

### 5337.1 THERAPY DOG

The school district supports the use of therapy dogs for the benefit of its students subject to the conditions of this policy. Benefits from working or visiting with a therapy dog include reduced stress, improved physical and emotional well-being, low 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 training to respond to, and reading to the dog.

Animal Assisted Therapy is a goal-driven intervention, which is directed and/or delivered by a health, human, or education service professional and is meant to improve physical, social, emotional and/or cognitive function of an individual.

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

The handler is an individual school district staff member or volunteer who has been individually trained, evaluated, and registered with the therapy dog to provide animal assisted activities, animal assisted therapy, and animal assisted interactions within a school or other facility.

The Rumson School District therapy dog is 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 district property. The Rumson School District therapy dog is funded through the Board of Education.

The following information will be kept current and submitted to the Board of Education:

- The proof of registration as a therapy dog handler with the individual therapy dog to be used (Note: Such registration shall be from an organization that requires an evaluation of the therapy dog and handler prior to registration and at least every two years).
- Proof from a licensed veterinarian that the therapy dog is in good health and has been immunized against diseases common to dogs. Such vaccinations shall be kept current and up to date at all times.
- Proof of licensure from the local dog licensing authority.



- Copy of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the work of the handler and therapy dog while the two are on school district property. This is provided by the Board of Education.

### **Therapy Dog Standards and Procedures:**

Registration: The therapy dog shall have registration from an organization that requires an evaluation of the therapy dog and handler at least every two years and shall remain current and in good standing at all times.

Health and Vaccination: The handler shall submit proof from a licensed veterinarian that the therapy dog is in good health and has been immunized against diseases common to dogs. Such vaccinations shall be kept current and up-to-date at all times.

Licensing: The handler and therapy dog shall wear appropriate identification issued by the school district.

Health and Safety: The Board of Education shall ensure that the therapy dog does not pose a health and safety risk to any student, employee, or other person at school and that the therapy dog is brought to the school district only when properly groomed, bathed, free of illness or injury and of the temperament appropriate for working with children and others in the schools.

Control: The handler shall ensure that the therapy dog wears a collar or harness and a leash no longer than four feet and shall maintain control of the therapy dog by holding the leash at all times that the therapy dog is on school district property, including during breaks, unless holding such leash would interfere with the therapy dog's safe, effective performance of its work or tasks. However, the handler shall maintain control of the therapy dog at all times and shall not tether the therapy dog to any individual or object.

Supervision and Care of the Therapy Dog: The handler shall be solely responsible for the supervision and humane care of the therapy dog, including any feeding, exercising, and cleaning up after the therapy dog while the therapy dog is in the school building or on school property. The handler shall not leave the therapy dog unsupervised or alone on school property at any time. The school district is responsible for providing the funding to the handler for care, supervision, and assistance to the therapy dog.

Authorized Area(s): The handler shall ensure that the therapy dog has access to only such areas of the school building or properties that have been authorized by school district administrators.



# POLICY

## RUMSON BOROUGH BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Therapy Dog

Allergies and Aversions: The handler shall remove the therapy dog to a separate area, as designated by the school administrator, in such instances where any student or school employee who suffers dog allergies or aversion is present in an office, hallway, or classroom.

Recordkeeping: Handlers who are school district staff shall sign in their therapy dog upon arrival and sign him/her out on their departure.

Damages and Injuries: The Board of Education shall assume full responsibility and liability for any damage to school property or injury to district staff, students, or others in the school caused by the therapy dog.

Exclusion or removal from School District Property: A therapy dog may be excluded from school district property if a school administrator determines that: (1) The handler does not have control of the therapy dog; (2) The therapy dog is not housebroken; (3) The therapy dog presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school; or (4) The therapy dog's presence otherwise interferes with the educational program. The handler shall immediately remove his/her therapy dog from school property when instructed to do so by a school administrator.

If the therapy dog is found to be no longer suitable for the program, the handler may request to the Board of Education to obtain full ownership. At that time, the Board of Education will vote to relinquish ownership of the dog to the handler, at no cost to the handler. All future costs associated with the dog will be taken over by the handler at that time.

Adopted: June 14, 2017

