

Animals in the School

Introduction

Animals have educational value in the school setting, but only under conditions that insure the safety and well being of the students, staff, and the animal. Live Animals in the classroom provide opportunities to learn about diversity, habitat, humane care, animal growth and development, reproduction, and behavior. A teacher must 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 study. Preparation for the use of live animals should include acquisition or knowledge on care appropriate to the species being used including housing, food, exercise, and the appropriate placement of the animals at the conclusion of the study.

Prior approval must be received from the principal before any animals are brought into the school. Animals in schools shall be planned for and approved in accordance with established procedures and guidelines.

Procedures and Guidelines

These procedures and guidelines apply to various situations for which an animal could be brought into a school. General guidelines for the care of animals in school buildings are included as well as guidelines for specific situations.

General Guidelines for Animals in School

1. The teacher must assume primary responsibility for the humane treatment of the animal while in the classroom. Only students designated by the teacher are to handle the animals. (Exception: see guidelines for service dogs below.)
2. Prior approval of the building principal must be obtained before animals are brought into the school. If the principal receives a parent complaint, he/she will take appropriate action, which may include having the animal removed from the school.
3. The teacher must survey at the beginning of the school year for any known allergies among students in the class. If allergies exist, parents must be contacted to determine whether a potential allergic reaction might exist. In the event that any student or staff member demonstrates an allergic reaction to the animal, the animal must be removed.
4. The teacher must notify parents in writing either at the beginning of the school year or prior to animals being brought to school.
5. Only animals that are known to be in good health and appropriately immunized will be allowed in school. Animals may not be transported on school buses.
6. If animals are to be kept in school on non-school days, the teacher must make arrangements for their care and safety. The practice of sending the animal home with a student for a weekend or holiday is not permitted.
7. Animals must be properly housed, e.g., in cages or aquariums specific to their species. They must have adequate food and water, and not be subjected to any abnormal environmental factors.
8. If an animal bites a staff member or student and skin is pierced, the incident must be reported immediately to the building principal and the parents of any students bitten.

9. If the building principal becomes aware of potentially harmful health or safety concerns, adverse smells, or disruptive sounds regarding a resident animal, the building principal is directed to take immediate steps including the removal of the animal from the building if necessary.

Resident Animal

A resident animal is kept in a classroom for more than a single school day. Only animals that are known to be in good health and appropriately immunized will be allowed in school. The following specific guidelines must be followed in order to have a resident animal in a classroom:

1. A teacher considering such an animal must assure that the animal is healthy and free of transmissible diseases or other problems that may endanger human health. Animals unacceptable as resident animals include:
 - a. Wild animals are defined as any animal other than a domestic dog or cat, pet rabbit, or pet rodent (mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs).
 - b. Poisonous animals including certain types of reptiles, spiders, insects, and amphibians.
 - c. Stray animals.
 - d. Psittacine birds.
2. Prior approval of the principal must be obtained before consideration is given for a resident animal. The principal and teacher will consider all aspects of this policy prior to approving a study of risks to student and staff members that will be using the classroom space, which the animal will reside.
3. Upon approval of the principal, the classroom teacher will survey all students at the beginning of the school year concerning possible allergies related to the resident animal. New students will be given the survey when they enroll.
4. When all student allergy surveys are returned, the principal and requesting teacher will review the data and make a final decision regarding the approval of a resident animal.
5. The teacher will notify parents in writing either at the beginning of the school year or prior to animals being brought to school.
6. The classroom teacher must assume primary responsibility for the humane care and treatment of the resident animal. Animals must be properly housed, have adequate food and water, and their habitats must be kept clean.
7. The classroom teacher is responsible for developing written guidelines for student/animal interaction. These guidelines should include student training on how to handle the animal.
8. Education with animals should be used to emphasize proper hygiene and hand washing recommendations. All children who handle animals should be instructed to wash their hands immediately after handling them.
9. Animals should not be allowed in the vicinity of serving lines, sinks, where children wash hands, in any area where food is stored, or served, or in areas used for the cleaning or storage of food utensils or dishes.
10. Students are allowed to handle or clean up any form of animal waste after receiving instruction from the classroom teacher as to how animal wastes should be disposed of in accordance with universal precautions as referenced in the District's Communicable Diseases' Policy (JHCC).
11. Animals should not be allowed to roam freely around the classroom or school.

12. If animals are to be kept in the classroom on days when classes are not in session, the teacher must make arrangements for their care and safety. Animals may be housed in the schools during the summer break with the permission of the building principal.
13. Any time a resident animal bites or scratches a person breaking the skin, the classroom teacher will notify the building principal and parents.
14. A plan must be in place to care for resident animals in the event of an emergency school closing.
15. If the building principal becomes aware of potentially harmful health or safety concerns, adverse smells, or disruptive sounds regarding a resident animal, the building principal is directed to take immediate steps including the removal of the animal from the building if necessary.
16. Animals may not be transported on school buses.

Animal Visitation to Schools

Occasionally there will be a request by a student, parent, parent-teacher organization, or other organization to allow an animal to visit the school setting. The school principal must approve all requests for such visitation. The same guidelines as those considered when approving a resident animal must be taken into consideration when determining whether an animal visitation may occur.

Exceptions to the unacceptable list of resident animals may be made when the wild animals are presented at school by a professional who has experience handling wildlife, and are displayed in enclosed cages which prevent contact between the animal, staff, and students. Because of the high incidence of rabies in bats raccoons, skunks, and wild carnivores, these animals (including recently dead animals) are not permitted on school grounds under any circumstances.

Special Events

The school board must approve in advance any special event requiring the use or presence of animals. Attendance at such events must be optional. The school board may also require special event sponsors to include information in all related publicity to provide notice of the presence of animals.

Certified Service Dogs

Dogs that are specifically certified to assist individuals with disabilities will be permitted on District property and at District events as required by Wisconsin Statute 174.056. For students, the need for a service dog will be documented in the individual educational plan (IEP) and/or documented in any required accommodation plan. The IEP will also include any necessary precautions. In addition in accordance with recognized National Service Dog Guidelines the District will adopt the minimum standards for training service dogs and public access test.

Minimum Standards For Training Service Dogs

1. A minimum of one hundred twenty (120) hours of training over a period of no less than six (6) months, must take place under the supervision of a program's trainer. During that time at least thirty (30) hours of regularly scheduled training must be devoted to field trips and public exposure.

2. Basic obedience skills the dogs must master with voice and/or hand signals are: sit, stay come, down, heel and off leash recall.
3. The dog must show social behavior skills of no aggression, no inappropriate barking, no biting, no snapping/growling, no inappropriate jumping on strangers, no begging and no sniffing of people.
4. The service dog must be trained to perform at least three physical tasks.
5. The training time with the student prior to placement must be a minimum of no less than 60 hours. This is both public and private. All graduates must be given a solid education in appropriate behavior of the team. The dog should stay as invisible as possible and not interfere with people.
6. The training facility must require the recipient to complete a follow-up progress report once a month for the first six months following the placement. Personal contact will be done by qualified staff or program volunteer within twelve to eighteen (12-18) months of graduation and annually thereafter.
7. Identification of the Service Dog will be accomplished with a laminated ID card with a photo of the dog and partner and names of both recipient and dog. In public the dog must wear a harness, backpack or slicker with a logo that is clear and easy to read and identifiable as a service dog.
8. The staff of the training center must demonstrate knowledge of the disabilities of the clients it works with. Organization shall make available educational material on different disabilities.
9. The recipient must agree to abide by the Minimum Standards for Assistance Dog Partners.
10. At the onset of training, every dog will be spayed or neutered and will have a thorough medical evaluation to determine that the dog does not have any physical problems that would cause difficulty for a working dog.

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Assistance/service dogs that do not meet these minimal training standards will be removed from the school buildings and school sponsored events as a safety precaution until the service/assistance dog can meet the minimal standards in a public setting.

Any animal that violates training standard #3: (The dog must show social behavior skills of no aggression, no inappropriate barking, no biting, no snapping/growling, no inappropriate jumping on strangers, no begging and no sniffing of people) will immediately be removed from the school building or school sponsored event for safety reasons and will not be allowed to return.

Liability for damage caused by Assistance Dog. (1) The owner of an assistance dog is solely liable for any damage to persons, premises, or facilities including but not limited to places of public accommodation, transportation services, common carrier of passengers, places of housing accommodations, and places of employment caused by that assistance dog.

Field Trips and Specimen Collecting

Teachers who collect specimens anywhere in Wisconsin must secure a collectors permit from the Department of Natural Resources and must comply with Wisconsin Statute 29.17. Field trips to sites such as local natural areas, farms and zoos should include appropriate educational objectives. Permission slips shall be used to inform parents/guardians of the trip. In addition the following guidelines will be followed:

1. Plant and wildlife should not be removed from the field site unless pre-arranged and in accordance with Wisconsin Statute 29.17.
2. Neither teachers nor students should release non-native plant or animal species into the environment.
3. Teachers and students should be careful not to harm the environment at the field trip site.

Dissection

Teachers must follow the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) guidelines regarding the use of animals in dissection activities. In addition the following guidelines will be followed:

1. Dissection should not be done at the elementary level.
2. Dissection at the middle school level should be allowed only if taught by appropriately trained staff.
3. Dissection is recognized as an appropriate activity for high school students.
4. Carefully planned objectives should be developed and other methods of teaching/learning the concept considered before selecting dissection as a classroom activity.
5. Specimens should be chosen which are of the lowest order necessary to accomplish the desired educational objectives.
6. Teachers should instruct students on safety precautions including tool usage and specimen handling and disposal prior to dissection activities.
7. Students must always be given the option of an alternative activity. If dissection is selected as an activity, the following procedures shall be followed:
 - a. Instructors should provide advance notification of dissection activities.
 - b. Alternative activities of learning the same concepts should be announced to students at the time of the dissection notification
 - c. Students should select an activity to learn the concept and inform the teacher so that the various learning activities can be provided.
 - d. All activities should employ the same rigorous stand and level of academic challenge as the dissection activity.

Legal References: Wisconsin Administrative Code (Animal Transportation on School Buses) TRANS 300.16
Wisconsin Statutes: 29.17, 174.056
Safe, Healthful, Clean and Sanitary Facilities for Students and Staff Wisconsin Statute: 121.02(1)(i) and 254.56

Cross Reference: Communicable Disease Policy JHCC

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