

SSA+S Dog Policy

SSA+S implemented a pilot Dogs on Campus program on campus program last Spring, which was very successful. As a result, we would like to create a formal dogs on campus policy as we move into the 2022-2023 school year. Research has shown the benefits of animals on campus, in addition to our small pet friends, dogs are now also allowed on site. This policy emulates the juvenile court comfort animal program, which has truly assisted young adults during a stressful time. Since it's inception, our program has been highlighted in both Scholastic Magazine and the Observer.

We began allowing dogs on campus due to some of the social-emotional issues we were having with our students. Research (see table below) has indicated that having access to dogs on campus has academic, social-emotional, and cognitive benefits for both children and adults.

We would like to implement a policy where dogs are welcome on campus, with specific guidelines in place to ensure the safety and comfort of our school family. Dog owners must read and agree to the following policies before bringing their dogs to school.

Dog Policy Details

- Classrooms with dogs must include this information in the syllabus and allow parents to provide information regarding fears and/or allergies.
- Reasonable accommodations will be made for allergies, such as schedule changes or foster classroom during that period.
- Faculty must complete the sign-up process before bringing their dog on campus. Spaces will be limited each day to ensure that dogs do not become a distraction for faculty and students.
- Dogs will not be allowed on campus on certain days and during special events.
- Any employee who brings a dog on campus must provide proof of their current homeowner's insurance policy or similar liability insurance covering pets before bringing the dog on campus. Proof of insurance should be provided annually to Administration. In addition, SSA+S requires proof of current rabies vaccination.
- All employees have the right to discuss dog concerns with Executive Administration.
- Dogs must always be on a leash while there are children on campus and must be under the owner's control at all times. Students may not walk dogs on campus.
- Dogs must be potty trained, and cleaning up after the dog is the responsibility of the owner.
- Dog owners are personally responsible for any physical/property damage or injury that their dog may cause.
- Dogs must be trained and friendly. Dogs who bark excessively or act aggressively will not be allowed to return to campus.^[1]_[SEP]
- SSA+S reserves the right to ask individuals not to bring their dog onto campus. The final decision rests with the Principal.
- At this time, dogs are the only large animals covered under this policy, as dogs in educational settings are research-based and have the appropriate temperament and relationship with humans to be beneficial.
- Caged animals are always allowed on site; ensuring proper handling, hygiene, and use of sanitizer.

Anderson, K	2006	Self contained classroom of 6 elementary aged children diagnosed with severe emotional disorders	<p>-Qualitative analysis of data indicated that the dog's placement in the classroom:</p> <p>-Contributed to students' overall emotional stability - Improved students' attitudes toward schools - Facilitated students learning lessons in responsibility, respect, and empathy</p>
Anderson, K	2007	Self contained classroom of 6 elementary aged children diagnosed with severe emotional disorders	<p>-Results indicated:</p> <p>-Students' attitudes toward school improved. - Students found companionship with the dog. - Students used the dog to remain in control of their emotions and behaviors in order to prevent them from entering emotional crisis.</p> <p>-Students used the dog as a de-escalation tool to calm their minds and bodies when they did enter into emotional crisis.</p> <p>-Students' learning was extended by fostering growth in respect, responsibility, and empathy.</p>
Bacon, C	2014	School age	<p>-Will help school administrators and educators better understand the benefits of having a therapy dog in a school setting.</p> <p>-Provides an overview of potential benefits, common objections, goals of therapy dog programs in schools, and steps in implementing a dog therapy program.</p>
Bassette, L	2013	3 elementary aged students w/ emotional behavioral disabilities	<p>-Results indicated that all three students experienced increases in on-task behaviors during intervention and maintained improvements over time.</p> <p>-"It was not until the dogs were present during intervention that they became engaged in the reading and more willing to read aloud" (252).</p>
Beetz, A	2013	25 students in third grade (Germany)	<p>-"The dog-class students reported a stronger improvement with regard to positive attitude toward school and positive emotions related to learning" (1).</p>
Brelsford, V	2017		<p>-Review of 25 papers relating to animal-assisted interventions conducted in educational settings. - Studies involved three different animals: guinea pigs, rabbits, and dogs.</p>

