

# EXPLORATION INTO ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY CURRICULUM



**Grade Level(s):** 10-12

**Curriculum Author(s):** Kathleen Gorman

**Course Description:**

This course introduces students to the growing field of animal-assisted therapy (AAT) and its role in supporting human physical, emotional and psychological well-being. Students will explore the history, theory, and practical application of AAT across a variety of settings including healthcare, education, rehabilitation, and mental health services. Through a combination of classroom instruction, guest speakers, case studies and hands-on activities, students will learn about the human-animal bond, animal behavior and welfare, and the selection and training of therapy animals. Students will also examine ethical considerations, career pathways, and certifications processes related to animal-assisted therapy interventions. The course is designed to build empathy, communication, and observation skills while offering meaningful insights into the therapeutic value of animals. Students must be enrolled in the Ellis Clark Regional Agriscience and Technology Center to enroll in this course.

## Year At A Glance

| Unit Title                                                              | Overarching Essential Question                                                                                  | Overarching Enduring Understanding                                                                                                                                                                      | <a href="#">Vision of A Learner “I Can” Statements</a>                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <a href="#">The Human-Animal Bond</a>                                   | What makes the connection between humans and animals powerful enough to promote healing and improve well-being? | The human-animal bond is a deeply rooted relationship that can have measurable psychological, emotional, and physiological benefits when applied in therapeutic settings.                               | <b>TCC2(9-12), TCC3(9-12),<br/>CCE1(9-12), CCE3(9-12)</b>                          |
| <a href="#">Therapy in Action: Roles, Settings, and Impact</a>          | How are therapy animals used to meet the needs of diverse populations in various environments?                  | Animal-assisted therapy is a versatile and impactful tool that supports individuals across a range of settings, from hospitals to classrooms, but enhancing healing, motivation, and emotional support. | <b>CCE3(9-12), DE2(9-12), TI1(9-12),<br/>P4(9-12), AA1(9-12)</b>                   |
| <a href="#">Partners in Healing: Animal Selection, Care, and Ethics</a> | How do we ensure that therapy animals are safe, effective, and ethically treated in their work?                 | Successful animal-assisted therapy relies on selecting suitable animals, prioritizing their welfare, and maintaining ethical standards that protect both the animals and the people they serve.         | <b>TCC2(9-12), CCE2(9-12),<br/>CCE3(9-12), DE2(9-12), DE4(9-12),<br/>AA1(9-12)</b> |

## Unit 1 - THE HUMAN ANIMAL BOND

### Desired Results - Goals, Transfer, Meaning, Acquisition

#### Established Goals:

##### Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resource Standards

**AS.01.01** Evaluate the development and implications of animal origin, domestication, and distribution on production practices and the environment.

**AS.01.03** Analyze laws and sustainable practices that impact animal agriculture from a local, tribal, state, national, and global perspective.

**AS.02.01** Explain management techniques that ensure animal welfare.

**AS.06.01** Classify animals according to taxonomic classification systems and use (e.g., agricultural, companion, etc.).

##### Common Core State Standards

**SL.11-12.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**SL.11-12.4** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

**W.11-12.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

**W.11-12.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**W.11-12.7** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**W.11-12.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

##### National Health Science Standards

**2.1.1** Model verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication.

**2.3.2** Prepare examples of technical and informative writing.

**3.1.1** Differentiate healthcare delivery systems and healthcare-related agencies.

**3.1.3** Analyze the impact of emerging issues on healthcare delivery systems.

**6.2.1** Discuss religious, social, and cultural values as they impact healthcare.

**Vision of A Learner Attributes:** Students will be able to independently use their learning to...

#### THINK CRITICALLY AND CREATIVELY

**TCC2:** I can evaluate evidence from multiple perspectives and recognize their limitations and implications, in order to justify new conclusions.

**TCC3:** I can integrate relevant information to produce multiple valid solutions.  
**COLLABORATE AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY**

**CCE1:** I can initiate discussions with my peers and teachers about a variety of topics, respecting different viewpoints, actively listening to others, and responding thoughtfully with peer-reviewed evidence that is free of bias.

**CCE3:** I can show initiative in prompting group discourse and fostering collaboration among others, providing actionable feedback, and working with others to solve problems and/or design products.

**Understandings:** Students will understand that...

- The human-animal bond is a unique and meaningful relationship that can have a profoundly positive impact on emotional, social, and physical well-being.
- Animal-assisted therapy has evolved over time, shaped by cultural, medical, and social developments.
- Animal-assisted therapy, activities, and service animals play distinct roles in supporting people with varying needs.
- Interacting with animals can cause measurable changes in human brain chemistry, stress levels, and overall health.
- A person's background, personality, and life experiences shape how they bond with animals.
- The human-animal bond can be intentionally integrated into therapeutic practices to support healing and development.

