

1 **REGULATIONS FOR THE USE OF ANIMALS IN THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM**

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3 There is a value for students to observe, study, and research creatures both wild and domestic.
4 Programs within Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS), including the Animal Science Program,
5 provides opportunities for students to engage with animals in a structured, developmentally
6 appropriate, and monitored manner. The proper care and use of laboratory animals in teaching
7 require professional judgment based on the animals' needs and the intended use. All activities
8 should be managed to minimize the impact on the well-being of the animal and have a direct tie to
9 the curriculum and competencies issued by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). Proper
10 veterinary care should be available when needed and include guidance regarding humane
11 endpoints when appropriate. Attention should be made for appropriate species and the minimal
12 number of animals needed for instruction.

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14 The school Principal or designee must approve all animals in the school.

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16 **Live Animals Which Can Not Be Brought Into Schools**

- 17 ● Venomous or toxin-producing spiders, insects, reptiles, and amphibians
- 18 ● Wild or exotic animals
- 19 ● Mammals at higher risk for transmitting rabies (e.g., bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes, and
- 20 coyotes)
- 21 ● Nonhuman primates
- 22 ● Stray animals
- 23 ● Baby chicks and ducks except under the supervision of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
- 24 (TLL) or a TLL approved ACPS Partner organization.
- 25 ● Aggressive or unpredictable animal

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27 **Animal Selection**

28 Observation or use of invertebrates is preferred where possible.

- 29 ● Organisms such as bacteria, fungi, protozoa and insects, can reveal much basic biological
- 30 information and should be used for research and learning whenever possible.
- 31 ● Observations of normal living patterns of vertebrate animals in the free living state or in
- 32 zoological parks, gardens, or aquaria are encouraged for student research and learning.

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34 **General Guidelines**

- 35 ● Animals can be displayed in enclosed cages or under appropriate restraint (e.g., leash).
- 36 Animals are not allowed to roam free in the classroom.
- 37 ● Food for animals must be stored in an air-tight closed container, preferably hard plastic, to
- 38 prevent spills and attracting nuisance animals and insects.
- 39 ● Specific areas in the school must be designated for animal contact.
- 40 ● Animals cannot roam, fly free, or have contact with wild animals.
- 41 ● Animals are not allowed in areas where food or drink is consumed.
- 42 ● Some students and staff have allergies to certain animals, and some beliefs prohibit
- 43 exposure to certain animals. Families should be informed of animals in schools and have
- 44 the ability to opt-out of exposure to some or all animals.

46 **Animal Housing and Feeding**

47 After an animal has been determined to be appropriate for the classroom setting, appropriate
48 housing and feeding must be provided. Considerations include:

- 49 ● Sufficient size to allow the animals to comfortably perform such natural functions as
50 eating, exercising, and sleeping. The facilities must be sanitary.
- 51 ● Feeding and watering equipment that has been selected for ease of cleaning and sanitizing
52 and for suitability for the species.
- 53 ● The facilities are designed to allow the removal of animal waste with minimum disturbance
54 to the animal.
- 55 ● Climatic control (temperature, humidity, and air quality) provides a humane environment
56 for the animal.
- 57 ● Classroom management policies
 - 58 a. Appropriate resource organizations and/or reference material should be consulted
59 to ensure that a proper environment is maintained for the animals.
 - 60 b. The animals must be fed and their facilities cleaned at appropriate intervals. This
61 schedule must be maintained on weekends and school holidays.
 - 62 c. Cages, feeding devices, watering devices, and bedding materials should be
63 appropriately washed or sterilized.
 - 64 d. Hands must be thoroughly washed before and after any contact with an animal or
65 its environment.
- 66 ● Access to animal care facilities should be limited to those individuals directly responsible
67 for the animals. Students may only help with animal care when parents have given written
68 permission, provided supervising staff ensure appropriate procedures and hand sanitation.
- 69 ● The appropriate climate for a species must be maintained at all times.
- 70 ● People who are ill should not be permitted to handle and care for laboratory animals.

71 **Protection of Students from Zoonotic Diseases**

72 In order to protect students from zoonotic diseases, the following general guidelines should be
73 followed:
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- 75 ● All animals that are brought into school will be clean and free of disease or parasites,
76 including fleas, ticks, and mites.
- 77 ● Animals suspected of being ill should be isolated and provided proper veterinary care.
- 78 ● Evidence of current rabies vaccination will be required for all dogs, cats, and ferrets that
79 are brought onto school property for instructional purposes. Dogs and cats under three
80 months of age and not vaccinated against rabies cannot be brought into school.
- 81 ● A current health certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian is required prior to bringing a
82 dog into school. There should be proof of current vaccination against canine distemper,
83 hepatitis, parainfluenza, and parovirus (these are frequently provided as one shot
84 (DHPP/DAPP/DA2PP). Leptospirosis, bordetella, and rabies are also required. Animals
85 should have a negative fecal exam for internal parasites within the past year. Dogs must be
86 on monthly heartworm preventative medication and must be housebroken.
- 87 ● A current health certificate for cats must be signed by a licensed veterinarian showing proof
88 of current vaccination against feline panleukopenia, rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, chlamydia,
89 feline leukemia, and rabies.
- 90 ● Everyone will wash hands after contact with animals, their products, or their environment.

- Areas where animals have been present must be cleaned and disinfected. All animal waste must be disposed of by a staff member using plastic bags and gloves. Under no circumstances can students be allowed to clean cages or handle animal waste products. Any spills or “accidents” should be immediately handled by school custodial staff.
- Parents/guardians must be consulted to determine any special considerations needed for children who are immuno-compromised or have allergies or asthma. Written parental permission for all student-animal contact must be obtained. A responsible adult must accompany all animal visits in school.

