

THERAPY DOGS IN SCHOOL

NEPN/NSBA Code: IMGB

The RSU78 school supports the use of therapy dogs for the benefit of its students. Benefits from working or visiting with a therapy dog include reduced stress, improved physical and emotional well-being, lower blood pressure, decreased anxiety, improved self-esteem and normalization of the environment, increasing the likelihood of successful academic achievement by the student. Examples of activities that students may engage in with a therapy dog include petting and/or hugging the dog, speaking to the dog, giving the dog simple commands that the dog is trained to respond to and reading to the dog.

A therapy dog is a dog who has been individually trained, evaluated, and registered with his/her handler to provide animal assisted activities and animal assisted interactions within a school or other facility. Therapy dogs are not “emotional support animals” or “service animals.”

Animal assisted activities and animal assisted interactions are non-goal-driven interactions where the specific content of the visit is spontaneous and is meant to provide, motivational, educational, and/or recreational activities that enhance the quality of life.

A handler is an individual school staff member or volunteer who owns a therapy dog and who has been individually trained, evaluated, and registered with his/her dog to provide animal assisted activities and animal assisted interactions within the school.

A therapy dog is the personal property of the handler and is not the property of the school district. The handler shall assume full responsibility for the therapy dog’s care, behavior, and suitability for interacting with students and others in the school while the therapy dog is on school property.

Adopted: 3.8.2022