

“Feed the Positive Dog-News Stories”

Lesson Plan

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Grade Level(s): 4, 5, and 6

Subject(s): Positive School/Math/Reading/Writing

Overview:

There is a parable about a positive dog and a negative dog at odds with one another. Which one wins? Whichever dog you feed. This two-part lesson is designed to show students how, many times, the negative dog is fed through the news media. Students will take note of the amount of negative news, then in part two, take action to increase the amount of positive news that's reported.

Materials:

- Newspapers (gathered from home)
- Graph Paper
- Paper and Pencils (for part 2)

Activities and Procedures:

Students are instructed to bring newspaper from home, or these can be gathered within the classroom over a specified period of time.

Feed the Positive Dog Lesson Part 1a (5 minutes):

In the beginning of this lesson, the teacher reads to the class the following simple story:
The story of the Positive and Negative Dogs: A man travels to a village to speak to the wise man. He says to the wise man, "I feel like there are two dogs inside me. One dog is positive, loving, kind and optimistic and then I have this fearful, pessimistic, angry and negative dog. They fight all the time. I don't know who is going to win." The wise man thinks for a moment and responds, "I know who is going to win. The one you feed the most. So feed the positive dog."

Discussion follows as teacher and students discuss ideas of what feeds negativity, and what feeds positivity.

Feed the Positive Dog Lesson Part 1b (20 minutes):

- Students gather into groups of 3 or 4 students, and each group is given a section of newspaper (or multiple sections, depending on the amount of time allotted for the exercise.) As students scan through the newspaper, noting mostly headlines, they're instructed to take note of how many stories are positive stories (good news) vs. how many stories are negative (bad news). Students note these on paper, then plot them on graph paper and tally the overall results. The results are then calculated into percentages (group totals, then classroom totals).

Feed the Positive Dog Lesson Part 2 (Homework):

- In part 2 of this lesson, students are instructed to write an article for a mock newspaper that is a positive news story. Story can be something positive they've heard recently and wish to write about, or something they imagine.

Evaluation/What we did:

- Learned about how negative media is more common than positive media, and calculated the percentage of positive vs. negative news stories.
- Took an active approach at finding, then creating positive news.

Extensions:

- When students' positive news stories are completed and graded, the classroom could work on a project where they compile them into a classroom newspaper. (Example: Mr. Haugen's 5th Grade Good News)