**Essential Questions:**

- What is the human-animal bond, and why does it matter?
- How has the role of animals in therapy changed throughout history?
- What are the differences between therapy animals, service animals, and emotional support animals?
- What does science say about how animals affect human health?
- How do individual factors impact the human-animal bond?
- How is the human-animal bond used in real-life therapeutic settings?

**Students will know...**

- The definition and characteristics of the human-animal bond.
- Basic theories that explain why humans bond with animals.
- Key historical figures and events in the development of AAT.
- The timeline of major milestones in animal-assisted interventions.
- Definitions and legal distinctions among AAT, AAA, service animals, and emotional support animals.
- Appropriate contexts and uses for each type of animal support.
- Key physiological responses to human-animal interaction (e.g., oxytocin release, lowered cortisol).
- Psychological and emotional benefits of animal contact.
- How age, culture, trauma, and personal history influence relationships with animals.
- The role of animals in helping people cope with stress, grief, and isolation.

**Students will be able to...**

- Identify examples of the human-animal bond in everyday life.
- Describe how this bond can influence human emotions and behaviors.
- Trace the evolution of therapy animal use across different time periods and cultures.
- Analyze how public perception of animals in healthcare has changed.
- Classify the animals into the appropriate therapy category based on a given scenario.
- Explain the purpose and training requirements of each therapy category of animal.
- Summarize scientific findings that support the benefits of AAT.
- Interpret basic data or research outcomes related to AAT effectiveness.
- Analyze how different populations experience and benefit from

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of programs and professions that use AAT.</li> <li>• Populations and conditions that commonly benefit from animal-assisted interventions.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>animal interventions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain why AAT might be more effective for some individuals than others.</li> <li>• Identify how the human-animal bond is applied in different professional settings.</li> <li>• Evaluate the effectiveness of real AAT programs using criteria such as outcomes, feedback and ethical standards.</li> </ul>                                        |
| <p><b>Key Vocabulary:</b><br/>anthropomorphism, animal rights philosophy, animal welfare philosophy, domestication, animal-assisted interventions, animal-assisted therapy, biophilia, companion animals, human-animal bond, human-animal interactions</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Assessment Evidence</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p><b>Performance Tasks:</b><br/><i>Classwork:</i> Students will create a visual representation of how animals influence human well-being. <b>TCC3</b></p> <p><i>Classwork:</i> Students will identify one key moment in AAT history and explain its impact. <b>CCE3</b></p> <p><i>Classwork:</i> Students will read and summarize a short research article or infographic on AAT benefits. <b>TCC2</b></p> <p><i>Interim:</i> Conduct and summarize a peer interview about their experiences with animals. <b>CCE1</b></p> <p><i>Summative:</i> Students will research and present on a real-world AAT program (e.g, prison dog training, hospital therapy dogs). <b>TCC3</b></p> | <p><b>Other Evidence:</b><br/><i>Classwork:</i> Students will describe a personal or observed experience that demonstrates the human-animal bond in a reflection journal entry.</p> <p><i>Classwork:</i> Students will reflect on which AAT application resonated most and why.</p> <p><i>Interim:</i> Students will complete a written assessment on the terminology and roles of animal-assisted therapy categories.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Learning Plan</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the historic progression of the human-animal bond throughout history. <b>TCC3</b></li> <li>• Differentiate between animal-assisted therapy (AAT), animal-assisted activities (AAA), service animals, and emotional support animals.</li> <li>• Research current animal-assisted therapy programs and their functions in society. <b>TCC3</b></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p><b>Teacher Resources:</b><br/>Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy, Fifth Edition</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

## Unit 2 - THERAPY IN ACTION: ROLES, SETTINGS AND IMPACT

### Desired Results - Goals, Transfer, Meaning, Acquisition

#### Established Goals:

##### National Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources

**AS.01.01** Evaluate the development and implications of animal origin, domestication, and distribution on production practices and the environment.

**AS.01.03** Analyze laws and sustainable practices that impact animal agriculture from a local, tribal, state, national, and global perspective.

**AS.02.01** Explain management techniques that ensure animal welfare.

**AS.05.01** Design and evaluate animal housing, equipment, and handling facilities for the major systems of animal production.

