

# Character Education

**"Teaching a child not to step on a caterpillar is as valuable to the child as it is to the caterpillar."  
- Bradley Miller**

Character Education is the process of helping young people know, care about, and act on core values. The eight traits focused on by the Humane Society of Broward County and the School Board of Broward County are: **responsibility, citizenship, kindness, respect, honesty, self-control, tolerance and cooperation.**

Each month the Humane Society of Broward County provides a lesson in "character education" to every middle school teacher in Broward County. The lessons teach students to exercise core values not only to the people around them but also to the other living creatures with whom we share our planet.

**Please feel free to print and use our lessons. We do ask that credit be given to the Humane Society of Broward County.**



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# Pet Responsibility



Being a GOOD PET PARENT!

## Initiating Questions:

Ask the students how many of them have pets. Ask them if they are responsible for their pets. What are some of their responsibilities?

## Materials:

Shoebboxes, magazines, scissors

## Information to Share:

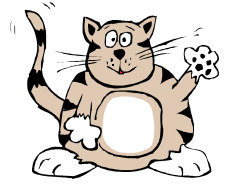
- ♥ Dogs and cats and other pets are not wild animals they are domesticated. They need human beings to care for them in order to survive.
- ♥ When you become a “pet parent” you become responsible for an animal’s life. Remember dogs and cats cannot talk and tell you what they need so it is up to you to learn about their needs. What are some ways you can learn about what your pet needs? (books, magazines, internet, experts)
- ♥ **IMAGINE...**close your eyes and imagine that you are an animal and you’re really hungry and really hot but you cannot talk to tell anybody. How would that make you feel?

## Activity:

1. Give each child a shoebox, or have them bring one from home.
2. Tell them the shoebox is going to be their “Pet Parenting” box.
3. Tell students that you would like them to decorate the outside of the box representing the kind of pet they own or would like to have one day. Have them choose only one. They can make collage, use real photos, draw pictures or whatever they would like.
4. Inside the box, the students must either put in real items that their pet needs from them as good “pet parents” or they can cut out items from magazines (have these available.)

5. You may want to make this a homework assignment.
6. Have students present their box to the classroom and explain the items they packed.

## Did you know...



- ♥ Every week at the Humane Society of Broward County more than 300 dogs and cats are turned in by their owners because they don't want them anymore!
- ♥ Many times these animals lose their home because somebody did not realize what a big responsibility it was to own a pet
- ♥ The Humane Society doesn't want your pet to become one of the homeless. Please take responsibility for your pet for their entire life.



### **Mini Math Activity:**

1. Divide the class into groups.
2. Assign a type of pet to each group.
3. Have the group figure out how much it would cost to care for this pet on a monthly basis.
4. Tell them to include everything they can think of that this particular pet would need (food, toys, collar/leashes, cages, medical care, grooming etc) let the kids come up with these ideas on their own.
5. Have them add up each item by estimating cost.
6. Have each group present their findings to the class.

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# Citizenship



## Lesson: Animal Neglect

### Initiating Questions:

What constitutes a good citizen? What are some things a good citizen might do? What are some things a good citizen can do for animals?

### Description:

Students will learn about some animal laws in our community. Specifically, they will learn about the plight of dogs on chains, and the absence of law in this area. Students will learn what they can do to make their voice heard and to make a difference in their own community on behalf of animals.

### Procedure:

1. Begin the lesson with the initiating questions above or choose some questions of your own. You're looking for the response that a good citizen is somebody that follows the law and helps the community in which they live.
2. Ask the students what laws they follow regarding their own pets at home (See "for your information" regarding laws). Share with them some of the laws in Broward County to protect animals. Explain to them that laws are ultimately for the protection of both animals and people.
3. Tell the students that the law against the "Confinement of animals without sufficient food, water or exercise; abandonment of animals" (write on the board) is a law that needs to be improved and enforced. Explain that every day thousands of dogs are kept on four- to six-foot chains for their entire lives.
4. Explain to students that currently the law in Florida states that dogs only need to be provided with food, water and proper shelter. The law does not forbid dogs to be kept on chains. Ask the students if they think it's fair that dogs stay on chains for prolonged periods of time. Ask how many think it is wrong and give reasons why, list on the board.