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100 **Animal Handling Procedures**

101 Animals should be handled humanely.

- Fish – use disposable gloves when cleaning aquariums, and do not dispose of aquarium water in sinks used for food preparation or for obtaining drinking water.
- Psittacine birds – Because these birds (parrots, parakeets, budgies, cockatiels) can carry disease, they cannot be handled by students. Staff members should clean cages when students are not present. Birds must be treated or test negative for psittacosis (chlamydiosis).
- Reptiles and Amphibians – Because of the risk of Salmonella bacteria, special precautions must be taken when students handle these animals. Students under the age of 5 should not have contact with reptiles and amphibians. Any child handling a reptile or amphibian must wash his/her hands thoroughly with warm water and soap afterwards. Hand sanitizer or “wet wipes” can only be used as an adjunct to soap and water.
- Hamsters, Guinea pigs, and Gerbils – Because these “pocket pets” can carry Salmonella bacteria and Lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus, special care must be taken when students handle these animals. Students under the age of 5 must not handle these animals. Any child handling a “pocket pet” should be instructed to wash his/her hands thoroughly with warm water and soap afterwards. Hand sanitizer or “wet wipes” can only be used as an adjunct to soap and water.
- Ferrets – Because these animals bite when startled, students should not handle ferrets in the classroom. Students under the age of 5 should not have contact with ferrets.
- Farm animals – Because of the risk of E. coli 0157:H7, Salmonella, Campylobacter, and Cryptosporidium, careful hand hygiene must be used when coming in contact with farm animals.

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125 **Protocol for Animal-Related Injuries**

- All bites, scratches, or other injuries acquired by students or staff members must be immediately washed well with soap and warm water for at least one minute and reported to the school nurse for first aid and recommendation for further medical evaluation and parental/guardian contact.
- Administrators will be notified immediately of the injury and an incident/accident report will be completed by the staff member responsible at the time of the injury and forwarded to the school nurse.
- If students receive a bite or scratch from a wild animal, animal control will be notified as well as the parents/guardians. Medical evaluation by the student’s primary provider will be recommended for all injury sustained from wild animals.

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Animal Dissection

Animal dissection may be used in the biology and life science program in middle and high school to develop an understanding of living processes. Animal dissection must include a concern for the humane and proper treatment and use of animals, particularly vertebrate animals. Vertebrate animal dissection as part of the elementary science program or as part of any science activities for elementary students sponsored by Alexandria Public Schools is prohibited. Only commercially prepared specimens may be used for dissection.

In accordance with policy IGAK - Alternatives to Animal Dissection, students expressing objections on an ethical or moral basis in advance of any animal dissection are not required to participate in dissection activities. An alternative assignment such as digital dissections and using diagrams of internal and external anatomy of various animals are provided.

Adopted: June 11, 2015

Legal Refs.: 4VAC15-290-60. Holding wild animals for exhibition purposes

Cross Refs.: IGAK Alternatives to Animal Dissection
KKA Service Animals in Public Schools

Reference: VDOE Safety in Science Teaching (2023)

Guidelines for Animals in North Carolina Schools, North Carolina Division of Public Health Guidelines, Animals in Schools, April 2006

Virginia Department of Health, Animal Contact and Human Health

MMWR, Recommendations and Reports, July 6, 2007/ 56(RR05); 18-19, Guidelines for Animals in School Settings,

ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
PARENT/GUARDIAN PERMISSION FOR STUDENT EXPOSURE
TO ANIMALS IN SCHOOL

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Name of Student: _____

School: _____ Grade/Teacher: _____

PART I: TO BE COMPLETED BY TEACHER/ STAFF

Dear Parents/Guardians,
ACPS guidelines require that we obtain parental permission prior to student contact with animals in school. We understand that allergies, asthma, immune problems, or other health concerns may make animal contact inappropriate for your child.

I would like to plan for the following animal to visit my classroom for academic purposes on _____.

- Cat Rabbit
- Dog Reptile or Amphibian
- Ferret Other (please explain: _____)

I verify that I will confirm that the animal (s) brought into school is clean and free of disease by inspecting documentation for a current rabies vaccination certification, health certificate from a licensed veterinarian, and proof of current vaccinations.

I also agree to supervise the entire human-animal contact session, have a clean and disinfected area for showing the animal (s), not allow food or drink in the animal showing area, and dispose of waste with the use of plastic bag and gloves.

Note: Under no circumstances will students be allowed to clean cages or handle animal waste products. The following animals are not permitted in schools: venomous or toxin-producing animals (e.g., certain spiders, insects, reptiles, and amphibians), wild or exotic animals, mammals at high-risk for transmitting rabies (e.g., bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes, and coyotes), non-human primates, stray animals, baby chicks and ducks, turtles with a carapace length less than 4", or aggressive/unpredictable animals.

PART II: TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENT/GUARDIAN:

I, _____, (circle one) **do/do not** permit the student identified above to be in
(parent/guardian's name)
contact with the animal listed below for academic purposes on _____
(date: mm/dd/yy)

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PART III: TO BE COMPLETED BY PRINCIPAL/ADMINISTRATOR

I, _____, permit the animal identified above to be brought into school
(principal/administrator's name)

for academic purposes on _____ .

(Date: mm/dd/yy)

(Signature of Parent/Guardian) (Date: mm/dd/yy)

(Signature of Teacher/Staff) (Date: mm/dd/yy)

(Signature of Principal/Administrator) (Date: mm/dd/yy)