**AS.05.02** Comply with government regulations and safety standards for facilities used in animal production.

**AS.06.02** Apply principles of comparative anatomy and physiology to use within various animal systems.

##### Common Core State Standards

**RI.11-12.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

**RI.11-12.2** Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

**RI.11-12.3** Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

**SL.11-12.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**SL.11-12.4** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

**W.11-12.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

**W.11-12.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**W.11-12.7** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**W.11-12.8** Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format

for citation.

**W.11-12.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**National Health Science Standards**

**2.1.1** Model verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication.

**2.3.2** Prepare examples of technical and informative writing.

**3.1.1** Differentiate healthcare delivery systems and healthcare-related agencies.

**3.1.3** Analyze the impact of emerging issues on healthcare delivery systems.

**6.2.1** Discuss religious, social, and cultural values as they impact healthcare.

**Vision of A Learner Attributes:** Students will be able to independently use their learning to...

**COLLABORATE AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY**

**CCE3:** I can show initiative in prompting group discourse and fostering collaboration among others, providing actionable feedback, and working with others to solve problems and/or design products.

**DEMONSTRATE EMPATHY**

**DE2:** I can honor my own feelings and show empathy toward others through my actions.

**TAKE INITIATIVE**

**TI1:** I can implement a realistic plan and adapt when necessary to achieve my goals.

**PERSEVERE**

**P4:** I can take on challenges and continuously engage in my own long-term strategies to overcome them to demonstrate through personal experience that failures are more instructive than discouraging.

**ADAPT AND ADJUST**

**AA1:** I can evaluate different approaches and justify the best pathway to success.

**Understandings:** Students will understand that...

- Animal-assisted therapy (AAT) and animal-assisted activities (AAA) both support human well-being but differ in purpose, structure, and outcomes.
- Animal-assisted interventions can be adapted for a wide variety of environments to meet different human needs.
- In healthcare settings, therapy animals can promote healing, reduce stress, and improve patient outcomes.
- Animals can support student learning, social-emotional development, and behavior in education settings.
- AAT is not limited to hospitals and schools; unconventional environments can also benefit from structured animal interaction.
- The success of animal-assisted therapy can be measured through outcomes, feedback, and client progress toward goals.

**Essential Questions:**

- What are the key differences between animal-assisted therapy and animal-assisted activities?
- Where and how are animal-assisted interventions used to improve human lives?
- How do therapy animals contribute to patient care and recovery in medical settings?
- In what ways do therapy animals impact students and teachers in schools?
- What are some surprising or unconventional environments where animal-assisted therapy is making a difference?
- How do we evaluate whether an animal-assisted therapy program is truly effective?

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| <p><b>Students will know...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The definitions and distinctions between AAT and AAA.</li> <li>• Examples of settings where AAT and AAA are applied.</li> <li>• Roles of professionals in AAT versus AAA.</li> <li>• Common settings for AAT/AAA (hospitals, schools, prisons, nursing homes, mental health clinics).</li> <li>• Population needs and goals in each of the common settings for AAT/AAA.</li> <li>• Types of healthcare settings that use therapy animals.</li> <li>• Benefits and limitations of AAT in hospitals, rehab centers, and long-term care facilities.</li> <li>• AAT applications for literacy, emotional regulations, and special education.</li> <li>• Challenges and benefits of using therapy animals in schools.</li> <li>• Unique settings in which AAT/AAA is applied (e.g., prisons, corporate offices, disaster relief zones, libraries).</li> <li>• Adaptations required for different environments applying AAT/AAA techniques.</li> <li>• Methods for assessing AAT success (e.g., surveys, observation, behavior change).</li> <li>• Importance of data collection, feedback and program adaptation.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Students will be able to...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare and contrast AAT and AA using specific criteria.</li> <li>• Identify the appropriate setting for AAT or AA based on client needs.</li> <li>• Match intervention goals to appropriate intervention settings.</li> <li>• Describe how animal-assisted services are tailored to unique populations.</li> <li>• Analyze how AAT supports physical and emotional healing.</li> <li>• Identify considerations and precautions for using animals in health care.</li> <li>• Design a basic plan for incorporating a therapy animal into a school environment.</li> <li>• Evaluate how animals can address specific student needs.</li> <li>• Identify unconventional uses of AAT and explain their impact.</li> <li>• Create a plan for a nontraditional AAT program.</li> <li>• Interpret sample data to draw conclusions about a program's success.</li> <li>• Propose improvements to an existing AAT program based on evidence.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Key Vocabulary:</b><br/>animal-assisted activities (AAA), animal-assisted interventions (AAI), animal-assisted therapy (AAT), assessment, client, documentation, ethics, evaluation, facility, handler, intervention, outcome, population, professional, program, progress notes, protocol, setting, stakeholder, therapy animal</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p><b>Assessment Evidence</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p><b>Performance Tasks:</b><br/><i>Classwork:</i> Students will create a visual guide showing setting, population served, and intervention goals for an AAT/AAA site. <b>CCE3</b></p> <p><i>Classwork:</i> As a group, students will review and give feedback on a real or mock AAT program's evaluation methods. <b>TI1</b></p> <p><i>Interim:</i> Students will create a brochure for a hypothetical hospital for an</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p><b>Other Evidence:</b><br/><i>Classwork:</i> Students will create a T-chart comparison of AAT versus AAA.</p> <p><i>Classwork:</i> Students will evaluate the effectiveness of an AAT program in a hospital setting through the use of case studies. <b>TI1</b></p> <p><i>Classwork:</i> Students will answer the reflection question: "How could a</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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| <p>AAT program launching. <b>CCE3</b></p> <p><i>Summative:</i> Students will plan a mobile AAT unit for a disaster relief scenario. <b>DE2, P4</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>therapy animal have helped you or a peer during school?”</p> <p><i>Classwork:</i> Students will complete a data analysis worksheet that examines sample AAT results and recommend adjustments. <b>AA1</b></p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Learning Plan</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will compare animal-assisted therapy and animal-assisted activities including definitions, goals, personnel involved, and documentation required. <b>CCE3</b></li> <li>• Students will analyze scenarios to determine if AAT, AAA or service animal is in use.</li> <li>• Students will research how AAT is used in multiple therapeutic settings. <b>TI1</b></li> <li>• Students will design a mock therapy session tailored to a specific setting population that includes session goals, animals used, safety measures, and expected outcomes. <b>DE2, P4</b></li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <p><b>Teacher Resources:</b><br/> Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy, Fifth Edition<br/> Pet Partners Handler Guide</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## Unit 3 - PARTNERS IN HEALING: ANIMAL SELECTION, CARE, AND ETHICS

