



# RED RIVER VALLEY SCHOOL DIVISION DIVISION SCOLAIRE VALLÉE de la RIVIÈRE-ROUGE

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## **Animal Assisted Therapy Guidelines**

### **Purpose**

Animal Assisted Therapy is a research based practice to support students who have a variety of needs. Research shows that Animal Assisted Therapy can benefit students psychologically and physiologically. Trained facilitators and their animals such as dogs can reduce anxiety in students as well as build their confidence and empathy.

### **Role of School Administrator**

- Administrators are involved in the student specific plan and approve the use of Animal Assisted Therapy with a student or in classroom-based program. Other team members involved in the planning may include parents/legal guardians, resource teacher, guidance counselor, classroom teacher and clinicians.
- Administrators will obtain written permission from parents/legal guardians for all students who are involved in Animal Assisted Therapy (individual or whole classroom).
- Administrators will inform staff if a therapy dog or other animals will be present in the school.
- Administrators will notify staff and students with allergies that the therapy dog or other animals will be in a specific room.
- Administrators will inform the Student Services Administrator of all Animal Assisted Therapy programs in the Red River Valley School Division.
- Administrators will establish a location where Animal Assisted Therapy can take place.
- Administrators will create a plan for managing the therapy dog or other animals before and after the program.

### **Role of Student Services**

- The Student Services Administrator is responsible to maintain all pertinent records regarding the pet, including vaccinations, illness, age, and training.

## **Role of Trained Facilitator/ Animal Handler:**

- The trained facilitator/animal handler must be a teacher or clinician who has completed certification through St. John's Ambulance Association (for dog therapy) or has been accredited as a Certified Animal Assisted Therapy Professional.
- The trained facilitator will have experience in providing positive behaviour support to students.
- The trained facilitator and school teams will collaborate in regards to the student or classroom-based program.
- The animal is to be under the care of the trained facilitator at all times during the program.
- After the program is complete, the trained facilitator is responsible for following the plan as outlined by the administrator.
- The trained facilitator will ensure that supplies for hand washing are available.
- The trained facilitator will control the animal so that the animal will not lick individuals, touch any toys or supplies.
- For Equine Therapy, the program must be certified by the Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association or Equine Facilitated Wellness Canada.

## **Criteria for Therapy Dogs**

- All therapy dogs are to be certified and temperament tested by St. John Ambulance Association.
- The animal facilitator and the dog shall be trained and regulated by the St. John Ambulance Association.
- All dogs must have all current vaccinations.