Ask them that a good citizen might do to help dogs on chains or what could be done to prevent other dogs from becoming a victim of this cruelty. Suggestions might be:

- Educate others: Tell friends, neighbors and family about the miserable life of chained dogs. Call the Humane Society of Broward County to get information to pass onto others about chained dogs (954) 266-6848.
- Write a letter to your Governor / Senator: Let your voice be heard! Each person can make a difference. Tell them you think it is wrong and would like to see a law to protect dogs from this abuse.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper.
- Report Cruelty/ Neglect - You can be a voice for the animals, since they can't speak for themselves. If you see an animal being abused or neglected it report it to the Humane Society at (954) 266-6823 or the Broward County Animal Care and Adoption at (954) 359-1313.



## **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

### **Regarding animal laws:**

There are many laws in Broward County to protect animals. Here are just a few:

1. **Leash law:** Your dog must be kept on a leash if it is outside your fenced yard. This law is to protect your dog from being hurt, injured or lost. The law is also made to protect people and other animals from being hurt or bitten by a loose dog.
2. **Rabies:** Every dog or cat four months of age or older in the State of Florida must be vaccinated and licensed against rabies. The reason for this law is to protect people and other animals from catching this fatal viral disease.
3. **Abandonment of animals:** It is against the law for any person to willfully abandon any animal for a period in excess of 24 hours without providing food, water, proper shelter, protection from the weather and necessary veterinary care for the animal.
4. **Fighting animals is prohibited:** It is a felony for any person to cause, instigate or encourage any dog or animal to fight another of its own species or another of a different species, or to maintain a place where any dog or animal is permitted to fight for exhibition, for wager or for sport.

### **Regarding dogs on chains:**

Dogs are very social animals. They are used to living in packs, today in our society their pack is their human family. Humans domesticated dogs over 10,000 years ago to live as companions and family pets. Since then they have learned to live with us and depend on us. Dogs are not solitary animals without us they suffer horribly from loneliness. Dogs kept on chains for long periods, begin to suffer from boredom and loneliness. As a result these dogs sometimes get very depressed and give up. Other dogs become aggressive from lack of mental stimulation and socialization with human beings. All dogs left on chains will end up with a variety of behavior problems such as digging, biting, barking and chewing. It is simply cruel and inhumane to have any dog spend long periods of time on a chain.

**Follow-up Activity:** Have student investigate an animal law and give an oral report to the class.

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# Kindness Counts!



Now is the perfect opportunity for your students to do something kind for the community in which they live!

The Humane Society of Broward County is a non-profit organization. We rely 100% on the community to help us care for over 400 homeless animals a week. Our mission at the Humane Society of Broward County is to provide shelter, aid and responsible adoptions to animals entrusted to our care, and to educate the community about respect and kindness to all animals. We hope you will help us...

Here are just a few ways the kids **can let their kindness shine** by helping a less fortunate group - the homeless dogs and cats of Broward County.



## 1. **HOLD A TOY DRIVE:**

The dogs and cats at the Humane Society spend the majority of their time inside their cage during their stay with us. To make their stay a little less stressful we would love it if every dog or cat had at least one toy. These are the types of toys we're looking for:

*Dogs:* Rubber Kongs, Nylabones, large rubber toys, soft stuffed toys. We cannot use small toys and tennis balls as they fall down our drains.

*Cats:* Ping pong balls, plastic balls and play mice. We need toys that we can wash and use over and over.

*Other Pets:* We also need toys for rabbits, ferrets and guinea pigs!

2. **HOLD A TOWEL/ SHOEBOX DRIVE:**

Our shelter uses a lot of towels and blankets for lots of different things. We prefer large white towels and gently used blankets. Our cats love to cuddle up in a cozy shoebox. We get all sizes of cats so we can use all shoebox sizes too! Our goal is to make sure every homeless animal has a soft comfortable bed to sleep in.

3. **MAKE OUR WISHES COME TRUE!**

Visit our Web site to view our Wish List on items that we are always in need of. ([www.humanebroward.com](http://www.humanebroward.com)) The Humane Society goes through loads of laundry detergent, paper towels, newspapers and dozens of other things.



**THANK YOU!**

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# Respect



## DOGS THAT HELP PEOPLE

Dogs have been our companions and our loyal friends for thousands of years. In addition to being our friends, dogs have also provided numerous services to help human beings in many ways. They have earned our hearts and our **respect** as a result. This lesson will help students to understand the value, intelligence and importance of dogs and how they help our community.

### ACTIVITY:

Divide the classroom into small teams of five or six students. Assign each team a "SERVICE DOG" group from below. The team's job will be to research their assigned "Service Dog" group and give a creative fifteen minute oral presentation to the classroom. There are hundreds of websites offering a variety of information on each of dog groups listed.

Presentations should be scored according to creativity, visual aid materials, unique stories/news articles and the like.

### Questions each report should include:

What service does your dog group provide?

How and when did this type of service dog evolve?

How is the dog trained to provide this service?

How much training is involved?

### Questions each report should include, continued:

Is there a certain type of dog that is trained to perform this function?

Each group should include two of the following: Stories, data, video clips, articles or other supportive material in relationship to their service dog.

## Choose one of the following "SERVICE DOG" groups per team:

### SEARCH & RESCUE DOGS:

Search and Rescue dogs aid in finding people in disasters such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes and bomb explosions. Search and Rescue dogs are trained to pick up scents in the air and on the ground to find missing people. Dozens of search and rescue teams (dog and human) worked tirelessly at the World Trade Center and Pentagon sites after the attack on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

### WAR DOGS:

Since Egyptian and Roman times, dogs have served in wars. Their instincts – keen senses, the desire to protect their "pack" and the ability to fight --- have served us well on battlefields. Military dogs perform many jobs in war. They are sentries on guard duty, alerting their handlers to strangers or attacking on command.

### POLICE DOGS:

Police officers get their dogs as puppies and raise them as part of their families. The canine cop, after months of training becomes an official patrol dog. Police dogs are taught to growl and attack on command. They learn to catch and hold a fleeing suspect. Police dogs are also taught to track the smell of humans in the air, on the ground and even off the water.

### GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND, DEAF & DISABLED: *(You can divide this team into three separate teams if you'd like)*

In 1928, a German shepherd named Buddy became the first Seeing Eye dog. People discovered that dogs could provide services to people who are blind, deaf or disabled. These dogs perform an enormous range of tasks and require extensive training.

### PET THERAPY DOGS:

The Humane Society of Broward County has an extensive Animal Assisted Therapy program. Our AAT dogs and owners visit over 80 different facilities in Broward County to include; hospitals, nursing homes, psychiatric wards, children's facilities and more. The goal of the program is to bring smiles and love to people in need. A therapy dog must be a well-mannered, calm and friendly dog. A series of tests is performed to certify a dog.

### SEIZURE DOGS:

Very special dogs with no particular training have been able to predict when their owners are about to seizure. These incredible dogs have saved many lives as a result. Recently, other dogs have been able to detect cancer in certain individuals. More research is yet to be done.



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# HONESTY



## Those Honest Pets!

Pets are probably the most honest creatures of all. They are truthful, trustworthy and sincere in their personalities and their emotions. For instance, a dog will jump up and down and wag his tail furiously when his loved one comes home...he doesn't try to disguise his feelings! If your cat doesn't want to be loved and cuddled he'll also be sure to let you know he wants down!

Can you name some ways that your pet is honest and upfront with his / her emotions? Take the time to note your pet's positive characteristics and allow him to be a teacher to you. Animals have so much to teach us if only we would open our eyes and our hearts.

As humans, many times we try to hide what we feel because we are afraid or embarrassed of what other people think. Animals wear their hearts on their sleeve. As an extra credit activity, have students observe their pet for a week or a fellow student's pet. Have students keep a journal of their pet's honest emotions. Have them write a story concerning their pet's honesty, sincerity and trustworthiness. Choose two students to share their stories with the class.

*SIDEBAR: "My Dog Skip" is an excellent movie that displays the honesty and loyalty of a dog. If students don't own a pet they can observe Skip's character and write a story based on the movie.*

## Adopting a Pet!

- At the Humane Society of Broward County, we adopt hundreds of homeless dogs and cats each week. The majority of the dogs and cats we receive are turned in by their families who no longer want them...it is very sad.
- We expect that if a person turns an animal into the Humane Society that they will give us an honest reason why they can no longer care for their pet. It is very important that they are honest with us so we can let the next family know why this pet was given up.
- We also ask the family turning in the pet to give us personal information regarding the pet's personality. Again, it is very important they are honest! We want to know

if the pet has any bad habits, if they like children, other pets etc. This way we can place them in the best possible home and the potential family knows what to expect from their pet.

- When a family comes to adopt a pet, we ask many questions to be sure that they will be a good responsible home to the dog or cat. We hope that people will be honest with their answers so we can match the pet with a good responsible home. The pet's well-being is always our first priority.

