

The board recognizes that the appropriate and safe inclusion of live animals in the educational environment can meet the academic and educational needs of students. The board also recognizes that the use of animals in the curriculum must meet the health and safety needs of students and school personnel who may come into contact with animals during educational activities.

This policy addresses the use of animals for academic and educational purposes and does not create a right for staff, students, or others to bring non-service or non-curricular animals onto school property. Policy 4202/5209/7272 addresses service animals in schools.

#### **A. CURRICULAR DOGS**

1. Curricular dogs are dogs that (1) have been individually trained, evaluated and registered by an approved therapy dog training organization as recognized by insurance organizations, (2) engage in animal assisted activities and interactions under the direct supervision of the volunteer handler, and (3) are owned by a volunteer handler who has been individually trained, evaluated, and registered with his/ her therapy dog to provide animal assisted activities and animal assisted interactions within the school or other facility. Employees may not serve as volunteer handlers for curricular dogs.
2. Curricular dogs are the personal property of the volunteer handler and are not the property of the board, school district, or individual schools. The volunteer handler shall assume full responsibility for the curricular dog's care, behavior, and suitability for interacting with students and others in the school while the curricular dog is on school district property.
3. A volunteer handler wishing to bring a curricular dog into a school shall submit a completed written request form to the principal of the school on an annual basis. In considering a request for approval, the principal shall consider, at a minimum, (1) whether the curricular dog's presence will enhance the academic and educational needs of students, and (2) in consultation with the school nurse and human resources department, whether known medical needs of school community members (e.g. allergies and cynophonbia) can be accommodated. Approval may be rescinded at any time in the sole discretion of the principal.
4. As part of the approval process, the volunteer handler shall present documentation (1) from a recognized therapy dog organization that the curricular dog is registered with the organization, (2) from a licensed veterinarian that the curricular dog is good health, free of any disease common to dogs, and is current on all immunizations, and (3) from an insurance company that the curricular dog and handler have general liability coverage in the amount of \$1 million per incident and \$3 million in the aggregate for their work while the two are on school district property.
5. After approving a request to have a curricular dog on campus, the principal shall

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obtain permission from individual students' parents or legal guardians before permitting the students to come into contact with the curricular dog. The principal shall also develop a plan and schedule for curricular dog visits. At a minimum, the plan must specify the designated location(s) in the school, other than classrooms (e.g. a conference room or the media center), where the dog may be present, and shall determine a route for the dog to access the designated area that minimizes interaction with the general student body.

6. The volunteer handler shall ensure the curricular dog does not pose a health and safety risk to any student, employee, or other person on school property, and that the curricular dog is brought to the school only when properly groomed, bathed, free of illness or injury, and of the temperament appropriate for working with students and others in the school.
7. The volunteer handler shall ensure the curricular dog wears a collar or harness and a leash no longer than four feet and shall maintain control of the curricular dog at all times that the curricular dog is within common areas of school property (e.g. hallways), unless holding such leash would interfere with the curricular dog's safe and effective performance of its work or tasks.
8. While the curricular dog is on school property, the handler shall be solely responsible for the supervision and humane care of the curricular dog, including feeding, exercising, and cleaning up after the curricular dog, shall not leave the curricular dog unsupervised or alone on school property at any time, and shall not tether the therapy dog to any individual or object. The curricular dog should be contained in the designated area by gate or a crate structure when not performing its work or tasks. Neither the board nor its employees is responsible for providing any care, supervision, or assistance to the curricular dog.
9. At all times that the curricular dog is on school property, the volunteer handler is responsible for ensuring that (1) the curricular dog's registration with a recognized therapy dog organization is current and in good standing, (2) the dog is in good health and free of any disease common to dogs, and (3) his/ her liability insurance policy providing general liability coverage in the amount of \$1 million per incident and \$3 million in the aggregate for the volunteer handler and curricular dog is in effect.
10. Should the volunteer handler encounter a school community member who displays signs of an allergy, cynophobia, or other aversion to the curricular dog while in common areas (e.g. hallways), the volunteer handler shall take steps to immediately remove the curricular dog from the area to the space designated by the school or immediately remove the curricular dog from the building.
11. The volunteer handler shall assume full responsibility and liability for any damage to school property or injury caused by the curricular dog to employees, students, other school community members, and all other persons on school property.

12. A curricular dog may be excluded from school property for any reason and must be excluded if the principal or designee determines that (1) the volunteer handler does not have control of the curricular dog; (2) the curricular dog is not housebroken; (3) the curricular dog presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school; or (4) the curricular dog's presence otherwise interferes with the educational program. The volunteer handlers shall immediately remove the curricular dog from school property when instructed to do so by the principal or designee.

## **B. OTHER CURRICULAR ANIMALS**

The use of live curricular animals, other than curricular dogs, as a part of an instructional program or as a classroom pet requires prior approval from the building principal prior to introduction. Prior to introducing any curricular animal, other than curricular dogs, a staff member must investigate known student or staff allergies or other health issues that may be aggravated by the presence of the animal. Parental notification and an opportunity to object or opt out will be required prior to the use of curricular animals, other than curricular dogs, for classroom or instructional purposes.

At a minimum, curricular animals, other than curricular dogs, must (1) be housebroken as appropriate, (2) have received all vaccinations as required by state law, (3) wear rabies tags where appropriate, (4) be free of parasites, (5) be clean and groomed and otherwise in good health, (6) be in an enclosed cage or other appropriate enclosure when not being used in service of an instructional goal, and (7) must not be prohibited by the Guidelines for Animals in North Carolina Schools published by the Division of Public Health of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. Animals are to be handled humanely, and school system staff are responsible for the handling, care, and supervision of any curricular animals, other than curricular dogs, used as part of the curriculum or as classroom pets, and are expected to practice humane treatment at all times. Any animal that causes injury to staff or students or that demonstrates aggression or a safety risk of any kind, or interferes with orderly school operations, will be immediately isolated and removed from the school premises. The owner of an animal is responsible for any physical damage or injuries caused by the animal.

Legal References: Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.; 28 C.F.R. Part 35: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.; Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. 705(20), 794; 34 C.F.R. pt. 104; N.C. Gen. Stat. 168-4.2; Guidelines for Animals in North Carolina Schools, Department of Health and Human Services

Cross References: Service Animals in Schools (policy 4202/5029/7272); School Volunteers (policy 5015);

Adopted: September 14, 2020