

**RED WING PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY**

536 THERAPY ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS

Adopted: March 6, 2023

Last Reviewed: April 28, 2026

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to recognize the educational use of therapy animals in school.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The school district recognizes the use of a therapy animal program for the academic, social, and emotional benefit of students. In recognizing the educational uses of animals in the classroom/school, it is a requirement for the building principal or designee to give permission before animals are brought into the school setting. It is the building principal's responsibility to confirm that there is an appropriate educational purpose for the animal to be working or to be performing tasks in the school setting. After consultation with the Superintendent, written permission of the building's administrator is required before any animal is brought into the school or used for educational purposes with student contact.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. Handler

A "handler" is an individual or individuals who accompany a therapy animal.

B. Trainer

A "trainer" is a person who is training an animal and is affiliated with a recognized training program for animals in this capacity.

C. Therapy Animal

A "therapy animal", regardless of breed or size, is individually trained to perform "work or tasks" that benefit individuals or groups of individuals in the school setting. The school can interchange the titles "emotional support", "comfort animal", "school animal" and "therapy animal".

This policy does not include service animals. (See policy 535 Service Animals in Schools)

D. Work or Tasks

Work or tasks that the animal can perform include, but are not limited to, being read to by students or staff; assisting with socialization, outward focus, independence, mental stimulation, or integration into a student's sensory integration; assisting with developing a sense of nurturing, acceptance and motivation, utilization in school curriculum.

E. Host

The host is considered the person or persons in which the animal goes home with each night to sleep and on weekends.

IV. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Care and Supervision: The handler(s) is responsible for the care and supervision of the animal while the animal is in school. This includes feeding, watering, cleaning and toileting.
- B. Control: The animal must be under the control of the handler while on school grounds.
- C. It is the host's responsibility to ensure all recommended vaccinations and exams are performed yearly or as needed.
- D. Allergies: If a student or employee notifies the district that he or she is allergic to a therapy animal, the district will balance the rights of the individuals involved. Upon notification of a sensitivity by students or staff, the classroom or work area will be kept animal free.
- E. Fear: If a particular student has a fear of the therapy animal, staff will respectfully honor that student's exposure to the therapy animal. If an administrator feels that the animal in the classroom is not in the best interest of the students and staff, the animal may be excluded from the classroom.
- F. Cultural view: If a particular culture of ethnicity is restricted from contact with the therapy animal, staff will respectfully honor that exposure.
- G. Working Status of Therapy Animal: Students, parents, volunteers and staff of the district should not feed or handle the therapy animal without permission from the handling staff.

V. ACCESS TO PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Therapy Animals in school must be properly supervised, handled and cared for. It shall be the responsibility of the principal or his/her designee to develop a plan of care for the animal given school closings and /or drills/crisis of any manner (i.e. fire drills, tornado drills, evacuations, etc.)

A Therapy animal is trained to provide affection and comfort to students. The most important characteristic of a therapy animal is its temperament. A good therapy animal must be friendly, patient, confident, at ease in all situations and gentle. Therapy animals must enjoy human contact and be content to be petted and handled, sometimes clumsily. A Therapy animal's primary job is to allow unfamiliar people to make physical contact with it and to enjoy that contact. Therapy animals are not considered trained service animals as described by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

A. MINIMUM STANDARDS

The following minimum standards shall be in effect for all Therapy Animals approved to serve in the district.

- A. A therapy animal is expected to be clean, well-groomed, and not have an offensive odor
- B. A therapy animal is expected not to urinate or defecate in inappropriate locations.
- C. A therapy animal is expected to not annoy any member of the student body or school personnel by seeking attention.
- D. A therapy animal is expected to not vocalize unnecessarily.
- E. A therapy animal is expected to show no aggression towards people or other animals.
- F. A therapy animal is expected to not solicit or steal food or other items from student body member or school personnel.
- G. A therapy animal is expected to not in any way interfere with the educational process of any student or staff.
- H. A therapy animal is expected to not pose a health or safety threat to any student, personnel or other persons.

A therapy animal may be excluded from school property if a school administrator determines any of the standards listed above are being violated. If it is determined that the standards listed are not being met, this may result in the removal of the therapy animal from school property by the handler.

B. GUIDELINES

- A. Proof of Therapy Certification will be provided by the Host.
 - 1. Approved Organizations for certification are:
 - Pet Partners
 - Alliance of Therapy Dogs

- Therapy Dogs International
- Other organizations meeting certification requirements may be submitted in writing to the Superintendent for consideration.

B. Therapy Animals must meet standards of health.

1. Examined by a practicing, licensed Veterinarian.
2. Required to complete training for accreditation and certification to be a Therapy Animal.

C. Prior to recommendation and approval, handlers shall provide:

1. Proof of current immunizations and yearly preventive treatments will be provided by the Host.

Health Requirements:

- a) Annual Check-up attested to by your Veterinarian within the past year.
 - b) Mandatory Rabies Vaccine (1, 2, OR 3 YEAR – MUST BE GIVEN BY A VETERINARIAN)
 - c) An initial series of core Distemper, Hepatitis, and Parvovirus Vaccinations. Based on Veterinarian recommendation.
 - d) A negative Fecal Exam must have been done within the past year. Based on Veterinarian recommendation.
 - e) A negative Heartworm test must have been done within the past year if the dog is not on a continuous heartworm preventative medication. A negative Heartworm test must have been done within the past two years if the dog is on a continuous heartworm preventative medication. Based on Veterinarian recommendation.
2. Proof of health, such as a current health certificate from a licensed Veterinarian will be provide by the Host yearly.
 3. Visible cleanliness of the animal with no signs of fleas/ticks will be the responsibility of the Host.
 4. An animal that is visually healthy, alert and not grossly over or under weight.
 5. Appropriate identification (such as a collar, tags and on/off duty vest) will be the sole responsibility of the Host.

6. An animal taking antibiotics, antifungals, or immunosuppressants (including steroid and chemotherapy medications), will be unable to register and visit until they have finished treatment.
- D. Documentation of these requirements must be met on an annual basis, prior to the start of any school year.
 - E. The Building Principal shall notify parents on an annual basis regarding the presence of a Therapy Animal in the school building.