THE MUTT-I-GREES CURRICULUM

This webinar is made possible through a grant provided by The Irving and Phyllis Millstein Foundation for Animal Welfare
A Mutt-I-Gree® is: Mutt-i-gree®/(mŭt-i-grē) Origin: Shelter or rescue group

1) A word created to convey the unique characteristics and desirability of shelter and rescue pets; 2) Dog, puppy, cat or kitten that has been adopted or is available for adoption; 3) A very special pet - adopting one saves a life.
Teaching kids (and adults) to care, cope with adversity and achieve success

- How we started
- Research Based: Social & Emotional Learning, Resiliency, and Human Animal Interaction
- Implementation
- Overview of the Mutt-i-grees Curriculum
- Q & A
How We Started: NSALA & Yale 21C
COMMON GOALS:

- To enhance children’s self- and social awareness, relationship skills, and decision making via **social emotional learning**

- At the same time, to promote **humane education and service learning**: awareness of one’s self, each other, community, the world
THE RESEARCH BASE

Mutt-i-grees Curriculum
SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING

CASEL (2012)
Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning

Good science links Social & Emotional Learning to the following:

**STUDENT GAINS**
- Social-emotional skills
- Improved attitudes about self, others, and school
- Positive classroom behavior
- 11 percentile-point gain on standardized achievement tests

**REDUCED RISKS FOR FAILURE**
- Conduct problems
- Aggressive behavior
- Emotional distress

RESILIENCY

Ability to overcome adversity and achieve success despite stress and difficult life situations
RISK FACTORS

- Early and persistent antisocial behavior
- Academic failure & low commitment to school
- Violent communities
- Excessive moves & transitions
- Low attachment to community
- Extreme poverty
- Chronic Stress
- Lack of social support
- Abuse & neglect
- Rebelliousness
- Friends who engage in problem behaviors
- Favorable attitudes towards problem behaviors
- Early initiation of the problem behaviors
- Family history of high risk behavior
- Family management problems

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Individual
- Temperament
- Positive social orientation
- Positive Thinking
- Physical health
- Social Support – having someone who is there for you
- Ability to ask for help

In Families
- Parental styles that match temperament
- Bonding
- Healthy beliefs & family standards for behavior
Research on the Transformative Power of the Dog
From Research to Practice

Educational activities – enhance social socio-emotional competence

- Activities, reading, and resources focus on the dog

- Emphasis on resiliency and coping skills
| **Objective:** | the aim of the lesson |
| **Rationale:** | description of how the lesson fosters key social-emotional skills and competencies |
| **Materials:** | listing of items needed to implement the lesson |
| **Vocabulary:** | highlight of featured words |
| **Introduction:** | a scripted overview of key concepts |
| **Discussion:** | topics for discussion, including scripted prompts and role-play |
| **Learning by Doing:** | suggested activities and approaches to engage students |
| **Closure:** | scripted discussion points for completing the lesson |
| **Readings and Resources:** | books and websites that complement the lesson |
| **Family and Community Involvement Activities:** | suggested activities to encourage collaboration with families and local agencies |
| **Advanced Activities:** | additional options to engage students |
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

- Movement
- Role playing
- Emphasis on reflection
- Mutt-i-grees Puppet
- Mutt-i-grees Manuscript
- Dog Dialog lessons
- Readings and Resources
- Vocabulary
DOES EXPERIENCING DOGS VICARIOUSLY WORK?

Yes!

Puppets, Videos, Activities & Animal Stories

Increase

- Literacy
- Academic Behaviors
- Interest & Curiosity
- Creative Play
- Expressing Emotion
- Classroom Management
IMPACT OF THE PUPPET FROM PRE-K - 12: A DECADE OF MUTT-I-GREES

From January 2010- Pre-K/K students learning the Mutt-i-grees curriculum pilot

Now 7th-10th graders remember the puppet as well as “Calling Mutt-i-gree”

Made dog puppets at home

Now, these students are in MUTTS Club and Peer Mentoring Classes where they receive community service credit (75 hours) for helping others (a higher level social-emotional skill in the curriculum)
- MUTTS Club and Peer Mentors receive instruction using the High School curriculum
  - Help other students via Zoom meet social goals on IEP
  - Mutt-i-grees meets requirements for social-emotional curriculum for behavior plans
    - Individually teach intensive needs lesson
  - Peer mentors help with academic and social needs
HOW CAN DOGS HELP?

Mutt-i-grees Curriculum
ROLE MODELS

• Intense Social Drive
• Focused & Interested in Others
• Demonstrate Pure Uncomplicated Emotions
• Capacity for Love
• Connected to Nature
• Authentic
• Non-judgmental
• Live In the Moment
• Compassion
• Forgiveness
• Don’t experience Self-Pity
• Not Naturally Neurotic
The Curriculum
THE FRAMEWORK:
FIVE THEMES (UNITS)

Achieving Awareness
Self-awareness, awareness of others’ unique traits, confidence

Finding Feelings
Body language, communication, emotions

Encouraging Empathy
Listening, taking another’s perspective, caring for others

Cultivating Cooperation
Teamwork, friendship, pressure, setting goals

Dealing with Decisions
Consequences, decision-making, helping others
THE THEMES

• Correspond to social emotional skills
• Meet or exceed state standards for social and emotional learning
• Each theme includes 5 lessons and 3 optional Extension Lessons (available on website)
• Must be implemented in sequence
THE THEMES & CULTIVATION OF EMPATHY

- Protects against racism and prejudice
- Fights against inequality
- Deepens relationship intimacy & satisfaction
- Reduces bullying
- Better emotional wellbeing
- Impacts those around them: greater satisfaction and health
- Better Teachers & Parents
- Increases heroic acts/ leadership
BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Mutt-i-grees Curriculum
Provides fun, creative and experiential activities where compassion and empathy are FELT; Students are MOTIVATED to learn

Understanding of self, feelings, others, decisions is processed at a cognitive & developmental level

Continually reinforced by experiences, school climate shift, and parental involvement

Behavior Change
IMPACT ON STUDENTS

After implementation, teachers reported that students

- Were more likely to try to understand how and why other children feel and think
- Were more likely to recognize and accurately label their emotions
- Were more likely to try and work out problems by talking
- Had exhibited an increased vocabulary of feeling words
IMPACT ON EDUCATORS

After implementation, teachers reported they were

- More likely to model how to identify and express emotion
- More likely to encourage students to identify and label feelings
- More likely to consider the feelings of their students
IMPACT ON COMMUNITY

- Increases in school climate
- Increases in family involvement
- Increases in student advocacy on behalf of shelter pets
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