

## Continuing the Learning Adventure:

### Part Two



## HOW DOGS HELP KIDS

Read and Succeed in the Classroom

In the first half of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, we captured children’s imaginations by giving each child a stuffed dog they could name and “foster,” but we also taught them real life lessons about being safe around and caring for live dogs and other animals. By the second half of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, children are ready to extend their learning in valuable ways in their schools and in their communities. Many times, children have a special bond with animals because they become empowered to speak for the animals, who cannot speak for themselves. This experience can be especially meaningful for young children, who are usually in the role of being cared-for, rather than being the care-givers. Therefore, I’ve created projects that extend children’s learning in real and meaningful ways - while teaching the Common Core. “Continuing the Learning Adventure” in this way will not only provide meaningful opportunities for inviting students’ stuffed dogs back to school, but helps students connect their learning to the real world – and make a difference in the lives of others. One of the best ways we learn is through teaching, and so many of these activities include genuine and meaningful ways that students can teach others what they are learning, thereby bringing the Common Core alive and helping students understand the purpose of what it is we are asking them to learn.

Part Two of *How Dogs Help Kids Read and Succeed in the Classroom* consists of ten projects, all designed to satisfy 20 Common Core State Standards in Language arts, and allowing teachers to continue the learning adventure from December or January until June. While Part One of this program is predominantly focused on teaching key reading strategies, capturing children’s imaginations and using high quality children’s fiction, Part Two is focused on student writing of informational and purposeful non-fiction text. All of the lessons, templates, rubrics for assessing student understanding of Common Core Standards, and short, inspirational videos from me to the students themselves for each lesson will be available on a password-protected teacher support website. Although the primary focus of the second half of this program is to extend learning through exciting writing projects involving their stuffed dogs, teachers can certainly elect to teach these lessons during Part One. Finally, although I have laid out these lessons month-by-month as an example of how they can be organized, each of these lessons can be taught at any time of the year as determined by individual classroom and school context.

### How Dogs Help Kids Read and Succeed in the Classroom

Part One (September – November/December)	Part Two (December/January – June)
<p>Literacy Focus: Reading (<i>Word study strategies, comprehension, and fluency</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Caring for real and stuffed animals in their home and in their classroom</li><li>• Children empowered as “teachers of animals”</li><li>• Focused concern for student safety around dogs (egocentric focus)</li><li>• Focus on reading and comprehending high-quality children’s fiction</li><li>• Intentional instruction in learning and applying reading strategies</li><li>• Satisfies 18 Common Core Standards in English Language Arts</li></ul>	<p>Literacy Focus: Writing (<i>Informative/explanatory, appropriate to task/purpose</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Caring for animals and for others in their communities and in the world</li><li>• Children empowered as “teachers of others”</li><li>• Focused student concern for animals around them (other-centered focus)</li><li>• Focus on both student-generated and published non-fiction text</li><li>• Intentional instruction in crafting informative and explanatory writing</li><li>• Satisfies 20 Common Core Standards (and reinforces 7 standards from Part One)</li></ul>

## December/January: Focus on Non-Fiction

**1. Pay it Forward (The Learning, That Is) through an Animal Poster Fair:** Participating in this program has given your students the extra edge in learning compassion for animals. Now it's time to help your students become teachers themselves – for other children. Working in small groups, students review what they've learned (and do some additional research) to design posters that teach others about safety around and compassion for animals. They then invite other classes (and parents, too) into the classroom to hold a poster fair where they can teach other children about what they've learned. Topics can include: How to meet a new dog, how to read a dog's body language, 5 things dogs (or cats) need, things you should and shouldn't do around your pets, how dogs and cats express their feelings, what a shelter animal is and why we need to "adopt, not shop" for a pet, and 5 ways to show kindness to animals in our communities. Teachers can elect to combine this activity with a fund-raising idea to donate to an animal shelter by inviting parents for an after-school showing and charging a small admission.

Writing Standards K-5	Research to Build and Present Knowledge	Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.
Writing Standards K-5	Production and Distribution of Writing	With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.
Writing Standards K-5	Research to Build and Present Knowledge	Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., read a number of books on a single topic to produce a report; record science observations).

**2. Create an Audio Recording/Audio Book to Teach Others:** In small groups, students write three key points summarizing lessons they want to teach others about proper care towards animals, drawing from the information they've presented on their posters. One students have revised and edited their writing, they practice reading their script out loud, and then audio record it. Students can then showcase their great work at a grade level or school assembly to teach others about the great lessons they've learned in a PowerPoint presentation showing their posters, with the recording of their voices.

Speaking and Listening Standards K-5	Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas	Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.
Writing Standards K-5	Production and Distribution of Writing	With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.

**3. Which Animal Makes the Best Pet in the World?** Students have spent the past several months learning all about safety and compassion for dogs, but of course, many children love other animals, too. In this writing activity, students are asked to select an animal that they think would make the best pet in the world, and then write an opinion piece about why they think this animal is best!

Writing Standards K-5	Text Types and Purposes	Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., <i>because</i> , <i>and</i> , <i>also</i> ) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.
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## February/March: Sharing the Love

**4. Brainstorm 100 Acts of Kindness for Animals** – Invite your students’ dogs back to school for this love-filled lesson. In small groups and then as a class, students brainstorm up to 100 acts of kindness for people and animals - and then are challenged to actively work to complete them. Each child signs his or her name beside each act they’ve completed until every single act has at least one name beside it! (*Note: Teachers may want to save this list for use during the March challenge: Service Ideas for Kids*).

