

School Family Jobs Tip Sheet

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School Family Jobs

Human beings are social animals. We have a deep universal need to be of service. We all seek, on some level, to make a difference, and live a life of purpose. We know, even at a very young age, that we need each other, and we need each other to do our part in contributing to the benefit of everyone.

Research across cultures shows that children in non-Western cultures participate in the welfare of the family and community from an early age. They are ready and willing to help with what is needed to help other thrive. While adults in Western cultures tend to bemoan the sad work ethic of today’s children, the fault actually lies with us. Many adults often choose to do the work needed for the family/classroom/community instead of engaging the children in that work. Often this is due to being concerned that the child doesn’t know how to do a task and will create more work for the adult in the long run. When in fact the opposite is true. When we engage children in the functions that create a smooth-running community, we teach them that being of service has value. And we teach them how to do the work so that in the long run they are productive members of their community, helping alleviate the work for adults. Does it take time and patience to instruct in these jobs? Of course. But the dividends that are paid out for everyone far outstrip the work required. The truth is that our children aren’t lazy, they just don’t know how much their contribution is needed, nor how good it feels to be of service.

School Family Jobs are one way to help children feel a part of the community by being of service. These jobs also work well to help staff member to feel better connected to their School Family as well. We encourage you to use School Family Jobs both in the classroom and at the center level (and even at home!)

The keys to success with School Family Jobs are:

1. Every person has a job. Every single person, every single day. You may have to be creative in working to come up with enough jobs, but everyone needs them. There can't be 5 jobs that are rotated amongst the children, or worse used as a reward and punishment system. Everyone needs a way to be of service every day.
2. The person doing them sees the value in the job for the community. While assigning jobs may seem the most efficient way to accomplish giving everyone a job, we must make sure that the person with the job actually thinks it is valuable. Allowing children and staff to choose their job can be very empowering. Having classroom meetings to explain that we must share jobs, and sometimes even rotate through children for very popular ones can be very helpful in solving issues before they start. Allow children (and adults) to help choose what the jobs are. As long as they are something that contributes to the community, consider allowing it to happen. You don't really need a Door Closer because the door closes on its own? But James really thinks this would be a great job and is proud to do it to help out? Sounds like you have yourself a Door Closer.

A note about staff jobs. Please do not make these jobs something that would require extra pay if you were to put it in a job description. These are jobs that help make the community move more smoothly – a Center Greeter, and Meeting Greeter, someone who recognizes staff birthdays, someone who refreshes the Wish Well board or other structures, etc. Bring your staff into the decision-making process to help ensure success.

A note about push-back. Everyone should have the right to opt-out of anything that isn't a safety or job requirement. Simply continue to encourage them to participate in the future.

For the Classroom and Center

- **Materials Needed:**
 1. Family Communication – to be sent out prior to starting a School Family Jobs (or before any major changes to its use)
 2. A School Family Jobs board placed in a highly visible place.
 3. Personalized tokens that represent each individual to mark who has what job.
 4. Visual routines that demonstrate how each job should be done.
 5. A way to keep track of who has had a job before to help support equity.
- **Steps to Success:**
 1. Send out family communication prior to starting or changing the School Family Jobs. Communicate in as many ways as possible: meetings, letters home, emails, phone, text, etc.
 2. Have a classroom or staff meeting to discuss what jobs are and what jobs there should be. This may be a good time to allow jobs to be chosen.
 3. Explicitly teach how each job is to be done. Use visual routines to help reinforce the learning.
 4. Gently remind everyone about their job starting out. It may take some time to get things running smoothly.
 5. Change your methods as needed if they don't seem to be meeting the needs of your students or staff. If things seem to not be working smoothly, engage your students or staff in a discuss about how to make it better.

Resources

- Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms by Dr. Becky Bailey
 - Chapter 6 – Encouragement
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/book-portal/chapter-6-encouragement/>
- Creating the School Family: Bully-Proofing Classrooms Through Emotional Intelligence by Dr. Becky Bailey
 - Chapter 11 – Classroom Jobs
- School Family Jobs
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/shuberts-classroom/job-board/>
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/sophies-classroom/job-board/>
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/> for many printables.