## Play the Adoption Game!

1. Divide students into groups of five or more.
2. Have the groups come up with a list of 10 questions they feel are important for someone adopting a dog or cat. What specific things do they feel would qualify a person to be a good responsible owner of a dog or cat?
3. Have each group select two members of the group to play the Adoption Counselor and the Adopter in front of the entire class.
4. Have them sit in front of the class in chairs facing each other.
5. Have the Adoption Counselor ask the 10 questions to the Adopter.
6. Stress the importance of "HONESTY."
7. After asking each of the 10 questions aloud, have the class take a vote whether or not this person would make a suitable adopter. Why or why not?
8. Repeat the game with each group.



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# Self-Control



## Initiating Questions:

How many of you have pets at home? How many of you have ever had a behavior problem with your pet? If so, what have you done to remedy the problem? Have you ever gotten angry at your pets, because they didn't listen? Have you ever yelled at them or hit them out of frustration?

## Description:

Students will learn about positive training methods to teach their pets (mainly dogs & cats) how to behave properly. Students will learn about options to control their pet's behavior.

## Materials:

Clicker or other device to make noise, like a bell.

Human Treats – jelly beans, M&M's or other small candies.

## Procedure:

1. Begin lesson with initiating questions above or choose some questions of your own. Emphasize the importance of being patient with your pets. Explain that it is upsetting to us when someone isn't patient with us. Ask students how they feel when their parents yell at them or their teacher singles them out. Your pet will only become frustrated, scared and confused if you don't exercise patience with them.
2. State that it isn't fair to get angry at your pet if he/she does something wrong and you haven't trained them to do the proper thing. Tell the students that today they will learn three concepts to teach their pet in a positive and healthy way.
3. The first concept (write on the board): **All living things repeat behaviors that are rewarding and avoid behaviors that are not.** Explain to students that many times we only want to correct our pets for what they do wrong and we ignore what they do right. Ask students to list some behaviors they repeat because of the rewards attached.
4. Give an example by complimenting a student in the room. Make them feel really

good about themselves. Point out humans too, are more likely to perform better if they are reinforced in a positive way.

5. The second concept (write on the board): **Your pet already knows just about everything you are going to teach him.** Ask students, does your dog know how to sit, lie down, walk by your side etc.? Explain that with training you are simply associating a word in English to something they already now how to do.
6. The third concept (write on the board): **Learning should be fun, not painful!** Ask the students if they would rather learn their spelling words by writing them until they had cramps in their fingers or would they rather make a game of it. Learning is always better if you're making it fun! Your pet is going to shut down if training is harsh or boring.
7. Tell the kids you're going to play a little game to demonstrate "positive reinforcement" using the concepts above. The only thing is we have to pretend that one of us cannot speak English—just like your pet. This exercise will help to show you how frustrating it can be to the animal if they don't understand you! This will help the students to understand how an animal might feel.
8. Select two students to come to the front of the room. One of them will be the trainer and the other will be the "person" being trained. Tell them that you are going to give the trainer an index card with a "command." Tell the class that the trainer cannot talk or use hand motions to the person being trained but only reinforce what they are doing right by "clicking" a clicker or other noisemaker.
9. Suggestions for commands to put on index cards are: turn out the light, do three jumping jacks, open the door, write an "X" on the board, write your name on the board. Come up with some ideas of you own.
10. Give the trainer a clicker or a bell, and small candy rewards. On an index card indicate the behavior you want performed by the person. Mark index card from suggestions above or come up with ideas of your own.
11. Tell the trainer that each time their student makes a move in the "right" direction they should reinforce with a clicking noise and a candy treat. Eventually the student will perform the action by following the positive feedback.
12. Ask trainer and trainee if it was difficult to communicate. Were they frustrated? Did the trainer make learning fun? Ask them if they can see how an animal might have difficulty understanding. (Repeat exercise with other pairs of students)

