

## Instructional

### Animals in Schools

The Racine Unified School District recognizes animals in the classroom have educational value and support the science standards and other curricular goals. Animals provide positive learning opportunities related to care and understanding of living organisms, habitat, humane animal treatment, growth, development, reproduction, and animal behavior. The School Board recognizes the value of children interacting with animals in the classroom. The Board maintains a commitment to the welfare, health, and safety of all students and staff in the Racine Unified School District. Live animals are permitted for classroom pets, curriculum study, laboratory study, and service animals provided that provisions of the Board policy are met.

The inclusion of animals in classrooms, either permanently or temporarily, must be with the approval of the principal except as noted for guide dogs for the blind, deaf or mobility-impaired. Plans for the care and maintenance of classroom-housed animals when school is not in session, either because of school breaks, weekends, or emergency closings will be the responsibility of the instructor.

Before animals are included as part of instruction, or any school sponsored activity, there must be assurances of a clear purpose for the involvement of animals and ample consideration given to the health and welfare of students, staff and animals.

#### 1. Provisions for Animals in Schools

Live animals will be allowed in the classroom as part of educational curriculum or as classroom pets and will be permitted for laboratory study provided the provisions of this policy are met. All animals brought into school must be approved by the requisite building principal. Service/companion animals trained to assist students with disabilities shall be allowed in school, as governed by this Administration Regulation.

To assure the appropriate, safe and healthful inclusion of animals in schools, the listed provisions must be followed:

##### a. Live animals (mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds)

- (1) No animal may be transported on a school bus except as provided for in this Administrative Regulation with respect to service animals.

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- (2) Animal(s) brought to school must be a part of a well-documented curriculum that details how the animal will be integrated into the classroom setting.
- (3) A teacher utilizing an animal as part of classroom curriculum shall notify parents/guardians and staff members of the presence of the animal in the classroom and encourage them to share any special health conditions, allergies and immunodeficiencies affecting their students that may be exacerbated by the inclusion of animals. Efforts must be made to prevent such affected students and staff from exposure to animals.
- (4) Only those animals in good health and appropriately immunized may be allowed. Teachers are responsible for providing documentation evidencing health and immunizations, as required by the respective building principal.
- (5) Animal(s) must be humanely and properly housed in cages, aquariums, etc., specific for the species. Animal cages, aquariums, etc., and the surrounding areas must be meticulously maintained and completely cleaned at least weekly.
- (6) A teacher utilizing an animal as part of classroom curriculum shall make provisions for the care and maintenance of the animal during the period of time when school is not in session (weekends, vacations, evenings, etc.).
- (7) The inclusion of animals must be in compliance with all regulations, state codes and orders, as well as all applicable local safety and health codes and regulations.
- (9) Wild animals are not allowed in schools (including ferrets, raccoons, squirrels, wild rabbits, bats, etc.).
- (10) All birds must be veterinarian certified (annually) to be free of diseases such as psittacosis. Birds are not permitted to fly free in the classroom.
- (11) Animals are not permitted in the vicinity of sinks where students or staff wash hands, in any area used for the cleaning, storage, preparation or serving of food, or in nursing/first aid stations or sterile or clean supply rooms.

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- (12) Persons handling animals, cleaning up after animals or coming in contact with equipment/surface areas should follow cleaning procedures outlined for blood borne pathogen exposure control.
- (13) Elementary and middle school students should not handle or clean up any form of animal waste (e.g. feces, urine, blood, etc.). Animal waste should be disposed of where children cannot come in contact.
- (14) High school students under the supervision of a teacher may assist in the care and clean-up of approved animals with parent permission.
- (15) In the event that an animal bites a student, first aid should be provided as necessary. Parents/guardians and the appropriate building principal shall be notified of a bite to a student. The bite must be reported to the public health department to determine if additional health measures need to be taken (e.g., quarantine of the animal, administration of rabies or tetanus shots, etc.).