Speaking and Listening Standards K-5	Comprehension and Collaboration	Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about <i>grade 2 topics and texts</i> with peers and adults in small/larger groups. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).</li> <li>b. Build on others’ talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.</li> </ul>
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**5. Partner Up with Plush Book Buddies:** Invite students to bring back their stuffed dogs to share the love for this fun project. Students create inspirational, tri-fold bookmarks that teach three important lessons about safe and appropriate behavior around dogs - from their dogs to their book buddies. In writing, students are asked to answer the question to publish on their bookmarks: “What are three ways you can act in safe and appropriate ways around dogs?” or “What are three ways you can show kindness and compassion for animals?”

Writing Standards K-5	Research to Build and Present Knowledge	Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.
Writing Standards K-5	Production and Distribution of Writing	With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose. CA

**6. Perform a Modern Day Version of Lady and the Tramp** using the students’ stuffed dogs as the main characters in a Reader’s Theater performance for other classrooms and for parents. Begin by reading the popular children’s Disney classic, *The Lady and the Tramp*, as a class, while discussing the main characters and story elements. Then, read the modern-day Reader’s Theater rendition of this story, comparing and charting the two versions. Finally, divide your class into groups of 5 and assign parts (or let the students choose themselves) to practice and then perform this play for other students! A wonderful art extension for this lesson is to create costumes for the stuffed dogs as they perform. ☺

Reading Standards for Literature K-5	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	Compare and contrast two or more versions of the same story (e.g., Cinderella stories) by different authors or from different cultures.
Reading Standards for Literature K-5	Craft and Structure	Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.
Fluency	Grade 2	Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.</li> <li>b. Read grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.</li> <li>c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.</li> </ul>

## April/May: Kids with a Cause – What If We All Did Just One Thing?

**7. Meaningful Service Ideas for Kids** – If classes participated in the brainstorming activity of creating 100 Random Acts of Kindness for Animals in February, one of the ideas generated from that activity may organically inspire a way to actively engage the kids in a public service project. If classes did not do this activity, teachers engage students in a discussion about the many ways they might choose to make a difference in the world by helping animals. The intention of this lesson and project is to help children “see the power of we.” It’s true that if only I do one thing, it makes a difference in the life of one person or animal – but it’s also true that if we work together to make a difference in the lives of others, we can do so much more. In the introductory video for this project, I share stories about individual children and classes of students who have achieved incredible things, simply by making the decision that they wanted to help make a difference for animals in our world.

Ideas teachers can discuss and vote on with their students (and I provide a step-by-step guide for each activity, which can be adapted should classrooms choose to take on other ideas/projects), include: Holding a mini-fundraiser (such as a spare change drive or gently used stuffed animal or toy sale), organizing a pet food drive, holding a silent auction for animals, creating toys for dogs and cats in shelters, or even creating an outdoor protective shelter for homeless animals.

Speaking and Listening Standards K-5	Comprehension and Collaboration	Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.  a. Give and follow three- and four-step oral directions. CA
Writing Standards K-5	Production and Distribution of Writing	With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose. CA

**8. The Powerful Consequences of Our Choices:** In this lesson, students read, analyze, and compare stories about two families and their experiences of getting a new pet. Contrasting the many decisions these families make about whether they adopt an animal from a shelter or purchase one from a pet store, whether or not they train their new pet, whether or not they spay or neuter their pet, as well as decisions regarding care for their pet all help students not only learn to compare and contrast important points in text, but to also learn about the power and direct consequences of these small but significant decisions.

Reading Standards for Informational Text K-5	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	Compare and contrast the most important points presented by two texts on the same topic.
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**9. The Value of Volunteering - Nurturing Budding Writers:** Beyond the obvious benefits of knowing that we are making a difference in the lives of others when we volunteer, there are numerous real and valuable lessons students can learn about the writing process by thinking and acting as writers as they participate. As educators, we often miss priceless teachable moments when we take children out into the world. Consider taking children on a field trip to volunteer at an animal shelter, all the while encouraging them to take notes about what they are seeing, feeling, and experiencing using descriptive writing – and watch your students develop some of the most powerful pieces of non-fiction writing you’ve ever seen. As students volunteer, they jot notes (using the templates provided) about what actions they are taking, what they are thinking as they take these actions, and how they feel about it. Students are then taught to transform these notes into a powerful narrative about their experience. Teachers may elect to then copy and publish these stories as a class book in the school library. Now talk about writing for a real purpose!

Writing Standards K-5	Text Types and Purposes	Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short
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		sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.
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**June: A Doggone Awesome Finish!**

**10. Student-Organized Reunion – and Letter-Writing to Next Year’s Class:** In this lesson, students bring their stuffed dogs back to school to read and write for a fun and exciting purpose – organizing and planning a reunion (for their classroom or for their grade level)! Children learn to design and write invitations for their parents, and write letters of advice to next year’s 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class about what they will learn this year. What a fun way to wrap up students’ experience of this program while welcoming next year’s class and teaching them all they have to look forward to in their 2<sup>nd</sup> grade school year. ☺

Writing Standards K-5	Production and Distribution of Writing	With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.
Writing Standards K-5	Production and Distribution of Writing	With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose. CA
Writing Standards K-5	Text Types and Purposes	Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.