

ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS

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The Use of Live Animals and Dissection in the Science Classroom

The Board of Education recognizes that the study of living things is essential to effective instruction in the life sciences. The primary goals for demonstrations and investigations involving animals are to achieve an interest in and an understanding of the life processes, to demonstrate biological principles, and to teach proper care and handling of animals. Therefore, the Board requires that any such instructional activities, investigations, and projects be well-planned and adequately supervised, and be conducted with a respect for life and an appreciation of the health and safety of both animals and students.

The Board also recognizes that some students have a moral or religious objection to dissection or otherwise harming or destroying animals. In accordance with state law, students shall have the right to opt out of dissection activities, provided that the student performs an alternative project approved by the student's teacher. The objection must be substantiated in writing by the student's parent or guardian.

At the start of the school year, teachers of courses that include animal dissection shall give notice to the students in those classes of their opt-out rights and responsibilities under the law and this policy. Such notice shall be shared with parents of those students, and also be available on the district website.

Service Animals

Pursuant to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), the District acknowledges the responsibility to permit students and/or adults with disabilities to be accompanied by a "service animal" in its school buildings, District transportation, classrooms, and at school functions. A service animal is permitted to accompany the individual with a disability anywhere on District property where other individuals in the same category (student, employee, member of the public) are permitted to go.

Unless it is readily apparent what work or tasks the animal is trained to perform, the individual it accompanies may be asked whether it is a service animal and what work or task it performs for the individual. Crime deterrence or the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort or companionship is not considered work or tasks performed for the individual sufficient to qualify the animal as a service animal. Documentation regarding the training of a service animal is not required as per the ADA.

Before permitting a service animal to accompany an individual, the District shall evaluate whether the particular facility can accommodate the type, size and weight of the animal.

A service animal must at all times be under the control of the individual it serves, or a trainer or other handler. This control shall involve the use of a harness, leash, or other tether, unless either the individual is unable because of a disability to use a harness, leash, or other tether, or the use of a harness, leash, or other tether would interfere with the service animal's safe, effective performance of work or tasks.

A service animal must be housebroken, meaning the service animal only urinates and defecates outside or where designated to do so, in order to accompany the individual indoors; the individual is

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required, when outdoors, to remove waste immediately and dispose of it in a sealed, non-absorbent, leak-proof container.

If a service animal proves not to be housebroken, or is out of control and is not able to be brought back under control, or is ill, the individual accompanying it may be asked to remove the animal.

An individual using a service animal or the parent of such an individual is encouraged to notify the District as soon as possible of the intent to be accompanied by a service animal. The District will make reasonable efforts to accommodate individuals with allergies or other significant side effects that may be triggered by the presence of a service animal.

Therapy Animals

Therapy animals, of any kind, are not to be present in school buildings unless they are specifically prescribed to students in an Individualized Education Program with approval by the District Medical Director. Any request for a therapy animal to be in a school building must be approved by the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee. Therapy animals are not considered trained service animals required by the ADA.

Immunocompromised staff/students and/or staff/students with severe allergies may be especially susceptible to diseases and reactions. If a student's health is compromised or at risk as determined by the school physician, the principal must make the necessary accommodations or may deny the request.

Classroom Pets

Classroom pets must be approved by the school principal. A teacher should have a clear understanding of and a strong commitment to the responsible care of living animals before making any decision to use live animals for educational enrichment. Classroom pets must be kept in an appropriate and conducive housing environment (aquarium, cage, terrarium) separate from student classroom space. No animal should be allowed to roam unrestrained in the classroom/school. In addition, there should be a plan for the continued care of these animals during the days that school is not in session.

Educational programs involving animals (assemblies, after school programs) for instructional and/or enrichment purposes is permitted with the approval of the school principal.

Ref:

Education Law §809(4) Responsible Use of Live Animals and Dissection in the Science Classroom
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 28 CFR Part 36

National Science Teachers Association Position Statement, revised March 2008
(www.nsta.org/about/positions/animals.aspx)

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