

INSTRUCTION

Animals as Part of the Instructional Program

The purpose of this rule and regulation is to establish procedures for the safe handling and care of classroom animals. This regulation provides information on safety precautions to prevent or lessen the severity of personal injury or illness due to animals, actions to be taken in the event of injury or illness due to the animals, and a basis for humane treatment and handling of animals in the classroom.

Animals in the classroom should promote learning about life science and the humane treatment of animals. Special needs of students and animals include:

- A. Allergens associated with the animal, its food, and its bedding;
- B. Monitoring of student behavior to ensure that the animal will not be harmed;
- C. Plans for care and feeding on weekends and vacations;
- D. Plans for preventing unwanted procreation of classroom animals;
- E. Plans for taking care of the animal at the end of the school year; and
- F. Plans for the possible death of a classroom animal.

Students must always wash their hands after handling any animal. Classroom pets are generally to be temporary in nature.

Unacceptable Animals for Schools

- A. Poisonous animals;
- B. Wild/stray animals;
- C. Aggressive animals;
- D. Large snakes (> 5 feet);
- E. Baby chicks, ducks, or other baby birds;
- F. Dangerous fish;
- G. Centipedes and millipedes; and
- H. Livestock.

Special Conditions for Specific Animals

Specific recommendations should be observed for the following animals because of zoonotic disease that they can carry or because of certain tendencies. Staff will check with the area director of health services for current handling information before allowing these animals in the classroom:

- A. Parrots, parakeets, budgies, and cockatiels;
- B. Ferrets;
- C. Reptiles; and
- D. Amphibians

Proper Restraint of Animals

Because animals may react to being in an unfamiliar classroom situation, it is important to have an effective way to control them. Fear may cause an animal to attempt to escape or even act aggressively in situations that are unusual to them. Appropriate restraint devices will help the person in control to react quickly and to prevent harm to the students or the escape of the animal.

Student Contact with Animals

Even very tame animals may react aggressively in strange situations; therefore, student contact with animals should always be supervised and regulated:

- A. All student contact with animals must be highly organized and supervised;
- B. Children shall not be allowed to feed pets directly from their hands;
- C. Children shall not have animals in close contact with their faces;
- D. Children who handle animals must wash their hands immediately after handling them.
- E. Animals are not allowed in the vicinity of sinks where children wash their hands; in area where food is prepared, stored, or served; or in areas used for cleaning or storage of food utensils or dishes. Animals must also be restricted from sand boxes and other areas where students play; and
- F. Immunocompromised students may be especially susceptible to zoonotic disease; therefore, special precautions may be needed to minimize the risk of disease transmission to these students. It is critical that parents be informed before animals are brought into a classroom.

Process for Introducing an Animal into a Classroom

- A. Staff members who plan to bring an animal into a school must complete a “Classroom Pet Request” form. The form must then be submitted to the building principal.
- B. If the principal approves the animal to be brought into the school, the staff member must notify the parents of all students who will come into contact with the animal prior to the animal being introduced. The staff member will give parents one weeks’ notice prior to the introduction of the animal.

Prior to granting or denying requests to include animals in the school’s instructional program the principal shall evaluate the following issues:

- A. There is an educational benefit to be gained by the inclusion of the animal in the instructional program;
- B. There is an appropriate plan for the control of the animal. Acceptable safety procedures and care plan have been developed;
- C. Any health concerns involving students, staff, or other animals have been thoroughly addressed. A written notice will be sent to each student’s parent before obtaining a classroom pet;

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- D. The animal's health, safety, and well-being have been appropriately evaluated. Animals' bedding must be kept clean and dry and cages well ventilated. Depending on the animal, cages maybe required to be cleaned daily. Recommended food and water must be available to pets. Use a metal screen or net to keep flammable bedding material from touching lights or heat lamps; and
- E. Sanitary issues have been addressed, the treatment of animal wastes and personal hygiene of students or staff in contact with the animal. This will be the sole responsibility of the classroom staff and not the custodial staff.

Amended: July 2023