### Desired Results - Goals, Transfer, Meaning, Acquisition

#### Established Goals:

##### National Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources

**AS.01.03** Analyze laws and sustainable practices that impact animal agriculture from a local, tribal, state, national, and global perspective.

**AS.06.02** Apply principles of comparative anatomy and physiology to uses within various animal systems.

**AS.06.03** Select animals for specific purposes and maximum performance based on anatomy and physiology.

**AS.07.01** Design programs to prevent animal diseases, parasites, and other disorders and ensure animal welfare.

##### Common Core State Standards

**RI.11-12.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

**RI.11-12.2** Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

**RI.11-12.3** Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

**RI.11-12.7** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

**SL.11-12.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**SL.11-12.4** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

**W.11-12.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

**W.11-12.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**W.11-12.7** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**W.11-12.8** Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

**W.11-12.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**National Health Science Standards**

**2.1.1** Model verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication.

**2.3.2** Prepare examples of technical and informative writing.

**3.1.1** Differentiate healthcare delivery systems and healthcare-related agencies.

**3.1.3** Analyze the impact of emerging issues on healthcare delivery systems.

**6.2.1** Discuss religious, social, and cultural values as they impact healthcare.

**Vision of A Learner Attributes:** Students will be able to independently use their learning to...

**THINK CRITICALLY AND CREATIVELY**

**TCC2:** I can evaluate evidence from multiple perspectives, and recognize their limitations and implications, in order to justify new conclusions.

**COLLABORATE AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY**

**CCE2:** I can give and receive actionable and relevant feedback with openness to be able to determine meaningful revisions for success.

**CCE3:** I can show initiative in prompting group discourse and fostering collaboration among others, providing actionable feedback, and working with others to solve problems and/or design products.

**DEMONSTRATE EMPATHY**

**DE2:** I can honor my own feelings and show empathy toward others through my actions.

**DE4:** I can work respectfully with all members of my community and support the needs of others.

**ADAPT AND ADJUST**

**AA1:** I can evaluate different approaches and justify the best pathway to success.

**Understandings:** Students will understand that...

- The effectiveness and safety of animal-assisted therapy depend on selecting animals with the appropriate temperament, behavior, and training potential.
- Therapy animals must undergo specialized training and evaluation to ensure safe, controlled interactions with people.
- Protecting the physical and emotional well-being of therapy animals is essential to ethical and sustainable animal assisted work.
- Ethical decision-making in AAT ensures safety, dignity, and respect of both clients and animals.
- Handlers are critical to the success of animal-assisted interventions, ensuring safety, communication, and effective delivery of services.
- A safe environment for both animals and clients enhances the

**Essential Questions:**

- What makes an animal suitable for therapeutic work?
- How are therapy animals trained and certified to work with people?
- How can we ensure therapy animals are treated with respect, care, and compassion?
- What ethical issues arise in animal-assisted therapy, and how can they be addressed?
- What is the handler's role, and how do they support both the animal and the client during AAT?
- How can we design spaces and routines that promote safety and well-being in AAT sessions?

