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### Animals in the Classroom

This procedure governs animals in District buildings and on District campuses. The District always recognizes service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act when a service animal is required because of a disability and the animal has been trained to perform a task for that individual due to that disability.

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On exceptional occasions, when a school or District department experiences a crisis, the District Crisis Response Team may deploy dogs that are part of the District Crisis Response Team. In the event of such a crisis, members of that team who possess a certified and properly insured therapy dog may be asked by the District Crisis Response Team lead to bring the dog as part of the response, pending approval from the building Principal.

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For any family requesting additional mental health support outside of their child’s school building, contact information for local agencies may be provided upon request. A list of specific agencies who provide therapy dogs as a service can also be provided upon request.

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#### GUIDELINES

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In all other situations, teachers shall adhere to the following guidelines when the Principal has authorized animals or insects to be brought to, or housed in, the classroom:

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1. Teachers should select animals or insects that will suit their specific instructional needs. The animal or insect should be practical to care for in the environment provided in or near the building with only minimal modification. For example, the teacher could bring a rabbit to her room housed in a cage, provided s/he complies with all requirements of this procedure. Teachers shall also make arrangements to provide care during weekends, long holiday breaks, and during emergency closings.
2. Fur-bearing animals may be allergenic (may easily sensitize an allergic individual and/or cause allergic symptoms in already sensitized individuals). Teachers must determine whether any student who will be exposed to the animal has an allergy to that type of animal. The animal shall not be housed in a classroom where there is a student with such an allergy. Because of the prevalence of animal-induced allergies among children, it may be more prudent to house the animal in an unoccupied area, (science common area). At any time, if it is suspected that a student or staff member has had an allergic response to the animal, the animal shall be removed from the classroom or, if necessary, from the building.
3. Any animal kept in the classroom for an extended stay shall be examined by a license veterinary to assure the animal is free from any apparent disease. Inoculation is required by law for all large domestic animals (such as dogs and cats) at six (6) months of age, although the presence of large animals are discouraged. Smaller mammals such as mice, guinea pigs, rabbits, hamsters, and gerbils need not be inoculated against rabies. Information on requirements for rabies inoculation shall be obtained from the Fayette County Health Department at 252-2371. The cost of the inoculation shall be at the owner’s expense.
4. Handling of the animals should be limited to that which is necessary, such as teacher-supervised instructional activities, feeding and watering, and cleaning of the housing. Unless the animal or insect is part of a specific activity, it should remain in its cage or housing. Animals or insects shall not be allowed to roam freely in the classroom.

**Animals in the Classroom****GUIDELINES (CONTINUED)**

5. Assuming that even healthy animals harbor disease-causing organisms, teachers must emphasize the importance of proper hand washing immediately after handling any animal. The use of vinyl gloves will provide an additional barrier to the transmission of disease, particularly when cleaning the cage or housing. Latex gloves are not to be used due to potential allergic reactions in some people.

**RESTRICTIONS**

When preparing for the introduction of live animals or insects into the classroom, the following prohibitions and rules shall be observed:

1. Wild, exotic, or aggressive animals shall be prohibited.
2. Bats shall not be kept, as they are known carriers of the rabies virus.
3. Parrots, parakeets, and other psittacine birds may be carriers of human respiratory diseases and shall not be kept in schools, unless they have been tested and certified as psittacosis-free. Teachers shall consult the Fayette County Health Department at 252-2371 for additional information.
4. Red-eared turtles, also known as painted turtles, are known carriers of salmonella, an infectious organism, and shall not be kept in a classroom unless the supplier provides written documentation that the turtle is salmonella-free. Many other reptiles also harbor salmonella bacteria. Therefore, reptiles and amphibians must be handled cautiously and only by the teacher.
5. Raccoons, ferrets, and skunks are not suitable for school use because they may inflict severe bites.
6. Poisonous animals and insects are prohibited.
7. Wild animals shall not be brought into the classroom unless they are under the direct supervision of a trained representative of a conservation agency or public zoo. In addition to the Principal's authorization, prior permission is also required from the division of Risk Management and Safety.
8. Insects that sting or bite shall not be intentionally brought into the classroom. The venom of some insects is known to cause a sensitivity reaction among some people. An allergy reaction may include anaphylaxis, a life-threatening condition.
9. Plans must be made for food, housing, and general comfort of an animal before it is brought into the classroom.
10. Animal housing must be kept in a clean, sanitary condition, free of odor. Waste shall be disposed of in a tied plastic bag.
11. All animal bites, stings, or scratches shall be reported immediately to the Principal, and a local health authority should be consulted for advice, either the Fayette County Health Department at 252-2371 or Animal Control at 233-0044. Teachers shall inform the parent or guardian of the injury and complete a Student Report, which is available from the FCPS web site on the Risk Management and Safety page.