

Section:	School Administration
Title:	Animals in Schools

Purpose

The Board recognizes the importance of guide dogs, service dogs, and medical therapy dogs, in supporting students with disabilities, or diverse needs, and other animals providing educational or culturally valuable experiences. This policy outlines the conditions under which these animals are allowed in schools, on school property, and on school buses in accordance with Canadian and British Columbia legislation.

Definitions

Guide Dogs and Service Dogs: Specially trained dogs certified under the Guide Dog and Service Dog Act (British Columbia) and trained at an accredited Assistance Dogs International (ADI), International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF), or a Ministry of Justice approved school. These dogs assist students with physical or developmental disabilities by performing tasks to mitigate their disabilities.

- a. **Autism Support Dogs:** Assistants for persons with autism, certified by Assistance Dogs International.
- b. **Guide Dogs:** Trained to guide blind or visually impaired persons, certified by the International Guide Dog Federation.
- c. **Hearing Dogs:** Alert individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to specific sounds.
- d. **Seizure Response Dogs:** Provide emergency response for individuals with epilepsy.
- e. **Service Dogs:** Assist individuals who utilize a wheelchair.

Medical Therapy Dogs: Social interactive dogs trained to work for a handler to provide service and comfort to others, such as in hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, libraries, rehabilitation units, or for children with learning disabilities or difficulty with literacy. These dogs do not share the same public access rights as guide and service dogs and may not be allowed admittance to public places. Therapy dogs and owners are certified or registered through organizations like Therapy Dogs Canada, Companion Paws, or Canadian Assistance Dog Institute..

Other Educational Animals: Animals brought into schools to provide direct educational or culturally valuable experiences for students. These animals must be housed in suitable, sanitary self-contained enclosures appropriate to their size, as per SPCA guidelines.

Policy

1. Guide Dogs and Service Dogs:

- a. These dogs are allowed in classrooms, schools, on school property, and on school buses when the terms and conditions of the supporting Board's Administrative Procedure are met.
- b. Their use is permitted when they afford students an equitable opportunity to access services, programs, and activities.
- c. The Board recognizes these dogs as approved aids, supports, and interventions for students with disabilities or diverse needs.
- d. Service animals must be certified, and up-to-date certification must be presented.

2. Medical Therapy Dogs:

- a. These dogs may be allowed in schools, on school property, and on school buses, when it has been determined that they are necessary for a student to have equitable access to services, programs, and activities offered by the district, when the terms and conditions of the supporting Board's Administrative Procedure are met.
- b. Medical therapy dogs are not guide dogs or service dogs and do not have the same public access rights.
- c. Medical therapy dogs must have up-to-date vaccinations and obedience training certification.

3. Other Educational Animals:

- a. Live animals may be used in a classroom or school, to support a direct educational or culturally valuable experience for students.
- b. Animals shall not be allowed to roam freely in the school.
- c. Stray animals on school property will be reported to the local animal control centre.³

4. Non-Educational Animals

- a. All other animals and dogs are not allowed on school property including during student pick up or drop off times.

Guidelines

- A. Guide dogs and service animals must be certified, and certification must be presented. Administration is responsible for documenting the certification and authorized use of guide dogs and service dogs in schools.
- B. Administration Procedures must be put in place for the approval of medical therapy dogs in schools.
- C. To ensure students are provided educational learning opportunities, other animals may be allowed in schools for educational purposes, when approved by the school principal, considering this policy, supporting administrative procedures, school district bylaws, and any other legislation or regulation that governs animals in schools.

Date Approved: April 15, 2025

Legal Reference:

Cross Reference:

Forms: