



BRIMFIELD C.U.S.D. #309 BRIMFIELD GRADE SCHOOL  
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### **Brimfield Grade School Facility Dog**

Brimfield Grade School is very excited to partner with Paws Giving Independence (PGI) to bring a trained facility dog to the school and Brimfield CUSD #309. Research has indicated the many benefits to having a facility dog available in an educational setting. Brimfield Grade School will be proactive to communicate with families that the dog will be a member of the staff. Part of our communication will allow parents to share allergies and fears to the school. This will help us with using the facility dog in the school. Students will be educated on proper ways to greet the dog safely. This includes not running up to the dog, asking permission before petting the dog, using a calm and quiet voice, never taking food from the dog, and never putting their face in the dog's face. Part of the process for placing a facility dog at Brimfield Grade School is to ensure that the right dog, with the right temperament, is placed in the school. This is important for the success of using the dog in the school.

#### **Use of a facility dog at School:**

- Help reduce symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression
- Help process grief and loss
- Help student open up about about issues impacting them emotionally/academically
- Help students with social communication difficulties improve social skills
- Help student with sensory integration needs to improve language production and social interaction
- Help reluctant readers improve fluency
- Help make the office a more welcoming and inviting place
- Help increase overall staff and student morale and positive connection to school

#### **Training Dog Handlers**

Julie Albritton, Grade School Principal, will be granted full ownership of the facility dog and accept all responsibility for the dog's medical care, housing, and food supply. Mrs. Albritton will be responsible for training the Brimfield Grade School staff with use of commands, signs of stress, introducing the dog into the classroom, giving treats, equipment use, when to remove the dog from a situation, watering, and bathroom protocols.

Minimal Requirements to be Considered for a PGI Dog :

- Successful completion of three home visits
- Housing in the handler's home full time
- A match in temperament between the dog and the facility
- Spayed/Neutered and maintenance of vaccinations and shots
- Handlers must complete 25 hours of training and coursework related to the dog

- Annual reports to update health and temperament records

### **Facility Dog Job Description**

Dress Code: While in the school setting, the dog will wear his working vest and be on leash at all times.

**Individual Students:** The dog will assist students demonstrating the following symptoms/behaviors:

- Anxiety/Panic Attacks
- Depression
- Grief/Loss
- Stress
- Limited socialization with peers
- Limited motivation to attend school

**Classrooms/Groups:** The dog will be present in various groups and classrooms when requested.

- Presentations/classroom visits
  - Lower tension and stress
  - Support individuals in distress
  - Provide sensory support for student with sensory integration needs
  - Assist in reading fluency activities for struggling/reluctant readers
  - Member of the school crisis team to lessen trauma of critical incident/event for students, teachers, and staff
- Other Duties as Assigned:

The dog may be present in open or common areas to allow students to become familiar with him, provide a positive start to the school day, and improve the overall school climate.

### **Managing Allergies**

Understandably students, parents, and educators may be concerned about potential allergic reactions to dogs in the school setting. Students generally know if they are allergic to dogs and know if they should avoid contact with dogs or wash hands after contact with dogs. Due to this, we will always ask permission for the dog to enter classrooms, or approach individuals or groups of students, we can reasonably avoid direct contact with pet dander from the dog.

### **Fear of Dogs**

As part of the communication with families, we will also be aware of any student who is fearful of dogs. Since the therapy dog program is implemented by permission and the dog is under the control of the handler at all times in unstructured settings, this fear can

be minimized. We will be able to deal with the allergy and fear concern by asking permission to approach a student or enter a classroom or by removing the dog from a situation in which the student doesn't want the dog to participate.

#### Possible Additional Activities Provided to School

- Visits to the library
- Meet and greet at bus drop off and pick up
- Lunch visits
- PAWS-itive behavior referrals
- Reading to the dog for struggling students /test taking accommodations to read aloud
- Change the environment during a student meltdown

#### **Supporting Research**

"There is no doubt that children are drawn to animals; however, is there more to this connection than the simple fascination? The scientific research is still relatively new in this area, but there have been numerous studies that believe animal interaction is extremely beneficial to child's social and cognitive development."

