

AKC Canine Character Education Program: Unit Lesson Plans

Getting Started

Ideally this program will be introduced within the first few weeks of school. This program is designed to take thirty minutes or less, once per week. Send the “AKC Canine Character Education Family Information Letter” home to families the week BEFORE you begin the program. This will give parents an opportunity to ask questions and prepare to get involved!

Month 1: Introduction

Week 1

The first week’s focus is to introduce the idea of character to your students. We suggest you begin with a brainstorming session. Have students think of a person they admire (younger children will need more support with what this means). Have them write some words that describe that person. Support the students by ensuring they are writing character words (i.e. nice, honest) instead of words about the person’s appearance, etc.

When the brainstorming session is complete, have students draw their person completing acts that show their character. When done, allow students to share their pictures if they would like.

Explain to students that character is the way someone treats others and themselves. It is shown in the way people think and act.

Week 2

Have students complete the online quiz, “What Kind of Dog Are You?” This can be done in class or at home. The quiz can be accessed via this link: <http://tinyurl.com/AKCcep>.

Week 3

Have students take the Canine Character pre-assessment.

Week 4

Have students respond to the following prompt: How do dogs show character?

Younger students can discuss it and older students can write about it.

Month 2: Bravery (German Shepherds)

Week 1

1. Introduce the “Bravery” character card to students.
2. Read over the card and discuss as a class.
Possible Discussion Questions:
 - a. Can you think of a time when you were brave? Tell us about it.
 - b. What does bravery mean to you?
3. Acknowledge the students who were determined to be “German Shepherds” during the personality quiz.
4. Assign those students the “What Does Bravery Look Like?” project and send information about it home to parents.

Week 2

1. Show the students the following video:
<http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/german-shepherd-highest-medal-bravery-38176467>
2. Discuss the video and how it demonstrates bravery.
Possible Discussion Questions:
 - a. What brave things did Lucca do?
 - b. What made him special?
 - c. How could you be brave like Lucca?
3. Discuss as a class:
What are some ways we can be brave this month?
4. As a class, choose two of the ideas you came up with and commit to trying them before the end of the month.

Month 2: Bravery (German Shepherds)-Continued

Week 3

Activity: Being Brave Skits

1. Discuss ways to show bravery.
2. Split the class into groups of 3-4 students.
3. Have each group brainstorm about things that might be scary.
4. Each group will choose one thing that is scary and create a 2-minute skit that shows how to be brave in that situation.
5. Each student must play a part in the skit.
6. Each group will perform the skit for the class.

Week 4

1. Discuss with the class what bravery means and why it is important.
2. Review the two ways to be brave that the class committed to during week two. Invite students to share how well they did trying those tasks.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- a. How did it feel to be brave?
 - b. What might you do differently next time?
3. Recognize the students who were acknowledged as “German Shepherds” during the first week.
 4. Invite them to share their project with the class.
 5. Invite a Canine Ambassador to visit the class with their German Shepherd.

Month 3: Determination (Akita)

Week 1

1. Give each student a Determination Character Trait Card.
2. Read over the card with the students and discuss as a class.

Possible Discussion Questions:

Can you think of a time when you were determined? Tell us about it.

What does determination mean to you?

3. Acknowledge the students who were determined to be an “Akita” during the personality quiz.
4. Assign those students the “What Does Determination Look Like?” project and send information about it home to parents.

Week 2

1. Show the students the following video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIZeayf5eSE>
2. Discuss the video and how it demonstrates determination.
Possible Discussion Questions:
How was Hachiko determined?
How could you be determined like Lucca?
3. Discuss as a class: What are some ways we can be determined this month?
4. As a class, choose two of the ideas you came up with and commit to trying them before the end of the month.

Week 3

1. Ask students to brainstorm about a time that they were determined.
2. As appropriate for their grade level and ability, ask students to share those stories with a small group or the class. Younger children may draw a picture of it or just describe the experience. Older students may write a paragraph or more about their experience.

Month 3: Determination (Akita)

Week 4

1. Discuss with the class what determination means and why it is important.
2. Review the two ways to be determined that the class committed to during week two. Invite students to share how well they did trying those tasks.

Possible Discussion Questions:

How did it feel to be determined?

What might you do differently next time?

3. Recognize the students who were acknowledged as an “Akita” during week one.
4. Invite them to share their project with the class.
5. Invite a Canine Ambassador to visit the class with their Akita.

Month 4: Kindness (Corgi)

Week 1

1. Give each student a Kindness Character Trait Card.
2. Read over the card with the students and discuss as a class.

Possible Discussion Questions:

Can you think of a time when you were kind? Tell us about it.

What does kindness mean to you?

3. Acknowledge the students who were determined to be “Corgis” during the personality quiz.
4. Assign those students the “What Does Kindness Look Like?” project and send information about it home to parents.

Week 2

1. Read the following article with students:
<http://www.foxnews.com/travel/2018/02/21/corgi-comforts-man-at-airport-who-lost-his-dog-night-before.html>
2. Discuss the video and how it demonstrates Kindness.
Possible Discussion Questions:
How was Cora the Corgi kind?
How could you be kind like Cora?
3. Discuss as a class: What are some ways we can be kind this month?
4. As a class, choose two of the ideas you came up with and commit to trying them before the end of the month.

Month 4: Kindness (Corgi)-Continued

Week 3

Activity: Filling the Bucket

1. Read the book, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today* by Carol McCloud.
2. On post-its (or with additional support in lower grades), have students write ways they can fill another person's bucket. They can be broad examples (i.e. give them a compliment) or they can direct their comment to someone (i.e. Sally, I like the way you always share at recess.)
3. Once all students have finished the task, read the notes aloud.
4. Discuss the examples and the ways the students could use them this week.

Week 4

1. Discuss with the class what kindness means and why it is important.
2. Review the two ways to be kind that the class committed to during week two. Invite students to share how well they did trying those tasks.

Possible Discussion Questions:

How did it feel to be kind?

What might you do differently next time?

3. Recognize the students who were acknowledged as "Corgis" during week one.
4. Invite them to share their project with the class.
5. Invite a Canine Ambassador to visit the class with their Corgi.

Month 5: Loyalty Unit (Golden Retriever)

Week 1

1. Give each student a Loyalty Character Trait Card.
2. Read over the card with the students and discuss as a class.
3. Acknowledge the students who were determined to be “Golden Retriever” during the personality quiz.

Possible Discussion Questions:

Can you think of a time when you were loyal? Tell us about it.

What does loyalty mean to you?

4. Assign those students the “What Does Loyalty Look Like?” project and send information about it home to parents.

Week 2

1. Show the students the following video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xo1J9cmr28U>

2. Discuss the video and how it demonstrates loyalty.

Possible Discussion Questions:

How was Figo loyal to his owner?

How could you be loyal like Figo?

3. Discuss as a class: What are some ways we can be loyal this month?
4. As a class, choose two of the ideas you came up with and commit to trying them before the end of the month.

Month 5: Loyalty Unit (Golden Retriever)-Continued

Week 3

Activity: The True-or-False Game

This activity is designed to help children distinguish between being loyal and not telling an adult something important when it is warranted.

1. Explain that some children believe that loyalty means not telling on a friend or lying for a friend to protect them. Explain that if someone has done something wrong, a truly loyal friend would try to get him to admit it, and if that didn't work, he would tell someone. Also, if a friend shares something that is dangerous, the loyal thing to do would be to tell an adult.
2. Create some examples of loyalty. Here are a few:
 - a. Standing up for a friend. (loyal)
 - b. Not telling the teacher when a friend is in trouble. (not loyal)
3. Ask students to work in groups to determine if each instance is an example of loyalty.
4. When everyone has finished, have the students share their answers.

Week 4

1. Discuss with the class what loyalty means and why it is important.
2. Review the two ways to be loyal that the class committed to during week two. Invite students to share how well they did trying those tasks.

Possible Discussion Questions:

How did it feel to be loyal?

What might you do differently next time?

3. Recognize the students who were acknowledged as "Golden Retrievers" during week one.
4. Invite them to share their project with the class.
5. Invite a Canine Ambassador to visit the class with their Golden Retriever.

Month 6: Resilience Unit (Dachshund)

Week 1

1. Give each student a Resilience Character Trait Card.
2. Read over the card with the students and discuss as a class.

Possible Discussion Questions:

Can you think of a time when you were resilient? Tell us about it.

What does resilience mean to you?

3. Acknowledge the students who were determined to be a “Dachshund” during the personality quiz.
4. Assign those students the “What Does Resilience Look Like?” project and send information about it home to parents.

Week 2

1. Show the students the following video:

<http://www.fox5dc.com/news/trending/disabled-dog-in-wheelchair-will-melt-your-heart-video>

2. Discuss the video and how it demonstrates resilience.

Possible Discussion Questions:

How does Molly show she is resilient?

What about her positive attitude makes her resilient?

How can you be resilient like Molly?

3. Discuss as a class: What are some ways we can be resilient this month?
4. As a class, choose two of the ideas you came up with and commit to trying them before the end of the month.

Month 6: Resilience Unit (Dachshund)-Continued

Week 3

Activity: Being Resilient Skits

1. Consider a person in your life that you believe is resilient.
2. Have the students write a short summary about what makes them resilient and how you are similar to them. For younger children, they can tell a friend about a special person to them.
3. Share with the class if you would like.

Week 4

1. Discuss with the class what resilience means and why it is important.
2. Review the two ways to be resilient that the class committed to during week two. Invite students to share how well they did trying those tasks.

Possible Discussion Questions:

How did it feel to be resilient?

How can you help others be resilient?

Why do you think being resilient is important?

