

Our Pet Project

Overview:

Animals depend on us for survival. Students love animals, which makes them the perfect medium by which to empower children to make a difference. This project will enrich students' study of living organisms as well as integrate information to help students become responsible pet owners, understand animal needs, and assist the animal population in our area while developing writing skills.

Materials:

- Invite local animal groups to partner with you to make this project come alive.
- The teacher will need to check on pet allergies prior to these visits.

Procedure:

Not only do animals rely on us, but we also rely on them. There are many ways in which an animal can serve, hence the dog's nickname "man's best friend." People who have sight impairments use seeing-eye dogs. Horses are being used as therapy animals.

1. Ask volunteers to bring an animal and discuss the needs of the pet, responsible pet ownership, safety around animals, and ways that students can help. You can look for volunteers at your local SPCA, animal rescue group, wildlife rescue groups, service animal organizations, or police departments with canine units.
2. Brainstorm with your class ways in which animals work for and with us.
3. Ask students to journal about the role of pets in their own lives. They can consider their own experiences, those of friends and family, or other ways other animals are part of their community.
4. As a class, write a thank-you note for the speaker.

Other activities may include the following:

- Discuss what it means to be a good pet owner. Create a list of the responsibilities of pet ownership.
- Have your class make a poster with a picture of the "class pets" as a visual reminder of the animals in the community that needs our help or those that serve us.
- Have students perform or videotape Public Service Announcements about the importance of being a responsible pet owner and/or how to help animals in their community. These could also be performed at an assembly or other school gathering.

Our Pet Project

- Encourage students to volunteer with local animal groups. (Some organizations have age requirements, so you want make sure you students are eligible before recommending this.)
- Find ways to donate to local animal care organizations. Students could organize fund raisers, bake dog biscuits, make blankets for pets, etc. Often your local Humane Society/SPCA will have suggestions.

This piece can serve as a nice parallel between our responsibility pillar and these animals.

What is their responsibility toward us? What is ours toward them? A packet of additional activities can be downloaded from the American Kennel Club at www.akc.org in the kids/juniors section.

This lesson was submitted by Barabara Gruener, a counselor at Westwood Elementary, in Friendswood, Texas.

McREL standards

Language Arts

Standard 1. Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

Benchmark 8. Writes compositions about autobiographical incidents (e.g., explores the significance and personal importance of the incident; uses details to provide a context for the incident; reveals personal attitude towards the incident; presents details in a logical manner)

<http://www.mcrel.org/Standards-benchmarks/>