



ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS AND WORKPLACES

Context:

The Board of Education recognizes that animals have a place in schools and workplaces under certain conditions. Animals brought to schools for educational reasons, including as examples service or police dogs, can provide valuable learning opportunities for children if the animals are properly cared for and controlled, and if parents have provided informed consent. As well, small classroom pets provide children with opportunities to develop empathy and learn about the care of animals.

Beyond educational purposes for having animals in schools and workplaces, assistance dogs, including guide dogs or service dogs, should also be welcomed in schools and workplaces as approved supports for children or staff members. Additionally, therapy dogs, when accompanied by handlers, can provide supports in schools and workplace in areas such as reducing anxiety or providing emotional support. There may also be times when handlers or dogs undergoing training are welcomed in schools and workplaces.

Policy Statement:

The Board of Education supports animals being in schools and workplaces for educational purposes, or as certified service or guide dogs, or as therapy dogs if accompanied by a handler, on the understanding that parents and staff have provided informed consent and the presence of the animal has been approved by administration.

Guiding Principles

The Board of Education believes that animals should be welcomed in schools for the purposes of education as it related to curriculum, core competencies, and social-emotional learning.

The Board recognizes and values the benefits that assistance dogs and therapy dogs bring to assisting children and adults with their daily living activities and is committed to considering applications for staff and students who would benefit.

The Board believes that the presence of animals in schools must be predicated on parents providing informed consent, and on ensuring that allergies are attended to as a priority where those allergies might relate to animals in schools.



Definitions

Assistance dogs - Also known as guide dogs and service dogs, assistance dogs have been trained to assist individuals with specific tasks pertaining to a visible or non-visible disability, such as epilepsy, diabetes, post-traumatic stress disorder or visual impairment. These dogs may be approved when a student or an employee requires such use in order to have equal access to the services, programs or activities offered by the school and when the School District's criteria have been met to the satisfaction of the Board of Education.

Therapy dogs - Interactive dogs trained to work for a handler to provide service and comfort to people. The presence of a therapy dog can decrease anxiety and provide a level of comfort that enables students to work through a variety of challenging issues. Their responsibilities are to provide physiological support to individuals other than their handlers. These dogs do not have the same access rights as guide dogs and service dogs and are organized by the School District at the discretion of the Senior Leadership Team on a case by case basis.

Other animals that are not a therapy dog, service dog or guide dog, will be subject to the School District's Administrative Procedure for Animals in the School and workplace.

Handler- The person that was part of the training process for a particular dog.

Therapy Dog Team - A handler and dog team that has successfully passed the tests and monitored visits necessary to work with children and adults, through a recognized therapy dog organization such as St. John's Ambulance or PADs.

References:

- British Columbia Guide Dog and Service Dog Act

Adopted/Amended:

Adopted: 85.04.17 (Original Policy)

Amended: 86.07.27: 88.11.23: 90.03.28: 91.09.10: 05.01.25: 17.01.24: 2020.04.28



Purpose

These Administrative Procedures are written in support of Policy 503: Animals in Schools and the Workplace.

1. Staff shall not bring their own household pets into district schools except for specific educational or therapeutic purposes as approved by the Principal.
2. The principal may initiate the use of therapy dogs and their handlers in schools, in conjunction with the Senior Leadership Team, to provide service and comfort to staff and students during specific events, such as a crisis response.
3. If a therapy dog is available for ongoing visits, a schedule for the dog must be provided by the therapy dog organization and is subject to the approval of all the principal or the workplace supervisor prior to commencing visits.
4. Prior to introducing an animal into a classroom, the teacher must ensure that the following conditions have been met:
 - a) animals must be in good health, free of disease with no tendencies to bite or scratch;
 - b) the owner of the animal must show proof of current records, including vaccinations or training where relevant;
 - c) the teacher bringing the animal into the school must know the past history of the animal;
 - d) the animal must not present aggressive behaviour towards students or employees;
 - e) parents must be informed prior to an animal visiting the school; and,
 - f) parents must be invited to express any concerns to the teacher and the principal, and those concerns must be attended to in reasonable ways.
5. An animal brought into the school for a visit must be leashed and/or under the control of a responsible adult or housed in a suitable, sanitary enclosure appropriate to the size and characteristics of the animal.
6. Teachers will be responsible for ensuring enclosures are kept in a sanitary condition.
7. Only relatively small animals which are easily confined or caged, maintained and handled may be kept in the classroom, such as tropical fish and small mammals.
8. Animals will not be left in schools during holiday periods, and, where practicable, teachers responsible will make arrangements for their care in other locations.
9. A student or employee may be eligible to receive the support of an assistance dog if they have an identified medical condition, as defined by the British Columbia Ministry of Education or the BC Guide Dogs and Service Dogs Act.