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| success and sustainability of AAT programs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p><b>Students will know...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common species and breeds used in animal-assisted therapy.</li> <li>• Characteristics of a good therapy animal (temperament, socialization, health).</li> <li>• Basic eligibility and evaluation criteria for therapy animals.</li> <li>• The steps involved in training therapy animals.</li> <li>• Key skills and behaviors animals must learn.</li> <li>• Organizations that certify therapy animals and their requirements.</li> <li>• Signs of stress and burnout in therapy animals.</li> <li>• The Five Freedoms of animal welfare.</li> <li>• Best practices for scheduling, rest, and health care.</li> <li>• Common ethical challenges (e.g., consent, animal stress, handler responsibility).</li> <li>• Ethical standards and guidelines for practitioners.</li> <li>• The importance of informed consent and appropriate boundaries.</li> <li>• Core duties of a handler before, during, and after a session.</li> <li>• How handlers communicate with both animals and clients.</li> <li>• The importance of handler training and self-awareness.</li> <li>• Key elements of a safe therapy environment (space, noise level, exits, animal access).</li> <li>• How to prevent and respond to incidents (e.g., bites, fear reactions, allergies).</li> <li>• Safety protocols and emergency procedures in AAT settings.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Students will be able to...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify traits of suitable therapy animals.</li> <li>• Explain why certain animals may or may not be appropriate for AAT.</li> <li>• Describe the training process for therapy animals.</li> <li>• Compare the standards of different therapy animal certification organizations.</li> <li>• Recognize when a therapy animal may be overstressed or unfit to work.</li> <li>• Create a basic wellness plan for a therapy animal.</li> <li>• Analyze ethical dilemmas and propose appropriate actions.</li> <li>• Explain how ethical practices protect both the client and the animal.</li> <li>• Simulate basic handler responsibilities in mock sessions.</li> <li>• Identify signs of stress in the animal and client and respond appropriately.</li> <li>• Assess a mock environment for AAT readiness and safety.</li> <li>• Develop a basic emergency response plan for AAT incidents.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Key Vocabulary:</b><br/> animal-assisted therapy (AAT), breed suitability, burnout, certification, ethics, evaluation, handler, health screening, informed consent, overstimulation, professional standards, selection criteria, service animal, socialization, stress signals, temperament, therapy animal, welfare, wellness plan, work/rest balance</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Assessment Evidence</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p><b>Performance Tasks:</b><br/> <i>Classwork:</i> Students will evaluate profiles of various animals to determine their suitability for animal-assisted therapy work. <b>DE4</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p><b>Other Evidence:</b><br/> <i>Classwork:</i> Students will outline the process from animal selection to certification.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

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| <p><i>Classwork:</i> Students will create a weekly care and work schedule for a therapy animal. <b>AA1</b></p> <p><i>Classwork:</i> Students will evaluate peers in a handler simulation role. <b>CCE2</b></p> <p><i>Classwork:</i> Students will evaluate a sample floor and recommend improvements. <b>TCC2</b></p> <p><i>Interim:</i> Students will do small group research presentations on major certifying organizations of animal-assisted therapy animals (e.g., Pet Partners, Therapy Dogs International). <b>CCE3</b></p> | <p><i>Classwork:</i> Students will identify welfare concerns and suggest improvements. <b>DE2</b></p> <p><i>Classwork:</i> Students will answer the reflection question: “What responsibility do humans have to therapy animals?”</p> <p><i>Interim:</i> Students will complete a written assessment on characteristics and selection criteria of animal-assisted therapy candidates.</p> <p><i>Summative:</i> Students will complete a cumulative written assessment of course material.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Learning Plan</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students evaluate animal profiles (species, breed, temperament, behavior) to determine suitability for therapy work.</li> <li>• Students will research certifying organizations and their requirements to certify animal-assisted therapy animals. <b>CCE3</b></li> <li>• Students will assess instances where therapy animal welfare is compromised and address concerns and propose solutions. <b>CCE2</b></li> </ul>                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <p><b>Teacher Resources:</b><br/>Pet Partners Handler Guide</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |