

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 unwanted 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 around 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?
- How can educating others impact animals and animal shelters?

Outcomes

- Students will realize their ability to have a positive impact on the animal community.
- Students will develop the ability to work as part of a team.
- Students will develop written and oral communication skills, such as writing informative texts, engaging in collaborative discussions, and presenting and supporting claims and findings.

Common Core State Standards

English Language Standards, Writing, Grade 6

- Text Types and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1 – Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- Text Types and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2 – Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

English Language Standards, Speaking & Listening, Grade 6

- Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1 – Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.4 – Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects, Writing, Grades 6-8

- Production and Distribution of Writing: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.5 – With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
- Production and Distribution of Writing: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.6 – Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently.
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.7 – Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.



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 a shelter to send a spokesperson to visit your classroom to help launch your project and again at the end of the project.
- Invite a local animal trainer to visit the class. Ask if he or she has a well-trained animal(s) to bring along.
- Work with shelters and libraries to arrange for student work to be displayed. Set up a time for your students to present their work to younger students, especially projects about animal safety.

Materials

- Book(s) on animal shelters

Vocabulary Terms

- **Shelter** – Something that provides cover or protection; for example, from heat, cold, or other weather. A refuge. In regard to animals: a place that provides temporary housing and food for animals that are lost or do not have a home.
- **Spay** – To surgically remove the reproductive organs of a female animal so that it will not be able to have babies. To “sterilize” or “fix.”
- **Neuter** – The sterilization of an animal so that it cannot reproduce; usually used in regard to males.
- **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 take on the role of teacher. They will research the topic of unwanted animals and prepare materials for others to learn from regarding animal safety and animal shelters.

Building Knowledge (approximately one class period)

- Read the selected book to students.
- Discussion question ideas include:
 - Have you ever visited an animal shelter?
 - Have you ever adopted a pet?
 - Why do you think animals end up at shelters?
 - How do you think it affects animals to be in a shelter?

Building Compassion (approximately one to two class periods)

- Organize students in small teams and have each team research one of the three questions below. Each small team should use a different resource to find answers. Information sources can be gathered from animal shelters, state agencies, pet stores, breeders, and trainers. The two questions are:
 - What are the most common reasons animals are brought to shelters?
 - What actions can the community take to help decrease the number of animals brought to shelters?
 - Historically, how did the system of animal shelters in the United States develop?
- Once the small teams have conducted their research, reassemble students into three large teams based on which question they researched. Have each team prepare a short oral presentation on their findings.

Taking Action (approximately two to four class periods)

Have students write and design a brochure about their project:

- Break the class into teams and assign each team a topic. Suggestions include:
 - How to safely approach an unfamiliar dog.



- Choosing a new pet for your family.
 - Important information about animal shelters.
 - Why is it important to spay or neuter pets?
 - How animal shelters impact our community.
- Have students use their research to create an informational brochure for use by the animal shelter and/or in the community.
 - Students should be assigned to write articles for the brochure, proofread and edit the articles, and design the brochure (either using a computer and printer or by cutting the articles out and pasting them onto a master brochure that can be photocopied).
 - Arrange for a classroom visit by a shelter worker or animal trainer.
 - Your Roots & Shoots project should end on a day when your students present their informational brochure to a representative from the animal shelter and/or to younger students. You might also invite local media to attend the presentation.

Extension Activities

- Conduct a fundraiser or participate in a local shelter's fundraising event.
- Create toys and treats for animals in a shelter
- Volunteer at a local shelter.

Journal Questions

- What other actions do you believe could be taken to help keep animals out of shelters? Why do you feel it is important for the community to support these actions?
 - If a neighbor was going to go buy a pet from a breeder, what argument would you use to try and convince him or her to adopt a shelter pet instead?
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- Allow students to present their research in different mediums (PowerPoint, Animoto, oral presentation, picture book or group skit).
 - Arrange for regular visits to your classroom from a trained therapy pet.

Additional Taking Action Ideas

- Assist low-income or elderly pet owners by creating and donating animal toys and bedding.
- Build climbing posts for cats out of recycled materials.
- Have a fundraiser to collect items on a shelter's Wish List.
- 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 to students' families outlining your project.
- 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?

