

Learning to Communicate with Dogs: The Importance of Training

Grade Level: 6-9

Subject: Language Arts

Character Concepts

Responsibility and Fairness

Objective

Students will practice reading for information, research, and reporting skills. Students will also learn the importance of communication.

Curriculum Connection

Research skills, oral report, bibliography

National Standards Addressed

NL-ENG.K-12.1 Reading for Perspective

NL-ENG.K-12.3 Evaluation Strategies

NL-ENG.K-12.4 Communication Skills

NL-ENG.K-12.7 Evaluating Data

NL-ENG.K-12.8 Developing Research Skills

NL-ENG.K-12.12 Applying Language Skills

Materials Needed

- books, magazine articles, other references on dog breeds and training tips
- index cards with companion animal scenarios (see lesson body for one example; others will be educator created)
- poster board and construction paper
- paint, markers, crayons, other medium as necessary
- glue or tape
- access to websites such as Petfinder.com, Pet911.com, or other rescue/animal site
- teacher can provide dog care items such as bowls, leashes, harnesses, small cages, treats, and food for those who may not have a pet or may not be allowed to bring items into the school.
- ["Puppy Chewing" tips sheet](#)
- [project question note sheet](#)
- [rubric](#) (optional) ([Learn more about rubrics.](#))

Lesson Procedure

Opening

1. Show students video clips of a dog exhibiting an unwanted behavior such as chewing on shoes or jumping on guests. (Another option is to read an excerpt from [Marley and Me](#) or tell a short story of a dog who shows unwanted behavior.)
2. Review that the behavior can be difficult to live with as well as dangerous for the dog and family.



3. Ask the students to participate in a [“chalk talk”](#) or brainstorm session where they list ideas of people or techniques that could help solve the problem.
4. Review the ideas on the list. Help students to realize how things they wrote relate to training or teaching communication skills, which will help a dog know what is expected of him or her in the human world as well as help the humans understand certain dog behaviors.
5. Discuss the role of dog trainers or canine behaviorists. (Optional: Invite a certified trainer or behaviorist to be a guest speaker in the class.) Review that many things considered to be problem behavior can be helped with training and by learning about canine communication.
6. Tell the class that they will be researching information about canine behavior and communication as well as learning training tips. Pass out the assignment [rubric](#) and review directions. (Note: Rubric does not have to be used if points will not be given.)

Body

(Lesson body can be completed individually or as a partner activity.)

1. Pass out [“Puppy Chewing” tips sheet](#) and ask the class to read.
2. Review with students that chewing is a common problem with both puppies and older dogs. Ask students to highlight areas in the reading that answer the following three questions:
 - a. Why do dogs chew?
 - b. How can a family help a dog to learn that chewing is not a desired behavior?
 - c. What should not be done by the family when trying to teach a dog not to chew?
3. After reading, review with the students answers to the above questions.
4. Review with students that each student or pair of students will receive an index card containing a common behavior problem or scenario. Each student or pair will be asked to research the type of dog involved (if provided,) the potential behavior problem, and see what type of training solution can be provided to the caregiver in the scenario. Pass out [project questions note sheet](#) and review. (Hint: Refer back to the [rubric](#) for guidelines.)
5. Provide students with time to review the resources provided and complete the project question note sheet. (Note: If time is limited you may want to have resources separated by topic so they are readily available to students.)
6. After students have completed the required research ask each student or pair to create a poster or other visual that contains the information from their project questions note sheet. (Note: Educators may wish to show a sample poster so students understand expectations.)
7. Ask each student or group to prepare a short oral presentation in which they highlight their visual and findings. Review [oral presentation tips](#).

Closure

(This may take more than one meeting if there are many students in the group.)

Ask the student or group to present each problem by reading the index card received at the beginning of the project. The student or group will then present the solution they researched.



Extension

Arrange to have a dog brought to class by local shelter or rescue staff. Staff can tell the story of the dog and review training that the dog is receiving while waiting for adoption.