



# Sweet Home Central School District

## Therapy Dog Program

Please click link above  
to therapy dog  
handbook



# Introduction

Therapy dogs have a significant impact on:

- the enhancement of a child's psychological development
- can improve social skills, increase self-esteem among other benefits
- can teach responsibility, compassion and respect for other living things.
- can calm fears, relieve anxiety, relieve stress and teach necessary skills





- Can make a measurable difference in terms of gaining various skills such as reading enhancement
- Can contribute to emotional and relational development
- Can decrease anxiety
- Can enable students to work through issues such as anger management, bullying tendencies and other psycho/social problems
- Can serve as a catalyst for forming adaptive and satisfactory social interactions
- Can help with guided activities and group discussions to help teach students learn how to handle interpersonal conflicts and to develop constructive responses.



When a child is able to regulate his/her emotional and relational skills, they are ready to learn; thus they have the maximum ability to benefit from classroom instruction.



Therapy dog programs in the Sweet Home Central School District will be designed to support instructional goals



# Description of Program

Therapy dogs in schools is a specific, research-based (academic and mental health) intervention program that is designed to achieve established goals.

The therapy dog intervention is intentionally incorporated in health, education and human service for the purpose of therapeutic gains and improved health and wellness.

The therapy dog is certified and trained, working under the direction of a certified, and registered professional, as part of a larger intervention program.



# Program Principles

- Research-based
- Purposeful, based on goals
- Requires district approval and adherence to the Sweet Home Central School board policy and implementation guidelines
- Part of the multi-tiered system of mental health and academic support
- An experiential intervention provided by a professional who is certified as a Therapy Dog handler, working under his/her direct scope of practice
- Provided in systematic, designated areas with progress monitoring and data collection to determine efficacy and efficiency



## How Therapy Dog Programs can be Implemented in Schools

- During individual counseling sessions (scheduled)
- During small group counseling sessions (scheduled)
- During small class instruction (planned and scheduled)
- During large class instruction (as planned and scheduled)
- During large class sessions (planned and scheduled)
- In the hallways and other common areas during designated times

At all times when a therapy dog is in the school building, the dog's presence will always be under the strict supervision of his/her Owner/Handler and will work exclusively toward the goals and objectives established.

Progress toward the goals of the program will be regularly evaluated and adjustments may be made to respond to the available data.

# The Value of a Therapy Dog Visit

- Animals have long been recognized as a positive addition to the healing process (both physical and mental).
- In facilities, visits from Therapy Dogs have shown an increased happiness, calmness, and overall improved emotional well-being.
- Studies have shown a decrease in blood pressure and stress levels during Therapy Dog visits.
- Therapy Dogs provide a break from the daily routine of school and loneliness for students and staff.





# Purpose

- Increase a positive culture and climate within the educational setting.
- Increase the social-emotional well being of the students and staff.
- Increase the sense of belonging for students that could lead to better attendance outcomes.
- Support for student academic achievement.



# Goals & Objectives of Program

## ***1. Improve culture and general mood of the school***

Therapy dogs provide many healing effects including:

- Reduced stress and anxiety/anxiousness
- Decreased feelings of depression, loneliness and feelings of isolation
- Decrease in aggressive behaviors
- Increase in socialization resulting in a sense of happiness and well-being
- Increase in mental stimulation
- Increase emotional support during crisis situations
- Decrease of blood pressure
- Release of strain and tension
- Can draw out a person from loneliness and depression.



# Goals & Objectives of Program

## ***2. Make a connection with at-risk students to improve behavior and attendance***

- The emotional well-being of students is a large factor in their success.
- The presence of a therapy dog can give students a sense of happiness that allows them to perform better academically.
- Dogs have been incorporated into schools in order to allow children to discuss issues with a truly impartial listener.
- There are many children who struggle to open up to a mental health provider or teacher about issues that they are facing. Interaction with animals can relieve their anxiety and improve their mood.

The therapy dog will give our mental health staff the opportunities to talk with children that otherwise wouldn't share how they feel about a specific situation. Children may find comfort in talking with the dog, and in turn will be willing to share with a trusted adult.

