

Therapy Dogs - Instructional/Emotional Assistance to Students Regulation

1130-30 | Therapy Dogs - Instructional/Emotional Assistance to Students Regulation

Date Approved: May 10 2017

Date Amended:

The School District endeavours to provide appropriate educational assistance to meet the needs of all children of school age. In order to meet this obligation, the assistance of a therapy dog has been shown to be beneficial. A therapy dog is a canine that is trained to provide affection and comfort to people in hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, schools, hospices, disaster areas, and to people with autism. In the educational environment, normally the therapy dog is the pet of an educator. For the purposes of this regulation, therapy dogs are not guide dogs for the blind or service dogs.

The presence of a therapy dog within a school or school board facility must have purpose. This purpose includes, but is not limited to building student confidence; providing emotional stability to a student; assisting a student to manage emotions; and instructing a student in empathy and caring for others.

An employee of School District 52 wishing to bring a therapy dog into any district school or facility shall, prior to bringing the dog into the facility:

- Obtain the approval of the Principal or management designate to proceed with a plan of introduction of the therapy dog into the educational facility
- Provide the Principal or management designate with proof of appropriate, completed training (for example, St. John's Ambulance provides therapy dog training)
- Advise other staff members including counsellors, teachers, secretaries, educational assistants and janitors of the possibility of the canine entering the school or facility to be aware of any concerns staff may have
- Discuss the possibility of the canine entering the class with students to determine if allergies or fear of dogs is a factor within the class. Students should also be encouraged to speak privately to the dog handler or send notes in case they do not wish to speak publicly about their fear

In the event a therapy dog enters a school, classroom or other district facility:

- The dog will be controlled via leash at all times
- Students may control the dog only in the presence of the handler

REFERENCES:

1130 – Student Support Policy

1130-10 – Instructional Services to Students with Special Needs Regulation

1810-10 – Animals in School Regulation