

Care and Handling Routines, Procedures, Provocations, and Activities

It is very important and effective to allow two to four weeks to thoroughly review care and handling routines and procedures through a scaffolding process in which discussions and modeling occur and are followed by close guided practice. Safety for both the children and the pet will be ensured as a result of careful planning and practice.

Week 1: Overview of Pet

Gather books from the library or from a book store or even pamphlets from the vet office or a pet store. Have books and expository texts located in library and by the cage of the pet. Many nonfiction children books about a variety of pets are located in your local library.

Read a loud:

- Choose a book to read to read to the children.
- Show the children the front cover of the book and read the title.
- Ask the children why they might be reading about this particular topic.
- Explain to children that this is a nonfiction book and what this means.
- Do a picture walk through the book asking predicting questions to gauge children's background knowledge and experiences.
- Next read the book stopping at various points to ask open ended questions.

After several nonfiction books have been read...do a graphic organizer like a web that includes topics such as Food, habitat, toys, health, play, etc. Have children fill in the graphic organizer as a whole group or in small groups.

Week 2: Observation Journals

Explain to children that over the next week, children are going to be given a journal to record their observations, thoughts, feeling over the next few weeks. You can provide the children with a framework for observing by providing some guiding questions like...

- What is the pet's favorite food?
- Where is the pet's favorite hangout place in his cage?
- Does the pet make any noises or try to communicate?
- What movements does the pet make?
- Or even provide daily writing prompts for children to fill out like...
- Where do you go to feel safe and where does the pet go to feel safe?
- What is your favorite food and what is the pet's favorite food?

The writing prompts can serve as a medium for children to build a connection or relationship with the pet therefore increasing empathy and making the pet part of the classroom community.

Continue writing prompts.

Week 3: handling

During small or large group time, get the pet out of the cage and ask children how you would hold the pet to keep both you and the pet safe?

Model how to correctly hold the pet and allow children to practice.

This should be repeated daily for the third week so children can internalize this process.

Week 4: feeding

Model how to feed the pet. Maybe provide a cutting board and a child safe knife (Gerber has a child safe knife in the baby section). Show children how to prepare fresh veggies and fruit for the pet. Allow 4 or 5 children to help each day so each child gets a chance to feed the pet during the first week. Even provide a chart so children can visually see that they will get a turn to feed the pet.

Review handling procedures mentioned in the previous week and continue writing prompts.

Week 5: Adding care and handling to the classroom daily procedures

Add “feeder” to the job chart...two to three children per day is a good number.

Come up with a procedure for children to hold the pet...add “handler” to the job chart maybe two to three children a day or have a sign up board with a certain amount of slots per day as the pet may get overwhelmed if over handled each day.

Make a “procedure” chart for handling the pet

1. Sanitize hands
2. Find a spot and sit on the floor
3. What for an adult to place the pet in your lap (maybe on a towel if the nails are sharp)
4. Remain in a sitting position while holding the pet
5. When you are finish signal to an adult to place the pet back in the cage
6. Sanitize hands

Have an ongoing rule for the safety of the child and the pet that only adults are allowed to get the pet in and out of the cage.

Review these new procedures and routines with children.

Week 6-10: Making the Pet part of the classroom community

Make an “all about me” book for the pet. Children can work in small groups or individually to fill out the pages.

Add the pet to the self-portraits by having the children draw sketches of the pet. In a large group or small group sit with the children and have the pet in your hands. Have a discussion on how you could sketch the pet...shape of head, shape of body, feet, eyes, nose, ears, fur, coloring.

The children can then take their sketches and turn their 2Ds pictures into 3D by using clay to create the pet.

Taking this one step further, dioramas can be created for the children's clay versions of the class pet by collaging materials into a shoe box or board diorama frame to create habitats for their pets.