3. Recognize the students who were acknowledged as “Dachshund” during week one.
4. Invite them to share their project with the class.
5. Invite a Canine Ambassador to visit the class with their Dachshund.

Month 6: Self-Control Unit (Border Collie)

Week 1

1. Give each student a Self-Control Character Trait Card.
2. Read over the card with the students and discuss as a class.
Possible Discussion Questions:
 - a. Can you think of a time when you showed self-control? Tell us about it.
 - b. What does self-control mean to you?
3. Acknowledge the students who were determined to be “Border Collies” during the personality quiz.
4. Assign those students the “What Does Self-Control Look Like?” project and send information about it home to parents.

Week 2

1. Show the students the following video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80NQLXXQwRM>
2. Discuss the video and how it demonstrates bravery.
Possible Discussion Questions:
How did Fame show self-control?
How did that help him be successful?
3. Discuss as a class: What are some ways we can show self-control this month?
4. As a class, choose two of the ideas you came up with and commit to trying them before the end of the month.

Month 6: Self-Control Unit (Border Collie)-Continued

Week 3

Activity: Red Light, Green Light

1. Have your students stand against the wall on one side of the classroom (or playground).
2. Explain the premise of the game “Red Light, Green Light.”
3. Explain that instead of being able to walk on “green” and stop on “red,” that would will be giving examples of self-control.
4. When the students believe that your example shows self-control, they may walk. If they believe that your example does not show self-control, they must stop.

Examples:

Self-Control (walk): I sit quietly in my chair when I would rather talk to my friend.

Not Self-Control (stop): I don't want to wait my turn in the game so I quit.

Week 4

1. Discuss with the class what self-control means and why it is important.
2. Review the two ways to show self-control that the class committed to during week 2. Invite students to share how well they did trying those tasks.
Possible Discussion Questions:
How did it feel to use self-control?
What might you do differently next time?
3. Recognize the students who were acknowledged as “Border Collies” during week 1.
4. Invite them to share their project with the class.
5. Invite a Canine Ambassador to visit the class with their Border Collie.

Month 7: Trustworthiness Unit (Great Pyrenees)

Week 1

1. Give each student a Trustworthy Character Trait Card.
2. Read over the card with the students and discuss as a class.
Possible Discussion Questions:
Can you think of a time when you were trustworthy? Tell us about it.
What does being trustworthy mean to you?
3. Acknowledge the students who were determined to be a “Great Pyrenees” during the personality quiz.
4. Assign those students the “What Does Trustworthiness Look Like?” project and send information about it home to parents.

Week 2

1. Show the students the following video:
<https://live.royalcanin.com/c/2017-akc-national-championship/video/8905/ace-award-for-service-dog-gunner>
2. Discuss the video and how it demonstrates trustworthiness.
Possible Discussion Questions:
How was Gunner trustworthy?
In what ways did Gunner’s owner depend on him?
3. Discuss as a class: What are some ways we can be trustworthy this month?
4. As a class, choose two of the ideas you came up with and commit to trying them before the end of the month.

Month 7: Trustworthiness Unit (Great Pyrenees)-Continued

Week 3

Activity: Tree of Trust

Before the Activity: Create a tree trunk and branches that can be posted on a bulletin board, door or wall in the classroom. Create leaves from construction paper large enough for the students to write on.

1. Give each student a leaf.
2. Have them think of a way to be trustworthy and write it on the leaf.
3. Work together as a class to add the leaves to the tree. Students can create more than one leaf.
4. Once finished, review the leaves with the class.

Week 4

1. Discuss with the class what being trustworthy means and why it is important.
2. Review the two ways to be trustworthy that the class committed to during week two. Invite students to share how well they did trying those tasks.

Possible Discussion Questions:

How did it feel to be trustworthy?

What might you do differently next time?

3. Recognize the students who were acknowledged as a “Great Pyrenees” during week one.
4. Invite them to share their project with the class.
5. Invite a Canine Ambassador to visit the class with their Great Pyrenees.

Month 8: Wrap Up

Week 1

This week's focus is to begin to bring the program to a close. Each day this week, choose 1-2 traits to discuss with the class. Ask them to describe why the trait is important and what it would look like in action.

Week 2

Have students take the "Canine Character" post-assessment.

Week 3

Have students complete the "Who I Am" activity. Save for next week's celebration.

Week 4

Host a character celebration this week. Invite parents/family to attend. During the celebration, allow students to share their "Who I Am" activity with the group. Invite questions from attendees.

Finding a Canine Ambassador

Inviting a Canine Ambassador to visit your class each month is a great way to enrich students' experience with this program.

Canine Ambassadors are dog enthusiasts that, along with their AKC Canine Good Citizen certified dog, teach children about responsible dog ownership, safety around dogs and much more.

You can find out more about this program, including how to find a Canine Ambassador near you, here: <http://www.akc.org/public-education/canine-ambassador-program/>.