



CREATING CALM, CONFIDENT, CARING KIDS



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Creating Calm, Confident, Caring Kids: The Mutt-i-grees® Curriculum

Children and animals have a natural affinity for one another.

Evidence shows that both derive many benefits from their interactions. The Mutt-i-grees Curriculum draws on this resiliency research, social and emotional learning and human-animal interaction to guide our program, which has two goals: enhancing children's resilience and social and emotional competence and promoting awareness of the desirability of shelter pets, referred to as Mutt-i-grees®. Our program reaches children beginning at a young age and provides opportunities for them to learn to care about themselves, other people, and animals.

The Mutt-i-grees Curriculum is a collaboration of North Shore Animal League America and Yale University's School of the 21st Century. The two organizations, one concerned with the welfare of companion animals and the other with the education and social and emotional development of children, have written a unique curriculum that supports the growth of calm, confident, and caring kids while creating a more humane future for all. The program is offered in schools, libraries, and other settings where children and families come together.



Awareness.

What Motivates Us

The Mutt-i-grees Curriculum addresses two sad realities:

- The large numbers of children who attend school each day, weighed down by negative experiences at school or at home.
- The plight of homeless pets awaiting adoption, millions of them euthanized each year in shelters that lack sufficient space.

Our Program Model

Every aspect of the Mutt-i-grees Curriculum reinforces the dual focus of our program. Children learn about shelter pets while also acquiring skills that support their ability to cope with stress, attain self-confidence and empathy, and learn to collaborate and make informed decisions. Each session includes an educational/developmental objective, with hands-on activities, books, and games focusing on shelter pets.



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How Mutt-i-grees Works

We offer the Mutt-i-grees Curriculum for Grades Pre-K through Grade 12. The lessons are organized into five themes that correspond to children's social and emotional skills:

- **Achieving Awareness**
- **Finding Feelings**
- **Encouraging Empathy**
- **Cultivating Cooperation**
- **Dealing with Decisions**

This sample packet contains a complete lesson that you can share with your students with step by step instructions. Each lesson plan follows a similar structure in which there is a clear objective and rationale for each session and includes materials, worksheets and hands-on activities. Plus, the digital version of the curriculum includes interactive materials such as videos, presentations and online activities.

Feelings. Empathy. Cooperation.



Effective for Special-Needs Kids

The Curriculum has proven extremely effective for special-needs students and those on the autism spectrum, providing a means for a more direct and meaningful connection to their environments. In several schools, educators provided alternative education students (with behavior and academic problems) with opportunities to work hands-on with shelter animals, feeding them, grooming them, and promoting their adoption. They report that the experience transforms students within several months; they return to regular classrooms and continue their education with classmates.

Praise from Teachers and Administrators

"I've always considered the Mutt-i-grees Curriculum an asset because it meets the social and emotional needs of the students. But when I saw the impact of actually incorporating dogs and puppies into the classroom, a light bulb went off."
Principal Terri Ahearn - Brooklyn, N.Y.

"Children already have a natural love and curiosity about animals and the curriculum draws upon that love to help transfer those feelings to other children."

Camy Bankemper, Program Coordinator - Cold Spring, KY

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ACHIEVING AWARENESS

GRADES 4 & 5



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Lesson Overview

LESSON TITLE	LESSON OBJECTIVE
1.1 Learning from Mutt-i-grees®	Children will learn about Mutt-i-grees®, the rationale behind the Mutt-i-grees® Curriculum and the importance of learning about humane education.
1.2 Getting to know you	Children will identify their unique physical and behavioral traits to further the process of knowing oneself. They will also learn that Mutt-i-grees® have special and unique qualities.
1.3 Give a compliment, take a compliment	Children will identify traits a/o characteristics that they like or admire in themselves and others and learn how to give and receive positive feedback.
1.4 The best of both worlds	Children will continue to identify strengths and talents and explore how their skill sets may complement those of their peers.
1.5 Goal!	Children will identify a goal in an area for improvement or a skill they would like to master.

Extension lessons available on the Mutt-i-grees® Website at www.education.muttigrees.org

LESSON TITLE	LESSON OBJECTIVE
1.6 Talk to yourself	Children will learn how to consciously focus (or re-focus), encourage, and calm themselves.
1.7 Who's there?	Children will identify resources and supports among their family, peers, school, and community.
1.8 Checking in	Children will review their progress towards achieving goals they set in Lesson 1.5.

