

# IMG - ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS

## ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS

The Board recognizes that having animals in the classroom can offer valuable student learning experiences but is also concerned with the health and safety of students, staff and visitors and the insurance of humane treatment of animals when they are brought to school.

For the purpose of this policy “animals” includes mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, insects and fish.

The presence of live animals in the classroom must be directly related to the objectives of the instructional program. Permission is to be obtained from the principal before animals are brought into any school by anyone.

The following guidelines shall apply to the presence of animals in Cape Elizabeth Schools.

- I. Staff who wish to have animals in the classroom must submit a written request to the principal; the request should include the instructional purpose and activity, the type of animal, the length of time the animal is expected to be present, and a plan for the care of the animal. The principal, at his/her discretion, may approve or deny the request.
- II. Students or parents who wish to bring animals to school for educational purposes must consult with the teacher who, in turn, will request permission from the building principal. All other persons who wish to bring animals to school must obtain written permission, in advance, from the building principal.
- III. The Superintendent/designee will be responsible for developing procedures to inform parents that animals may be visiting or residing in classrooms during the school year. Parents are expected to notify the school if their child has an allergy or other physical or mental health condition that will be affected by the presence of animals in the classroom. The building principal and staff will respond appropriately when health considerations are brought to their attention. An animal will not be housed in a classroom if a student in that classroom has a documented allergy to the animal.
- IV. Health and Safety: Animals that come into schools must not pose a health and safety risk to any student, employee, or other person at school. A “health” risk may be defined to include both physical and mental health. The interpretation of what poses such a potential risk is left up to the building Principal or his/her designee and is not subject to appeal. An animal will not be brought into a classroom if a student in that classroom has a documented health risk related to animals. If any student or school employee assigned to a classroom in which a therapy dog is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to an animal, the animal will be removed to a different location designated by the administrator. Cleaning procedures will be followed whenever an animal occupies a shared space in the building.
- V. Animals may not be transported in school vehicles.
- VI. If animals are to be kept in the classroom on days when classes are not in session, arrangements for their care will be made by the responsible staff member.
- VII. No domestic mammals/pets (including dogs, cats, ferrets, and primates) or livestock will be allowed in school unless current proof of rabies and/or other vaccination is provided. Smaller mammals such as mice, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, and rabbits do not need to be vaccinated against rabies. Bats, as they may be carriers of rabies, are not allowed in the schools. Parrots, parakeets and other psittacine birds (birds that may carry psittacosis, a severe infectious human respiratory disease) shall not be brought to school unless they have been tested and certified as psittacosis-free. Red-eared turtles (also known as painted turtles) are carriers of salmonella and shall not be kept in the classroom without written documentation from the supplier that they are salmonella-free.

- VIII. No wild, exotic, aggressive or poisonous animals will be allowed in school unless under the control of an individual trained in the care and management of the animal and properly licensed by state or federal agencies as appropriate (e.g., zookeepers, veterinarians, biologists, Maine Fish and Wildlife personnel). Students will not be permitted to handle such animals.
- IX. No animals will be allowed free range of the classroom or the school. All animals brought to school must be restrained by the owner/handler. The teacher is responsible for the proper supervision and control of students whenever there is an exhibit or activity involving animals in school.
- X. Animals kept in classrooms must be housed in suitable cages or containers and fed and otherwise cared for appropriately. Only the teacher or students designated or supervised by the teacher may be allowed to handle these animals. Animal waste must be removed on an as-needed basis and in a sanitary manner. Only staff members or adult volunteers will be allowed to clean cages or containers or remove animal waste.
- XI. If a student is bitten/injured by an animal on school premises, the building principal, school nurse and parent/guardian must be notified as soon as possible. If a staff member or visitor is bitten/injured, the building principal must be notified. The building principal must notify appropriate public health authorities and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services Center for Disease Control of each incident. An accident/injury report must also be completed and forwarded to the Superintendent.
- XII. If a stray or wild animal appears on school grounds, students shall not be allowed in the area until the animal has left the premises or is removed by the local animal control officer, game warden or other appropriate official.
- XIII. No animal may be used as part of a scientific experiment or for any other purpose in which the normal health of the animal is interfered with or which causes pain or distress. No person may practice vivisection or exhibit a vivisected animal in the schools. Dissection of dead animals shall be confined to the classroom and to the presence of students engaged in the study of dissection and shall not be for the purpose of exhibition.
- XIV. The Board recognizes that service animals may be used to assist persons with disabilities. This policy does not apply to the presence of service animals that have been or are being specifically trained for the purpose of assisting a person with a disability.

## Legal Reference:

- Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.)
- 7 MRSA § 397122
- MRSA §§ 801-825

## Cross Reference:

- ACAC - Service Animals in the Schools
- EBBB - Accident Reports
- IMGA -Service Animals in the Schools
- JLCE - First Aid and Emergency Medical
- IMGB - Therapy Animals in Schools

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