

<p>NORTH PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT USE OF ANIMALS IN NORTH PROVIDENCE SCHOOLS FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE POLICY</p>	<p>Approved: 1/24/2024</p>

SECTION I: PURPOSE

The North Providence School Department is committed to providing a dynamic quality educational program for all students in a safe and healthy environment. The Department recognizes that the use of animals in the educational environment can enhance the overall well-being of students and enrich daily instruction. This policy addresses the requirements for use of therapy animals and classroom pets. This policy is separate from any Assistant Animals/Service Animal policy adopted by the Department and is not intended to be used to accommodate or otherwise assist any particular individual with a disability who may require an Assistant Animal/Service Animal.

SECTION II: DEFINITIONS

Therapy Pet means a dog which has been trained and evaluated to provide animal-assisted therapy and animal-assisted interactions pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 40-9.1-5.

Pet-Assisted Therapy Facilitator (PATF) means an individual, approved by the Department, who has successfully completed, or is in the process of completing, an accepted pet-assisted therapy program.

Classroom Pet means an animal that is present in a classroom as a pet. Classroom Pets have a teaching purpose and are otherwise limited to presence in a single classroom. It is neither a Service Animal nor a Therapy Pet, but an animal whose purpose is educational. Unlike a Service Animal or Therapy Pet the Classroom Pet is under the authority of the classroom teacher, or if necessary, another school employee or administrator.

Handler means an individual who shall maintain control over a Classroom pet. In all instances the Handler shall be the individual authorized by the Department to handle said animal or pet. Said Handler shall demonstrate sufficient knowledge to properly handle the Classroom pet.

SECTION III: THERAPY ANIMAL

R.I. Gen. Laws §40-9.1-5 provides for the use of a Therapy Animals in the classroom setting supported by a PATF. The use of such Therapy Pets are restricted to certain circumstances and must first be approved by the Superintendent or his or her designee.

A. Use of Therapy Pets

Therapy Pets are intended to be utilized during the school day for the purposes of benefiting staff and students. The Therapy Pets shall be used in the schools in ways that assist students with reducing stress, processing mental health concerns, and boosting academic engagement.[1]

Use of the Therapy Pets and its PATF shall be in a manner that conforms with the following principles:

- o Equitable to ensure that all students have an opportunity to interact with the Therapy Pets throughout the school year;
- o Establish curriculum related goals for the Therapy Pets;
- o Achieves the mission of the North Providence School Department;
- o Achieves the particular goals as identified for that particular Therapy Pets;
- o Avoid disruption of the learning and working environment, including both the learning environment of the PATF, such as a loss of instructional time, and the learning environment of the students the animal is visiting; and
- o Avoid use in any classroom or area where a student or employee is known to have allergies to animals or where a student or employee is known to have a fear of the type of animal.

B. Pet-Assisted Therapy Facilitator Requirements

All PATF and associated Therapy Pets services shall be provided by third-party organizations that meet the requirements of this policy and protocol and are approved by the Superintendent/designee

The third party organization shall provide a PATF that is properly trained and insured. The third party shall cover all costs associated with caring, feeding, grooming, and otherwise maintaining their pet.

PATF shall be responsible for care of the Therapy Pet, including scheduling time for the Therapy Pet to be outside and take breaks from student interactions. Such times shall not interfere with the normal operations of the Department.

SECTION IV: CLASSROOM PET

Classroom pets shall be maintained in a single classroom setting for the purposes of facilitating certain learning objectives, curriculum, and instilling a classroom culture of nurturing animals and living things. Classroom pets shall be selected by a classroom teacher and approved by the building principal. Student's or a student's family-owned pet are prohibited from serving as Classroom pets. This policy expressly prohibits students from bringing their pets to school.

A. Use of Classroom Pet

Classroom Pets shall be limited to small animals that can be maintained in an aquarium, terrarium, or cage. Use of such pet shall be approved by the building principal upon the development of a classroom pet plan. Said Plan shall incorporate the following:

- o Curriculum related goals for the Classroom Pet
- o Day-to-day care and maintenance of the Classroom Pet
- o Long term care during weekends, holidays, school vacations, and summer break
- o Identify who is responsible for Classroom Pet
- o Plan to avoid disruptions of the school day

B. Responsibility for Classroom Pet

The Classroom Teacher shall be responsible for the Classroom Pet on a day-to-day basis and long-term responsibility shall be identified within the plan as determined by the Classroom Teacher and the Building Principal.

SECTION V: REMOVAL OF ANIMAL

The following are grounds for removal of any Therapy Pet or Classroom Pet from any classroom or school building:

- The inability of the PATF or Handler to control the animal or take effective action to take control of the animal;

- The learning environment is disrupted;
- The fact that the animal is not house broken;
- The presence of the animal fundamentally alters the nature of the service, program, or activity; or
- It is determined that the animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.

VI: DEVELOPMENT OF PROTOCOL:

The North Providence Superintendent shall develop a procedure to ensure implementation and compliance with this policy.

[1] Kropp, Jerri J. & Shupp, Mikaela M., *Review of the Research: Are Therapy Dogs in Classrooms Beneficial*, 2019.

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