



The world premiere of RUFF! is available to come to your school, free of charge, August 31-September 11!

RUFF! by Jenifer Nii is the story of Axel (a shelter regular) and Buddy (a shelter novice) who discover together what's possible when dogs and their people learn to see past stereotypes and summon the courage to be the best they can be. **RUFF!** will help students discover what lies behind commonly misunderstood canine behavior. Students will also have the opportunity to interact with therapy dogs courtesy of Intermountain Therapy Animals. The use of therapy dogs, trained to interact with all humans calmly and equally, is to ensure that each human-canine interaction is a positive one. **looking past our initial judgments based on outward appearance.**

RUFF! is a wonderful opportunity for students in **grades K-3** to experience an entertaining play that promotes a very positive and salient message about kindness to others. By providing this opportunity to students, schools will have partially fulfilled the responsibility of providing age-appropriate anti-discrimination training as per **Salt Lake City School District policy G-19.**

The relevance of **RUFF!** lies in some of the **research** about the judgments that humans invariably make about others. Starting early with an education about the importance of looking beyond appearance is critical.

- Research shows that adults tend to evaluate the personalities of attractive people more accurately because they take more time getting to know them. Attractiveness is often determined based on symmetry of the face and the presence of average, accessible features. We tend to base our decisions on what is familiar. This extends to our impressions of prospective pets and clothing.
- Facial bias appears in young children. It is incumbent on parents and teachers to start the conversation early about refraining from these snap judgments. Reading books to children where the "ugly duckling" becomes a hero can be helpful, psychologists argue.

Dogs have been shown to be a positive presence in classrooms across America. They have the potential to calm fears, relieve anxiety, and teach skills. In Indiana, a former child psychologist used a dog in the classroom to teach important life lessons to all ages of student. The lessons included patience, following rules, healthy eating habits, trust, responsibility, and "Judge less, accept more."

To schedule your **free** assembly, contact Jim Martin at james.martin@slcschools.org (running time 35 minutes)



Study Guide



Discussion Questions

- How are Axel and Buddy similar?
- How are they different?
- How does Axel help Buddy?
- How does Buddy help Axel?
- What do people think about Axel when they see him?
- Have you ever had someone judge you before they got to know you?
- Have you ever judged someone else before you got to know them?

K-5 Reading Standard 3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

K Social Studies Objective 1: Identify how individuals are similar and different.

Write About Friends

At the beginning of the play, Axel and Buddy didn't really like each other. By the end of the play they had become friends. Write your own story about two characters who become friends. Alternatively, make finger puppets and create a puppet show about two characters becoming friends.

K-5 Writing Standard 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events

1st Grade Healthy Foundations Standard 3: Demonstrate how to express gratitude, treat others with kindness, and respect differences.

Learn More About Dogs

Axel talks about one of his friends- a dog who helps their owner by finding things for them. Use the resources below to learn more about dogs. Then write an informational text answering the following questions:

What jobs can dogs do to help people? What characteristics make them good at these jobs?

Online Educational Resources:

All About Guide and Service Dogs, Easy Science for Kids blog post

<https://easyscienceforkids.com/all-about-guide-and-service-dogs/>

Tiger the Police Dog, National Geographic slideshow

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/books/doggy-defenders/doggy-defenders-tiger/>

Dog Genius, National Geographic video (26 minutes)

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/videos/awesome-animals/#/202805315937>

(For shorter attention spans) Gina Explains Service Dogs, Sesame Street clip (2mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXTX88WKHaE>

Dogs, National Geographic quiz

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/games/quizzes/quiz-whiz-dogs/>

K-2 Science Standard 4 Students will gain an understanding of Life Science through the study of changes in organisms over time and the nature of living things.

K-5 Writing Standards 2 Write explanatory/informational texts