How the Affinity Between Children and Dogs Helps to Develop Emotional Intelligence

...the Mutt-i-grees School Dog Program at Harris Middle School 2018-20
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Today’s Presenters</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jayne Vitale</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director, Education and Youth Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shore Animal League America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Washington, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:jaynev@animalleague.org">jaynev@animalleague.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Michael A. Tountasakis, EdS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryan County Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pembroke, GA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:mtountasakis@bryan.k12.ga.us">mtountasakis@bryan.k12.ga.us</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mutt-i-grees School Dog “Ruby”
Session Objectives

#1 - Examples of building emotional intelligence and resilience with lessons from the program

#2 - Applications for special needs students

#3 - Bridging social emotional learning with humane education
Why? What? How?

Why we decided to pursue this program for Harris Middle...

What are the Mutt-i-grees Curriculum Goals and supporting research?

How we did it...
“A dog possesses the inherent qualities of the best social workers… warmth and unconditional love”
Mutt-i-grees Curriculum Goals and Supporting Research

Two main goals: SEL bridged with humane education and service learning

(a) To enhance children’s self- and social awareness, relationship skills, and decision making

- In the presence of a dog, or even simply by talking, reading stories or seeing videos about dogs, children become calm, happy, friendlier toward others, and more interested in learning.
- They begin to think about something other than themselves.

(b) At the same time, to promote humane education; awareness of one’s self, each other, community, the world

- Rescue Dog Resonates
- Breaks Stereotypes
- All inclusive, leveling the playing field
#2 - Mutt-i-grees Supporting Research

- Child mental health is a major concern: affecting one out of five children.
- Curriculum was inspired by emerging research on Human-Animal Interactions and the powerful, therapeutic role that dogs (especially) can have on children as well as adults.
- Yale School of Medicine
- North Shore Animal League
- HMS is currently contributing to the research-base (Academia and Practitioners) on the effectiveness of school dogs
  - Direct support of systems and school dog programs (ongoing)
  - Development of formal resources specifically for schools (how to proceed)
HMS Mutt-i-grees Curriculum Model

How do we implement this curriculum into our schedule and existing SEL groups?

• Our Champion groups are mixed 6-8 (purposefully built and matched with the right staff members)
• A student has her/his Champion all 3 years - the 8th graders in the group graduate and 6th graders are added yearly...
• The master schedule is what it is…
• We wanted the ability to have exposure all three years without redundancy of lesson activity

Our solution(s)

• Create a year #1, #2 & #3 from the Mutt-i-grees Grades 6 (Year #1) and split the 7 & 8 Lessons into Year #2 & Year #3, respectively
• Loop these years by Champion group
#3 - Our successes and how we made “it” happen

Successes!

- One-on-ones (formal)
  - Comforts
  - De-escalations
  - Rewards
  - Behavior plans
- Small group
  - Champion
  - SSR
  - Mutt-i-grees Curriculum
  - SPARCS
  - PBIS students of month
  - CICO lunches
  - HART Project ‘19 (MCAR to NSAL) - 2020 expanded to full-year/3 groups
Successes continued..!

**Informal** (whenever)
- arrival/dismissal
- Classroom visits
- Class changes
- Office Drop-ins (students/parents/staff/community members)

**Off-site Requests/Appearances**
- Primary/Elementary/Pre-K
- Local businesses/CO

**Public Relations**
- Social media - Instagram/Facebook (using AIG group)
- Newspaper & TV
- Sharing: Peer/Professional Inquiries, Conferences
- Mutt-i-grees National Ambassador Ian
- Office Greeter
Ian and Ruby
Mutt-i-grees National Ambassador & Autism Awareness
Successes continued..!

School Culture & Climate
• Staff morale
• Meetings (parent/IEP/BIP/faculty)
• Humor/Smiles
• Calming and Friendly
Ruby as “Director of Staff Wellness”
Ruby as “Office Manager”
Ruby as “Personal Assistant to the Principal”
We started with a concept...

Sound rationale:
• Our school’s at-risk students...
• The research base…
• Other schools are doing it...

Solid planning (KISS):
• Logistics
• Supervision
• Intended uses & documentation
• Researched the “what ifs” - had answers ready!
It was totally worth it!
Mitchell County to New York Rescue

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9F8Ad4J4J4
Follow The Mutt-i-grees Curriculum!

Twitter - @muttigree
Instagram - @muttigree
Facebook - Facebook.com/TheMuttigreesCurriculum
Thanks for your support!

Instagram: Rubytheschooldog