10. The assistance dog must be trained and certified by a training school accredited by either or both the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) or Assistance Dogs International (ADI) or certified by the Justice Institute of British Columbia. In any and all cases, the dog / team should be able to present the British Columbia Guide Dog and Assistance Dog Provincial ID Card. The School District may also consider applications for dogs that are currently undergoing training to become certified.
11. The introduction of the assistance dog or therapy dog to the school community must not create barriers to students' learning or disrupt their regular job duties.
12. The student or employee requesting an assistance dog must be capable of maintain control of the dog at all times;
13. Employees must submit requests for an assistance dog to the Director of Human Resources or designate. Parents or guardians of a student requiring an assistance dog must submit their request to the principal.
14. The School Principal will:
 - a. inform all staff members of the presence of an assistance dog or therapy dog;
 - b. inform parents of the plans with regard to the dog and request that any concerns, including in relation to allergies and fears, be provided;
 - c. inform the transportation department of any transportation requirements of an assistance dog;
 - d. notify students and their parents of the arrival of the assistance/therapy dog, including an explanation of the purpose of the dog and arrangements that have been made;
 - e. retain all letters regarding an assistance dog in the student's file;
 - f. ensure that a poster is placed at each entrance to raise awareness of a working therapy dog / assistance dog in the school; and,
 - g. restrict access for assistance or therapy dogs to certain parts of the school as necessary, including mechanical rooms, science labs, custodial rooms, food preparation areas, shops and other areas of risk to the animal, unless via a carefully considered necessary exemption to this restriction.

References:

- British Columbia Guide Dog and Service Dog Act

Dates of Adoption/Amendments:

Adopted: 1985.04.17 (Original Policy)

Amended: 1986.07.27: 1988.11.23: 1990.03.28: 1991.09.10: 2005.01.25: 2017.01.24:
2020.04.28: **2022.10.25**



APPENDIX 1 - THERAPY DOGS IN SCHOOLS CONSENT FORM

Name of School: _____

Qualicum School District has partnered with the therapy dog organization to provide a certified dog therapy team to visit your child's school.

The following service will be offered at your child's school:

- Children will be reading one-on-one to a dog therapy team to practice reading skills.
- Group visitation will occur with one or more dog therapy teams.
- Service Dog/Guide Dog:

Start Date of Activity: _____

Frequency of Activity: (single visit, weekly, school year, etc.): _____

Please Complete below and return to school.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND CONSENT

I understand that the Handlers and dogs involved in this program are members of a therapy/guide dog organization that have been certified as Guidelines are in place for the safety of the participants as well as the safety of the teams performing the visits.

While every possible precaution is taken, accidents can and do happen, and occur without the fault of the participant, the school, Qualicum School District, and/or the certified teams. By choosing to take part in this program, you are accepting the risk that you/your child may be injured. The chance of injuries or incident can be reduced by carefully following instructions at all times while engaged in visits.

I consent to my / my child's participation in this program.

Student Name (Print): _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Signature of Student (if 18 years of age or over): _____



**APPENDIX 2 - ASSISTANCE DOGS IN SCHOOLS
SAMPLE LETTER TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY
(SCHOOL LETTERHEAD)**

Date

Dear Parent / Caregiver:

This letter is to inform you that, effective (date), there will be a service dog in our school. The dog will be in the school (times/days). Dates and times may change as required without further notice.

A service dog is a dog that has been trained to assist an individual with specific tasks pertaining to a visible or non-visible disability, such as epilepsy, diabetes, post-traumatic stress disorder or a mobility limitation.

(Name of dog) is a highly trained and fully certified service dog, and we are thrilled to have (him/her) become a member of our school community. If you have any questions about (name of dog), please feel free to contact me.

There will be information sessions at the school to integrate (name of dog) into our daily routines and all of our staff and students will be instructed as to the proper procedures regarding the service dog.

If you have any specific concerns regarding the presence of the therapy dog in the school, please contact me.

Thank you for your understanding, support, and interest.

Sincerely,

Principal

cc: Superintendent of Schools



APPENDIX III
SAMPLE LETTER TO THE FAMILIES OF CHILDREN IN THE CLASS(ES)
(SCHOOL LETTERHEAD)

Date

Dear Parent / Caregiver:

This letter is to inform you that a therapy dog will be present in your child's class on (date).

Therapy dogs are interactive dogs trained to work for a Handler to provide service and comfort to people. The presence of a therapy dog can decrease anxiety and provide a level of comfort that enables students to work through a variety of challenging issues.

There will be information sessions at the school and students will be instructed as to the proper procedures regarding the Therapy Dog.

If you have any specific concerns regarding the presence of the service dog/therapy dog in your child's class, please contact me.

Thank you for your understanding, support, and interest.

Sincerely,

Principal

cc: Superintendent of Schools



NOTICE:

There is a working
THERAPY/ASSISTANCE DOG
in this school today.

