

Use of Therapy Dogs in the District

The District recognizes that specially trained therapy dogs can provide educational and other benefits for District students and may allow such dogs to be used in schools, in accordance with this policy and with Policy 2580 Use of Dogs in Educational Programs.

A “therapy dog” is a dog that has been individually trained and certified or registered to work with its handler to provide emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship to District students. The dog must have a current American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen certificate or equivalent acceptable to the Principal and Superintendent. Therapy dogs are individually trained and certified/registered to provide appropriate interactions with students and others at school. The dog must be well behaved and have a temperament that is suitable for interaction with students and others in a public school.

A “handler” is an adult who is responsible for caring for and supervising the therapy dog, which includes toileting, feeding, grooming, and veterinary care. Students shall not act as handlers.

The District is not obligated to supervise or otherwise care for a therapy dog. Therapy dogs are the personal property of a District employee or volunteer. Therapy dogs are not owned by the District. Therapy dogs are not “service dogs” as described in Policy 2375 Service Animals in Schools. They are also not emotional support dogs intended to provide comfort to a particular individual. This policy is not intended to, and does not, allow students, parents/guardians, staff, or others to bring emotional support dogs onto any District property.

Therapy Dog Plan

District staff who wish to have therapy dogs made available to students shall submit a plan to the building principal. It must be resubmitted each year and any time a different therapy dog or handler will be used. The plan shall address all of the following topics:

1. The location for the therapy dog to be kept when the therapy dog is on campus
2. The credentials of the proposed therapy dog and the organization that has certified them, including:
 - A. Proof the proposed therapy dog has received appropriate certification;
 - B. The credentials of the certification providers;
 - C. A copy of the proposed therapy dog’s temperament evaluation;
 - D. The credentials of the temperament evaluator(s); and
 - E. Proof the proposed therapy dog is current on all vaccinations.
3. Plans for interaction between the proposed therapy dog and students, including:
 - A. The students the therapy dog is intended to serve;

- B. The anticipated goals for and intended uses of the therapy dog;
 - C. Proposed instruction to be provided to students on the appropriate behavior and treatment of the therapy dog;
 - D. How the staff member will accommodate students who are allergic to the dog, fearful of the dog, or whose parents do not give permission for the student to interact with the dog.
4. Plans for care and supervision of the therapy dog, including:
- A. The identity and credentials of the handler;
 - B. The credentials of the providers of the handler's training;
 - C. Proposed schedule for the handler to provide necessary care for the therapy dog, including exercise, feeding, watering, toileting, and any necessary cleanup; and
 - D. Proof of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on District property.

The building principal may reject a proposal for any reason, and shall reject the proposal if:

- 1. It does not meet the requirements of this policy;
- 2. The building principal does not consider the benefit to outweigh the risks and costs;
- 3. The building principal believes that the time required to care for the therapy dog is inconsistent with the assigned duties of the school employee/handler; or
- 4. The proposal is otherwise inconsistent with the needs of the school.

The principal shall submit any proposal the principal desires to be approved to the Superintendent or their designee for final review. The Superintendent or designee may approve or reject the proposal.

Approval of any therapy dog program may be suspended or ended at any time by the building principal or Superintendent for reasons including, but not limited to any violation of District policy, the administrator's determination that the dog's presence interferes with the educational process, or the administrator's determination that the handler or dog have behaved in an unprofessional or unsafe manner.

District employees shall not receive any additional pay, stipend, or compensation for providing the therapy dog or for being the handler and/or the owner of the therapy dog. The supervision and care of the approved therapy dog is solely the responsibility of the therapy dog handler when the therapy dog is on District property. The therapy dog handler will assume full responsibility and liability for any damage to District property or injury to District staff, students, or others while the therapy dog is on District property. The therapy dog handler must maintain an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on District property.

Appropriate identification as a therapy dog will be kept with the handler at all times when on District property. The therapy dog shall be required to wear a vest, collar, or other article identifying them as a therapy dog and distinguishing them from a service dog. The therapy dog

shall be under the control of the handler(s) at all times, and shall be required to be kept on a leash.

The therapy dog shall only be allowed in areas authorized by the building principal. If any student or school employee assigned to a classroom in which a therapy dog is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to the therapy dog, the handler of the dog will be required to remove the dog to a different location designated by an administrator. Therapy dogs shall not attend field trips.

A student shall not schedule or attend a session with the therapy dog without parent permission. Knowing a therapy dog will be used at times during the school day, if a parent or guardian has a concern due to allergies/personal preference etc, they should notify the principal and/or counselor at the school their student attends so proper precautions can be taken.

Cross Reference:

2580	Use of Animals in Educational Programs
2580P	District Procedure on Dissection of Animals

Policy History:

Adopted on: 1-16-24

Revised on:

Reviewed on: