Pets in the Classroom Grant Lesson Plan
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grades 6-8 amphibian/reptile

The "Write" Pet
Pet Centered Writing Workshop

Most middle school classrooms in our area, with the exception of science classes, do not include pets. Students are only in the classroom for 40 minutes and then move, and there is less time for teachers to spend outside of the specific course standards. The challenge is how to find time for students to spend time with the pet while still focusing on curricular activities. By introducing a pet into my language arts classroom, I hope to make the class inviting, engaging, and connect with the students' natural interest in animals.

Pet Research - Before bringing the pet to school, a local expert who raises snakes will visit class. He has several types of snakes to share and can explain and answer any questions students may have. He also allows students to handle a large boa. His visit will allow for our discussion of important rules for class pets: 1) Wash hands before and after handling a pet 2) No extremes for pets - sounds, touches, motion, temperature or any other experience. 3) Pets must have food, shelter, water and the correct temperature, always.
Following an introductory lesson, pet naming contest, and time during homeroom and before and after school for one-on-one snake time for those interested, students will work in groups to research the pet **corn snake**. Using Google Docs, they will create a group list of facts and ideas to use in their writing. We will work together to categorize the information to make it more easily useable, regardless of the genre that students choose individually.

Writing Craft Reminder - Students will work with their group, and then the whole class, to create a rubric that highlights what is important to include in the genre choices: narrative, expository, and argument. They will have access to their past writing portfolios to help them remember what makes a good memoir, how-to-book, or argument. This project will be a great way for students to show that they understand the various types of writing we have studied. It allows for guided student choice, review of genres and writing craft, and independent application of writing skills. Following their work, the whole class will agree on a rubric to be used to evaluate the writing projects.

Individual Options - Students will decide what type of writing they will complete individually and what format they will use to present their work.

Format choices: traditional typed story/report, booklet, poster, powerpoint, or video using Do Ink and green screen technology.
Students should consider their time commitments and access to supplies and technology outside of class time. Three days of class time will be available, and the rest must be completed outside of class. Students will present their products to their groups, followed by an "Art Show" format that allows students to set their work on their desks and walk around the room to view other student work informally.

Types of writing for students to choose from-

Narrative - creative story/memoir
Students choosing to write a narrative could write from the point of view of the animal, using *Diary of a Worm* by Doreen Cronin, *The One and Only Ivan* by Katherine Applegate, or any others students are currently reading. We have several prewriting/planning pages and graphic organizers to help students organize their ideas. Also, our town celebrates the National Sweet Corn Festival every August, which might be a pretty exciting situation for a corn snake. The main consideration should be the point of view and trying to see the world as a snake might. Many students enjoy writing to entertain, and this genre offers itself to that goal well.

Objectives:
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.A
Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.B
Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.C
Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.D
Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.E
Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

Expository - All About Corn Snakes or How to Care for Corn Snakes

After researching and reading sample non-fiction about animals, students could choose a preferred writing product to best communicate information they could teach others about corn snakes. Writing products should include one or more non-fiction text features and structures. Guidance for products is available from our study of **non-fiction features:** titles, headings/subheadings, maps, photographs, diagrams, charts, index, glossary, bold print, captions, labels and text boxes and **non-fiction structures:** description/list, sequence/time order, compare/contrast, cause/effect, problem/solution.

Objectives:
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2.A
Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2.B
Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2.D
Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

Argument - leveled choices
In seventh grade, argument writing begins to become especially challenging. Students learn new concepts of counter claim, relevance and the beginnings of logic. By using past writing and moving beyond writing about " the what pet is best argument", students will begin to apply what they have learned to consideration of animals. Since writing argument relies on students reading and understanding both sides of the argument before choosing a side to argue for, they need materials written at their reading level. To accommodate a variety of levels, students may choose from the following materials/topics according to how well they feel they can read and understand them.

level 1 Zoos: Pro/con - AtoZ readers

level 2 Medical testing on animals
 http://idebate.org/sites/live/files/MIddle_Schoolers_Debatabase_v01.pdf   page 34

level 3 Keeping exotic animals as pets - independent research by individual students

level 4 - Student choice of topic with independent research and teacher approval

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1
Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1.A
Introduce claim(s), acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1.B
Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1.C
Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1.D
Establish and maintain a formal style.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1.E
Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Our students nominate classmates' projects for "Best Of" awards using a fair, private system that students enjoy. We will use the projects that earn a "Best Of" rating in each genre to share with the fifth and sixth grade students at our school. Authors of the projects will have a chance to take the class pet to visit the younger grade classrooms and share their writing. By including a real audience and a break from regular class time, students are encouraged to make their best effort to present their best work.