

## AKC Canine Character Education: Teacher Implementation Guide

### **About the Program**

*What is the AKC Canine Character Education Program?*

The AKC Canine Character Education Program is a complete character education unit that can be utilized in any educational setting, but is best utilized in a K-6 classroom. The goal of this program is to provide schools with a quality character education program that results in measurable improvement in student behavior and peer relationships.

*Why should you use it in your classroom?*

Studies show that students who engage in an effective character education program demonstrate better behavior and improved academic performance. A study by Leming (1993) indicated that there was a reduction in disciplinary problems in schools where character education programs were in effect as compared to schools without a program. Additionally, a study by Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith (2003) found that schools with higher total character education implementation tended to have higher scores on academic measures for the year prior to the application, the year of the application and the subsequent two years.

### **About the American Kennel Club**

Since 1884, the American Kennel Club has been advocating for the purebred dog as a family companion, advancing canine health and well-being, working to protect the rights of dog owners and promoting responsible dog ownership. Our role in this program is to use our vast knowledge of dogs to engage children in a character education program that will help students become responsible citizens.

### **The Traits**

The focus traits of this program are those that teachers and scientists (Peterson & Seligman, 2003) identify as having the most impact on student character: Bravery, Determination, Kindness, Loyalty, Resilience, Self-Control and Trustworthiness.

### **Partnering with Parents**

The most effective character education programs include parents. We will give you all the tools you need to make parents/guardian active participants in their child's character education.

### **What You Will Receive:**

We want to make this program easy to integrate into the great things you are already doing. We will provide an outline to follow, monthly lessons and activities, printable character trait sheets to use in class and to send home, and printable certificates to culminate the program.

## **Program Overview**

### ***Getting Started:***

Ideally this program will be introduced within the first few weeks of school. This program is designed to take 30 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:* Complete “What is Character” activity with students.

*Week 2:* Have students take the “What Kind of Dog Are You?” Quiz at [www.tinyurl.com/AKCcep](http://www.tinyurl.com/AKCcep).

*Week 3:* Have students take the “Canine Character” pre-assessment. Send home results to parents.

*Week 4:* Students respond to journal prompt: How do dogs show character?

### ***Month 2: Bravery (German Shepherd)***

*Week 1:* Introduce “bravery” character card and discuss. Acknowledge “German Shepherd” quiz students. Assign project.

*Week 2:* Watch the video about bravery and discuss with students. Brainstorm ways to show bravery. Choose two to focus on.

*Week 3:* Complete “bravery” activity.

*Week 4:* Recognize students who were determined to be a German Shepherd during the quiz. Allow them to present their project.

### ***Month 3: Determination (Akita)***

*Week 1:* Introduce “determination” character card and discuss. Acknowledge “Akita” quiz students. Assign project.

*Week 2:* Watch video about determination. Discuss with class. Brainstorm ways to show determination. Choose two to focus on.

*Week 3:* Complete “determination” activity.

*Week 4:* Recognize students who were given “determination” during the quiz. Allow them to present their project.

#### **Month 4: Kindness (Corgi)**

*Week 1:* Introduce “kindness” character card and discuss. Acknowledge “Corgi” quiz students. Assign project.

*Week 2:* Watch the video about kindness and discuss with students. Brainstorm ways to show kindness. Choose two to focus on.

*Week 3:* Complete “kindness” activity.

*Week 4:* Recognize students who were given “Golden Retriever” during the quiz. Allow them to present their project.

#### **Month 5: Loyalty (Golden Retriever)**

*Week 1:* Introduce “loyalty” character card and discuss. Acknowledge “Golden Retriever” quiz students. Assign project.

*Week 2:* Watch the video about loyalty and discuss with students. Brainstorm ways to show loyalty. Choose two to focus on.

*Week 3:* Complete “loyalty” activity.

*Week 4:* Recognize students who were given “loyalty” during the quiz. Allow them to present.

#### **Month 6: Resilience (Dachshund)**

*Week 1:* Introduce “resilience” character card and discuss. Acknowledge “Dachshund” quiz students. Assign project.

*Week 2:* Watch the video about resilience and discuss with students. Brainstorm ways to be resilient. Choose two to focus on.

*Week 3:* Complete “resilience” activity.

*Week 4:* Recognize students who were given “Dachshund” during the quiz. Allow them to present.

#### **Month 7: Self-Control (Border Collie)**

*Week 1:* Introduce “self-control” character card. Discuss. Acknowledge “Border Collie” quiz students. Assign project.

*Week 2:* Watch the video about self-control. Brainstorm ways to show self-control. Choose two to focus on.

*Week 3:* Complete “self-control” activity.

*Week 4:* Recognize students who were given “Border Collie” during the quiz. Allow them to present their project.

## **Month 8- Trustworthiness (Great Pyrenees)**

*Week 1:* Introduce “trustworthiness” character card. Discuss. Acknowledge “Great Pyrenees” students. Assign project.

*Week 2:* Watch the video about trustworthiness. Discuss with students. Brainstorm ways to be responsible. Choose two to focus on.

*Week 3:* Complete “trustworthiness” activity.

*Week 4:* Recognize students who were given “Great Pyrenees” during the quiz. Allow them to present.

## **Month 9-Wrap Up**

*Week 1:* As a class, discuss what you learned about each character trait and why they are important.

*Week 2:* Students take “Canine Character” post-assessment.

*Week 3:* Complete “Who I Am” activity.

*Week 4:* Hold a character celebration and invite parents to attend.

## **Enrichment Opportunities**

There are many ways to enrich the AKC Canine Character Education program. American Kennel Club has a directory of Canine Ambassadors that would love to come to your school! 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/>.

## **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.

Leming, J. (1993). In search of effective character education. *Educational Leadership*, 51, 63- 71.

Peterson, C. & Seligman, M.E. (2003). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.