

## Canine Character Education Family Information

*“Compassion for animals is intimately connected with goodness of character.” –Arthur Schopenhauer*

### What is the Canine Character Education Program?

The Canine Character Education Program is a complete character education unit that is designed for schools. The goal of this program is to provide schools with a quality character education program that results in measureable improvement in student behavior and peer relationships. For many years, schools have attempted to teach children about character traits that they feel will help them to become responsible citizens in our community. Often these programs do not hold children’s attention and are therefore ineffective.

The American Kennel Club, a well-known advocate for purebred dogs and the responsible care of all dogs, has created a program that gets kids excited about character education. In this program, children will take a short personality quiz which will identify the breed of dog with which they share the most character traits. This allows children to make a real-world connection to the idea of character and gives them a familiar lens with which to view each trait by learning about a dog that exhibits that trait. Each month, your child’s teacher will focus on a different trait. Students will discuss what the trait means, see an example of what the dog looks like, and be encouraged to demonstrate the trait throughout the month. Finally, each student will have a chance to be recognized, along with “their” purebred dog, for embodying a particular trait. This allows each student to shine.

### What are the benefits of implementing a character education program?

The Canine Character Education Program traits are designed to evolve with your child. The traits will gain more meaning for the students as they get older, students will have more opportunities to see the traits in action, and to delve more deeply into all that they mean. Once students have a full understanding of each trait and what it looks like, they can be embedded into every curriculum. Studies show that children who take part in character education programs have fewer behavioral problems and often perform better academically (Benninga, et al, 2003). The Canine Character Education Program is fully committed to enriching your child’s educational experience.

### How can you help?

Character education programs work best when parents are active participants. Take time to discuss the character trait cards with your child. Talk to them about what those traits mean to you and ways you see them in others. Review their character pre-assessment and post-assessment results and congratulate them on their growth. Assist them with their character project so that they may present their ideas to the class and have an opportunity to show off what they know! Finally, continue the conversations about these character traits all year long!

### References

Benninga, J.S., Berkowitz, M.W., Kuehn, P., & Smith, K. (2003). The relationship of character education implementation and academic achievement in elementary schools. *Journal of Research in Character Education*, 1(1), 19-32.