

Books 'n Woofs: A Literacy Program for Schoolchildren

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INFORMATION

CLIENT POPULATION AND SETTING

The population being served in this program are schoolchildren ages 8-10 (grade levels 3-4). The program will take place at an elementary school as either a before or after school program or as an intervention program within the school day. Within the elementary classroom, a literacy teacher will work in conjunction with the handler/dog therapy team. This age level has been selected because of the plateau of reading performance typically seen at the 4th grade for students at this school (according to school standardized CSAP test scores). Reading interventions need to happen at an early age, and this school has many interventions in place for K-2 graders. Intense reading instruction (i.e. guided reading groups) lessens after 3rd grade, however interventions are still needed.

In order to be qualified to participate in this program, students will need to meet the following criteria: be at-risk in reading and performing below grade level in reading.

The selection process will include:

1. Be recommended by literacy teacher/classroom teacher for the program
2. Have parent permission to participate in the program
3. Being available to participate in the full length of the program for data collection

With the success of the literacy program, the program will move into being an integral part of school-day content instruction (expanding from literacy to include math, writing and the teaching of social skills).

PROGRAM GOALS

The main goal for this program will align with the current needs for our school: increasing literacy rates to have each student at or above grade level in reading. . There is a direct correlation between fluency and comprehension, and those students who do not read fluently typically do not have high comprehension. Currently there is an average of 30% of students at each grade level are below grade level in reading due to the influx of new students to the school.

Not only will students practice reading aloud to increase reading fluency, but will also work on activities to improve their skills to decode and problem solve in reading and improve their comprehension. Additional goals include:

- To reach students at an early age before they become at-risk, offer them additional or alternative interventions, and motivate them to read
- To monitor student progress to improve the efficacy of a literacy-based AAI program (as opposed to R.E.A.D. programs in existence that do not monitor progress or set individual client goals)
- Develop a model that can be used in other local schools/districts

CLINICAL RATIONALE

Most of the reading dog programs in existence involve a dog visiting a library or school, and the child reading for a set amount of time to the dog. In these types of programs, progress of the child's reading ability is not monitored. Handlers of the dogs have gone through a variety of levels of certification (such as CGC, Delta Society, R.E.A.D) however have often not had training in literacy (unless as specified through their occupation). As a teacher starting this program, I *have* had formal training in literacy and strategies that can help students to read, as

have the team of teachers that would work with me. Students will not only improve their reading ability by reading aloud to the therapy dog, but also work on literacy activities that incorporate the dog into the activity. By incorporating both reading *and* activities, students will show increased ability to read at their grade level.

One of the reasons for this program is the benefits to students, dogs, and their handlers. According to Kris Butler (2004) “A program can be tailored to address virtually any topic...from a positive, rather than problem-focused, position.” (p.18) Additionally, she claims that all dogs need a job, whether it be visiting in a therapy setting or something completely different. Finally, handlers benefit because they are contributing to society with the services they provide. (p. 18-19) This program will benefit not only the student, but also the animal and handler involved.

As stated in Fine’s Handbook on Animal Assisted Therapy, there is a natural bond between children and animals. Evidence has shown that “animals are naturally part of a child’s world”, and “the child/animal bond is something pure when witnessed. It can bring a withdrawn child out...” (Ascione, McCabe, Phillips and Tedeschi, 2010, Chapter 18, Section 18.3.2, para. 3). For those that are unmotivated in reading, an animal can be a strong motivational tool to getting that child to read and, furthermore, giving them confidence in their reading abilities. Many of the at-risk students in reading are also at-risk in other areas, including social and emotional behavior, and in particular, self-confidence. By having a positive experience and relationship with a therapy dog to improve reading skills, self-confidence should also increase.

Finally, the program should improve the child’s attitude towards reading. For students who struggle in reading, reading is often perceived as a chore, an undesirable activity, and an activity with little success. By combining the presence of something that (most) children love

and are familiar with, a dog, reading can be turned into a more enjoyable activity because it is being associated with something they like (the dog).

METHODS

ANIMAL

Because this program involves children, a dog has been chosen as most suitable. Below are reasons a dog would be most beneficial:

- a) A dog is an animal familiar to and liked by most children
- b) A dog can be trained to perform certain commands to integrate into instruction
- c) A dog is not too large to bring into a classroom (as opposed to a horse) but not too small for small children to interact with (as opposed to a rat or bunny)
- d) A dog is an animal that I, the handler, am familiar with, and would be willing to take responsibility for in ownership

A TYPICAL DAY IN THE PROGRAM

1. Student arrives and greets the handler and dog. (2-3 minutes)
2. Handler, dog and student work on a literacy activity together. (10 minutes)
3. Student reads aloud to the dog for 10 minutes.

