



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

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](#)

Dates of Adoption/Amendments:

Adopted: 1985.04.17

Amended: 1986.07.27: 1988.11.23: 1990.03.28: 1991.09.10: 2005.01.25: 2017.01.24:
2020.04.28: **Reviewed 2024.11.26**



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Application of the Policy: Educational Purposes in Schools

1. Staff shall not bring their own household pets into district schools except for educational purposes as approved by the Principal.
2. Educational purposes for the presence of animals in schools may include:
 - a) as subjects for observation and data gathering on body characteristics, habits, movement, feeding behaviour, instinctive reactions;
 - b) talking and writing stories about animals to support language development;
 - c) supporting the development and learning of a sense of responsibility, kindness and concern for other living beings; and,
 - d) supporting the development and learning of a healthy respect for animals in our local environment.
3. The Principal shall approve all animals that are brought into the schools for educational purposes.
4. Prior to introducing an animal into a classroom, the teacher must ensure that the following conditions have been met:
 - a) students and school personnel may be afraid of or allergic to that type of animal must be accommodated to the extent necessary;
 - b) animals must be in good health, free of disease with no tendencies to bite or scratch;
 - c) the owner of the animal must show proof of current records, including vaccinations or training where relevant;
 - d) the teacher bringing the animal into the school must know the past history of the animal;
 - e) the animal must not present aggressive behaviour towards students or employees;
 - f) parents must be informed prior to an animal visiting the school; and,
 - g) 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. Animals shall not roam freely in the school. 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. Larger animals such as dogs and cats may not be kept in the school building beyond regular school hours and only for the purposes defined in the policy.
9. Animals will not be left in schools during holiday periods, and, where practicable, teachers responsible will make arrangements for their care in other locations.



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10. Teachers will ensure that any student who assists with the care of the animal in the classroom:
 - a) is properly trained by the teacher; and,
 - b) is under on-site supervision by the teacher with the teacher present but not necessarily constantly viewing the activity.
11. If in the opinion of the principal, animal hygiene becomes a factor, approval to keep the animal in the school is withdrawn and the animal must be taken from the school at the end of the school day.
12. If conditions change (animal, student, environment) withdrawal of the animal can be made at the discretion of the principal.

Application of the Policy: Therapy Dogs

13. The principal will 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.
14. A schedule for ongoing visits must be detailed in a document provided by the therapy dog organization and subject to the approval of all the principal or the workplace supervisor prior to commencing visits. Approval must be provided, then renewed each school year or whenever the handler wishes to use a different therapy dog.
15. The Principal of the school has the authority to end any arrangements pertaining to the use of therapy dogs at any time at their discretion.
16. Handlers of therapy dogs will be required to provide proof of liability insurance.

Application of the Policy: Assistance (Guide or Service) Dogs

17. 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.
18. 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.
19. 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.



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20. The student or employee requesting an assistance dog must be capable of maintain control of the dog at all times;
21. 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.
22. Certified assistance (service or guide) dogs brought onto school district property as part of a medical accommodation will be covered by the district's insurance policy.
23. Information to be included in a request for an assistance dog is as follows:
 - a. a letter requesting an assistance dog to accompany them to work or school, as well as an overview of the benefits of having an assistance dog attend school / work;
 - b. a letter of recommendation from a doctor confirming the presence of a recognized disability or special need, as well as a recommendation for the use of an assistance dog;
 - c. a Certificate of Training for the assistance dog from the appropriate agency;
 - d. veterinary records as evidence that the dog is in good health;
 - e. BC Guide Dog and Assistance Dog Provincial ID Card where applicable;
 - f. details of arrangements for the personal care and physical needs of the assistance dog, including at least one bio-break per day and providing appropriate bedding and water bowl; and,
 - g. details of an alternative dog handler for instances when the primary dog handler is absent.

Responsibilities

24. The School District will:
 - a. support the principal or workplace supervisor in ensuring that the provisions of the policy and administrative procedure in place at all times;
 - b. communicate the contents and requirements of the policy and administrative procedures to all employees annually;
 - c. support the principal or workplace supervisor in ensuring that the use of any assistance dog is consistent with the accommodation needs of an employee or the documented needs of a student including as identified within an individual education plan;
 - d. reserve the right to remove or exclude from school facilities or property any assistance dog / therapy for reasons it deems appropriate; and,
 - e. support the principal or workplace supervisor in ensuring that:
 - i. the purpose and function of an assistance or therapy dog are clearly connected to a need of a student or employee;
 - ii. within a school, parents of children who will be exposed to an assistance or therapy dog are informed of all of the details of the visit of the dog, and given an opportunity to express any concerns including in relation to allergies or fears;



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- iii. within a school, those concerns are accommodated as possible;
 - iv. therapy dogs are present only with handlers;
 - v. therapy or assistance dogs are provided with a visit to the school prior to students being present; and,
 - vi. arrangements for assistance or therapy dogs are documented.
25. 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

Amended: 1986.07.27: 1988.11.23: 1990.03.28: 1991.09.10: 2005.01.25: 2017.01.24:
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APPENDIX 1 - THERAPY DOGS IN SCHOOLS CONSENT FORM

Name of School: _____

School District 69 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, SD 69, 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): _____



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

Date

Dear Parent / Guardian:

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



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

Date

Dear Parent / Guardian:

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.