LESSON	1.1 Learning from Mutt-i-gree®
Objective	Children will receive an overview of the rationale behind the Curriculum and discuss their own unique traits, as well as the unique traits of Mutt-i-gree® dogs.
Rationale	Gaining appreciation of the distinctive qualities of Mutt-i-gree® dogs will help facilitate children’s sense of self and build self-confidence.
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional Mutt-i-gree® puppet/plush • Construction paper or felt • Crayons, markers, colored pencils • Yarn or fabric for fur • Colored cotton balls or pompoms • Glue
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutt-i-gree® • Mixture/Combination • Unique • Breed • Permanent • Initiative/program • Aware/awareness
Introduction	<p>Over the next few weeks/months, we are going to learn to become more aware – about ourselves and the world around us. We will be learning about ourselves—what makes us special, what we do well, the many different feelings we (and other people) have, how we can be a good friend and think about other people’s feelings, and how to make good decisions. But we are not going to be learning just about people; we are also going to be learning about dogs. Just like people, dogs come in many different shapes, sizes, and colors. We will learn about a special type of dog called a Mutt-i-gree®. Mutt-i-grees® are dogs awaiting adoption at an animal shelter. Shelters have Mutt-i-grees®, which are a mixture of at least two different dog breeds, as well as purebreds – all deserving of a loving home.</p> <p>If children have had prior experience with the Curriculum, the teacher can ask children what they remember learning about Mutt-i-grees.®</p> <p>In addition to learning about dogs, and specifically, Mutt-i-grees® we will also discuss what we can learn from dogs; this is what makes the Mutt-i-grees® initiative so unique. Have any of you seen the bumper sticker that says “Wag More, Bark Less?” Even if you don’t own a dog, you can still learn important lessons from them. The teacher can encourage an open discussion – what do the students think we can learn from dogs, and from Mutt-i-grees® (respect, loyalty, the importance of exercise/play, the importance of family/community/pack, how to comfort others, patience, gratitude, are some examples). Our goal in the series of lessons on Mutt-i-grees® is to become calm, confident, and caring individuals who will grow up knowing that we make a difference in the lives of people, animals, and the environment.</p>
Discussion	<p>There are approximately 77.5 million dogs owned as pets in the United States; that’s a lot of dogs! Thirty-nine percent (about one-third) of US households own at least one dog. How many of you have a dog for a pet? Can you tell me about your dog? (The teacher can use prompts such as: Do you have a purebred dog or a mixed-breed dog? How big is your dog? Is your dog male or female? What is your dog’s name? Do you know the history of your dog (where the dog came from, for example). The teacher can also share information about his/her own dog or the dog he or she would want).</p>

Discussion (cont'd)	Unfortunately many Mutt-i-gree® dogs live in animal shelters waiting to be adopted. Approximately 6-8 million dogs and cats enter animal shelters each year and about 75% of the dogs in shelters are Mutt-i-grees®. Animal shelters provide food, housing, and medical care for animals (including dogs and cats, and in some cases, rabbits and birds) that don't have homes. These animals need to be adopted into permanent homes where they can receive care and companionship. The teacher may discuss local animal shelters or take the students on a virtual tour of a local shelter website or animalleague.org
Learning by Doing	Teacher may decide to use a Mutt-i-gree® puppet or plush as a class Mutt-i-gree®, to be brought out at the beginning of each lesson, in addition to or in lieu of having each student create one. For class or student creations, suggestions include: large poster on which children can work together as a group or several smaller ones created by individual students. The teacher can use the creations to illustrate the diversity of characteristics (length and size of ears, color, etc.) and facilitate a discussion on unique traits of Mutt-i-grees®.
Closure	Today we learned about the goals of the Mutt-i-grees® initiative . We learned that Mutt-i-grees® are a unique combination of different kinds of dogs and that many Mutt-i-grees® live in animal shelters waiting to be adopted into permanent homes. We also discussed the different kinds of dogs we own (or would like to own) as pets.



