

ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS

Background

The Board recognizes that animals have a place in schools or other district buildings in certain circumstances. Animals brought to schools for educational reasons during instructional times, including 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.

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, assistance dogs such as registered and trained Guide Dogs or Service Dogs should also be welcomed in schools and workplaces as approved supports for children or staff members.

Therapy Animals, when accompanied by handlers, may provide supports in schools and workplaces in areas such as reducing anxiety or providing emotional support as part of Critical Incident support.

Procedures

1. General

- 1.1. All Guide and Service Dogs must be certified. British Columbia's [Guide Dog and Service Dog Act](#) and [Guide and Service Dog Regulation](#) govern how these dogs and their handlers are certified.
- 1.2. Proof of this certification must be provided to the principal/supervisor or designate.
- 1.3. Approval of access for Therapy Animals and their handlers will be at the discretion of the superintendent or designate and will be on a case-by-case basis. This approval may be revoked for any reason.
- 1.4. Animals brought to the school for curricular or educational purposes, including for large assemblies out of the classroom, must be approved in advance by the principal or designate. Parents must also be informed in advance of the animal's presence.
- 1.5. Prior to an animal being around students, there must be a discussion and understanding with staff and students to determine any individual health concerns such as allergies.
- 1.6. In situations where there are individual health concerns, principals will try to ensure the needs of those with Service Animals and those with health concerns are both met, including with alternate placements. Any inability to meet these needs should result in communication with the superintendent.