

Policy 310 – Animals In Schools

The Board of Education believes that animals may be beneficial in school facilities for educational purposes, under certain conditions. Animals brought to school for educational reasons, including classroom visitors, therapy dogs and assistance dogs, can provide valuable learning opportunities as well as provide children with opportunities to develop empathy.

The Board recognizes and values the benefits of Therapy Dogs and Assistance Dogs and is committed to considering applications from schools and students who would benefit.

The Board believes the presence of animals in schools must be predicated on the school community being informed of the introduction to animals in the school and ensuring that severe allergies are a priority where those allergies might relate to animals in schools.

Animals in schools will be governed by the following administrative procedures:

AP 310 – Animals in Schools for Educational Purposes

AP 310-1 – Therapy Dogs

AP 310-2 – Assistance Dogs.

DEFINITIONS

Animals for Educational Purposes:

Classroom Pet: Small animals which are easily confined or caged, such as a tropical fish or small mammals.

Classroom Visitor: Larger animals that are in good health and can be leashed and under the control of a responsible adult or housed in a suitable, sanitary enclosure appropriate to the size and characteristics of the animal.

Therapy Dogs:

Therapy Dogs: Dogs that are trained to work for a handler to provide service and comfort to people at the community level through animal-assisted activities and animal-assisted therapy.

Assistance Dogs:

Emotional Support Dogs: Dogs that provide support for individuals suffering from an emotional or mental disability (Examples are, but not limited to, Autism Spectrum, anxiety, depression, cognitive or learning disabilities.)

Hearing Dogs: Dogs that alert individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to specific sounds.

Seizure Response Dogs: Dogs trained to provide emergency response for individuals with epilepsy.

Service Dogs (as defined in the BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act): Dogs trained to perform specific tasks to assist an individual with a disability.

Guide Dogs (as defined in the BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act): Dogs trained as a guide for a blind or visually impaired individual.