OTHER RESOURCES & ACTIVITIES

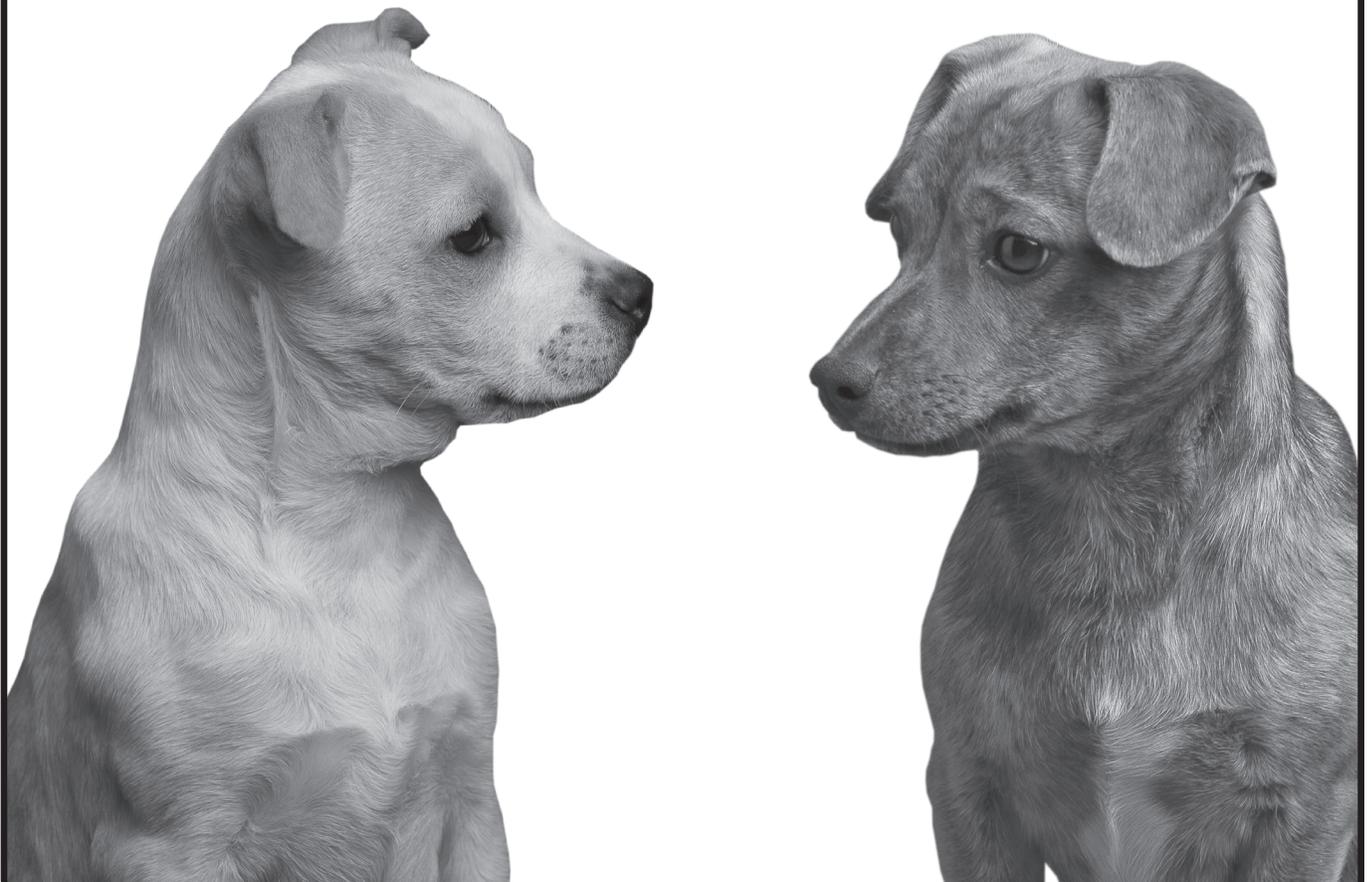
Readings and Resources	<p>Useful websites: American Mutt-i-grees® Club: http://www.muttigrees.org/ Animal Planet's Dogs 101: http://animal.discovery.com/tv/dogs-101/ North Shore Animal League America: http://www.animalleague.org</p> <p>Books: Dogs, by Steven Otfinoski</p>
Family and Community Involvement Activities	Meet a Mutt-i-gree®. Arrange a visit by a Mutt-i-gree® and its owner. Have children prepare interview questions such as: What breeds make up your Mutt-i-gree®? Do you know what happened to your dog before you got him/her from a shelter? How/why did you pick this particular dog? Why did you give your dog his/her name? Students will get a chance to walk the dog and learn how the dog is taught commands (how to sit, down, etc.). Children who own Mutt-i-grees® as pets can also share the story of their own dogs (as well as photographs) or invite a family member to join in and share their experience. Some schools have therapy dogs, many of whom were adopted from a shelter.
Advanced Activities	Is your classroom representative of the US? According to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association 2009-2010 National Pet Owners Survey, 39 percent of households own at least one dog and 19 percent of dogs owned as pets were adopted from an animal shelter. People own approximately the same number of male and female dogs and 75 percent of owned dogs are spayed or neutered. Does your class mirror these statistics? Have children collect data and create a large graph or table displaying on the number of dogs owned, the different breeds, sizes, ages, and genders, where dogs were bought, and whether they are spayed or neutered. Assist students in calculating percentages and comparing whether the class statistics are similar to the reported statistics for the United States.

LESSON	1.2 Getting to know you
Objective	Children will identify physical, behavioral, and emotional traits and defining characteristics of both themselves and others. Children will also begin to explore how they are both similar and different from their peers.
Rationale	The process of identifying individual characteristics and traits helps children acquire a stronger sense of self-confidence. When they share this information in class, they will understand the similarities and differences among people and gain appreciation for diversity. Such awareness has been shown to increase children’s sensitivity to disparity and capacity for empathy with others from different backgrounds.
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three-ring binder with clear pocket in front, back, and on spine • 8.5”x11” paper/attached template • Colored pencils, markers, crayons • Index cards
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attributes • Characteristics/Features • Define/Defining • Accurate • Misperception • Self-portrait • Manuscript
Introduction	Today we are going to talk about our unique traits and characteristics and what makes us who we are.
Discussion	<p>How would you describe yourself? What are your defining characteristics? There are many ways to describe yourself; by physical attributes, whether you are a boy or a girl, your age, or by who you are as part of a family (do you have siblings?). However, to help someone understand what is special about you, you may also want to share what you like to do, play, and eat or something you are especially good at. Together, these features and characteristics define who you are. Let’s see if you can guess who I am describing – I won’t tell you his or her name, but I will tell you about some of his or her defining features and characteristics. Teacher should describe someone children know well, such as his— or herself, the principal, or a classroom aide. Once children have correctly guessed the person, ask them which characteristic was the one that made it easy to figure out who you were describing.</p> <p>Some of you may know each other from school last year or because you live in the same neighborhood or because you play soccer together. But, there may be some people in this class who you do not know very well at all. How can we get to know each other? Sometimes we may look at people for clues about what they are like and what they enjoy doing. Have any of you heard the saying “looks can be deceiving?” What does that mean? We may think we can learn about someone based on the way they look, but sometimes what we see on the outside doesn’t give us much – or accurate – information. If I see you wearing [insert name of a local team] hat or shirt, I may think you are a big fan of that team. But maybe you were just wearing it because you borrowed it from your brother, it was the only clean shirt you had, or maybe you needed a [insert color] shirt or hat because that is your school color and it is school spirit day. Often we make mistakes or have misperceptions based on our interpretation of someone else’s appearance or actions. Can you think of a time when you thought something about someone because of the way they looked, only to get to know them and find out it was not true? The best way to get to know someone is to spend some time with them – eating lunch together, playing on the playground together, or just talking. And, sometimes it takes some time to really get to know someone.</p>

<p>Discussion (cont'd)</p>	<p>To get to know dogs, we need to think about them as animals and spend some time with dogs – and their owners. Learning about how dogs behave in nature can help us better understand, interact, and care for them in our homes and communities. Similar to people, looking at a dog only gives us some information about them and, just like people, looks can be deceiving. For example, some people are scared of big dogs because of their size. But, you can't tell whether a dog is friendly or not just by looking at it—some big dogs might actually be friendlier than little dogs! What do you know about dogs? What do you know about mutts or Mutt-i-grees®? (The teacher can probe for stereotypes and ask children why they think Mutt-i-grees® are found in shelters so often. Teacher can then list all the descriptions on the board). Do you think these characteristics or descriptions are true? How could we find out? The teacher can also encourage children to think about their own experiences with different dogs and whether these confirm or dispel stereotypes. What's the best way to get to know a dog? How could you get to know a dog at a shelter?</p>
<p>Learning by Doing</p>	<p>Over the next several weeks/months, each of you will create a Mutt-i-grees® Manuscript. A manuscript is defined as a book that is personally created and includes a compilation of information and illustrations. You will get to take the Mutt-i-grees® Manuscript home at the end of this program. Each week we will work on one or more pages and we will put together the entire book at the end. Today you are going to create the front and back cover of your book with some drawings that identify you as an individual. For the front cover, draw a self-portrait of what you look like now. Try to make your self-portrait look as much like you as you can. You can also decorate your self-portrait by drawing or gluing pictures of things you like to do, eat, or play. For the back cover, draw a self-portrait of what you think you might look like as an adult. Try to show what you hope your job might be (veterinarian, police officer, etc.) and what goals you might have accomplished (special awards, family, etc.). The teacher can write or type each student's name on a thin strip of paper and insert it into the pocket on the binder's spine.</p> <p>True or False... It says of each of you is also going to get an index card and I want you to write three things on this card – two things about yourself that are true and one that is not. Once you complete your pictures and your card statements, I am going to hang them up around the room and have you guess who is who. I am also going to ask you to guess which of the statements are true and which are false. Depending on time available and the size of the class, the teacher can have the whole class vote together or ask children to go around the room and write their guesses/votes on paper. Following the exercise, ask children what made it easy and what made it hard to guess the identity of their classmates from the self-portraits and descriptions. Also inquire if children were surprised to learn anything new about a classmate.</p> <p>Another option: Never have I ever – Ask students to hold their hands with all ten fingers up in front of them. Each student will tell something that they have never done before, one by one. For example, they might say, "Never have I ever walked a dog." If the other students have done this before, they must remove a finger. This activity is a good way to get students to say things that most people have done but they haven't.</p>
<p>Closure</p>	<p>Today we got to know each other a little better. You may have been surprised to learn something about a new friend or classmate. Remember you can't always tell what a person or animal is like just by looking at them. The best way to get to know someone is to spend some time with them.</p>



