to College! that integrates student and parent workshops, field trips, and teacher-mentor professional development opportunities designed to make college an achievable goal. Students attend workshops twice a month focusing on study habits, college entrance requirements, careers, and financial aid. Their parents meet with teachers regularly to learn how to support their children's college plans. Students and parents then participate in monthly joint sessions with classroom teachers. Topping the list of goals for this program is to increase parents' belief that college is a realistic expectation for their children.

Students attending the college conference were enthusiastic: "I like that the panelists shared their experiences with us. They really inspired me," said one student. Another remarked, "Now I know about the opportunities to make my dreams come true."





Financial Aid Workshop for Parents and Students

*Mullins High School
Mullins, South Carolina*

To show parents and students how to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for postsecondary school, Mullins created a financial aid workshop. The workshop was held in February—after parents had received wage statements, but before they started their tax returns.


The area surrounding Mullins has a high unemployment rate. Many of the parents of students at Mullins have difficulty navigating the complex financial aid form. As a result, many students cannot access the financial assistance they qualify for and need to take advantage of postsecondary education opportunities.

To create the program, Mullins researched how other schools were helping their students and families navigate the financial aid system, borrowing several of those practices. The guidance office contacted local college financial aid advisors to help design and implement the workshop. These advisors did most of the content planning and supplied the required materials. The sessions demonstrated the step-by-step process required to fill out the forms and addressed the questions and concerns of students and their parents. The advisors provided each parent with a copy of the FAFSA form. By the end of the workshop, each student's financial aid application was complete.

Mullins knew its biggest challenge would be getting parents to attend. Other parent involvement initiatives had only drawn a handful of participants. To publicize the financial aid classes, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) offered a bonus incentive to stu-

dents who attended the workshops: a tardy pass that could be used once anytime before the end of the school year. Guidance counselors visited classrooms to invite juniors and seniors to attend, and the daily televised broadcast included announcements and reminders about the tardy pass incentive. The school encouraged students to remind their parents about the workshops. The ATP also used traditional publicity methods to reach out to the parents directly, including signage outside the school, fliers for visiting parents, the website, and newsletter announcements.

In the end, 56 students and 73 parents participated in the workshop. Thanks to the efforts of teachers, administrators, community members who acted as financial aid advisors, and students who helped with publicity, the event was a success. Students and parents received valuable information about financial aid, and they realized how much the school cared that they attend the workshops. Best of all, the students walked out of the meetings with filled-out financial aid applications in hand!



Life After High School: College and Career Fair

*Pulaski High School
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

Thanks to a massive college and career fair, Pulaski High School students are looking toward a brighter future. The Life after High School: College and Career Fair brought representatives from 70 colleges, universities, the military services, non-profit organizations and local businesses together to prove to students that staying in school would pay off.

The idea for the event began three years ago when members of the school's Action Team for Partnership (ATP) wanted to do more to improve the school's graduation rate. Only about forty percent of the students in the Milwaukee Public Schools graduate from high school on time. School administrators said that too few students think about life after high school until just before graduation. ATP members wanted to change that by introducing Pulaski's students to postsecondary possibilities earlier in their high school careers. They created the Life after High School: College and Career Fair for student in grades 10, 11, and 12.

ATP leaders recruited local businesses and colleges to set up booths. School administrators advertised the fair in a special guidance office newsletter sent home with students at the beginning of the year. Promotion continued with fliers and automated phone messages sent to the families of eligible students.

On a Tuesday afternoon in late November, 550 students came to the fair. Nearly 180 members of the community participated with good information. Booths advertised careers in healthcare, firefighting, law enforcement, the military, and in other fields. Two-year and four-year colleges and technical schools from the area presented their offerings, including engineering, graphic arts and design, aviation technology, and more.

"Students were able to get time out of the classroom and talk directly with representatives from organizations around Milwaukee, as well as many based in other areas of Wisconsin," said an organizer. "In having this fair, Pulaski is hoping to gently push students to stay in high school and get their diplomas."

Many of the exhibitors donated items for raffles. To help ease the overcrowding in the school's parking lot, the Milwaukee Police Department waved the two-hour parking restriction on streets around the school.

"I was impressed by the number of local organizations that participated," a volunteer said. "We will definitely be back next year," a college representative promised.

Thanks to in-kind donations from area businesses, the event cost the school less than \$200—to rent tables and chairs and provide light refreshments.

The fair has become an annual fall event at Pulaski. This is, in fact, the largest career fair in the Milwaukee Public Schools. Next year, the school intends to invite parents to help them help their teens make decisions about life after high school. The fair benefits parents in another way: "This fair could help them gather information to further their education and follow their career aspirations as well," said an organizer. "A larger parent turnout would be fantastic!"



