

Roberson's Rolling Classroom

Nine year old Payton's classroom is smaller than most, but the view is exceptional and the teachers truly care about her progress. In the cab of a truck, Payton is home-schooled by her parents, Audra and Donnie Roberson who are both professional drivers. Audra is also a member of Women In Trucking Association.

Payton gets real life examples to help her learn math, which is her favorite subject. She helps calculate mileage while learning how to read an atlas. She's also becoming familiar with road signs and how to maneuver through the interstate system.

Donnie Roberson has been a professional driver for the past sixteen years, and this year Audra decided to join him. She earned her CDL at Central Alabama Community College and was allowed to be trained by Donnie at their current carrier. "When we asked if we could home-school our daughter, the company agreed to let us bring her in the truck," said Audra. "So, this past September Payton started school on the road."

At first Payton wasn't excited about leaving her friends, but she did like the

idea of having one-on-one lessons with her parents. To comply with Alabama home-schooling law, the Robersons are registered with a Christian school and use a certified program called A Beka. Audra is required to complete a record of every lesson, every test, and how much time they spend learning.

"We're a little less structured because Payton is the only student," Audra admitted. The program is very controlled and the reporting provides the documentation needed to comply with teaching requirements in Alabama. The Robersons looked at



Parents and drivers Audra and Donnie Roberson home-school their daughter Payton in the truck

numerous home-schooling programs, but settled on this one because there was no face-to-face requirement such as in-house meetings.

Although the Robersons see many children on the road during the summer vacation months, they haven't met anyone else home-schooling their children in the truck. "I've met some who tell me they have educated their children on the road, but they're grown now," said Audra. She does have some guidance from a family member, however, "My sister-in-law

home-schooled her children and now one is going to medical school," she added.

While Payton studies during the day, her dad drives. After her lessons, her mom sleeps so she can take over driving at night while Donnie rests. When they get home, Audra and Donnie go separate directions so they can have some space in their relationship. "Donnie hops in the car and visits his family," Audra said, "and I get some time alone." Payton uses her time at home to catch up with her friends, who she misses while she's away.

"My friends think it's cool that I'm home-schooled in the truck," Payton shared. Although she likes being on the road with her parents, she is not interested in becoming a professional driver when she grows up. "I want to be a forensic scientist

and earn enough money to buy a horse farm."

Payton is already starting a career as a performing artist. Her dad is a singer / songwriter and already recorded two albums (myspace.com/donnieroberson). Payton joined him as a backup singer on his new single, "Honky Tonk Truck Driving Cowboy." Donnie was one of the finalists in the Trucker Talent competition at Big Rig Truck Expo in Tulsa. Payton accompanied him at the event.

When Payton is not studying or singing, she's dreaming of a big ranch where she can train horses and maybe sing a song or two with her dad. For now, she's focusing on completing her classes and keeping her grades up while being home-schooled on the road.