

Waitsfield Elementary School Policy

GL 17 Animals In School

Policy

The Waitsfield School Board recognizes that the presence of animals at school can provide a valuable learning experience but animals cannot be allowed to endanger student safety or disrupt learning. There should be a clear instructional or therapeutic purpose for keeping an animal in a school classroom. In addition, the Waitsfield School board recognizes that instruction related to the care and treatment of animals teaches students a sense of responsibility and promotes the humane treatment of living creatures. It is the policy of the school to notify parents of students in a classroom when an animal is being introduced. It is the policy of the Waitsfield Elementary School to support the inclusion of service animals as part of its compliance with Federal and State law as well as its belief that our school community values those with different needs and seeks to support them to be fully included in a manner that fosters greater independence.

Procedures

Animals brought to school for short term/day visits:

During school hours, no animal will be brought to school without prior authorization. Students must obtain permission from their teacher; staff will obtain authorization from the principal. Arrangements for animal visits should be made 24 hours in advance. Animals brought to school at pick up and drop off times will be leashed.

Any animal brought to school must remain under control of the responsible adult at all times. The animal will be contained on a leash or in suitable carrier. This applies to days when school is in session, prior to the start of school and for an hour after school is dismissed. Transportation to and from school will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian or other adult. Animals are not to be transported on school buses.

No wild animals or protected animals will be purposely brought to the building or on school grounds by anyone other than an authorized or licensed animal handler. There will be no physical contact between the animal and students unless it is an integral part of the objectives for the program with prior approval received from the Principal.

Animals considered as resident class pets:

The teacher will communicate with the nurse before seeking permission from the Principal. Permission of the Principal is required prior to

establishing resident animals in the classroom.

Teachers assume primary responsibility for the humane and proper treatment of any animal in their classroom. When the school is not in session for more than three days, the teacher must make arrangements for any resident animal's care and safety.

Service Animals:

The use of service animals is not subject to the restrictions of this policy. Restricting the presence of service animals on campus is subject only to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, its regulations, and corresponding provisions of State law. The ADA defines a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. It is not necessary for a service dog to be licensed or certified by a state or local governmental agency as a service dog to be considered one by the ADA.

Service dogs are not pets and are permitted to accompany the individual with a disability to all areas of the facility where children normally go. The school reserves the right to restrict a service animal from its premises when it is determined that the dog's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. When a service animal is introduced to the classroom, a team, including the teacher, administrator, and family, will be formed to develop a comprehensive plan. This plan will include a detailed description of implementation strategies as well as a communication plan. Determination of threat is the responsibility of the principal. Determination of threat will be made in consultation with the school's child protection team (including the school nurse, counselor, and principal).

Students with medical concerns:

Student health issues will be considered when assessing the appropriateness of animals in the classroom. Prior to the consideration of the introduction of an animal to the classroom, the teacher will confer with the school nurse and review the student health records to assure that there is no conflict.

Conflicts or concerns with animals and children with medical reactions to those animals will be referred to the school nurse. It is the policy of the school to consider the safety, health and well being of each and every student when making decisions regarding the introduction of animals to the classroom. When there is a conflict in this area, the Principal is responsible for resolving the matter in consultation with the involved parties, the school health officer (nurse) and others as the administration deems appropriate.

Law enforcement:

Animals under the control of a law enforcement officer are excluded from the provisions of this policy.

Liability:

The owner or handler of any animal, including a service animal, is

responsible for the animal's behavior and shall be liable for all damages suffered by persons who may be bitten or injured, and all damages to public or private property, regardless of the former viciousness of the animal or the owner's knowledge of such viciousness. All teachers will fill out an "animal in the classroom housing" form prior to the introduction of an animal in the classroom.

Humane treatment of animals:

Animals within the school will be handled, treated, and housed in a humane manner. Enclosures will be appropriate to the species. Animals will be kept in an environment appropriate to the species. Habitats will be maintained and cleaned regularly by staff not students.

References:

Americans with Disabilities Act, 28 CFR Section 38.302

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504

VSA, Title 9, Chp. 139: Discrimination and Public Accommodations

Waitsfield Local Ordinance: Leash law

Resources

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

(www.aaaai.org)

Kansas Department of Health and Environment, "Animals in Kansas Schools"

Government of Western Australia, "Animals in Schools", June 2001,

www.animalethics.wa.edu.au

Madison Metro Schools, "Animals on School Premises

(www.mmsd.org)

Secord, D.C., and Rowsell, H.C. Proper use of Animals in Schools.

Date Warned: 05/20/13

Date Adopted: 06/10/2013