			<p>-Studies were grouped within eight topics, including, reading ability, emotional stability and learning, and social functioning and interpersonal skills.</p> <p>- "The majority of the studies reported beneficial effects on cognitive and socio-emotional behavior and physiological responses" (28).</p> <p>-Recognized the need for more robust research with increased sample sizes, adequate control groups, and strict testing protocols.</p>
Cambria, N	2010	Therapeutic Dog Gets High Praise For His Role In Preschool Classroom	<p>-When the therapy dog is present, "the whole feeling of the classroom is calmer" (2).</p> <p>-Waco, the therapy dog, participated in all classroom activities-toothbrushing time, picking up toys, and opening the door to the playground.</p>
Chandler, C	2001	Animal-Assisted Therapy in Counseling and School Settings	<p>- "Animals in counseling sessions and the classroom facilitate an atmosphere of trust, nurturance, and relationship building" (2).</p> <p>-Overview of benefits of animals in classrooms.</p>
Education World	2013	Lessons Learned from Dogs in the Classroom	<p>-The therapy dog helped deliver eight life lessons, which included the importance of waiting, being friendly to everyone, and making sure to eat good foods.</p> <p>-The therapy dogs in the high school were part of a plan to help students meet graduation requirements. Morgan, the therapy dog, calmed anxious students and served as a reward to students who stayed on task with no emotional outbursts.</p>
Esteves, S	2008	Social Effects of a Dog's Presence on Children with Disabilities	<p>- "The study showed that the presence of the dog during sessions increased positive initiated interactions toward the teacher and the dog for all three participants" (13). -Authors also noted that the rate of occurrence of negative interactions decreased with the intervention.</p>
Friesen, L	2009	How a therapy dog may inspire student literacy engagement in elementary language arts classroom	<p>-Provided an overview of Guthrie's research on literacy engagement and potential application using therapy dogs. -Provided anecdotal evidence of impact using author's personal therapy dog, Tango.</p> <p>- "Tango united them [children] in a common and authentic purpose for learning, and therefore served as the springboard for numerous other literary-based activities" (109).</p>
Friesen, L	2010	Exploring Animal-Assisted Programs with Children in School and Therapeutic Contexts	<p>- Expressed that therapy dogs may offer physiological, emotional, social, and physical support for children. -Interacting with dogs can help to encourage children's social interaction with peers and adults in special needs classrooms.</p>

Friesen, L	2010	Potential for the Role of School- Based Animal-Assisted Literacy Mentoring Programs		-Provided goals and best practices of school-based mentorship programs that involve therapy dogs. - Presented ways mentors can incorporate the six language arts into animal-assisted literacy sessions.
Friesen, L	2012	Animal-assisted literacy: A supportive environment for constrained and unconstrained learning	45 students, grades 1-5	-Examined five animal-assisted literacy programs in Canada. -"Interaction with the animal served as a conduit for playful communication and fostered a sense of agency on the part of the child" (104). -" Animal-assisted learning sessions provided meaningful and novel opportunities for both constrained and unconstrained literacy skill developments" (105).
Friesen, L	2013	The Gifted Child As Cheetah: A Unique Animal- Assisted Literacy Program	Single case study on gifted 7 year old (2nd grader)	-Illustrated how reading and writing with a dog helped nurture the child's unique brilliance -In addition to giving five suggestions for working with gifted young children, Friesen outlined five benefits animal-assisted literacy learning experiences for high-achieving children: individualized learning, unconditional acceptance and companionship, relief from perfectionism, motivation for meaningful learning and advocacy, and increased communication and risk-taking.
Gee, N	2007	The role of therapy dogs in speed and accuracy to complete motor skills tasks for preschool children	14 children, ages 4-6	-Study determined whether the presence of a therapy dog would affect the performance of a set of gross motor skills tasks for preschoolers. -Findings indicated that the "presence of a therapy dog served as an effective motivator for the children, who performed faster, but without compromising accuracy, in all tasks but one" (375).
Glenn-Applegate, K	2017	Child's Best Friend-Is a Dog Visitor a Good Fit for our Preschool?	Preschool	-"Dogs can indirectly support children's cognitive learning" (12). - A dog provides authentic opportunities for children to develop empathy, caretaking skills, and respect for living things.
Graf, T	2012	Therapy dogs making move from hospital to classroom	1st grade students	-Anecdotal evidence regarding a pilot program in a primary school.

