People Who Make It Work

In each classroom students interview their teacher and one or more of the non-teaching school staff members and then create vivid displays for a whole-school collage that captures the voices and faces of every adult in the school community. The goal of this activity is to help students get to know the adults they see at school every day—teachers, secretaries, administrators, nurses, librarians, playground monitors, lunchroom staff, classroom aides, social workers, bus drivers, and the custodial staff. The displays can include photographs, drawings, stories, poems, or whatever else fits the interests and ambitions of the collage makers.

Why This Activity?
The first few weeks of school can be an exciting, but potentially overwhelming, time for children. They are eager to know who their teacher is, who the other adults in the school are, and whether or not they will fit in with the other children. Just as teachers use activities that help children get to know one another in their classroom, this schoolwide project offers children the opportunity to meet and learn about the adults in the school community. As a result, students are likely to feel more comfortable with the adults who work with or around them each day. For staff, this activity offers an opportunity to see themselves as valuable contributors to a whole-community effort to help children grow as learners and as people.

The Program

Getting Ready
Begin by discussing the proposed project with teachers at a staff meeting, describing its purpose and how they will be asked to participate. Point out that the Coordinating Team will be matching one or two staff people with each classroom, but that the teachers themselves will be responsible for scheduling the interviews (about 20 minutes for each)—including their own. Distribute copies of the suggestions for teachers for this activity, and invite everyone to contribute ideas and suggestions.
Send a memo to nonteaching staff, explaining the activity and requesting their participation (see Sample 1.1 below). Remember to include part-timers, specialists, and consultants. Match each participating adult with a classroom, and notify classroom teachers of these assignments so that they can schedule the interviews. Provide translation as needed.

Make some preliminary decisions about where the school collage might be displayed, the final size of the collage, the size of each classroom’s contribution (which should all be of approximately the same size), and the timeline for the project.

**Classroom Interviews**

Classroom teachers are primarily responsible for managing this aspect of the activity, but students in each classroom should be responsible for deciding how they will conduct the interview and what they will ask. For example, teachers might have students brainstorm categories of information they would like to know about their interview subjects, as well as specific questions for each category; to broaden student thinking about question categories, teachers might also ask students to think about ways to “translate” their interviews into graphically interesting collage pieces. For more details and ideas about what this activity might look like in the classroom, see the suggestions for teachers.

**Creating the Collage**

In the classrooms, students will create a display about each adult they have interviewed—these displays might include photographs, drawings, stories, quotes, or anything else they want to use to tell the story of the adult and what he or she does in the school community.

Once the class displays are finished, have students from each classroom hang their work and build the collage piece by piece. Once the collage is finished, you may want to create a sign-up schedule for teachers to take their classes to view the collage; you might also want to document the finished piece or invite local media to do so. Remember to take time to acknowledge and celebrate everyone’s participation in the project, including your own.

**Adaptations**

Based on the students’ interviews, create a staff directory featuring a photograph and story about each person and his or her job. If a camera is not available, upper-grade students could interview the staff members, while younger students could make drawings to accompany each person’s description.

**Parent Information**

Let parents know you are working on a schoolwide collage to help children and school staff members get to know each other. Invite them to visit the school to see the collage. (See Sample 1.2 below).
Dear School Staff Members,

We’d like you to know about our plans for a schoolwide activity called **People Who Make It Work**, and to invite your participation—in fact, we can’t do this activity without you!

As part of our effort to build our schoolwide sense of community, we want to “introduce” students to all the teachers and staff members in the school. To do this, the students in each class will interview their teacher and at least one other adult in the school. They will make a display to show what they learned about each person they interviewed, and then all the class displays will be combined into a whole-school collage. This way, students can look at the collage and get to know the many adults they see at school every day in other classrooms, the library, the lunchroom, the office, on the playground, and on the bus.

We guarantee this will be fun for everyone, and we hope you’ll agree to participate. Also, we’d love to hear your ideas, suggestions, or questions. Please let us know by returning the form below to our mailbox in the Main Office. Thanks!

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**Name:**

**Room/Phone:**

☐ Yes, I’d like to participate. Please match me with a classroom and have the teacher contact me.

☐ No, I’m unable to participate.

☐ I have questions! Please have someone from the Coordinating Team contact me.

**Ideas & Suggestions**

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**Materials & Facilities**

- Art supplies
- Camera and film (optional)
- Space to hang the collage
Dear Family Members and Family Friends,

As part of our efforts to build a stronger school community, the children at (NAME) School have been participating in a schoolwide effort called People Who Make It Work. For this activity, students have interviewed the adults in the school and now are creating a schoolwide collage to show what they learned from their interviews.

The collage features the members of our school staff, including teachers, classroom aides, playground monitors, custodians, cafeteria staff, administrators—all the adults who make our school work.

The collage will be displayed in the (LOCATION) from (DATE) to (DATE). We hope you’ll visit the school to see the collage and learn more about the adults in our school community and what they do here!