

Maggie Cammack

Mr. Speice

ISM 1

10 December 2018

Improving Important Skills

Assessment 10 - Observation

**Observed:** Maureen Bennett

**Profession:** Service Dog Trainer

**Location:** The Keller Pointe, 405 Rufe Snow Dr, Keller, TX 76248

**Date:** December 9, 2018

**Time:** 1:00pm-3:00pm

**Assessment:**

Maureen Bennett, head trainer and president of IDEA Service Dogs, teaches service dog training classes to people with mobility disabilities so they can self-teach their own service dogs. She holds class every Sunday from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm to go over the tasks they dogs must perform with the dogs, and then the owner teaches the practices the skills during the week. It was interesting to see how what skills the dogs have been able to learn in their two years being part of the program. I wanted to be able to what a typical class looks like so that there is a broader understanding of service dog curriculum and the type of reinforcement training used in order to teach the dogs in the best environment.

Service dog trainers must create their own lesson each week based on the students' individual needs. For the type of service dog training done from this year's research, the dogs

would be trained on task based on their owners' stress levels. Bennett created her own manual that she gives to each of her students so they have something to look back on in between class, and or after they graduate. A manual will be created for as a part of the original work process to give a detailed description of what the dogs are expected to learn throughout the class. It will then be used for the final product when training will start taking place. More research must be done regarding the main tasks a person with anxiety will need their dog to complete in order to be able to come up with the best method of teaching and perfecting each skill. Speaking with a psychiatrist may be beneficial in gaining a broader understanding of the illness beyond just personal experience. This will ensure that the dogs are doing to the right tasks at the right time, limiting overall stress. Putting this information in a plan/manual will also educate the student do they fully understand what their dog will be doing once fully trained.

Class organization is an important factor in the success of the students in the class because the dogs can get distracted easily when new stimuli are introduced. Creating a positive environment as been something I have done an abundance of research about because the environment can impact the dogs ability to learn and process information. One aspect of the class that will aid in the future is bringing in other dogs when the class is taking place. This will help make sure that the dogs can still focus on their tasks without being worried about things going on around them. Partnering with local shelters to bring dogs into class could help in the socialization of the shelter dogs and the service dogs in training. This is something that is of interest because of the large number of dogs in shelters that have not been properly socialized, which makes them less likely to get adopted. Bring in these outside dogs will also introduce the dogs in training to dogs that will be most like the ones they will see in public. Classroom organization has a direct

correlation with the progression of skills. Being able to observe how at the beginning of class each of the dogs went over the tasks they had been struggling with the past week was interesting, and showed how the trainers were genuinely concerned with making sure the dogs were able to do each task without assistance or difficulty. Working on skills at the beginning of each class prevented the dogs from picking up on bad up on bad habits that could inhibit them in the future.

Bennetts company will be used as a model in the future because the members of her staff are focused on building relationships with each of the students involved in the program beyond just teaching their dog. Being able to run a successful business is important, but being able to connect with people is more important. Creating a program that teaches the owners how to work with their dogs, as well as allow them to be more independent is the ultimate goal, and by learning and working with people who devote their lives to that line of work will allow that goal to be reached.