				-Therapy dogs are successful because "they can't talk back" (2).
Hall, S	2016	Children Reading to Dogs: A Systematic Review of the Literature	Children under 16 years	-Examined 48 studies and aimed to "determine the scientific evidence base for the pedagogic effects of reading to dog's programmes" (3). -"The papers evidenced improvements to the children's behavioral processes...However, the quality of the evidence on which these conclusions are drawn is low" (13). -Recognizes the need for more "rigorous investigation," including longitudinal studies, increased sample sizes, and the use of standardized measures (17).
Jalongo, M	2004	Canine Visitors: The Influence of Therapy Dogs on Young Children's Learning and Well- Being in Classrooms and Hospitals	Ages 5-8	-Examines common objections that are raised to therapy dogs in schools and hospitals: sanitation concerns, safety considerations, allergies, cultural differences, fear of dogs. -Includes recommendations for those who work with canine visitor programs.
Jalongo, M	2005	R		-This article gives guidelines and suggestions on implementing a reading education assistance dog program. -AAT does not replace effective instruction on reading, it provides a more structured and appealing alternative to "read by yourself" (155). -Referenced a 2002 study that showed AAT decreased absenteeism, increased the use of the library, and resulted in better grades.
Ko, M	2017	R	2nd grade students	-Recognized the need to assess impacts of AAI in schools, students experience greater stress, challenging social situations, and fear of negative feedback in the school setting. -Scores assessing academic reading attitudes increased significantly among the children who read aloud to dogs.
Kotrschal, K	2003	SE	-24 students (mean age: 6.7	-"The group became socially more homogenous due to decreased behavioral extremes, such as aggressiveness and hyperactivity. Also, formerly withdrawn

			years) in Austria	<p>individuals became socially more interested" (147).</p> <p>-Effects were more pronounced in the boys than the girls. -Children paid more attention to the teacher.</p> <p>-Concluded that the presence of a dog in a classroom could positively stimulate social cohesion in children while improving teaching conditions.</p> <p>-Children seemed to assume responsibility for the dog by acting considerate and observing its needs.</p>
Lane, H	2013	R	Ages varied	<p>-Goals of canine-assisted reading programs include increasing reading fluency, increasing motivation to read, providing encouragement for reluctant readers, and making reading fun.</p> <p>-3 case examples: primary classroom in Florida, public library in Colorado, dog scout in Maine.</p>
Le Roux, M	2014	R	3rd grade students (Avg. age- 8 years), identified as poor readers	<p>-Reading comprehension scores with dog group scored higher than other groups</p> <p>-3 groups- dog group, adult group, teddy bear group -Looked at reading rate, accuracy, and comprehension</p>
Levinson, E	2017	R	45 children, grades 2-5	<p>-Reading aloud to an adult/therapy dog team tended to increase children's scores on a test of oral reading fluency much more than reading aloud to peers.</p> <p>- "Given these early and high expectations for literacy, the pressure is on for larger numbers of young children to reach unprecedented level of proficiency in reading" (4).</p> <p>-The dog effect seemed to be more prominent and consistent at grade 2 than at other grades, suggesting that such programs may be more effective in the early elementary grades (k-2), rather than later grades (3-6).</p>