#### Improves Environment

"The theory that children receive developmental benefits from canine interaction is based on the concepts of: attachment theory, conceptualism, environmental psychology and child therapy. Dogs have a particularly calming effect on children; this is because of their non-threatening and non-judging nature. This 'calm' creates a safe environment for the child allowing them to engage at a level that previously would have taken numerous sessions to develop rapport. This engagement is seen in a child's willingness to participate, alertness, responsiveness and an increase in self-disclosure. Dogs are also believed to be a beneficial tool in working with students on the spectrum as the dog's social cues are easier to interpret." Cirulli, Francesca, Borgi, Marta, Berry, Alessandra, Francia, Nadia, & Alleva, Enrico. (2011). Animal-assisted interventions as innovative tools for mental health. *Annali dell'Istituto Superiore di Sanità*, 47(4), 341-348. [https://dx.doi.org/10.4415/ANN\\_11\\_04\\_04](https://dx.doi.org/10.4415/ANN_11_04_04)

#### Encourages Traumatic Debriefing

"Animal Assisted Interventions have proven very effective when working with traumatized children. The animal in these situations were either used as a social partner in the session or as a metaphor. Dogs are commonly used in sessions for activities such as: telling the dog (opposed to the counselor) about their experiences, explaining the incident through the dog's perspective, and grooming the animal while engaging with the counselor. These interventions are successful due to their ability to assist in the child's regulation throughout the session, allowing the child in distance themselves from the incident while telling their story, and express themselves to a completely neutral party (dog)." O'Haire, M. E., Guérin, N. A., & Kirkham, A. C. (2015). Animal-Assisted Intervention for trauma: a systematic literature review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 1121. <http://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01121>

#### Positive Effects on ADHD Symptoms

"ADHD presents as an inability to control one's behaviors, impulses, and movements. ADHD isn't curable however individuals can learn skills and techniques to decrease the effects of these symptoms. Animal-based interventions have shown to have calming and de-arousing effects on children. These effects promote the child's ability to focus and engage in interventions that targets over activity, impulse control or agitation. Combining Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Animal Assisted Interventions increases a child's chances of overcoming their symptoms and excelling in the classroom." Busch, C., Tucha, L., & Talarovicova, A. (2016). Animal-Assisted Interventions for Children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. *A Theoretical Review and Consideration of Future Research Directions*, 118 (1), 292-331. <http://doi/full/10.1177/0033294115626633>

#### Academic Benefits

"Animal-Assisted Activities have shown to have academic benefits in the form of achievements. Having a dog in a classroom reduces stress and anxiety while improving motivation. This is extremely beneficial during times of high stress such as testing. A dog can also increase motivation, focus and task persistence through being incorporated into classroom lessons. These benefits are achieved through using a topic of discussion that is tangible, engaging and unique to their school. In social studies a dog can be used to examine the roles of working animals, science can focus on reproduction or lifecycles, health can examine canine diet and math can work on the costs of owning a dog." Beck, K (2015). *The Impact of*

Canine-Assisted Therapy and Activities on Children in an Educational Setting. Education Masters, 6.312.  
[http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1313&context=education\\_ETD\\_masters](http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1313&context=education_ETD_masters)

Improvements to Literacy Levels

“Schools all over the country have programs focused on improving literacy skills within their students. There have been numerous studies demonstrating the positive the effect a therapy dog has on these students. With the addition of a therapy dog into the program the children literacy performance increased. The greatest increases were seen in small group and individual settings. This is believed to be because of the calming effect of the presence on the dog. The children benefit in this environment because of the decrease in anxiety and blood pressure. The combination of these physical effects combined with the non-judgmental nature of the animal allows the student to feel confident and motivated to succeed. This belief in self, combined with the calming environment created by the animal allows the student to practice their skills more readily thus improving their literacy level.” Hall SS, Gee NR, Mills DS (2016) Children Reading to Dogs: A Systematic Review of the Literature. PLoS ONE 11(2): e0149759.  
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0149759>

Example Permission Form to be filled out at registration.

**Brimfield Grade School – Facilities/Therapy Dog – Permission Form**

- I give permission** for my child to participate in activities with and/or being near Brimfield Grade School’s facility dog for the 21-22 school year.
- I DO NOT give permission** for my child to participate in activities with and/or being near Brimfield Grade School’s facility dog for the 21-22 school year.

Child’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Special Notes/Comments (fear of animals, allergies, concerns, special considerations, etc.)

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