CANINE COMPANIONS

**LESSON 2: Grades K-3**

**HOW TO SPEAK “DOG”**

**Curriculum Connections, Standards addressed:**

**Academic Goals:**  1.5, 1.10, 2.3, 4.6, 4.7

**Knowledge Goals:**  Communication Arts: 1, 4, 6; Science: 3; Health/Physical Education: 5

**Objective:** To interpret canine verbal and non-verbal communication, both positive and negative.

**Common Core-Aligned Activities:**

**SL.K-2.1—Engage effectively in collaborative conversations with peers and adults.**

**SL.3-4.1c—Pose and respond to specific questions and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to remarks of others.**

Ask students to discuss how dogs--as living, breathing, feeling creatures---have needs. How do dogs communicate their needs? If some of these needs are not met (i.e., food and water), dogs can become very sick and even die. Without having the ability to speak to “their people” how can dogs “talk” to us and relay their feelings or needs?

**Character Concepts:** Respect, Responsibility

**Respect:** Treat other living creatures as you would like to be treated. Dogs don’t speak our language and therefore must be treated with patience and respect until you establish a means of communication with them. Be patient, this takes time.

**Responsibility:** Take the initiative to do the right things for your dog. As pet guardians, we must be aware of what their needs are and meet them.

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

**2-LS2-1**—Events have causes that generate observable patterns.

We’ve all heard the saying, “Dogs are man’s best friend.” Why is that? Because we can develop the ability to communicate with dogs. They can live in harmony with us because of this trait. Dogs are living creatures that have a unique style of communication. Record some ways that certain communication, on behalf of man, can result in a prescribed response by our canine friends.

**Materials:**

* Pencils
* Crayons, colored pencils, markers
* Paper or poster board
* DOWNLOAD Handout: “Reading Canine Body Postures”
* DOWNLOAD Handout: “The Dog’s Bill of Rights”

**Method:**  It is very important to be able to understand what dogs are “saying” to us. Dogs communicate through body language, tail wagging and facial expressions. We must learn to interpret these behaviors so we can develop a deeper relationship through mutual understanding.

*Speaking:* *Do dogs speak the same way humans do? No! But, they do communicate through sound. A dog can make many sounds to convey feelings of excitement, fear, pain and anger. For example, a dog may yelp if he is excited to see you or growl if he feels threatened or scared.* Have students think of the many different sounds a dog may use to communicate. Brainstorm with the students as to why a dog would communicate via this method.

*Body Language:* *Like people, dogs use their body to express their feelings.* *For example, I may cover my eyes if I am scared, whereas a dog may crouch down if something frightens him.* Choose a few volunteers to act out different emotions using **only** their bodies. Explain the importance of acknowledging a dog’s behavior and responding accordingly. Clarify the different body postures a dog may demonstrate for common emotions. Have the children demonstrate how we look when we are happy, mad, sad and surprised. Ask the rest of the class to guess what emotion the “actor” is expressing.

Canines use their ears, tails, eyes, body hair and body posture (the way they stand, sit, crouch, lay or position their bodies) to “talk.” Most of the time they use their bodies and sounds together to communicate to people.

Distribute the “Reading Canine Body Postures” handout to each student. As a class, look at each dog. Examine and discuss what is happening in each picture. Think about the following:

1. The dog’s body language—look at each part of the body and what it is doing.
2. What sound may this dog be making?
3. What is this dog feeling?
4. Is it safe to approach, touch, or pet this dog? Why or why not?

Write a simple sentence describing the behavior of each dog. The more you understand what your dog may be trying to say to you, the more you will appreciate the relationship between you and your dog.

**A few more tips for safety around dogs:**

Make your dog part of the family. A dog that receives little attention from people is more likely to bite or act aggressively. Spend some quality time playing and petting your dog. You’ll both feel better.

The noises and movements you make when playing are very exciting to dogs. When dogs play with other dogs, they often play roughly with their teeth and claws. Sometimes dogs forget that they can’t play the same way with you. A dog can hurt you by accident, just by being too excited. Always play gently and calmly and if a dog gets too excited, freeze and slowly walk away. Never run from a dog.

When a dog is in pain, he doesn’t understand where the pain is coming from. If you touch him, he may think you are causing the pain and may bite you. If a dog is acting like he is sick or hurt, leave him alone—even if he belongs to your family. Tell an adult, and together you can get medical help for the dog.

A dog will protect anything that is important to him: His toys, bed, food and water bowls, yard, even his people. If you come near something that a dog feels is off-limits to you, he may bite to make you leave his “property” alone. Don’t go into a yard where there is a dog you don’t know. Don’t reach through a car window or a fence to pet a dog. Don’t pet a dog that is tied up. Always leave your dog alone while he is eating. He may feel threatened and to protect his food, he could bite.

Quick movements and sudden or loud noises are scary for dogs, and they may bite to protect themselves. If a dog thinks you’re a stranger who might hurt him, he may not know how to get away, so he’ll protect himself by biting. When you are around a dog you don’t know, be quiet and move slowly. Always ask the dog’s owner for permission before you pet him. If the owner isn’t there for you to ask, leave the dog alone.

MOST IMPORTANTLY---treat your dog and all animals with kindness and respect. Never pull a pet’s hair, tail or ears. Don’t kick, hit or throw things at any animal. Let’s practice treating pets gently. Using stuffed animals, demonstrate to students how to pet and touch animals. Remind them that our pets at home aren’t like stuffed animals at all. They have feelings and will hurt just like we would if we were kicked, hit or tugged on. Allow students time to practice stroking and touching the stuffed animals. This is a good time to talk to them about using quiet, inside voices when around pets. Explain that pets may become upset or frightened if children yell and scream around them.

Distribute “The Dog’s Bill of Rights” color sheet to reinforce this lesson.

**Call To Action:** Make two posters for your school. On one poster, with colorful crayons or markers, copy all of the **DO’s** from The Dog’s Bill of Rights. On the other poster, copy all of the **DON’T’s** from the Dog’s Bill of Rights. Decorate the posters and hang in your school cafeteria or another spot where it will be seen by many. What is a bill of rights? Can you think of any additions that can be made to the Dog’s Bill of Rights?

**Related 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