

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."

*Margaret Wilks, Parent Involvement Facilitator
(479) 229-5177
mwilks@paris.wsc.k12.ar.us*