Malchik, A	2015	What If Schools Hired Dogs as Therapists?	O'Farrell Charter School, grades K-12	<p>- "Researchers over the last decade have amassed a sobering body of evidence showing the inability of stressed students to learn" (2).</p> <p>- "The research supporting its effectiveness is sparse and largely anecdotal" (7).</p> <p>- Sejera is a facility dog that works in the charter school. -The therapy dog gives traumatized children an initial point of contact for comfort and safety.</p> <p>- Found that Sejera acts as a stress-reducer and a catalyst for helping students deal with stressful situations.</p>
Newlin, R	2003	Paws for Reading: An innovative program using dogs to help kids read better	15 students in second grade who tested below grade level in fluency and reading tests	<p>- Discussed the Paws for Reading Program located in Wilmington, North Carolina.</p> <p>- "Most participants improve their reading skills by at least two grade levels of the course of an entire schools year" (43).</p> <p>- Several participants became mentors and introduced others to the program.</p>
Pillow-Price, K	2014	Sit, Stay, Read: Improving Literacy Skills Using Dogs!	Preschool children	<p>- Recommendations on how to implements a <i>SitStayRead</i> program</p> <p>- The averages of the students who participates scored significantly higher than both the district and state averages.</p>
Schwartz, M	2012	Therapy Dogs' Presence Steadily Grows in Libraries	Ages 3-10	<p>- Focused on the "Read to a Dog" program at Oshkosh Public Library in Wisconsin</p> <p>- "Five to six consecutive visits (with therapy dogs) will raise them [children] two reading levels" (1).</p>
Shaw, D	2013	Man's Best Friend as a Reading Facilitator		<p>- Complete overview of R.E.A.D. program, including varying perspectives (teachers, parents, students, and handlers) and implementation techniques.</p> <p>- Referenced study where all ten students in the R.E.A.D. program significantly improved their reading scores.</p>

Recommendations Regarding the Use of Therapy Dogs in Florida Dependency Courts

1. Introduction

Numerous jurisdictions in Florida have or are beginning to implement animal therapy programs. These recommendations are provided to assist courts in developing procedures and policies to:

- Provide comfort to and relieve stress for all dependency court participants, particularly children;**
- Ensure the safety of all court participants, facility occupants and visitors, and dogs; and**
- Uphold the administration of justice.**

2. Applicability

These procedures are applicable to all dependency court events. Although most recommendations are also applicable to other child advocacy (such as Guardian Ad Litem) or criminal justice system programs (such as forensic investigations), these recommendations are not meant to impact or diminish those successful programs that safely include animals assisting children.

3. Definition of Therapy Dog

Unlike service dogs, therapy dogs are not legally defined. Therapy dogs undergo and pass evaluations according to standards set by national organizations. They have been trained as a team with their owner/handler to provide therapeutic comfort or emotional support to people.

4. Definition of Service Dog

Service dogs are defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform specific tasks for their owners with disabilities. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability.

5. Misrepresentation of Therapy Dogs as Service Dogs

Therapy dogs are generally not service dogs. Under no circumstances should therapy dogs, that are not also service dogs, be represented as service dogs in any manner; and under no circumstances should service dogs be represented as therapy dogs, as service dogs are not trained to be therapy dogs nor provide services for anyone except their owners.

1. Registration of Handler-Animal Therapy Team

All handler-animal therapy teams should be registered with an animal therapy program, such a Pet Partners; Therapy Dogs, Inc.; or Therapy Dogs International, which adheres to the basic team requirements.

2. Basic Team Requirements

- **Teams should be evaluated by a licensed/certified evaluator.**
- **Teams should participate in biannual or more frequent evaluations.**
- **Teams should be covered by at least \$1 million liability insurance. Note: only**

volunteers, not accepting a fee for service, are eligible for insurance coverage

via their registering therapy animal organization.

- **Dogs should be at least one year old.**
- **Dogs that have been trained to aggressively protect and/or encouraged to bite**

(such as Schutzhund or hunting activities) should not be eligible.

- **Dogs should be examined by a veterinarian to ensure health of dog.**

3. Additional Team Requirements

- **Handlers should be at least 21 years old.**
- **Handlers should undergo and pass a background check.**
- **Handlers should not be employees of the State Court System (SCS). (An opinion**

from the Office of the State Courts Administrator states that it is probably inappropriate for a SCS employee to participate because it would violate several Canons of the Code of Judicial Conduct.)