Motion Commotion Truck Fair

*Ruth Livingston Elementary School
Pasco, Washington*

Kindergartners huddled in the scoop of a front end loader. Squeals and laughter rang from second graders in the cab of a fire truck, as they sounded the siren. The school principal and superintendent shared the bucket of a utility truck parked high above the playground. Such were the sights and sounds at this year's Motion Commotion Truck Fair.

Ruth Livingston Elementary School takes great pride in its truck fair – a school production that cannot happen without community support.

Held every other year on a fall school day, the event involves dozens of “things that go.” The motion-machines are assembled on the schoolyard for a rare sort of career fair. Hundreds of people plan for months to make the fair successful and exciting. This year at least 98 local businesses and community members displayed commercial and recreational vehicles.

On the morning of the “vehicle carnival,” excitement accelerates as a dump truck, police car, library bookmobile, deluxe motor home and limousines idle outside the school, waiting to pull onto the playground. Parents direct traffic to ensure that everyone arrives safely.

The exhibitors get a warm welcome in the school library, designated as the Hospitality Room, where they can enjoy hot coffee and fresh baked crumb cake. During the school day, students meet the various participants and explore the rolling exhibits. Teachers gear their reading, writing and mathematics assignments to the fair.

The students are eager to see it all, says one organizer. The drivers and vehicle owners talk to the students about their businesses and what they do during a work day. Teachers say it is inspiring to hear fifth graders asking what kind of education is necessary for careers in television broadcasting or automotive sales.

Each year Motion Commotion has student participants, as well. The youngsters are

always thrilled to see a classmate show off his or her dirt bike and riding gear, four-wheeler or baby calf in the stock trailer.

By celebrating different occupations and recreational activities that use vehicles, Motion Commotion supports Pasco School District's Career Pathways Program, designed to help high school students select a career goal before graduation. The school believes that exposing students to various businesses, services and occupations in the elementary grades makes students more aware of career choices before the high school Pathways Program.

In addition, the event supports school improvement goals by connecting the community and school with various occupations and careers across the curriculum in a fun way. Many of the exhibitors bring stickers, pencils, penlights, Frisbees or other small advertisements to share with students.

Ten teachers made up this year's planning team. In the fall, the Motion Commotion Team of volunteer staff members and parents began meeting. They planned everything from initial contacts and school grounds preparation to hospitality and participation certificates. Each year more staff, parents and community members agree to participate. The Action Team for Partnerships helps foot the \$200 bill.

After a morning of hands-on learning, students invite the exhibitors to stay for lunch in the cafeteria. At the end of the day, it is common to see students outside lining the building as the vehicles roll off the playground and into the street. Horns are honking, lights are flashing, sirens are screaming and students are waving and shouting goodbye and thank you! They're probably also saying, “Come again!”



Second-Grade Job Share Program

*Paris Elementary School
Paris, Arkansas*

It's never too early to start thinking about what you want to be when you grow up! This premise led Paris Elementary School to invite parents and community members to visit its second-grade classrooms for short presentations about their occupations. These visits supported a school goal of increasing career awareness, by showing children how the skills they learn in school will apply to jobs later on, and explaining how all jobs contribute positively to the community.

The Job Share Program welcomed people from diverse backgrounds to talk about their jobs, including hairstylists (who did a teacher makeover), air evacuation teams (who brought their helicopter), forest rangers, dog groomers, business owners, cashiers, city maintenance workers, welders, hospital workers, representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and area banks, and school officials. Those who visited spoke about the skills needed for their jobs and the expectations of their employers. The presentations tied math and reading skills, trustworthiness, responsibility, and other attributes developed at school to students' future success. If possible, presenters brought the tools that they work with. After each presentation, students asked questions. If the presentations occurred around lunchtime, the parent presenters could sit at a special table to eat with their children.

Because of its rural location, the area around Paris Elementary has few corporate and factory jobs. As a result, when organizers initially named the project "Career Share,"

many parents felt that they had nothing to offer. After the name was changed to "Job Share," the program became a success.

Parents and community members enjoyed having the opportunity to speak to the students. While the students learned to listen and asked good questions, the presenters felt pleased that the students saw the value in what they do to earn a living for their families. They also developed positive attitudes about the school and the goals it tries to reach for its students. Says the parent involvement facilitator, "This is probably one of the best programs we have in place. Students love to share their parents with their classmates, and it gives our teachers a chance to meet parents in a way that is not tied to grades or discipline."