Empathy to Action: A Therapy Dog Takes Students Beyond the Classroom

Presenters

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By the end of the session, participants will:

• Identify ways educators and community partners can collaborate to achieve educational goals.
• Examine how teachers can allow students to direct instruction and become strong class leaders.
• Understand how to incorporate service animals in learning.
• Identify ways service learning can be part of classroom learning.

Demographics

Overall description of Watauga County
• Watauga County Schools Enrollment 4498
• Total county EC population 805

Description of Hardin Park School
• Title 1 school
• Number of Hardin Park students 775
• Number of EC students at Hardin Park 149
• Number of General Education Classes 36
Service Animal or Therapy Dog?

- As of March 2011, “Service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities...Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person’s disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA...Some State and local laws also define service animal more broadly than the ADA does. Information about such laws can be obtained from the State attorney general’s office.”

  http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm

- There is no legal definition of “therapy dog” but a common explanation would be: “Animal-assisted therapy (AAT), also known as pet therapy, utilizes trained animals and handlers to achieve specific physical, social, cognitive, and emotional goals with patients.”

  http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/pet+therapy

Therapy Dog Organization Structure

- Each organization has its own educational and testing protocol, rules and regulations.
- All require up-to-date veterinary care. Once the dog-handler team has completed the testing/registration process, they are welcome to begin visitations.
- Not all offer liability insurance.

Therapy Dog Organizations

- The Delta Society http://deltasociety.org
- Therapy Dogs International http://tdi-dog.org
- Therapy Dogs Incorporated http://therapydogs.com
Common Therapy Dog Settings
- Hospitals/Long Term Care facilities
- Disaster Sites (additional training required)
- Nursing Homes
- Schools
- Libraries

Considerations for Schools/Classrooms
- Classroom Setting
  - Student behaviors
  - Noise level
  - Medical conditions
  - Children’s prior dog experience with dogs
  - Number of children
- Size of Dog

Suggestions for Placing a Dog in a School
- Have the paperwork in order
- Meet with all parties BEFORE placement
- Allow the dog and handler to visit the classroom during “off” hours before the first visit
- Set a goal; be realistic and flexible
  - If you are targeting a student, how do you set the environment so they don’t feel singled-out?

Ideas
- Collaborate with related service providers.
- Classroom preparation for therapy dog placement.

“Toby is cool. I felt really happy reading to Toby.” – Edmerson
Classroom Description

• This was a third grade classroom with general and special education students.
• Toby visited once a week for 30 minutes.
• Toby served as a springboard for social studies sessions and a class service learning project.
• Students read to Toby weekly.

“Toby was really calm. I felt really good reading to him. He never barked.” – Roxy

Toby Goes to 3rd Grade

• Questions
• Reactions
• Toby’s work
• Student love!
• Video

“Toby made me feel good. He made reading in front of the whole class much easier.” – Garrison

October is Disability Month in North Carolina

SESSION LAW 2007-274

• SENATE BILL 753
  – Each local board of education shall provide instruction on disability, people with disabilities, and the disability rights movement in conjunction with Disability History and Awareness Month.
  – Local boards of education are encouraged to incorporate individuals with disabilities or knowledgeable guest speakers from the disability community into the delivery of this instruction.”

Disability Awareness

Toby's Influence on One Terrific Third Grade Class

• A New Idea for Disability Awareness Month: Pennies for Pups
• Presentation to Students
• Brainstorming

"I liked to read to Toby because he was a great listener." - Patrick

Students as Collaborators: A Plan Evolves

• Steps
• Children's Literature
• Education of Students

Selecting an Organization

• Paws for Purple Hearts
  www.pawsforpurplehearts.org/
• Service Dogs for Children

• The Vote: 2012 was an election year!

"He was always really sweet. He was calm and relaxing. He didn't mind if all of us pet him." – Lyndsey
Involving the Whole School

- Posters
- Speeches
- Collection containers

“It felt good because we really wanted to help. I was really nervous at first.” – Christin

Speech Written by Class

Hi, my name is __________. I’m a third grader from Ms. Beckley’s Class. We are doing a special project in our class called Pennies For Pups. This year a service dog named Toby comes to our classroom every Thursday morning. We love reading to Toby and we love giving him belly scratches. Our class has been learning about different types of service animals and we have decided to raise money for an organization called Paws For Purple Hearts. They provide service dogs for Veterans with combat related physical disabilities. Your class will get a container to collect money in and our class will collect the money from your room every few days. Our goal is to raise $550.00 by the end of October. We are so excited about Pennies For Pups and we thank you for your help.

Social Studies Standards Met

Third Grade Civics and Government Goals
- Understand how citizens participate in their communities.
  - Exemplify how citizens contribute politically, socially and economically to their community.
  - Exemplify how citizens contribute to the well-being of the community’s natural environment.
  - Apply skills in civic engagement and public discourse (school, community)

ELA Reading Informational Text Standards Met
- Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
ELA Writing Standards Met

- Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

ELA Speaking and Listening Standards Met

- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.
- Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

What DPI has to say about Service Learning?

- Service-learning is an effective framework for curriculum delivery, a learning tool, and strategy to engage students, parents, volunteers, and community. The following are a few examples:
  - Fosters a sense of care and concern for others
  - Positively impacts student outcomes
  - Extends the boundaries of the classrooms, community becomes the learning lab
  - Provides opportunity for inquiry-based experiential engagement with real-life situations

Characteristics of High Quality Service Learning

- Links academic content standards and community-based service in ways that support outcomes for students.
- Curriculum and service are well planned for positive outcomes in both areas.
- Youth voice is encouraged and supports problem-solving.
- The process provides benefits to staff, students, volunteers, and community.

*From the National Corporation for National and Community Service*
Pennies For Pups

- What students did on their own in the community
- School Buzz
- Bringing October to an end
- Total collected
- Toby’s work in the classroom continues

“It was really hard, but we did it! We even beat our goal.” – Jada

Learning Continues

- Veterans Day
- Our Visitor
- A Moment in Time
- “Thank you” letters

“I learned that it’s really easy to help other people even if it seems hard.” – Carlos
More Social Studies Standards Met

Third Grade History Goals
Understand how events, individuals and ideas have influenced the history of local and regional communities.
- Explain key historical events that occurred in the local community and regions over time.
- Analyze the impact of contributions made by diverse historical figures in local communities and regions over time.

Reflections:
Why Pennies For Pups Worked

- Students
- Teachers

“It felt good because we were helping other people who really needed help.” – Brooke

Questions?

References
National Corporation for National and Community Service
http://www.ncpublicschools.org/servicelearning/
Disability Awareness Information
Service Animals in Schools, NASN. January 2013
More than Just a Pet
www.invisibledisabilities.org/educate/serviceanimals/morethanjustapat/
Paws for Purple Hearts
www.pawsforpurplehearts.org/