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## The Wright combination: Mother and daughter teaching at same school for a semester

By Renee Messacar - Staff Writer

MALTA - Wright Elementary School teacher Pam Bybee



Pam Bybee (left) and her daughter, Liz Bybee, read to their students at DeKalb's Wright Elementary School in Malta during a lunch break Wednesday. Liz, who graduated with an art education degree in December, enjoys teaching at the same school as her mother. Provided photo

said she was honored when her daughter, Liz, decided to become a teacher.

But when Liz took a semester-long position at the school this spring, Pam received a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" that she will always cherish, she said.

After graduating from Illinois State University this winter with an art education degree, Liz joined the Wright staff to help with a kindergarten class, provide sensory breaks for children with special needs and help out where she's needed.

School Principal Scott Kubelka said the staff was happy to get Liz for the spring.

"It's been a fantastic experience having both Liz and Pam," he said. "Both are child-centered and creative. It's unusual to have related people working at the same school, but it was a win-win situation because Liz filled a position for us and she has time with her mother, who is a great mentor to her."

Liz said she's had a wonderful experience at Wright.

"I've enjoyed spending time with my mom," she said. "We chat when we see each other during the day. And after school, I come to her room and we talk about how the day went."

The rest of the staff welcomed her and enthusiastically helped her improve her teaching skills, she said.

She's learned the most, however, from her mother, Liz said.

"From her, I've learned to teach with compassion," she said. "I've learned to encourage every

single student, no matter what their backgrounds and levels are, and to respect who they are."

Liz's brother, Sam, is a third-grader at Wright, and she also enjoys seeing him during the day, she said.

Pam, who teaches fourth-grade, said her children always attended the elementary schools where she has taught.

"It's fun being able to see them during the day and know what's going on in their classrooms," she said. Being at the same building also provides them more time together before and after school.

Even after Liz left elementary school, she often stopped by her mother's classroom to put up bulletin boards, play with the children and hang out.

Watching her mother in action inspired her interest in teaching.

"She's a great teacher, and I got the idea from watching her," Liz said. "I'm the oldest, and I enjoyed my siblings so much I want to be with kids all the time. Children make my day. Working with them is an uplifting job. I also wanted to do something with art - so art education was a good choice."

"I'm honored she went into education," Pam said. "And it's great having her at the same school."

Pam's eyes misted over last week when she spoke about working with her daughter.

"This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me," she said. "It has been a special time for us."

Her sixth-grade son also is thinking about becoming a teacher.

Kubelka said the school was happy to have Liz for spring - she's searching for a permanent position in the Springfield area.

"We consider the school a family for students and staff, and in this situation, it really is family," he said.

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