**SAFETY WITH ANIMALS**

**Lesson 4: Grades 4-6**

**Are You a Master of Disaster Plans?**

**Curriculum Connections, Standards addressed:**

**Academic Goals:**  1.6, 1.8, 1.10, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 4.1, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7

**Knowledge Goals:** Communication Arts: 1, 4 & 6; Mathematics: 2; Science: 5; Social Studies: 5 & 7;

Health & Phys Ed: 7

**Objectives:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of natural disasters and their effects on people and animals. They will create a disaster plan for animals in their home in the event a disaster occurs and their pet has to be evacuated. Students will demonstrate compassion for animals’ feelings and an understanding of animals’ needs.

**Common Core-Aligned Activities**

**W.5.7 – Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.**

**SL.5.1—Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.**

Ask students to research various natural disasters that have occurred in the United States over the past 10 years. Specifically hone in on the effects on animals. How has the attitude of the public changed over the past 10 years to include the welfare of animals? Why has this occurred? What steps are now taken to protect pets and livestock? What national and local agencies have worked for this change? Do they agree it is important? How can we safely save our pets?

**Character Concepts:** Responsibility

Why do we have a responsibility to consider the welfare of animals during a disaster? What are those responsibilities?

**STEM Initiatives**: **Thinking critically in the connections to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math**

**4-ESS3-2--**Generate and compare multiple solutions to reduce the impacts of natural Earth processes on humans\* (\*animals)

**ESS3.B—**A variety of hazards result from natural processes (e.g. earthquakes, tornadoes, floods).

Humans cannot eliminate the hazards but can take steps to reduce their impacts. What safety standards and practices can be formulated for the welfare of all living creatures? Design a solution that might work for your school or home and investigate how well it performs under a range of likely conditions**. (ETS1.B)**

**Materials Needed:**

* Paper
* Pencils
* Markers or colored pencils
* Map of your school building and grounds and your school evacuation procedures
* DOWNLOAD Handout: “Pet Alert” Cards
* DOWNLOAD Handout: “Be Prepared”
* DOWNLOAD Sample “Emergency Alert Label

**Note:** Please note that although the students are developing animal evacuation plans, they will be reinforcing the plans of safety designated for themselves and their classmates as well.

**Method:** If possible, speak with your school principal in advance and ask if he/she could schedule a practice fire drill on this day. Schools are required to conduct these on a regular basis and it never hurts for children and teachers to practice. Or you could find out at the beginning of the year when the practice evacuations will take place and plan your unit around this time.

The actual fire drill would serve as the introduction to your lesson. Once the drill has been conducted and your students have returned to class ask them why they think it is important to conduct these drills. If staging a fire drill is out of the question, you can ask your students to recall the events that took place the last time you did have one. Reinforce the idea that it is important to have a plan prepared to ensure everyone’s safety and everyone knows what to do. If you know there are teachers in your building who have classroom pets ask the students if they noticed whether or not “Harry”, the hamster in Mrs. Jones’s class was brought out of the building during the drill. Or if you have a classroom pet, did anyone grab “Larry” the hedgehog? Reinforce the idea that animals should be considered in a disaster plan because they depend on us for their safety and we should take the pets to safety with us. The teacher should be in charge of this responsibility.

Ask students to join their detective groups. Distribute a map of your school building/grounds that contain the exit routes and flow of traffic in the event of a fire or natural disaster. Discuss the reasons that certain exits are used and talk about the significance of the traffic flow.

Explain to students they are going to use their detective skills to create a disaster plan for Larry the hedgehog or Mrs. Jones’s hamster “Harry”, but first the students must uncover the dangers that exist. Ask the students, “besides fire, what types of disasters occur in our area?” Write the correct answers on the board in big headings. In the Midwest we encounter fires, tornadoes, floods and possibly earthquakes.

Explain that each group is going to become an expert on one of these disasters and will explain the dangers associated with each. During a flood water rises, during a fire the flames are extremely hot and the smoke rises, during a tornado the wind is very strong and moving quickly and during an earthquake the ground moves and items are shifted around.

Finding the safest place in the room for the pet is the first step. Have each group of detectives determine the safest place in the classroom for Harry or Larry in the event of their particular disaster. For example, during an earthquake the ground shifts and classroom furniture moves around so we wouldn’t want to put Harry or Larry’s glass aquarium on a high surface because it might fall off and break. So we could suggest that his aquarium be placed closer to the ground with thick blankets beneath. The flood group will probably say that the ground is not the safest place during a flash flood due to the rising water. Their answers may conflict when the expert groups report back to the class with their suggestions and this is okay. They must establish the best place for the pet by taking all disasters into account. The safest place for the classroom pet in the Midwest due to our disasters is near the exit door, off the floor but on something that is not too high (coffee table height).

**Call to Action:** Have each student write a persuasive letter to the other classroom teachers encouraging them to move any classroom pets to the area that your class has determined is the safest. Have them explain why it is the safest place and remind them to remember to take their pet with them whenever possible during a drill or disaster.

Give the students a homework assignment that requires them to draw a map of the rooms in their home including all windows and doors. Have them determine the safest place for their pet and mark this on the map as well. Have them include a brief explanation of their reasoning. Students without pets can develop a plan for their friend’s, neighbor’s or relative’s pets.

Use the handout “Emergency Alert Label” or have students design and brightly color their own emergency alert label to cut out and tape to window (for school and home use).

Distribute the Be Prepared handout and Pet Alert cards and require them to fill these out. Students without pets can fill them out for friends, relatives or neighbors.

**HEY TEACHERS! If your students want more fun, here are some additional hand-outs to download:**

“A Classy Pet”

“Weekend Blues”

**Reading:** Visit our section entitled ***Recommended Children’s Literature*** for a comprehensive listing of animal-related books.

**Web sites:**  Visit our section entitled ***Recommended Web Links*** for animal-related web sites.