

ANIMAL COMMUNITY

Objectives

- Students will map their community to determine that animal shelters are a resource in need of assistance.
- Students will develop an understanding of the homeless animal population in the United States, as well as why the need for animal shelters exists.
- Students will discuss and analyze the needs of animals in shelters.
- Students will complete a service project focused on creating items such as beds and toys for animals living in shelters while awaiting adoption.

Essential Questions for Students

- What role do animal shelters serve in the community?
- How can you make a positive impact on the lives of animals in shelters?

Outcomes

- Students will realize their ability to have a positive impact on animals in their community.
- Students will develop the ability to work as part of a team.
- Students will develop written and oral communication skills, such as writing narratives, conveying information clearly, and supporting a point of view.

Common Core State Standards

English Language Arts Standards, Writing, Grade 3

- Text Types and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.1 – Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.
- Text Types and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.2 – Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- Text Types and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.3 – Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

Community Connections

- Research local humane or no-kill animal shelters. In addition to the larger shelters, many communities have smaller, privately funded shelters that would appreciate volunteer support.
- Invite your shelter to send a spokesperson to visit your classroom at the launch of your project and again at the end of the project. If your class cannot visit a shelter to deliver their final project, it would be wonderful to have this person visit the classroom again to receive the class's gifts on behalf of the animals.
- Ask for parent involvement and donation of materials.

Materials

- To preorder: Informative materials from the shelter with which you are working. Be sure to ask for any age-appropriate videos, as many shelters have produced videos and are happy to loan them to schools.
- Materials for students to write, print, and illustrate the books that they will create. You might have the students handwrite their books, or use a computer and printer. Regardless, be sure to have them leave room to illustrate each section.
- Books on animal shelters for a read-aloud



Vocabulary Terms

- **Shelter** – Something that provides cover or protection; for example, from heat, cold, or other weather. In regard to animals: a place that provides temporary housing and food for animals that are lost or do not have a home.
- **Volunteer** – To perform or offer to perform a service of one's own free will. To do charitable or helpful work without pay.

Lessons

Students will each author, illustrate, and publish their own book focused on what their life as an animal in a shelter would be like. Books will have three sections:

- Beginning section on how they, as the animal, became in need of a shelter.
- Middle section on what life is like for them as an animal in a shelter.
- End section on how they felt upon receiving gifts such as toys, blankets, and treats while they were in the shelter. Students should complete the third section of their book after they finish their service project, so they can describe in their book how their life was impacted by someone else's generosity.

Building Knowledge (approximately one class period)

- As a whole group or in teams, have students write a description of what they believe an animal shelter is, whom it serves, and why animal shelters exist in the community. If possible, keep these comments posted in the room for the duration of this project.
- As a class, read books on animal shelters or materials from a local shelter. Most shelters have websites with many resources. Suggested discussion questions include:
 - How do you think the animals in the shelter feel?
 - How do shelter animals feel when they are adopted?
 - Why did the people in the story decide to help the animals?
 - Have you ever helped an animal?
 - Why did you choose to help, and what happened?
 - Why do you think it is our responsibility to assist animals in need?
- Introduce the service project to the students. Explain that shelters and the animals they serve are dependent on volunteer efforts such as the one they are going to undertake in the "Taking Action" part of the lesson.

Building Compassion (approximately one to two class periods)

- Have students imagine what it would be like to be an animal in a shelter. Have the students each draw, briefly write, or act out why they ended up in need of an animal shelter. Allow students to share these ideas with the entire class or in small groups.
- Tell students that they are going to create a book about the experience of being in a shelter from an animal's perspective. The book will have three sections, as described above. Let students know that their story's ending will be developed later, so they need to leave some room!

Taking Action (approximately two to four class periods depending on the project and book publishing)

- Take action! Create gifts for the animals living in a local shelter to make their lives more pleasant and comfortable. Engage the students in discussions with questions like:
 - How do you think the animals in the shelter feel?
 - Why did the people in the story decide to help the animals?
 - Have you ever helped an animal?
 - Why did you choose to help, and what happened?
 - Why do you think it is our responsibility to assist animals in need?
- General ideas for cats and dogs:
 - Bake dog treats



- Make bandanas for dogs to wear at special events
- Make “no-sew” cat beds
- Make catnip bags
- Additional ideas and directions can be found online. (We like www.ehow.com)
- After the students make the gifts for the animals, have them write and illustrate the third section of their book. Creating the ending should allow students the opportunity to reflect on the positive impact they have made. Story endings should reflect on how the students, as the animal character they created, would feel about being offered the gifts made by the class. These books are great for public display!
- Your Roots & Shoots project should end on a day when your students deliver the gifts to the animal shelter or representatives from the shelter come to your school to accept the gifts on behalf of the animals.

Extension Activities

- Coordinate ongoing sales of dog treats to raise money for the shelter.
- Investigate why it is important for animals to be spayed or neutered.

Journal Questions

- How do you believe shelter animals feel when they are adopted into a new home? How do you think life changes for adopted animals once they get to their new homes?
- If someone you knew was opposed to animal shelters, what information would you share to help change his or her mind? What benefits do animal shelters provide for communities?

Accommodations/Modifications

- Allow students to express their stories with different mediums (PowerPoint, Animoto, oral presentation, picture book, group skit, etc.).
- Arrange for regular visits to your classroom from a trained therapy pet.
- Create gifts for the animals in teams instead of working individually.

Additional Ideas for Taking Action

- Assist low-income or elderly pet owners by creating and donating animal toys and bedding.
- Build climbing posts for cats from recycled materials.
- Have a fundraiser to collect items on the shelter’s wishlist.
- Hold a bake sale and sell treats for people and pets to raise funds for your local shelter.
- Create a sanctuary outside your school for birds, bats, butterflies, etc.
- Participate in a letter-writing project on behalf of the animals in the shelter.
- Coordinate a school team to participate in your local shelter’s fundraising walk or run.
- Arrange to volunteer at your local animal shelter for a day. See what special help your shelter needs in October for National Adopt-A-Dog month and June for Adopt-A-Cat month.
- Write your local representatives regarding issues that are affecting animals in your community.

Family Connection

- Send an informative letter or email outlining your project to students’ families.
- Ask the shelter you are working with if they have materials that are available to send home.
- Encourage students to bring in photos of their pets. Did any of these pets come from shelters?
- Ask parents to talk about the pets they had when they were growing up. Did any of those pets come from shelters?