<p>Readings and Resources</p>	<p>My Life In Dog Years, by Gary Paulsen A Dog’s Life: The Autobiography of a Stray, by Ann M. Martin Nothing Wrong with a Three Legged Dog, by Graham McNamee</p>
<p>Family and Community Involvement Activities</p>	<p>Surprise! See if you and a family member can surprise each other by sharing something new. For example, a parent, sibling, or relative could tell you something about what he/she liked most or least about school or a pet he/she had (or wanted to have as a child).</p>
<p>Advanced Activities</p>	<p>Get to know someone new. Today you are going to get to know someone in the class – someone you may not know very well. You will have about 10 minutes to talk with your “new friend.” Some things you can ask your new friend or talk about are: how many people are in their family, what they like to do or eat, and what they did over the summer. The teacher can ask students to select someone they don’t know very well or make these selections for them. This is a good opportunity for teachers, assistants, paraprofessionals, or even parents to join in. Once the time has elapsed, bring everyone back together and have each child tell the class about their new friend.</p>



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MY MUTT-I-GREES® MANUSCRIPT

This Manuscript Belongs To:

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DOG DIALOG

PART OF THE PACK

Learning about how dogs behave in nature can help us better understand and care for them in our homes and communities. Humans are all part of one species: homo sapiens. Though we may come from different places, speak different languages, and look different from one another, we are all similar in the fact that we are human beings. Dogs, too, belong to a particular species of animals:

canis familiaris. There are many different breeds of dogs and many mixes of these breeds, but all dogs are part of this same species.

Like humans, dogs are social animals and live as part of a family. In the wild, dogs form packs, which become their families. Dogs have a “pack mentality” – they think about the good of the pack rather than what is best for each individual dog. Packs are stable and organized and this originally helped dogs survive in the wild. Each dog has a role within the pack – Alpha, Beta, Omega. One dog is the pack leader (Alpha dog) while the rest are followers. Pack leaders show dominance over the other dogs in the pack. Dominance does not mean that one dog thinks he is better than the other dogs; rather that the pack leader shows consistent leadership by setting and reinforcing rules. Dogs naturally look for (and up to) a strong and fair leader. This social order within the pack lets dogs know what to expect and where they stand – knowing this, dogs acquire a sense of security and confidence.

Though they may no longer live in the wild, dogs still maintain a pack mentality; a pack may be simply a dog owner and his dog or a dog and several family members or a family with more than one dog. From birth, dogs learn their place within the pack and who is in charge, creating a natural balance within the pack. Since leadership is very important to dogs, the pack leader is respected and obeyed; if a dog does not perceive a leader, it will try to become the leader! When dogs live with a family, dog owners need to take on the role of pack leader by calmly but firmly showing dogs that they make and maintain the rules. If dog owners do not take on the role of pack leader – in other words, if they do not set the rules and consistently expect these rules to be followed – their dogs will try to take the leadership role and may become unstable, difficult to control, and anxious. Some early signs of lack of balance: dogs pulling on a leash during a walk or otherwise refusing to obey commands.

- What might happen when there are two leaders in the house (two parents)?
- How do dog owners become leaders?
- How would you lead the pack if you were the leader?

Objective:

In the series of Dog Dialog Lessons students will learn about how dogs behave in nature, which will give them insight about canine characteristics and behaviors, so they can confidently and effectively interact with and care for dogs. An understanding of dogs’ behavior is essential if students are to have empathy and compassion for dogs. In the first lesson, students are introduced to the concept of pack mentality and learn that dogs are pack animals; they follow the rules established by the pack leader. They will also learn that although there are differences between people and dogs, both humans and dogs are social, which is why they have bonded so well over the years.

Vocabulary Words to Highlight:

Socialize, Pack Leader, Dominance, Leadership, Consistent, Unstable/Instability