

ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS

Code **IMG** Issued **9/20**

With the exception of service animals, animals are not allowed on district property, in school facilities, at sporting events, or on playing fields during school hours unless specifically approved by the principal. For purposes of this policy, *school hours* 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.

Animals remaining in vehicles while the owner is visiting the campus are not restricted except that owners should keep windows and other openings restricted to prevent students from reaching into the vehicle.

If a stray or wild animal appears on school grounds, students will 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.

Classroom Pets

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 will evaluate the appropriateness of the animal of interest and the long-term benefits of the educational objective for having the animal in the classroom. The teacher will ensure the presence of the animal directly supports the learning objectives of the district's educational program. The teacher will then submit a written request to the principal detailing:

- the instructional purpose of the animal
- the type of animal
- the length of time the animal is expected to be present
- a plan for the care of the animal (including, but not limited to, a plan of daily care for the animal, including weekends, holiday breaks, and end of the school year; a plan for access to and paying the cost of veterinary care; and an exit plan for the animal if it has to be removed from the school)
- proof of the animal's good health, including proof of rabies and other vaccinations, if applicable for the species

Principal approval is required on an annual basis and may be revoked by the principal or a district-level administrator at any time.

It is not appropriate to request that students or their families assume any responsibility for a classroom pet.

Under no circumstance will the district be responsible financially for the veterinary care of any classroom pet.

Parent/Legal guardian notification

After receiving administrative approval of a classroom pet, but prior to obtaining the pet and/or bringing it to school, a written notice will be sent to each student's parent/legal guardian. If the school is notified of a student health or safety need, that need will take priority over the classroom pet. Parent/Legal guardian consent is required before a student will be allowed to handle a classroom pet.

PAGE 2 - IMG - ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS

This notification process will be repeated, at a minimum, annually for year long classes or per semester with each new group of students. Permission must also be obtained for new students enrolling mid-year.

Animals appropriate for the classroom

Fish and small mammals (e.g. guinea pigs, rabbits, hamsters, gerbils, mice, and rats) may be appropriate classroom animals. Snakes, other reptiles, amphibians, insects, and spiders may also be appropriate, but only when the animal was bred in captivity, is not venomous or toxin-producing, and does not otherwise pose a health or safety risk.

Birds and ferrets may not be kept as classroom pets. Other animals, not strictly prohibited, may be considered for a classroom pet on a case-by-case basis.

Care and handling of classroom pets

Teachers approved to adopt classroom pets will be familiar with the appropriate care, feeding, and handling of that animal and of any potential dangers caused by that animal to ensure student and staff safety and proper treatment of the animal.

Animal enclosures must be sturdy, locked if possible, and appropriate for the specific species. Animal enclosures must be properly cleaned on a regular basis. Students will not assist with cleaning the animal's enclosure or disposing of animal waste. Fish tank water should not be disposed of and animal enclosures should not be cleaned in a sink or fountain that is also used for drinking water or food preparation.

If it is appropriate for the animal to be handled, students will be instructed on the correct way to handle the animal and supervised to minimize the potential of the animal or the student getting harmed. The district strongly encourages gloves to be worn when handling animals. Students will not be allowed to touch animals with their faces, hold animals close to their faces, or hold animals too tightly. Hands should be washed immediately after handling an animal. Feeding should be done by an adult or under close supervision if done by a student.

Injuries and animal escapes

The nurse, principal, and an injured student's parent/legal guardian will be notified immediately of all animal bites, scratches, or other injuries. The appropriate public health and/or animal control officials will also be notified, as appropriate.

If an animal escapes, all building staff will be notified to take extra precautions until the animal is retrieved. Students will not be involved in the recapturing of an escaped animal. The appropriate animal control officials will be contacted, as appropriate.

Transportation of animals

Animals will not be transported on school buses or other district vehicles.

Prohibited Practices

No live animal will 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 where pain or distress is caused. No person will practice vivisection or exhibit a vivisected animal in the schools. Dissection of deceased animals will be confined to the classroom and to the presence of students engaged in the study of dissection and will not be for the purpose of exhibition.

Adopted 9/22/20

Latta School District