ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS

SERVICE ANIMALS

The Tacoma School District acknowledges its responsibility to permit students, parents/guardians, family members, employees, and community members with disabilities to be accompanied by a “service animal” consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Washington Law Against Discrimination (WALD) on school property and on school buses or at school activities.

A “service animal” is an animal that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of assisting or accommodating a disabled person’s sensory, mental, or physical disability. The animal must be trained to engage in specific actions or tasks to assist its handler with a disability. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability. An animal whose sole function is as a pet or to provide comfort or emotional support does not qualify as a service animal under this Regulation or law.

ALL OTHER ANIMALS ON CAMPUS

With the exception of service animals, animals are not allowed on District campuses during school hours unless specifically approved by the Principal. Many animals, while well-behaved normally, may act aggressively under the increased input of a school campus where students and adults are moving constantly. School hours are meant to include classroom periods, the period of time before and after school when students are entering and exiting the school, and during after-school activities when students are present.

Parents or guardians walking their animals and the student as part of the arrival or departure process must keep their animals off the school grounds. Animals remaining in vehicles while visiting the campus are not restricted except that owners should keep windows and other openings restricted to prevent children from reaching into the vehicle.

ANIMALS IN CLASSROOMS

Safety precautions are needed to prevent or lessen the severity of personal injury or illness, define actions to be taken in the event of injury or illness due to animals, and set procedures for humane treatment and handling of animals.

Selecting/Adopting a Classroom Pet

Allowing any animal into the school building or on the school grounds is at the Principal’s discretion. Before a classroom “adopts” a pet, the teacher should evaluate the appropriateness of the animal of interest and the long-term utility of the educational objective for having the animal in the classroom. The teacher must then develop a plan of daily care for the animal (including weekends, holiday breaks and end of school year), a plan for access and to pay for veterinary care if potentially needed, and an exit plan for the animal if it has to be removed from the school. Under no circumstance will the District be responsible to pay for the veterinary care of any classroom pet.
• Prior to adopting a pet for the classroom, arrangements must be made in advance for the feeding and care of the pet(s) on weekends and during school vacations. Requesting students or their families to assume this responsibility will not be permitted. However, adult family members may volunteer their services if they so wish. It is essential to find good, qualified summer caretakers who are interested in caring for a pet.

• Teachers should select a veterinarian for the classroom pet and have instructions for the evening custodian and weekend or holiday care giver should an emergency arise. If a teacher is assuming the responsibility of having a classroom pet, they are also assuming the responsibility for all expenses related to the care of the classroom pet, including regular and emergency veterinarian care.

The teacher must submit the daily care plan, the veterinary care, and an exit plan for the animal when to the Principal for consideration and approval when making the request for having a classroom plan. The Principal will use this Regulation in making his/her decision regarding the request. Principal approval is required on an annual basis and may be revoked by the Principal or a District administrator at any time.

Parent Notification

A written notice will be sent to each child’s parent before obtaining a classroom pet. At the parent’s request, a student may be excluded from the class for health reasons or the “adoption” may be refused. This process must be repeated annually for each new group of students and for new students enrolling mid-year.

Allergies & Animal Sensitivities

Students and staff members with allergies or sensitivities to animals must be accommodated. Location of the pet, cleanliness, and indoor air quality concerns must be addressed. If adequate accommodations cannot be made, the pet must be removed or the “adoption” denied.

Animals Appropriate for the Classroom

The below constitute the only animals that a teacher may request as a classroom animal.

• Fish
  Fish aquariums must be cleaned and cared for regularly. Used tank water must be disposed of in sinks that are not used for food preparation or drinking water.

• Small Animals - Guinea pigs, hamsters, mice and rats
  Small animals such as guinea pigs, hamsters, mice and rats can make good classroom pets if proper care is taken to avoid incidents.

• Snakes, Reptiles and Amphibians
  The Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, Washington recommends the following short list of reptiles for classroom study:
  Leopard Gecko
  Tree Frog
  Inland Bearded Dragon
Corn Snake
Argentine Horned Frog
Boa Constrictor (< 6 feet long)

Only reptiles bred in captivity will be allowed. Reptiles are a long-term acquisition. Many live for 10 to 20 years or more. Careful research on behavior patterns and required care is recommended before acquiring a classroom reptile.

Reptile tanks and aquariums should be as natural as possible and maintained appropriately.

Reptiles should not be kissed or touched by a child’s face.

All reptiles and amphibians can carry salmonella, even when bred as pets or for display. Hands must always be washed after handling a reptile, as should all surfaces the reptile has touched. Hands should be washed immediately after handling animals with warm water and soap. If reptiles are placed outside their aquarium, be sure to clean the area(s) afterwards with a disinfectant cleaner. Carefully clean desks or tables used for eating. Use a toilet or utility sink (not a kitchen or hand washing sink) to empty tank water.

The Herpetocultural Library Series is an excellent resource for information about specific reptiles.

Care and Handling of Classroom Pets

Classroom animals must eventually be found permanent homes. Animals that receive good care make better pets. The teacher must keep bedding clean and dry and cages well ventilated. Cages are required to be designed to keep bedding and/or absorbent materials inside the cage and not allowed to accumulate bedding/litter/food on counters or floors.

Pets must receive appropriate amounts and types of foods on a regular basis and have fresh water available at all times. Use a metal screen or net to keep combustible bedding material from touching lights or heat lamps. Be sure that pets are not exposed to extreme temperatures, especially heat radiating through sunny windows. Buildings may not be heated or ventilated over weekends and holidays which may cause discomfort for some animals.

All student contact with animals must be organized and supervised. Gloves must be worn when handling animals. Hands must be washed after gloves are removed. Children must not be allowed to touch animals with their faces, hold animals close to their faces, nor hold animals too tightly. Feeding should be handled by an adult.

Reporting Problems

If a student or staff member has an incident with the classroom pet, or if there are allergic symptoms present, then the Principal must be notified. If the incident involved student exposure to the animal or animal products where the skin has been broken or other cause for concern is present, then the parent or guardian must be contacted by the Principal or delegate. If the Principal needs advice on the handling of the incident or issue, the Safety Manager may be consulted.
Cross Reference:
Policy 2161    Special Education and Related Services for Eligible Students
Policy 2162    Education of Students with Disabilities under Section 504
Policy 3111    Nondiscrimination and Equity
Policy 5265    Nondiscrimination

Legal References:
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Revised Title II Regulations, Section 35 Service Animals
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

RCW 28A.642    Discrimination Prohibition
RCW 49.60.010   Discrimination – Purpose of Chapter
RCQ 49.60.030   Freedom for Discrimination – Declaration of Civil Rights
RCW 49.60.040   Definitions
RCW 70.84.010   Blind, Handicapped, and Disabled Persons – Declaration– Policy
RCW 70.84.021   “Service Animal” Defined

WAC 162-26    Public Accommodations, Disability Discrimination
WAC 392-145-021(3)   General Operating Requirements
WAC 392-172A-01035   Child with a Disability or Student eligible for Special Education
WAC 392-172A-01155(3)   Related Services
WAC 392-190   Equal Educational Opportunity – Unlawful Discrimination Prohibited