

RATIONALE:

The presence of a Therapy Dog can decrease anxiety and provide a level of comfort that enables students to work through a variety of challenging issues. Their responsibilities are to provide physiological support to individuals other than their handler(s). These dogs do not have the same access rights as Assistance Dogs and are organized by the school principal in consultation with the Senior Leadership team on a case-by-case basis.

1. Definition

Therapy Dogs are trained to work for a handler to provide service and comfort to people at the community level through animal-assisted activities and animal-assisted therapy.

2. Criteria

The Therapy Dog and its handler must be able to demonstrate that they have met the requirements to receive certification as a therapy team from a BC/Canadian organization.

3. School Responsibilities

- 3.1 The principal will initiate the use of Therapy Dogs and their handlers in schools to provide comfort to students during scheduled events or as part of a crisis response strategy.
- 3.2 The principal must ensure that no students or staff with allergies or who are fearful of the animal will be adversely affected.
- 3.3 A schedule of ongoing visits must be completed prior to the start of visits.
- 3.4 The principal must inform all staff, students, and parents of the introduction of a Therapy Dog Team into the school setting.
- 3.5 Approval of a Therapy Dog Team in a school setting must be completed on an annual basis and whenever the handler wishes to use a different therapy dog.
- 3.6 The principal of the school has the authority to end any arrangements pertaining to the use of therapy dogs at any time at their discretion.