

Instruction

Subject: Animals in the School (Instructional Purposes)

The Board of Education, in recognizing the educational uses of animals in the classroom, requires that permission be obtained from the Building Principal before animals are brought into the school or classrooms. It is the Principal's responsibility to ensure that there is an appropriate educational purpose if any animal is housed in a classroom. Animals are not to be transported on school buses with the exception of animals certified to assist persons with disabilities.

Study and Care of Live Animals

Any school which cares for or uses animals for study shall ensure that each animal in the school be afforded the following:

- Appropriate quarters;
- Sufficient space for the normal behavior and postural requirements of the species;
- Proper ventilation, lighting, and temperature control;
- Adequate food and clean drinking water; and
- Quarters which shall be cleaned on a regular basis and located in an area where undue stress and disturbance are itemized.

Only the teacher or those students designated by the teacher are to handle the animals.

It shall be the responsibility of the Principal or his/her designee to develop a plan of care for those animals housed in school in the event of an emergency school closing or in the event the animals remain in the classroom on days when school is not in session.

Dissection of Animals

Any student expressing a moral or religious objection to the performance or witnessing of the dissection of an animal, either wholly or in part, shall be provided the opportunity to undertake and complete an alternative project approved by the student's teacher; provided, however, that such objection is substantiated in writing by the student's parent or legal guardian. Students who perform alternative projects shall not be penalized.

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Instruction in the Humane Treatment of Animals

Students in elementary school must receive instruction in the humane treatment and protection of animals and the importance of the part they play in the economy of nature as well as the necessity of controlling the proliferation of animals that are subsequently abandoned and caused to suffer extreme cruelty.

This instruction may be joined with work in literature, reading, language, nature study, or ethnology. This instruction may be joined with work in literature, reading, language, nature study, or ethnology.

Therapy Dogs in School

The Board of Education supports the use of therapy dogs by teachers or other school personnel (“Owner/Handler”) for the benefits of its students.

Definitions:

Therapy Dog: A dog who is trained and certified/registered to work together with its Owner/Handler to provide emotional support to students. Therapy dogs are not “service animals” pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act. Rather, therapy dogs are individually trained and certified/registered to provide appropriate interactions with students and others at school.

Owner/Handler: The individual who owns the dog and is responsible for caring for and supervising the therapy dog, which includes toileting, feeding, grooming, and veterinary care. The District is not obligated to supervise or otherwise care for a therapy dog.

Requests for Therapy Dogs

Requests to bring therapy dogs to school may only be made by current District employees. Such requests must be submitted in writing to the school’s principal. Requests must include the therapy dog’s current health/vaccination records, the therapy dog’s license, the Owner/Handler’s insurance policy covering the therapy dog’s activities within the public school setting, the therapy dog’s certification/registration to engage in therapy dog activities from a professional accrediting organization, and the therapy dog’s proposed role in interacting with students. The request must be submitted for each school year and/or whenever the Handler/Owner wishes to use a different therapy dog. Approval may be rescinded at any time at the discretion of the principal or superintendent.

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A therapy dog may only interact with students whose parents/guardians have provided informed written consent for their children to engage in such activities with the therapy dog.

Owner/Handler Responsibilities

The therapy dog's owner, who must be an employee of the school, is responsible for the handling of the therapy dog. Therapy dogs are not the property of the District. The Owner, as the therapy dog's handler, must adhere to the following requirements:

1. The District requires that a therapy dog be under the control of its Owner/Handler at all times. The District requires that a therapy dog shall have and use a harness, leash, or other tether at all times.
2. The Owner/Handler must abide by current city, county, and state ordinances, laws, and/or regulations pertaining to licensing, vaccination, and other requirements for animals. It is the Owner/Handler's responsibility to know and understand these ordinances, laws, and regulations. The District has the right to require documentation of compliance with such ordinances, laws, and/or regulations, which may include a vaccination certificate.
3. The Owner/Handler is required to clean up after and properly dispose of the animal's waste in a safe and sanitary manner. The Owner/Handler must always carry sufficient equipment to clean up the animal's waste.
4. The Owner/Handler agrees to abide by all equally applicable District policies such as assuring that the animal does not unduly interfere with the routine activities of the District.
5. The District's personnel shall not be required to provide care or food for any therapy dog including, but not limited to, removing the animal during emergency evacuation for events such as a fire alarm.
6. The Owner/Handler must possess proper insurance that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on school property.

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Removal of Therapy Dog

The District may exclude the therapy dog from the District if:

1. The therapy dog does not possess the required training/certification for performing therapy dog duties;
2. The therapy dog poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others or causes substantial property damage to the property of others;
3. The therapy dog's presence results in a fundamental alteration of a District program, service, or activity;
4. The therapy dog is not house-broken;
5. The Owner/Handler does not comply with the Owner/Handler's responsibilities set forth above; or
6. The therapy dog or its presence creates an unmanageable disturbance or interference with the District's operations.

The District will base such determinations upon the consideration of the behavior of the particular dog at issue, and not on speculation or fear about the harm or damages a dog may cause. Any removal of the animal will be done in accordance with District policy.

Allergies/Aversions

The Owner/Handler shall remove the therapy dog to a separate area as designated by a school administrator in instances where the therapy dog is in the presence of any student, school employee, or other individual on school grounds who suffers dog allergies or aversions.

Damages and Injuries

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The Owner/Handler is fully and solely responsible and liable for any damage to school property or injury to others while on school property that is caused by the therapy dog.

Americans with Disabilities Act

42 United States Code (USC) Section 12101 et. seq.

Education Law Section 809

8 New York Code of Rules and Regulations (NYCRR) Section 100.2(c)(8)

Adopted: 8/9/21