## b. Animals carcasses and animal specimens

- (1) Animal carcasses and specimens may only be brought to schools under the supervision of a teacher and only for use in instructional activities.
- (2) Reasonable accommodations must be afforded students who, because of sincerely held religious beliefs, cannot participate in instructional activities involving animals (e.g., examinations, specimen dissection).
- (3) Appropriate permits must be secured from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for the collection or salvaging of any wildlife specimens.
- (4) Animal specimens likely to be handled by students must be secured from a reputable business that specializes in providing animals to schools.
- (5) Individuals must wear protective equipment, when appropriate, such as disposable gloves, to handle specimens.
- (6) No experimental procedures will be conducted with live animals.
- (7) The use of animal specimens in science laboratory and dissection activities should be in compliance with guidelines established by the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) as listed below:

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- (a) Acquisitions and care of animals must be appropriate to the species.
- (b) Student classwork and science projects involving animals must be under the supervision of a science teacher or other trained professional.
- (c) Teachers sponsoring or supervising the use of animals in instructional activities – including acquisition, care and disposition – will adhere to local, state and national laws, policies and regulations regarding organisms.
- (d) Teachers must instruct students of safety precautions for handling live animals and animal specimens.
- (e) Plans for the future care or disposition of animals at the conclusion of the study must be developed and implemented.
- (f) Laboratory and dissection activities must be conducted with consideration and appreciation of the organism.
- (g) Laboratory and dissection activities must be completed in a clear and organized work space with care and laboratory precision.
- (h) Laboratory and dissection activities must be based on planned objectives.
- (i) Laboratory and dissection activities must be appropriate to the maturity level of the student.
- (j) Student views or beliefs sensitive to dissection must be considered; the teacher will respond appropriately.

Animals under the control of public safety officials or under control of a District approved program (e.g., Zoo Outreach Program) are not subject to these policies.

## 2. Student Use of Service/Companion Animals

### a. Service Animals

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A service animal is any dog, miniature horse, or other animal as authorized under Wis. Stat. 106.52(1)(fm) that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, neurological or other mental disability.

The animal must be “individually trained” to do something that qualifies as work or a task. An animal that is merely a “pet” or “support/comfort animal” and does not mitigate the effects of the disability is not a service animal.

The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual’s disability. Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to, assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing non-violent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, alerting individuals to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors. The provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship does not constitute work or tasks for purposes of this definition.

Access for individuals with disabilities and their service animal to Racine Unified School District facilities:

- (1) Individuals with disabilities shall be permitted to be accompanied by their service animal in all areas of the District’s facilities where members of the public, participants in services, programs, or activities, or invitees, as relevant, are allowed to go.
- (2) Individuals with disabilities shall be permitted the same access to portions of the District’s facilities as any non-disabled individual.

The District may permit students to use service animals in District facilities and at school events under the following circumstances:

- (1) An individual requesting to be accompanied by a service animal will be required to provide a written statement to the District regarding what work or task(s) has the service animal has been trained to perform. Such

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written statement shall be provided to the District two (2) weeks' prior to the individual being accompanied by a service animal.

- (2) The individual requesting to be accompanied by a service animal is responsible for the following:
  - (a) Animals must have proper licensure as required by the local municipality where the animal resides, as well as proof of licensing with Racine County, and be immunized against diseases common to that type of animal. All vaccinations must be current and proof provided on an annual basis. Verification shall be required. Dogs must wear a rabies vaccination tag.
  - (b) Treating for and keeping the service animal free from fleas and ticks.
  - (c) Ensuring that the service animal is housebroken.
  - (d) Grooming and keeping the service animal clean to avoid shedding and dander.
  - (e) Any and all liability for any harm or injury caused by the service animal to other students, staff, visitors, and/or property. The individual requesting to be accompanied by a service animal is strongly encouraged to obtain and provide to the District information regarding current liability insurance coverage if the individual has liability insurance that would cover harm or injury caused by the service animal.
  - (f) Using a harness, leash or other tether, unless either the handler is unable because of a disability to use the tether, or the use of the tether would interfere with the service animal's or the handler's safe, effective performance of work or tasks, in which case the service animal must be otherwise under the handler's control.
  - (g) Care and supervision of the service animal, including walking the animal or responding to the animal's need to relieve itself are solely the responsibility of the owner/keeper and/or handler.
  - (h) Identification of the handler and ensuring the handler has sufficient control of the service animal, if the handler is different from the individual requesting to be accompanied by a service animal due to

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the individual's inability to handle the service animal without assistance. Handlers who will be present in school for the purpose of assisting a student with his/her service animal are required to comply with all Board and District policies, rules, and regulations, including a background check.

1. Service Animal's Handler Background Screening:
  - i. Due to the need of a service animal's handler to have unaccompanied access to school grounds for the care and maintenance of the service animal, if the service animal's handler is not a student or employee, the service animal's handler must submit to and pass a fingerprint Level II background screening by school officials.
- (3) Requests to permit a service animal to accompany an individual with a disability in a District facility will be handled on a case-by-case basis, considering the following:
  - (a) The type, size, and weight of the service animal and whether the facility can accommodate those features.
  - (b) Whether the service animal's presence in a specific facility compromises legitimate safety requirements that are necessary for the safe operation of the facility.
- (4) The District shall make reasonable accommodations if the presence of an animal results in health concerns for other individuals. These accommodations may include assignment of the student(s) to a different classroom in the District.