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# Tolerance



## Raising a PUPPY or KITTEN...a lesson in TOLERANCE

- Write in capital letters on the board the word "PUPPY." Next, make two columns one entitled POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS and the other entitled NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTICS.
- Ask students how many of them have ever owned a puppy. Ask them to think back on their experience and share what are the positive aspects of owning a puppy and the negative aspects. List their comments on the board.
- Ask students how many of them kept their puppies through adulthood. Ask how many of them gave up their puppies. If their families gave up their puppies ask them why (chances are many of the families gave up the puppies for behaviors they considered intolerable).
- Erase the list of positive characteristics from the board and one by one go down the line and speak about each intolerable behavior. Some of your answers will probably include the following: chewing, biting, urinating or defecating in the house, destroying things, crying at night, barking etc.
- Explain to the students that each of these behaviors is natural and normal; it is what puppies do. We as their owners are responsible for teaching them what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.
- Write the word "BABIES" on the board. Ask students to list some things, we must teach babies or toddlers. When you are finished, ask them if they see some similarities between the types of things we teach animals and babies. (Some similarities might be potty training, getting into things, playing gently, crying, etc)
- State that even though sometimes babies might test our patience we wouldn't get rid of them because they are acting like all babies do. Just as we should not get rid of our puppies because they are doing, what puppies do.



# Group Activity

1. Divide students into groups and hand to each of them an index card with one of the negative characteristics of owning a puppy. Tell them their job is to come up with a list of five ways to teach the puppy in a positive way.
2. For example: If the negative characteristic was "CHEWING" inappropriate things, some ideas would be: supplying proper chew toys, telling the puppy "NO" and then showing him what to chew, putting away things the puppy might get into, confining the puppy when you are gone, etc.
3. Remember to stress the behavior must be addressed in a positive way.
4. Have students report their ideas to the rest of the classroom.
5. Repeat this entire activity with kittens rather than puppies.

## Put on a Skit!

Have the kids work during the week to put on skit for other classrooms regarding tolerance and pets. Their skits can portray what happens when people lose their cool and are not tolerant of their pet's behavior. The skits can show the patient and correct way to teach your pet proper behaviors. Have fun with it, have kids make costumes and really get into their roles!

### SKIT IDEAS:

- *A puppy loses his home because his family can't take the chewing anymore / a family takes their puppy to puppy classes to address the chewing problem*
- *A puppy gets chained in the yard because the family has had it / the family exercises their dog and makes him a part of the family*



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# Cooperation



**Cooperation:** Working together toward a common end.

**Cooperate:** To work together for a common objective.

## **DESCRIPTION:**

- During this lesson, divide students into groups of four or more to work together to find solutions to the “animal welfare” problems listed below.
- You may wish to assign all of the problems to each group or assign one problem to each group.
- Time frame: One to two hours

## **Problem #1: PET OVERPOPULATION**

Every week in Broward County, more than 1,000 dogs and cats become either homeless in animal shelters or left to die on the streets. Only 1/3 of these animals will ever find new responsible homes. Discuss among your group solutions to end the homeless animal problem. What could we do to prevent this problem from occurring in the first place? What could the community do to help more of these animals find homes?

Have your group report a specific plan to help end the pet overpopulation problem.

## **Problem #2: ADULT DOGS AND CATS ARE UNWANTED**

At the Humane Society of Broward County, we house up to 400 homeless dogs and cats each week. Seventy Five percent of the animals we receive are beautiful adult dogs and cats. A good majority of the time when patrons come to adopt a pet they overlook the adult animals and are only interested in adopting the cute puppies or kittens.

Many people are under the assumption that you can't bond with an adult animal or that they cannot be trusted. The fact is adult animals are eager and ready to bond and often times make the best pets of all. As a group come up with a convincing “Marketing Campaign” or “Public Service Announcement” to convince the general public to adopt an adult pet.

Present your commercial and/or campaign to the class. The Humane Society would love for you to share your project with them too!

### **Problem #3: CHILDREN ARE THE NUMBER ONE VICTIMS OF DOG BITES**

Dogs bite more than one million children each year. Most of these dog bites are avoidable if children learn important safety information about behaving around animals.

As a group, research the internet to discover how children can avoid dog bites. Include dog body language tips, when to leave a dog alone and how to approach a dog properly.

Share your information with other classrooms by presenting your information as a lesson.

### **Problem #4: MILLIONS OF DOGS SUFFER EVERY YEAR IN PUPPY MILLS**

Over 90% of pet stores get their puppies from puppy mills. The breeding mothers spend their entire lives in filthy small cages just to mass produce puppies so stores can sell them. Many times these poor mothers are very ill mentally and / or physically and pass this on to their pups. If the general public keeps buying puppies this cruel practice will never end.

As a group, brainstorm ideas on how we can stop this cruel suffering. Make posters or signs stating your case. Share with the class and post around your school.



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