



## **SMCISD Child Development Center**

### **Pet Policy , effective 9-1-14**

#### **Reason this policy is important:**

Pets in a child care program will be carefully chosen in regards to care, temperament, health risks and appropriateness for young children.

#### **Procedure and Practices, including responsible person(s):**

- Animals will be properly cared for (clean water, food, clean cages, and immunized). Staff will be assigned duties to maintain the pets.
- Animals, their cages and any other equipment will not be allowed in the food prep area.
- Children will be closely supervised when handling pets.
- Children with allergy response to animals will be accommodated.
- Children and adults will wash hands after handling or feeding animals.
- Children will not clean cages or have access to animal waste. Staff will wash hands after cleaning animal cages/equipment.
- Animal visitors or readers will be ensured of proper immunizations or associated with an organization that such as Reading Education Assistance Dogs (READ), PAWS Across Texas, Therapy Certified dogs. During the annual RIF Community Readers dogs or other animals maybe brought in for a rare reading session. These sessions last approximately 30 minutes and are not a regular scheduled event but occurring during the 2-3 week reading challenge typically in February.
- Parents will be notified in writing when pets will be on premises, including the type of pet.

## **Pets Bring so Many New Ways to Learn**

Whether it's Math ("how much does a hamster weigh?") or Science, ("what does a snake eat?") Geography ("what part of the world do ferrets come from?") or Grammar ("what words would we use to describe a goldfish?") students will approach learning all these subjects with a new enthusiasm and interest. Other classes can even come visit your classroom pets and your students can create special presentations about the animals.

## **Pets Enrich the Classroom Experience**

- Even kids with no exposure to animals or nature in their home environment can see, feel, touch and make connections to the wide world of animals.
- Observing and caring for an animal instills a sense of responsibility and respect for life.
- A pet brings increased sensitivity and awareness of the feelings and needs of others—both animals and humans.
- Kids learn that all living things need more than just food and water for survival.
- Students will see directly how their behavior and actions affect others.
- Studies show that the presence of animals tends to lessen tension in the classroom.

## **Health & Education**

It's official. Studies show that children from families with pets are better equipped to fight off infection than kids from non-pet households, showing significantly higher levels of immune system performance. When school attendance records were compared side by side, researchers discovered that kids with pets averaged more days at school every year than their pet-free counterparts.

## **Welfare**

The study also showed that kids turn to their pets for emotional well-being, with 40% of children choosing pet companionship when feeling down. Kids were also found to seek out their pets when feeling tired, upset, scared or lonely, and 53% of respondents said they enjoy doing homework with pets nearby. "Being around animals is extremely good for children", says Dr. Harvey Markovitch, pediatrician and editor of *The Archives of Disease in Childhood*. "They're good for morale, and teach children about relationships and about the needs of another living being – learning to care for a pet helps them to learn how to care for people". Studies show caring for pets aids in improving school attendance and teaching children about [responsibility.discoveryhealth.com](http://responsibility.discoveryhealth.com)

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Kids and Pets—A winning combination!

## **Pets Encourage Nurturing**

Nobody enjoys being treated roughly. Kids soon learn that if they want to be liked and trusted by the family cat, they'll need to treat her carefully and kindly. This sort of training benefits all kids, but is especially important to small boys who don't often get the chance in our society to practice nurturing skills as girls do.

## **Pets Build Self Esteem**

Helping to take care of a pet gives a child a sense of pride and accomplishment, especially if the animal is able to return the affection. Shari Young Kuchenbecker, Ph.D., research psychologist at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, says, "The child who cares for a pet knows that what he does matters, and so he'll want to do more of it. The more successfully he feeds, walks, or emotionally bonds with the pet, the more confident he'll feel." In fact, studies conducted by the Waltham Centre have shown that children with pets have higher levels of self-esteem than those without pets.

## **Pets Teach Responsibility**

Even a small child can begin to learn to care for the needs of another living being. Whether helping to empty a cup of dry kibble into the rabbit's bowl, or filling the hamster's water bottle, it's never too early to start teaching kids proper animal care. Of course, parents or teachers must monitor all pet care that the child carries out. Kids should be expected to fulfill their responsibilities, but when the inevitable slip-ups occur, we shouldn't make too much of a fuss; we should just point out that the pet was counting on him.

## **Pets Become Friends**

Lots of animals such as cats, dogs and guinea pigs love human contact and can become a child's best buddy. Kids can even develop strong human animal bonds with non-responsive animals such as fish or turtles. These relationships help to strengthen a child's social skills, giving them the potential to do better in a school setting. (sesameworkshop.org)  
*"It seems to me of great importance to teach children respect for life. " ~Eleanor Roosevelt, former First Lady of the United States of America*