### b. Inquiries Related to a Service Animal

- (1) When it is not obvious what work/task an animal provides, a District representative may only make two inquiries to the Student/Employee/Visitor or service animal's handler to determine whether an animal qualifies as a service animal:
  - (a) If the animal is required because of a disability, and
  - (b) What work or task the animal has been trained to perform.

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- (2) A District representative may not make these inquiries about a service animal when it is readily apparent that an animal is trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability (e.g. the dog is observed guiding an individual who is blind or has low vision, pulling a person's wheelchair, or providing assistance with stability, or balance to an individual with an observable mobility disability).
- (3) No District representative shall ask about the nature or extent of a person's disability.
- (4) No District representative shall require documentation, such as proof that the animal has been certified, trained, or licensed as a service animal.

### c. Animal Separation/Removal

In the event a service animal must be separated from the student whom the animal is accompanying, it is the responsibility of the student and/or the student's parents/guardians to arrange for the care and supervision of the animal during the period of separation.

A service animal may be required to be removed from a District facility under any of the following circumstances:

- (1) The service animal is out of control and the animal's handler does not take effective action to control it;
- (2) The service animal is not housebroken; or
- (3) The service animal's presence would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity.

If a service animal has been required to be removed from a District facility, the owner may request reinstatement of the use of the service animal in the District facility. The request for reinstatement should be in writing to the Executive Director of Special Education (for students with IEPs), the Director of Student Services (for students with Section 504 plans), or the Chief of Human Resources (for staff related needs) and should state the training or other measures that have been taken to address the reason(s) that the service animal was removed. The District shall convene a student's individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 team, to the extent required by law.

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The District shall issue a written approval or denial to the individual requesting a service animal within ten (10) calendar days of receiving the request. If a request for a service animal to accompany an individual with a disability in a District facility is denied, that decision may be appealed to the Superintendent of the District.

If a service animal is properly excluded as provided above, then the individual with a disability will have the opportunity to participate in the service, program, or activity without having the service animal on the premises.

### d. Compliance with the IDEA and Section 504

The District will comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and any other applicable laws. For any student who qualifies for service under the IDEA and/or Section 504, the student's IEP/Section 504 team shall meet and discuss whether the animal is a supplemental service necessary for the student to effectively participate in the educational programs of the District. If it is, the animal shall be incorporated into the student's IEP/504 plan. The District shall also consider whether the animal shall have a harmful impact on other students or staff members or if the animal would pose a significant risk to the health and safety of others that cannot be eliminated by a modification of policies, practices or procedures. Nothing in this policy is intended to limit any right a student may have under any other federal or state law.

### e. Companion Animals

In the event a parent/guardian believes their child requires the assistance of a companion animal to effectively participate in the educational programs of the District, the parents shall provide a:

- (1) physician's written confirmation of the necessity of the animal;
- (2) veterinarian's written confirmation of the animal's appropriate immunizations;
- (3) copy of the animal's certification that the animal has been certified, trained, or licensed as a companion animal

The parent shall be required to meet with the Executive Director of Special Education or the Director of Student Services, and if the student is a student

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with a disability, the student's IEP/Section 504 Team, to identify the conditions under which the companion animal may be present, if at all, in the classroom.

If approved, a written copy of the initial approval, including the timelines for review of the decisions, shall be given to the parent(s) and to each of the student's teachers. The Executive Director of Special Education or the Director of Student Services, and if the student is a student with a disability, the student's IEP/Section 504 Team, shall periodically review the educational impact of the animal on the student's academic and/or functional behavior. .

Student use of companion animals shall be at the sole discretion of the Executive Director of Special Education or the Director of Student Services.

Legal Reference: Sections 95.21(2)(a) and (f); 106.52(1)(fm), (3)(am); 120.13; 121.02(1)(e)(f) and (i); 174.02(1)(a); 174.056; 174.07(1); 252.21; and 254.56, Wisconsin Statutes  
 Chapter HFS 145, Wisconsin Administrative Code  
 Wis. Admin. Code. sec. TRANS 300.16(2)  
 Americans with Disabilities Act  
 28 C.F.R. Part 35  
 Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act  
 Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

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