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Dogs With Jobs Educational Assessment Report Letter

This letter is written in support of *Dogs With Jobs*, an engaging educational television program that highlights individual dogs from around the world and the jobs they perform. The family-friendly series features service dogs, search and rescue dogs, police dogs, herding dogs, and others. Program segments provide footage of dogs on the job, and also include stories of their rescue, training, and relationships with their owners and handlers. The thirty minute program, designed for viewers ages 13 to 16 provides viewers with informative content using age- appropriate language, images, and stories. As a seasoned educator of over seventeen years working within K-12 schools and also within academia as a professor of education, teacher educator and curriculum content and instruction reviewer, I can attest that *Dogs With Jobs* program content not only meets but exceeds Federal Communications Commission standards for quality educational television programming for children and youth audiences.

Within each thirty minute episode, three vignettes on various dogs and the jobs they perform are introduced to the viewer. The viewer meets the dogs, and learn about the origins of the dog breed, the persons that work alongside the dogs, and the trainings and activities that the dogs receive. The narrator's upbeat, engaging tone, along with the background instrumental music and sounds, the images and the personal stories of human and animal connection, enables the viewer to learn new information in a very entertaining fashion. This type of content delivery appeals to a diverse set of learners, specifically, auditory, visual, and intrapersonal learners, and connects directly to their cognitive processing and understanding. When content is presented using a variety of instructional methods, and connects directly to the student's learning styles, the level of knowledge comprehension and retention is greater for the learner¹.

In addition, age-appropriate vocabulary is used throughout the episodes, and young viewers are given the opportunity to engage in new explorative learning. When new vocabulary is introduced, clear and concise explanations as well as context clues that help the viewer with word meaning-making are presented. For example, within the segment on Pie, a champion Bikejoring dog, the narrator provides an explanation of the word "Bikejoring" detailing the Norwegian origins of the word, which means to "travel or ride". This method of presenting new vocabulary provides the viewer with new learning through an authentic, exploratory and self-directed process.

¹ Gardner, Howard. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books, 2011.

Moreover, the dog jobs highlighted in each segment are all unique and expose children and youth to a range of careers, from bear biologist to coast guard officer. The U.S. Department of Education standards emphasize that K-12 instructional activities should address College and Career Readiness for all students². Within one particular segment viewers meet Tuffy, a bear shepherd that works with Carrie Hunt, a bear biologist. Viewers not only learn about environmental issues around bear extinction and the various methods used to combat bear extinction, but also the characteristics and job qualifications necessary for both the bear biologist and her trusty dog shepherd. Qualities that require leadership, confidence and patience when tracking and capturing a bear, knowledge of bear habitats, and the ability to work collaboratively with others.

Additionally in Tuffy's segment, viewers are asked to reflect on environmental issues related to animal extinction, a topic addressed in the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)³, but often not within the comprehensive educational classroom setting. Students are rarely given the opportunity to learn about possible careers that work directly to address these environmental issues, but *Dogs With Jobs* offers its viewers the opportunity to engage in a supplemental educational experience and highlights educational content in a meaningful way that connects classroom learning to real-world application with the introduction of various career opportunities for the dogs, the owners and handlers that work with them. *Dogs With Jobs* provides educational programming that specifically caters to a youth audience and focuses on different career opportunities that its viewers may have never encountered prior to viewing the show, but may later decide to further explore; careers such as a bear biologist, coast guard officer, photographer, professional bikejoring, and many others.

Dogs With Jobs also offers its children and youth viewers positive social messages centered-around important citizenship and character education development standards⁴. The various episodes include content that address educational standards emphasizing behaviors, attitudes, skills, and knowledge that focus on hard work, determination and discipline, acceptance of diversity, and service to others. Within the various episodes, the dogs are required to learn new skills and receive intense training to provide support for the people they serve and the owners and handlers they work alongside. For example, in the segment on Fergus, the service dog, the viewer meets Samantha a young woman who is afflicted with Fibromyalgia, a chronic disorder characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain, fatigue, and tenderness. Samantha informs viewers about her illness and the various physical limitations that she experiences. Fergus's role and the ways in which he assists Samantha is also depicted, allowing viewers to understand various roles that animals as well as humans can share in order to address the needs and offer support to others. In addition, young viewers are able to consider how they may use their own personal qualities to engage in good citizenship practices, which includes understanding the experiences of others, empathizing, and service to others.

Dogs With Jobs also provides educational programming that challenges children and youth viewers to expand their world view, geographically and culturally. In each episode, viewers meet dogs

²U.S. Department of Education College and Career Readiness Standards <https://www.ed.gov/k-12reforms/standards>

³ Next Generation Science Standards <https://www.nextgenscience.org/search-standards>

⁴ National Council for the Social Studies Standards <https://www.socialstudies.org/standards>

and their owners and handlers from various countries. Dog breeds such as the Karelian Bear native to Finland, the Leonberger native to Germany, and Shar-Pei with origins in ancient China are some of the many different dogs and diverse countries that viewers encounter. This exposure to cultural diversity is critical when preparing children and youth for interaction within an ever-changing globally diverse world. Providing educational opportunities in which knowledge about other cultures and countries are shared helps to dispel ethnocentric attitudes and engage students in more global outlooks and perspectives, key components of educational standards for 21st Century Learning⁵.

Dogs With Jobs is a quality educational television program that teaches children and youth between the ages of 13 and 16 about individual dogs from around the world and the jobs they perform. The family-friendly series offers age appropriate content and vocabulary, addresses national college and career standards through the exploration of various dog jobs and the professions they support, and provides positive social messages centered-around important citizenship and character education development standards. If there are questions regarding the significant educational value of the program, *Dogs With Jobs*, please feel free to contact me at cearl@gsu.edu or (404) 413-8399.

Sincerely,



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⁵ Framework for 21st Century Learning Standards <http://www.p21.org/our-work/p21-framework>