Escambia County School District Policy Manual

 3.07(16) Animals on Campus

A. The district recognizes the educational benefits derived from utilizing animals, such as insects, and aquatic life in the classroom. To that extent, live animals will be permitted on campus subject to the following restrictions:

1. Live animals must have direct relevance to the objectives of the instructional program.

2. The principal shall approve all animals that are brought to school for instructional purposes.

3. Prior to introducing animals, the teacher shall be certain that:

a. students and school personnel are not allergic to their presence;

b. animals will present no danger (pathogens, toxins, or other physical harm) to students, or other district personnel;

c. students are instructed in the proper care and sanitary handling of the animal;

d. sanitary and humane conditions can be maintained.

4. After handling animals, careful hand washing must be reinforced.

B. Service Animals

1. "Service animals" are defined as "any dog or miniature horse that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability. Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to, assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing non-violent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, alerting individuals to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors, reminding an individual with a mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming an individual with post-traumatic stress disorder during an anxiety attack, or doing other specific work or performing other special tasks. The crime deterrent effects of an animal's presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purposes of this definition."

2. When a request has been made for a service animal to accompany a student or employee to school, the District will follow established procedures to determine whether the service animal meets the requirements of State and Federal law as well as local ordinance.

3. A service animal is permitted to accompany a student with a disability to whom the animal is assigned anywhere on the school campus where students are permitted to be.

4. A service animal is the personal property of the student and/or parents. The Board does not assume responsibility for training, daily care, or healthcare of service animals. The Board does not assume responsibility for personal injury or property damage arising out of or relating to the presence or use of service animals on Board property or at District-sponsored events.

5. A service animal shall at all times be under the control of the student with a disability or a separate handler if the student is unable to control the animal due to disability. A service animal shall have a harness, leash, or other tether, unless either the student with a disability is unable because of a disability to use a harness, leash, or other tether, or the use of a harness, leash, or other tether would interfere with the service animal's safe, effective performance of work or tasks, in which case the service animal must be otherwise under the student's control (e.g., voice control, signals, or other effective means), or under the control of a handler other than the student.

6. If the student with a disability is unable to control the service animal and another person serves as the animal's handler, that individual shall be treated as a volunteer and, as such, will be subject to Board policy.

7. If the animal's trainer intends or is required to be on school grounds when students are present, the trainer will be treated as a volunteer subject to Board policy.

8. Other individuals with disabilities who are accompanied by their service animals are permitted access to all areas of the District's facilities where members of the public, as participants in services, programs, or activities, as vendors, or as invitees, are permitted to go. Individuals who will access any area of the District’s facilities with their service animals should notify the Principal or site administrator that their service animal will accompany them during their visit.

9. If a service animal demonstrates that it is not under the control of the disabled student/person or handler, is not housebroken, poses a threat to the health and safety of others, or disrupts the effective delivery of instruction (for example, barking or growling), the Principal or site administrator shall document the observed behavior and determine whether the service animal should be removed or excluded from District grounds.

10. The Principal or site administrator should notify the Superintendent when a service animal has been removed and/or excluded, and immediately subsequent to such notification, document the reasons for the removal and/or exclusion.

11. The Principal’s or site administrator's decision to remove and/or exclude a service animal from District property may be appealed in accordance with the complaint procedure set forth in Policy 1.17 - Nondiscrimination.

12. The procedures set forth in Policy 1.17 - Nondiscrimination do not interfere with the rights of a student and his/her parents, an eligible student, or disabled employee to pursue a complaint of legally prohibited discrimination with the United States Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, the Florida Civil Rights Commission, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, or the Department of Justice.