

IMG - ANIMALS IN THE SCHOOL

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The Board recognizes that under the proper conditions, animals can be an effective teaching aid. In order to protect both children and animals, the following guidelines are adopted for use in all schools in the district.

1. The bringing of animals into the classroom shall not violate town/state/federal law.
2. The only animals and animal products (e.g., owl feces for dissection) allowed in a classroom shall be for a specific and appropriate educational purpose and shall be allowed for the amount of time necessary to achieve the educational goal.
3. Precautions should be taken to minimize transmission of all diseases and injuries (e.g., Salmonella, rabies, ringworm, bites, scratches, etc.)
4. All animals shall be in good physical condition and vaccinated against transmittable diseases. Dogs, cats, and ferrets require proof of current rabies vaccination. Animals shall be kept humanely and shall be clean and free of intestinal parasites, fleas, ticks, mites, and lice.
5. Certain groups of people may be more susceptible to diseases, including infants, children, pregnant women, and those with weakened immune systems. Consult with parents to determine special considerations needed for children who are immunocompromised, who have allergies, or who have asthma.
6. The teacher shall be responsible for the proper control of animals brought to school for instructional purposes, including the effective protection of children when animals are in the school. This shall include keeping the animal in an appropriate cage or container, supervising human-animal contact, and handling fecal material in a sanitary manner.
7. No animals are to be allowed to run freely in the classrooms, food areas, or activity areas.
8. Areas should be designated for animal contact. Such areas should be properly cleaned regularly and after animal contact. Food or drink should not be consumed in these areas.
9. All fecal material shall be cleaned from the cage of any mammal or bird on an as needed basis (at a minimum of one time per week), and appropriate sanitizer used. Reptiles, fish, and insects shall be cared for in a manner to minimize odor and maintain health. Persons cleaning cages shall wear gloves, masks, and glasses or goggles. Cleaning should be performed by people older than 5 years and under the supervision of an adult. Ideally, cleaning should be performed when other children are not in the room.

10. Wash hands after contact with animals, animal products, or their environment. Hand hygiene should be stressed, using verbal and written educational materials.
11. Certain animals pose additional risks and contact should not be permitted with young children.
12. Wild or exotic animals are not permitted in classrooms, unless under the control of a professional.

It shall be the responsibility of the teacher to provide for a plan of care for classroom housed animals in the event of an emergency school closing which might cause disruption of the routine care of the animals. In each school where these animals are housed, there should be a plan whereby the staff member who visits the school daily during the emergency closing shall be aware of the animals' presence and see to their care. If no staff member visits the school daily in such circumstances, the teacher is responsible for the daily care of the animal(s).

Teachers shall be contacted prior to having animals in their classroom. No animal shall be at school unless the teacher involved is familiar with the appropriate care, feeding, and handling of that animal and of any potential dangers caused by that animal. It shall be the responsibility of the teacher to become familiar with each animal as it relates to the well being of the individual students in that particular classroom.

The principal shall be advised of any animals to be housed in the classroom. At the principal's discretion, permission to keep the animal may be denied based on these considerations: (1) the purpose for the animal's presence, (2) the ability of the teacher to control the animal, and/or (3) the past practice in the classroom.

Unauthorized Animals on School Grounds

Unauthorized animals are not allowed in school buildings or on school grounds. Children and staff shall be instructed to keep their own animals off the school grounds. The appropriate town official shall be called and requested to impound all animals taken into custody by school personnel.

The Superintendent shall develop procedures stating which animals are unauthorized as well as proper handling and caging procedures of animals in buildings or on school grounds.

Authorized Safety/Guide Animals

The District shall, on a case by case basis, permit animals in school buildings or on school grounds which are specially trained to assist an owner with a disability ("service animal"). Any individual wishing to bring a service animal in to a school building or on to school grounds shall provide assurances to the Superintendent or Principal that the animal has been properly trained and that it does not present a threat to the safety or health of the staff or students.

Legal References:

National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, Inc., Compendium of measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings, 2006.
<http://www.nasphv.org/documentsCompendia.html>

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