

Careers & Curiosity in Math and Science

An elementary school career program sponsored by Santa Fe AAUW Branch

Careers & Curiosity in Math and Science is an elementary school career fair recruiting people who use math and science in their jobs. Airline pilots, archeologists, architects, artists, authors, biologists, carpenters, chefs, couturiers, crime scene investigators, detectives, doctors, economists, engineers, farmers, financial advisers, firefighters, geologists, hydrologists, illustrators, journalists, lawyers, mathematicians, nurses, organic gardeners, pale anthropologists, physicists, plumbers, rangers, sculptors, veterinarians, water quality experts – and more have all participated.

Over the years the students have observed that math and science are everywhere, are natural, can be fun, and, since all the participants are women, they see that women can do everything men can.

Following are students' quotes (original spelling preserved) which show us these career fairs are worth the effort. And they *are* fun.

- ◆ I think it was valuable because it shows women can all have good jobs. I don't think you could have made it better because it was really good. [3rd grade]
- ◆ I don't like math, but I like this! [4th grade]
- ◆ It help me think about college and what career I am going to have. [5th grade]
- ◆ Well it made me think about other careers then pro sports. [6th grade]

Careers & Curiosity was designed by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Branch in Los Alamos in response to research showing that girls tend to turn their backs on math and science at a very early age. Career fairs in junior high cannot reverse this tendency. The “mechanics” are fairly simple.

- AAUW members visit every classroom in the school during the week before the presentation to talk about careers in general – just to introduce the students to the idea of future work. No particular stress is made on math and science alone or about the presenters all being women.
- The presenters are assigned tables, usually in a gymnasium, and arrive on the appointed morning. Each “career” gets a table, electricity if needed and any other special accommodation. Each decides which and what “stuff” to bring. The classes are scheduled by the school, and up to 50 children will be milling around at any one time. The number of presenters ranges from 15 to 25. Students are free to visit anyone for as long or as short as they wish.

A very good contact within the school is needed to inform the staff, organize the table arrangement, schedule the classes, etc.

- In follow-up all students get an “evaluation” sheet: three quite simple multiple choice questions (e.g., Did this help you learn about math? Not at all ...a little ...a lot); and a couple of essay questions. Some teachers have organized very inventive responses from their students. For example one class took photos, interviewed presenters, and created “books” with photo biographies. We are encouraged by this inventiveness.
- Volunteers are on hand to direct traffic, help presenters, fetch, carry, etc.
- Of course, food, coffee, tea are available for teachers, staff, volunteers, presenters. We will even *bring* food to the career women.

More information, including pictures, can be found at www.aauw-sf.org