Grant Program Opens Virtual Learning Lesson Exchange

*Pets in the Classroom is asking teachers to submit video lessons to the program’s Virtual Learning Lesson Exchange in order to equip teachers with more funds and resources for virtual learning.*

As educators expand their back-to-school efforts to include remote or virtual instruction, the Pets in the Classroom grant program is ready to be a resource for teachers who are looking for ways to include their classroom pet in virtual learning lessons, as well as lessons within the classroom. In an effort to provide lessons for teachers to use, Pets in the Classroom is asking all interested teachers to submit video lessons that include their classroom pet to the program’s Virtual Learning Lesson Exchange.

With the Pets in the Classroom Virtual Learning Lesson Exchange, teachers can submit instructional videos geared toward students grades Pre-K to 9th grade that use the classroom pet in teaching the lesson. Videos must feature a classroom pet that is supported by funds from the Pets in the Classroom grant program, and should offer 1-3 post-lesson activities for students to complete on their own. The **first 40 teachers who submit videos that are selected for publishing will receive a $50 gift card**. All approved entries submitted by October 31 will be reviewed by a committee of judges, with one video being selected to receive a $500 gift card.

Once submissions have been reviewed and accepted, these lessons will be available on the Pets in the Classroom website for other teachers to use.

As teachers face new challenges this school year, classroom pets serve as tools that teachers can utilize to support students. Classroom pets offer a wonderful way to bring joy and excitement into the lives of students—but they also offer social, emotional, and academic benefits. Through a survey conducted this spring by the Pets in the Classroom grant program, teachers across the U.S. and Canada have shared valuable insight into how they are using pets, both in the classroom and in remote learning, and the multitude of ways that students are benefiting from them. According to the survey, 97 percent of respondents said that having a pet in the classroom has been a positive experience, with nearly 69 percent incorporating their pet into virtual learning. One teacher stated, “This is an awesome program and even through distant learning, our class leopard gecko has been a part of our daily Google Meets. Especially during these unusual learning experiences, our class pet has helped students with anxiety and engagement. I have had feedback from many parents that seeing our Little Leo was something that helped their kids during this time.”

During in-class instruction, teachers saw improvements in attendance, empathy/compassion, responsibility, testing/academic performance, self-esteem, and student engagement. Teachers also reported that pets help students improve their social skills and decrease anxiety. As one teacher stated, “To say that having class pets is beneficial would be an understatement. It is therapeutic for both staff and students. I am amazed at how my students responded in such a positive way to our pets. It opened the floor for honest conversations about managing emotions, stress, and how our actions and reactions affect others.”
The survey results, coupled with studies and thousands of previously shared teachers’ experiences, show the many benefits that pets can provide to students. One little pet can help shy kids open up, struggling readers build confidence, aggressive children develop nurturing tendencies, and apathetic students gain a new desire for learning.

As teachers face unprecedented challenges as children transition back to school, whether in-person or through virtual learning at home, the Pets in the Classroom grant program is ready to help by providing resources, as well as funding for classroom pets, to PreK – 9th grade teachers across the U.S. and Canada.

For more information, visit www.petsintheclassroom.org/virtual-video-lesson-exchange/.