- **Handlers should sign an oath of confidentiality.**
- **All animals must wear a collar or harness and be on lead at ALL times and the**

handler should have control of the animal. A second leash can be used to allow the child to assist the handler, provided the handler has control of the dog. (A facility may in rare circumstances approve an animal to be off-lead, with the written understanding that the facility is assuming liability for off-lead work.)

4. Court Related Skills for Therapy Dogs

Therapy dogs registered with an appropriate organization demonstrate the necessary health, skills, aptitude, and temperament requirements. Additional court-related skills include:

- **The ability to adapt to the courthouse facilities, including tolerance of crowds and noise, slick floor surfaces, small rooms and escalators/elevators.**

- **The ability to maneuver through security screening posts.**

5. Court Related Training for Handlers

Court personnel should provide training or disseminate information to handlers on court specific policies and procedures. This can be accomplished through

“classroom” training sessions, home study guide with examinations and/or mock court proceedings. Training topics should include the following:

- Basic information on the dependency court process.
- An understanding and commitment to confidentiality.
- Courthouse facility information, including appropriate entrances, restricted areas

in the facility (snack bars, etc.), parking, location of dog walk areas, and

whether teams will have freedom of movement in the facility or be escorted. • The emotional impact of volunteering.

- The necessity of the presence of a third party.
- Points of contact for problem solving and related administrative needs.

1. Presence of Third Party

A handler should never be left alone with a minor child; a third party should always be present. Third parties could be any other adult, including GAL volunteers, bailiffs, a second handler, child’s parent or guardian, or court personnel.

2. Role of Handler

Regardless of the handler’s profession or background, the handler has the sole responsibility for the correct stewarding of the therapy dog and must function as the therapy animal’s advocate at all times. While performing as a member of a therapy animal team, the handler should not act in a dual capacity, such as a child advocate, since other duties may conflict with the handler duties if an emergency arises.

3. When Teams Are Not Appropriate

Therapy dog teams are not appropriate in instances of dog allergies, fear of dogs, or possible transmission of zoonotic diseases. Handlers should be trained to obtain permission prior to approaching individuals to ensure the safety of all people and dogs. Separate waiting areas may be used to provide an appropriate environment for all parties.

Manatee court swears-in first courtroom support dogs

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[Seen on TV](#)

[FOX 13 Tampa Bay](#)

BRADENTON (FOX 13) - An unusual but welcome sight inside a Manatee County courtroom: dogs and their handlers were sworn in as part of a new courtroom pet therapy program.

You would think dogs in a courtroom would be a distraction, but that's not the case.

Judge Teri Kaklis Dees swore in seven dogs and their handlers as the inaugural class of Manatee County's Dependency Court Pet Therapy Program.

“Do you promise never-ending affection and support for those experiencing in our courtroom and our waiting areas?”

“We will!”

These dogs will provide comfort to everyone inside the courtroom, including the judge.

“This is a tough courtroom. It can be chaotic. It can be very difficult to work in. It can be emotionally charged. There are more things going on in here in any given time than you can imagine,” explained Kaklis Dee. “When the dogs come in, it takes a different tone,”

The dependency court sees cases involving children who may be dealing with tumultuous situations like abuse, neglect or abandonment.

“I watch people come in and they look down, they see the dog, they'll stop, they'll pet, they'll smile, they'll say thank you, and they come in to do their business here,” said pet therapist, Nan Miller. “Children, in particular, will come in and they'll just sit right down with the dog.”

In other cases, children have been accused of committing a crime, and these dogs are there to help them, too.

“They have a calming effect, they bring the chaos down,” said Kaklis Dees. “This is a courtroom with a lot of trauma. I think a lot of people that come into this courtroom are scared to death to be in here. They could be losing their children; their children could be going off to the Department of Juvenile Justice.”

Children will be able to pet and sit with these dogs during those tough times. But, everyone inside the courtroom should benefit from their presence.

“The value has really been discovered,” said Miller.

To apply for the pet therapy program, visit <http://www.jud12.flcourts.org/Portals/0/PDF/pets/Application%20for%20Pet%20Therapy%20Program.pdf>.