



Theme: Canine Legislation

Breed-specific Legislation

Objective: To teach students about the legislative process and encourage involvement in their local community.

Note: Consider inviting your local AKC Legislative Liaison for this presentation. For assistance in locating a nearby liaison please contact:

AKC Canine Legislation
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Educational Subjects

- Civics
- Language Arts

AKC Materials:

- Judge the Deed, Not the Breed worksheet

Suggested Procedure

1. Present several situations involving dog-related problems in the community. Ask the students how many of them have let their dog run loose. Then ask the students about whether they pick up after their dogs in public. Explain that when you let your dog run loose or do not clean up after him, you are most likely breaking the law. Brainstorm with the students why dog laws are important.
2. Now present the scenario from the worksheet:

Imagine that a German Shepherd Dog owner visiting a park let his dog off lead. The playful, energetic dog knocked a child down. Trying to get the child to play, the dog bit the child on the arm. Fortunately, no severe injury resulted. No stitches were needed, but the child's parents were outraged and contacted the mayor. In an effort to prevent future incidences, the city council has now decided to restrict the ownership of all German Shepherd Dogs in the town.

3. Explain the different types of strict provisions often outlined in breed-specific legislation. Owners may be required to:
 - *Pay higher licensing fees*
 - *Leash and muzzle their dog when in public*
 - *Obtain expensive liability insurance*
 - *Build a fence or kennel for their dog*
 - *Register their dog with city officials*
 - *Move to or find a new home for their dog where its breed is permitted*
 - *Give the dog up to a shelter, where it may be destroyed.*

4. Explain the issues surrounding breed-specific legislation.
 - *All dogs have the potential to bite. Not all large, energetic breeds are “dangerous.” Likewise, not all toy breeds are friendly.*
 - *Environment and training play key roles in what kind of personality a dog will develop.*
 - *Any breed of dog can be trained to attack a person.*
 - *Just like you cannot judge a person based on how they look, the dog’s breed does not determine how he will behave.*
 - *Many large, energetic breeds serve as Search and Rescue dogs, therapy dogs who work with patients in hospitals, guide-dogs, and assistance dogs who help the physically impaired.*
5. Have the students pretend they own one of the breeds commonly targeted by breed-specific legislation. Ask them what they would do if their legislator was going to pass a bill that would label their family pet as “dangerous.”
6. Distribute the worksheet “Judge the Deed, Not the Breed” to the students.

Suggested Questions

1. What are alternatives to breed-specific legislation?
 - *Legislation that addresses the dog’s behavior, not the breed of dog. The AKC supports laws that:*
 - a. *Establish a fair process by which specific dogs are identified as “dangerous” based on stated, measurable actions.*
 - b. *Impose appropriate penalties on irresponsible owners.*
 - c. *Establish a well-defined method for dealing with dogs proven to be dangerous.*

Have the Class:

- Complete the worksheet “Judge the Deed, Not the Breed.”
- Research a dog-related issue pertinent to their community by contacting shelters, police, kennel clubs, etc. Have students write or email a letter to a government official (mayor, congressman, etc.) explaining why the issue is important and how it could be improved