OUTCOMES

Cognitive and Skill Outcomes and Indicators	Measurement Tool/Approach
<p>Cognitive Outcome: Improve ability to read and follow a set of multi-step directions</p> <p>AAI Indicator: Child will follow directions for daily grooming and care (brushing, feeding, watering, etc.) of a therapy animal.</p>	<p>Staff Observation Tool: Teacher will be asked to give the student an initial examination in which the child will need to read and follow a set of multi-step directions. Directions will include target words that the student needs to be able to read. Teacher will administer this evaluation on a weekly basis</p> <p>Handler observation tool: Handler gives student a series of directions to follow for dog grooming (that include student's target words). Student will read and follow these directions to groom the animal. Handler will oversee grooming, complete own checklist of tasks performed, and report to the teacher at the progress the child makes on reading/following directions. Handler will monitor this weekly.</p> <p>Child feedback: Child will be asked to fill out a checklist each visit of the duties to be performed in grooming.</p>
<p>Skill Outcome: Student will be able to read a grade level passage</p> <p>AAI Indicator: Student will read the grade level passage while dog is present.</p>	<p>Measurement Tool: Using AIMSweb passages, student will need to read the appropriate grade level words per minute (WPM) and complete the grade level number of comprehension sentences accurately.</p>

TECHNIQUES

1. **Active engagement:** At the beginning of the session, students will participate in a literacy lesson with the therapy dog and handler. (see attached lesson)
2. **High interest/Dog-related books:** Students will have a selection of challenging but appropriate books to read when in session that are dog related.

3. **Incorporation of real-life skills:** Reading practice will include reading and following a set of grooming instructions for properly grooming the dog. Instructions will vary each session and build on one another. This also incorporates fine motor skills (brushing, buckling a harness) which children of this age are still developing.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The program will be evaluated by assessing the students' gains in reading (fluency and comprehension) and the students' attitude towards reading. An initial assessment (AIMSweb) will be given to show where the students are at in fluency and comprehension. A survey will also be given to the students to find out their attitude towards reading. These assessments will then be given on a weekly basis by the classroom teacher and again at the end of the program. Finally, a bonding scale survey used by the Human-Animal Bond in Colorado may be beneficial for collecting data of students if given at the end of the program. (see Resources)

STRENGTHS AND POTENTIAL WEAKNESSES OF THE PROGRAM

Strengths:

1. A new and innovative reading intervention program
2. Offers client-specific goals and progress monitoring of students
3. Additional goals beyond reading aloud to a therapy dog

Potential Weaknesses:

1. Administration buy-in to the program
2. Management of students and animal simultaneously

3. Establishing certification requirements: Is CGC enough or should other certifications be required? Rough petting/handling should be assessed when working with children. As stated in Handbook in Animal Assisted Therapy, the context in which the animal/handler will be working is of importance when evaluating the animal and handler (Frederickson-MacNamara and Butler, 2010, Chapter 7 Section 7.3.1, para. 5)

DOG CARE

Ethical Concerns

Working with children can be stressful and taxing on anyone, and especially an animal. Precautions must be taken to ensure the dog's safety and well-being are both being met throughout the program. Outlined below are steps to ensure these are met.

1. Before beginning of the program, go over rules and guidelines for dog handling with the students in the program. Use a stuffed animal dog to role play with students how to properly approach and pet the dog. Additionally, read sections of the book Good Dog by Evelyn Pang and Hilary Louie, with particular focus on the chapter "What is Your Dog Trying to Tell You?".
2. If the dog shows any beginning calming signs (Louie and Pang, 2008, p. 22-29), remove him immediately from the situation. Take a play break outside or inside. Depending on the signs exhibited, the program may need to be cancelled for the day. Because of this possibility, it will be necessary to have another adult involved in the program to be with the child if the dog becomes stressed.

3. A short break should be given to the dog between each 30 minute session (i.e. a short game of tug or fetch). After 2 sessions (approximately 1 hour), a longer, outside break and walk will take place. At the end of the day, the dog will have a longer play session.

Training

The dog will need to have the following certifications for participation in the program: Canine Good Citizenship (CGC) certification plus a therapy animal certification through either Delta Society or Therapy Dogs International. Certification as a R.E.A.D. dog (through Intermountain Therapy Animals) would also be beneficial.

These certifications require the dog to know basic and advanced commands, which will be useful in the literacy activities students will participate in.

