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Sandy Welch's Dog Unit

By Sandy Welch and Dorothy Hinshaw Patent

Sandy Welch teaches sixth grade at Lolo Elementary School, Lolo, MT. She was the puppy raiser for Irah, the guide dog featured in **The Right Dog for the Job**. Irah came to school with Sandy two days a week, and the students helped train him. They also learned a great deal about personal responsibility, helping others, and pride of accomplishment. Sandy also developed this unit. Most children love animals, especially dogs, and that interest can help motivate students who might otherwise not be interested in these kinds of assignments.

Writing Descriptive Sentences:

Sandy gave the students photos of Ira and her own dog, Laddy. Each student wrote a sentence that described the photo. She posted the photos to the board and as a group the students matched the sentences to the pictures. Some sentences seemed to describe several different pictures, making it become apparent that most authors needed to add additional information to set their pictures apart. She assigned the obvious photos to the less able writers for them to be successful on the first try. The other children did the rewrites until what they wrote described their photos uniquely.

Creative Writing Ideas: New Chapters: Sandy had the students read books, then write additional chapters. These books are useful for this assignment:

A Dog's Little Instruction Book, by David Brawn
Fun Facts about Dogs, by Richard Torregrossa
101 Uses for a Golden, photographed by Denver Bryan
Three Stories You Can Read to Your Dog, by Sara Swan Miller

Dog stories: Sandy gave the students a summary of two different dog stories. The student could select either one and write a story which coincided with the summary.

Rewriting a story: Buddy, the First Seeing Dog, by Eva Moore, is written for younger readers. Cooperative Learning groups took each chapter and rewrote it using more descriptive language. Then they put it together for a revised version.

Suggestions for Reading Aloud:

Here are some good dog books to read aloud to sixth graders, or for sixth graders to read to other students:

Ginger Pye, by Eleanor Estes
Hero Dogs, by Peter C. Jones and Lisa Mac Donald
Return of the Wolf, by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent
Help! I'm Trapped in Obedience School, by Todd Strasser
No More Dead Dogs, by Gordon Korman
Wander, by Susan Hart Lindquist
The Trouble with Tuck and Tuck Triumphant, by Theodore Tayler (excellent since they deal with special abilities)
Child of the Wolves, by Elizabeth Hall

How Dogs Really Work! By Alan Snow
How to Talk to Your Dog, by Jean Craighead George
Dogs: The Wolf Within, by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent