

Animals in the Classroom

Prior to Bringing an Animal into NWRESD Facilities

Permission must be obtained from the superintendent or designee before an animal is brought to a Northwest Regional Education Service District (NWRESD) facility.

The administrator will consider the following factors before granting permission for the animal to be in the school:

1. Type of animal. The animal should be appropriate to the age of the students. See the attached list of recommendations for reptiles in the classroom.
2. Health and safety for students and staff. Consideration will be given to any known allergies of students and staff assigned to the classroom in which the animal will be housed.
3. Humane housing of the animals. The size of the animal's cage or container, care and food requirements should be known before permission is granted for the animal to be in a NWRESD facility.
4. Relevance to the NWRESD curriculum.
5. Additional costs related to the animal's care in terms of sanitation, electrical environmental support systems (heating, cooling, aeration), and nutritional requirements.
6. Under no circumstances will sick or injured animals be maintained in a NWRESD facility. The animal should be taken to a veterinarian for evaluation and treatment as soon as it is apparent the animal is ill. Costs for such veterinary care shall be the responsibility of the animal's owner.

Animals Appropriate for Classroom Use

1. No poisonous animals are allowed in a NWRESD facility.
2. When selecting animals for classroom use, staff and administrators should refer to the attached document for a listing of animals appropriate for the specific age groups of students.

Transportation of Animals

1. Animals should be transported in an appropriate manner including the use of a cage that is adequately secured and of appropriate size for the animal.

2. Animals are not permitted on NWRESD school buses.

Housing of Animals in NWRESD Facilities

The following steps must be addressed before animals are allowed into classrooms:

1. The cages or homes for the animals must be of adequate size for the type and size of animal. Cages or containers must be secure in order to prevent any animal from escaping the cage.
2. Electrical environmental support systems such as heaters, cooling devices and aerators must have labeling that they are UL approved. Classrooms or laboratories in which these devices are used must have adequate electrical outlets to permit the devices to be directly plugged into the electrical outlet without using extension cords.
3. The animal must be adequately fed and cared for during the stay at school. The teacher must post instructions for handling, care and feeding of the animal. The teacher must instruct students in proper hand washing procedures, including the use of anti-bacterial soap, both before and after handling, feeding and cleaning of the animal cages. The teacher must also ensure that proper procedures are being following by all students and staff to prevent the spread of salmonella and other infectious diseases.
4. Instructions for emergency treatment due to accidents must be posted near the cage. The supervising administrator and nurse or health assistant must be notified of any animals present and potential dangers and necessary emergency treatment protocols related to injuries inflicted by these animals.

Duration of Stay

The keeping of animals in the classroom is to be an extension of the curriculum and, therefore, animals shall not be kept in the classrooms during school vacation periods. The animals must be removed from the classrooms during winter vacation, spring break and summer vacation periods. With provisions for proper care and feeding, exceptions for keeping animals at school during vacation periods may be secured in advance from the supervising administrator.

RECOMMENDED ANIMALS FOR CLASSROOMS

Reptiles

1. Elementary Grades
 - a. Snakes: Gopher snakes, garter snakes, sand boas, rosy boas, rainbow boas, some kinds of rat snakes, king snakes and milk snakes, ball pythons, children's python.
 - b. Lizards: Anoles, ameivas, lacertas, plated lizards, armadillo lizards, some kinds of geckos, bearded dragons, blue-tongue skinks, monkey-tailed skinks, chuckwallas, spiny lizards.
 - c. Turtles: Most box turtles and the smaller tortoises are great around all children. They are easy to care for and don't take up lots of space. Water turtles are not recommended as they are high maintenance, frequently bite and are known to carry salmonella.

2. Middle School and Above
 - a. Snakes: All of the elementary grade recommendations plus some additions: Colombian boas, more species of rat snakes, kingsnakes and milk snakes, Burmese pythons in some instances.
 - b. Lizards: All of the elementary grade recommendations plus more species of geckos and spiny lizards. Some species of monitors under the right circumstances.
 - c. Turtles: Same as the elementary grades and in some cases water turtles would be appropriate with adequate health and cleanliness precautions.
3. Never or Special Circumstances Only
 - a. Any crocodylian, caiman, alligators or crocodiles.
 - b. Any venomous snake, including “de-venomized” ones.
 - c. Any snapping, common or alligator turtle.
 - d. Reticulated pythons.
 - e. African rock pythons.
 - f. Anacondas.
 - g. Larger monitors.

Mammals and Rodents

1. Small, domesticated mammals such as mice, rats, rabbits and chinchillas. Because of the prevalence of communicable disease in wild rodents, under no circumstances should wild mice, rats, squirrels or chipmunks be brought into the classroom.
2. Cats and dogs are not to be maintained in either the classroom or on school premises for reasons of sanitation. Exceptions will be granted to guide dogs for disabled students, employees or visitors.

Birds

1. Small birds such as parakeets, canaries, finches and baby chicks are appropriate for classrooms.
2. No birds of prey, either living or dead, are to be kept in the classroom.

Insects and Spiders

No venomous insects or spiders are permitted in the classroom.

Fish and Marine Invertebrates

No poisonous fish or invertebrates are to be brought into the classroom.

Animals in NWRES D Facilities

If the animal is a service animal¹, please answer the following questions:

1. Is the service animal required due to a disability? _____

2. What work or task has the service animal been trained to perform²?

If an animal is not a service animal, the NWRES D staff may request emergency contact information.

¹The American with Disabilities Act definition of “service animal” means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Companion and comfort animals are not considered service animals. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual’s disability. Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to, assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing non-violent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, alerting individuals to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors. The crime deterrent effects of an animal’s presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purposes of this definition. The law and its regulations also make an allowance for miniature horses.

²The NWRES D may request this information if the nature of the work or task the service animal is trained, or is being trained to do or perform, is not readily apparent.