Zoonotic Concerns

The first and most important concern with dogs in schools is allergies. Actions can be taken to reduce a child's allergic reaction; however it would not be ideal for a child with severe allergies to be involved with an animal therapy program with dogs. Other zoonotic concerns include: ringworm, hookworm, Giardia, ticks, fleas and rabies. By following these procedures, most of these concerns can be avoided/controlled: grooming of animal before sessions, preventative healthcare for dog, and proper disposal of animal waste. Students must follow these procedures before/after interaction with the animal: proper hand-washing techniques

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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8. State of the Art Report, Howie and MacNamara

APPENDIX A

Literacy Lesson Plan: Sequencing a Story

<p>School: The Academy Elementary School is a charter school in Westminster, CO. It is a high-academic performing school with a distinct focus on reading and writing.</p>
<p>Subject(s): Literacy</p>
<p>Grade Level(s): 2nd grade</p>
<p>Objectives: Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read aloud sentences from a short story • Sequence the story from beginning to end • Recall events from a story
<p>Materials Needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog • Harness • Leash • Tennis balls with slits • Note cards with sentences from the story on them • dog treats. • pencil • Sequencing sheet (see end of this document)
<p>Procedure: Prior to this lesson, teacher will also have gone over appropriate commands to use with the dog. (take, give, bring)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher will introduce story to student. Student will make predictions what they think the story is about. 2. Student will choose a ball to throw for the dog and give the command “bring” once the dog has retrieved the ball. 3. After dog has brought ball back to the student, the student will give the command “give” to the dog, at which the dog will give the ball to the student. 4. Student will open the ball and pull out the note card with sentences from the story. 5. Student will read the note card aloud, highlighting any word(s) that are difficult to add to the students’ personal word list. 6. Student will repeat steps 2-5 until all the balls have been thrown/retrieved/read aloud. 7. Student will order the story from beginning to end and glue the note cards into the appropriate boxes. 8. Teacher will check student’s work.

Extension: Student can add their own details to the story. Student will put them into the balls for another student to then solve.

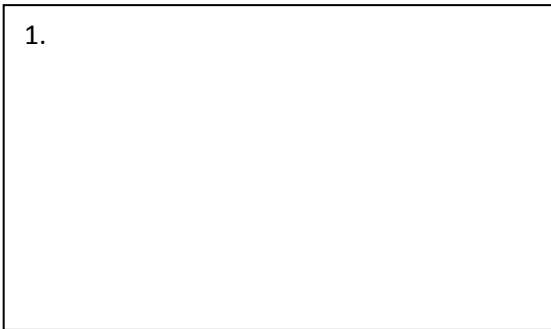
Assessment: At the next session, student will read aloud the story they sequenced fluently with ___% accuracy.

Name: _____

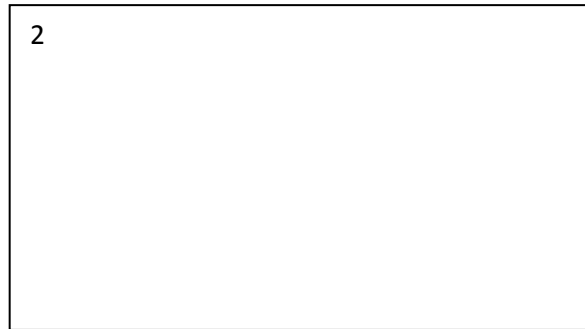
Date: _____

Sequence That Story!

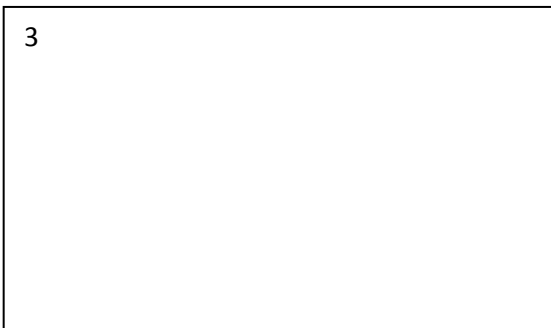
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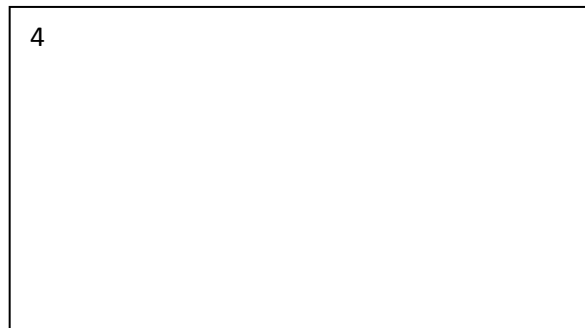
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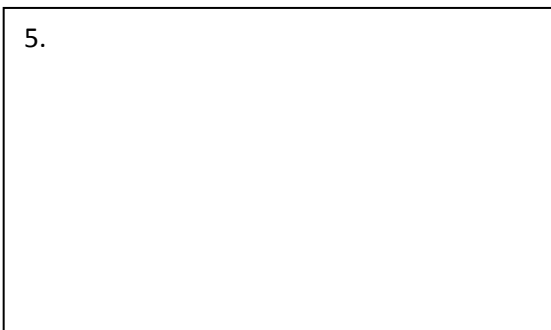
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4.



