

### It's not just a job

#### What do you want to be when you grow up?

Most kids can give you a simple answer to that question, but one group of Brookfield students can answer it and tell you exactly how they're going to achieve their plans—backed up by spreadsheets, a timeline and a video description.

Pam Sullivan, who taught technology last year at S.E. Gross Middle School, developed a career exploration unit for fifth-graders that would help them develop their tech skills as well as learn about career choices.

Students first picked out a potential career and did Internet research to gather information on their choice. They then used a software program called TimeLiner to develop a timeline for what they needed to do to enter the career, including selecting courses in high school, choosing an appropriate college or trade school and actions needed to actually land the job.

Sullivan also injected a shot of real-world planning into the mix by having the students set up an Excel spreadsheet to calculate the money they'd earn in their chosen profession, and the expenditures they'd face once they were living independently. Each time students entered class, they would receive a "Chance" card that detailed an unexpected expense—a doctor visit, an unplanned shopping spree—or savings opportunity, and they had to work their budget around these events.

The students honed their writing skills by taking on the persona of a teacher or boss and writing letters of recommendation for themselves. The exercise, says Sullivan, made them think critically about the skills needed for their career choices and whether they, in fact, had these skills. They also wrote a script, filmed and edited a short video explaining their career choice.

Although the unit was taught in a technology

class, students used a variety of additional skills, including math, writing and language arts, and Sullivan says it could easily be adapted for other curricula. "The students enjoyed using a real-world, interactive approach," she says—and the group, which includes a future zoologist, pastry chef and news broadcaster, can attest to that.

### The art of collaboration

**Arts and technology have teamed up** in a big way at Northfield's Sunset Ridge School.

Sixth-graders at the school participated in "The Big Picture," a yearlong project that culminated in a multimedia performance, with students dancing, singing and acting in front of mammoth murals based on the works of three artists.

"The Big Picture" was coordinated by music teacher Carol Broos and art teacher Mary Bortz, along with Ken Smith, gifted teacher, and aide Eric Simon; and was based on a project originally done in a California school.

Students researched and painted murals based on works by Joan Miro, American painter Stuart Davis, and Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai. The three-paneled murals—which measured 8'x10' when completed—served as a backdrop for student performances, and were eventually hung around the school when the project was over.

Students also researched each artist's era and culture and then wrote scripts incorporating relevant music and information about the artists. The performances were recorded, and a DVD was produced, which was shown to the entire school.

The collaborative effort among the teachers in different disciplines was essential, says Broos. "When you're collaborating, it's so important that you focus on who you're working with," she says. "The focus has to be: We want to work together. If it starts like that, it's going to work."