Many children who experience emotional troubles often lack trust, and using the intervention of a dog may help the child to develop trust. Interacting with animals helps to decrease anxiety, manipulative /abusive behaviors, depression, increase self-esteem, self-worth, expression of feelings and ability to trust. (Chandler, 2001)



# Goals & Objectives of Program

## 3. *Improve attitudes with learning*

- Reading to dogs can eliminate the fear of judgment for many children.
- Many studies have shown that students are able to improve perceptions of learning because of the increased motivation and interest they have in reading with a dog.
- A study of the All Ears Program conducted at the Veterinary School at the University of California-Davis showed that school children who read aloud with a handler/dog team improved their reading skills by 12 percent compared to children who read with only an adult. (Paddock, 2010)



# Reading Programs with Therapy Dogs

- Provides a relaxed and “dog-friendly” atmosphere, which allows students to practice the skill of reading.
- Many of the children who have difficulties reading as a result have developed self-esteem issues. They are often self-conscious when reading aloud in front of other classmates (Therapy Dog International, 2022).
- By sitting down next to a dog and reading to the dog, all threats of being judged are put aside.
- The child relaxes, pats the attentive dog, and focuses on the reading.
- Reading improves because the child is practicing the skill of reading, building self-esteem, and associating reading with something pleasant (Therapy Dog International, 2022).





# What is Therapy Dog International?

Therapy Dogs International (TDI®) is a well established, nonprofit, volunteer organization dedicated to regulating, testing and registration of therapy dogs and their volunteer handlers for the purpose of visiting nursing homes, hospitals, schools, libraries, other institutions and wherever else therapy dogs are needed.





Therapy Dog Visit to  
Glendale's 8:1:1  
exceptional classrooms

Mandy Woodward's  
exceptional classroom

Alyssa Braun's  
exceptional classroom

Danielle Kawa's  
exceptional classroom











# Kaia & Jersey



# Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. Who is the dog at my child's school?

\_\_\_\_\_ is a \_\_\_\_\_, who has completed and been registered with Therapy Dogs International (TDI). The therapy dogs handler is \_\_\_\_\_.

## 2. What does a therapy dog do at school?

The dog has many different jobs at school. The therapy dog will be working with students. The dog will also work with their handler to provide assistance for students including, but not limited to, effort, participation, social awareness, confidence, engagement and the belief in their power to succeed.



# Frequently Asked Questions continued...

## 3. I am worried about allergies. Is this concern being considered?

- The dogs are well groomed, well kept.
- The owners have submitted veterinary health records prior to the visit
- All dogs are wiped down with an allergen reducer wipe prior to entering to help reduce dander and allergens.
- Dogs may stay on a designated clean blanket / mat that the handler provides
- The coordinator also coordinates with our school nurse to be aware of students who have allergies. Please reach out if additional concerns are present.
- In all of the classrooms in SHCSD there is a High-efficiency air particulate (HEPA) air filtration / air purifier running 24/7 which helps to reduce allergens. According to [United States Environmental Protection Agency](#), this type of air filter can theoretically remove at least 99.97% of dust, pollen, mold, bacteria, dander, allergens and any airborne particles with a size of 0.3 microns.
- You may also opt out of the visit  
<https://forms.gle/O4Cf6mGtCfyhjUDZ6>





# Frequently Asked Questions continued...

## 4. My child is afraid of dogs. What should I do?

Please contact **Kristina Pinkowski** if your child has an aversion to dogs. There are several rules that our dog and handlers follow at school to ensure that all our students and staff feel safe. Also, please know that therapy dogs are USED in the treatment of overcoming the fear of dogs. If you would like more information on how therapy dogs can help your child with this fear please contact Kristina Pinkowski at 1-716-250-1297 or by email at [kpinkowski@sweethomeschools.org](mailto:kpinkowski@sweethomeschools.org)

## 5. Whom do I contact with questions?

Please contact **Kristina Pinkowski** if you are interested in learning more about these programs and how they may help your child. She can be reached at 1-716-250-1297 or by email at [kpinkowski@sweethomeschools.org](mailto:kpinkowski@sweethomeschools.org)

## 6. What do I need to do if I do not want my child to work with the therapy dog at school?

If you have any reservations and do not want your child to participate in the Therapy Dog program, please use the link below to access the Opt-out form. If you are unable to access the link, please contact the individual identified above.

<https://forms.gle/Q4Cf6mGtCfyhJUDZ6>



# In Closing

There is endless research available on the benefits that animal therapy programs have in schools, libraries, hospitals, prisons, nursing homes, and airports. I am asking that we work together for collective greatness. We have to do more for our students and adopting an animal therapy policy is adding another much needed tool to our toolbox.

I stand before you tonight with the courage, dedication and organizational skills needed to lead Sweet Home's Therapy Dog Program.



# Link to Forms

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HpP1FUfnoQ5EVxA\\_zxwMU0Kgg1diGIVleOUfxi2cHHw/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HpP1FUfnoQ5EVxA_zxwMU0Kgg1diGIVleOUfxi2cHHw/edit?usp=sharing)



**Thank you for your time and  
consideration**