5.



6.



APPENDIX B

Literacy Lesson Plan: Following Grooming Directions

<p>School: The Academy Elementary School is a charter school in Westminster, CO. It is a high-academic performing school with a distinct focus on reading and writing.</p>
<p>Subject(s): Literacy</p>
<p>Grade Level(s): 2nd grade</p>
<p>Objectives: Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and follow a set of directions for grooming an animal
<p>Materials Needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog • Harness • Leash • brush • dog treats • pencil • Activity sheet (see end of this document)
<p>Procedure: Prior to this lesson, teacher will also have gone over appropriate handling of the dog while grooming. Student will initially practice grooming on the stuffed animal to assure utmost care and proper handling of the dog.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Give student “Groom That Dog” Worksheet. 10. Have student read all the directions out loud first. Ask student to show how to do each grooming activity before grooming the dog. 11. Have child reread each activity, stopping after each number to complete the grooming activity. 12. Student checks off each grooming activity he/she completed. Handler will also check off on his/her own checklist and record any missed or misunderstood words in the grooming directions. <p>Extension: Have student write a grooming step in his/her own words.</p>
<p>Assessment: Student reads all the grooming steps fluently and accurately, and can describe what needs to be done in each step.</p>

Name: _____

Date: _____

Groom That Dog!



Dog I groomed: _____

Gather all materials for grooming: brush , tissue, collar, harness and leash.	<input type="checkbox"/>
1. Begin by gently brushing the dog's neck.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Move slowly down to brush the dog's back.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Next, brush the dog's belly and tail.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Using a tissue, gently wipe the dog's eyes	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX C

BONDING SCALE
Human-Animal Bond in Colorado (HABIC)

The following questions relate to the dog that you are working with. Please respond to each question by circling the one best number for you. Thank you for your participation.

	<u>Never</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Always</u>
1. I look forward to working with my dog.	1	2	3
2. I know what my dog likes.	1	2	3
3. There are times that I am lonely without my dog.	1	2	3
4. My dog comforts me.	1	2	3
5. My dog helps me to relax.	1	2	3
6. I feel responsible for my dog.	1	2	3
7. My dog gives me a reason for coming to school.	1	2	3
8. I miss my dog in-between visits.	1	2	3
9. My dog is very important to me.	1	2	3
10. I know what my dog does not like.	1	2	3
11. I am close with my dog.	1	2	3
12. I feel safe with my dog.	1	2	3

APPENDIX D

Sample Permission Form:

Animal-Assisted Interventions Parent Permission Form

Dear Academy Families,

Academy Elementary is planning to use therapy dogs as a part of a reading intervention program, Books 'n Woofs. Students may be in contact with Delta Society certified therapy dogs throughout the school year under the supervision of Andrea Schmuttermair, Teacher, or _____, Literacy Teacher.

Our dog, Wesson, is trained in basic obedience, and, along with Ms. Schmuttermair, had to pass a very difficult evaluation process in order to be certified Pet Partner Teams. Our certification was completed through the Pet Partners Program, which is part of the Delta Society, an organization that specializes in research concerning the benefits of the human-animal bond, as well as in the training and certification of animals for work in various capacities with people.

“What benefits does having a dog at school serve for my child?” you might ask. Animals help children experience and learn compassion, caring, love, and empathy, as well as responsibility, respect, and self-discipline. Animals provide unconditional love and caring, and with a wag of the tail or lick on the hand, a friendly dog can bring a smile to just about everyone!

In addition, this program will provide your child with important reading interventions in a new and innovative way.

Your child must have a permission slip on file in order to participate with or be around the therapy dogs at The Academy Elementary. If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact Andrea Schmuttermair at 303-289-8088 x181.

Sincerely,

Andrea Schmuttermair

Teacher

Please complete this form, sign and return by _____:

Student Name _____ Teacher Name _____

____ YES, my child has permission to participate in the animal-assisted interventions program at The Academy for the 2011-2012 school year.

____ NO, my child does **not** have permission to participate in the animal-assisted interventions program at The Academy for the 2011-2012 school year.

Parent/ Guardian Signature _____ Date _____