

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Our mission is for all students to be successful, engaged, lifelong learners.

Program Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 1, 2018
District Office Conference Room
2 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930
5:00 p.m.

Members Present

Kathy Clancy, Chairperson
Michelle Sweet, Vice Chairperson
Joel Favazza

Administration Present

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent
Gregg Bach, Asst. Superintendent
Matt Fusco, Veterans Principal

I. CALL TO ORDER – Chairperson Clancy called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.

II. REPORTS/DELIBERATIONS/DISCUSSION

A. Policy Re: Use of Therapy Dogs in Schools – Mr. Bach reviewed the draft policy and discussed the difference between animal assisted therapy and animal assisted activities or interactions. He recommended that the primary function of therapy dogs in the district be animal assisted therapy. Mr. Fusco reported that he plans to initially have the therapy dog work with a very small targeted group of students for about two hours a day.

Mr. Bach reported that he spoke with Laura Peckham of Cabot Risk Strategies, the city's liability insurance provider, who indicated that the handler must be trained and have all the correct certifications and insurance. She also stated that the district needs to clearly inform parents and staff about the therapy dog program, including permission forms, staff meetings, information in the student handbook, website notices, SchoolMessenger, etc. She indicated that she can help draft a notice to parents and permission forms.

Mr. Bach discussed the amount of insurance the handler should have and indicated that he will check with Ms. Peckham for a recommendation on what the minimum coverage should be.

The committee discussed allergies, and Mr. Fusco indicated that that information would be on the permission form. Mr. Bach stated that when the therapy dog is going to be used with larger groups of students for animal assisted activities, notice should be sent out to parents well in advance. He also noted that the school nurse will know if there are any life-threatening allergies.

Chairperson Clancy noted that the “Request to Use Therapy Dog in School” refers to the handler asking to bring the dog into the school. She believes the form should be revised to indicate that the principal is requesting the handler to bring the dog to the school. The paragraph entitled “Request” on page 1 of the draft policy was revised to reflect that the principal will provide a written request to the handler for signature, which will be approved by the superintendent, and the handler shall provide the principal with the necessary documentation.

On a motion by Ms. Sweet, seconded by Mr. Favazza, it was unanimously

VOTED: 3 in favor, 0 opposed to recommend to the full School Committee that we approve a first reading of the Use of Therapy Dogs in Schools policy, as presented and amended.

Ms. Sweet requested that the permission form be presented to the subcommittee once it has been drafted.

III. ACTION – See II.A.

IV. ADJOURNMENT – On a motion by Ms. Sweet, seconded by Mr. Favazza, it was unanimously

VOTED: 3 in favor, 0 opposed to adjourn the Program Subcommittee Meeting of February 1, 2018 at 5:26 p.m.

All reference documents and reports are filed in the Superintendent’s office.

*Maria Puglisi
Recording Secretary*