

Theresa,

The following is a description of the Canine Ambassador program from the AKC website
http://www.akc.org/public_education/faqs_ambassador.cfm :

"A Canine Ambassador is an AKC-affiliated club member who goes into the community to educate children about responsible dog ownership, canine safety and a variety of other canine-related topics. Canine Ambassadors usually make presentations to children in schools or youth programs, such as Boy Scouts or the Boys and Girls Club. Canine Ambassadors usually make presentations with their dogs. All Canine Ambassadors receive periodic mailings from the Public Education department that contain reproducibles. These reproducibles are fun word games or matching games that emphasize the importance of responsible dog ownership, canine safety or the sport of purebred dogs."

Our focus has always been on the dog bite prevention, because they are so often preventable. The following is a little about our program specifically:

On the average w/ questions & "petting" time, our presentations range from 45 minutes to an hour. When we have especially young children, I try to keep it to 1/2 hour. We often use 2 dogs which allows for more "petting" time.

These are the things I ask every group to do:

- If you have children (or adults) who are afraid of the dogs, we ask that they are seated away from the entry & not at the front of the area where we'll be standing. I also like to have that area pointed out to me so I don't wander over there while talking w/ one of the dogs.
- Advise the children not to come up to the dogs before or during the presentation. They get really excited and lose their focus.
- At the end when we let the kids pet the dogs, I'll usually ask for 2 lines of kids & we bring 2 or 3 kids to the dogs at a time. I will supply treats that they can give the dogs if they want to, but they shouldn't bring any other food to the dogs.
- A lot of groups ask about a charge for the presentation. We don't charge anything, but if the kids/troop/parents want to make a donation to Akita Rescue we won't turn it down. They are a non-profit organization (Akita Rescue Society of Florida Tax ID# 59-2988131). This is the rescue that I adopted my dogs from & I do the presentations as a member of Akita Rescue & on behalf of the AKC.

Our presentations usually follow a simple format:

- Introduction of the dogs & ourselves
- Talking about a healthy dog is a happy dog & happy dogs are less likely to bite (re:vet visit, right food, good exercise)
- Emphasize that a well trained dog is a good dog (obedience training, the different tools used for training)
- Talk about bite specific items (what to do when a dog approaches, not teasing dogs, let sleeping dogs lie etc...)
- Q & A session
- Petting session

To answer a few questions ahead of time: We've done groups as small as 5 kids & as large as 175. We usually average about 2 school appearances a year although the past 3 years we've not done any schools. We've done scout troops and Church & Synagogue groups. We've worked w/ pre-school aged kids up through 6th grade. I try to tailor my specific info/handouts etc.... to the age group, but have had mixed age groups in the past. I don't have flyers currently but could put something together if necessary. The AKC supplies a ton of "fun sheets" for different age groups, in addition, I've made some of my own. Our presentation is interactive, we usually pick different children from the group & have them act out the things to do if a dog approaches.

There is one part that we do that we prefer parents either be present or at least are aware of so they can decide yes/no on: We talk about a trained dog being a happy dog & we show some training tools. One of those is a shock collar. We have found that most kids absolutely love to get shocked (on the lowest setting which is kind of like touching a 9V battery to your tongue). We don't force any kid to try it - it's a simple if you want to feel it "hold it this way above your head & I'll push the button, if you don't just pass it on". The kids get a kick out of it. We want happy parents, so if you can find a way to let us do this without offending parents, it's a "big bang for the buck" item that helps the kids remember the program. If you think it will cause problems, we won't do it.

I hope this will help you decide that we'd be a perfect thing to have going on at the JCA for your pre-school.

Sincerely,
Jen Fone
(000) 000-0000