

Formal Written Correspondence to the Board

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12.40.223.114

* Name

Melanie Sadek

* Address

Phone Number

* Email

* Subject

Dogs on Campus Policy Change

* Comments

Dear LVJUSD Board Members,

I am writing on behalf of Valley Humane Society, a nonprofit animal welfare organization dedicated to supporting both people and companion animals in the Tri-Valley area. It has come to our attention that the policy regarding dogs on campus is being updated to exclude all dogs. If this is accurate, we respectfully request that this change be reconsidered.

For over 20 years, Valley Humane Society has provided pet-assisted therapy services to students and staff within your district, and we have been recognized for this important work. Each school year, we issue a certificate of insurance naming LVJUSD as an additional insured. Our volunteers undergo all required clearances, and we have maintained a spotless record with no incidents. Our programs have a direct and positive impact on children in your district. We support struggling readers through our Paws to Read program, provide mental health support to middle and high school students, and collaborate with special education teams. The feedback we receive underscores the immeasurable benefits of these programs. Discontinuing this service would negatively affect students, especially the most vulnerable.

The Paws to Read program offers teachers a unique way to support students who struggle with literacy. By reading to a dog, students experience a positive and anxiety-free environment that fosters a love for reading. Each child receives a bookmark featuring their therapy dog, allowing them to carry this positive experience home.

We also offer mental health relief on campuses in various forms. During finals week, we provide stress relief breaks, and our teams are available for regular mental health support in private sessions and wellness centers. In times of crisis, we send teams to help ease grief and anxiety.

Additionally, we provide opportunities for schools to request teams for their special education programs. Interacting with therapy dogs allows students with unique learning needs to express themselves in new and comforting ways.

The Valley Humane Canine Comfort Pet-Assisted Therapy Program is meticulously managed, ensuring only the best teams are approved. Our teams serve all four Tri-Valley School Districts and collaborate with organizations such as Kaiser, Stanford, and the Alameda County District Attorney's office. Our program is well-respected, and we take pride in serving the amazing students in your district.

We kindly ask you to revisit this policy change. While we understand the need for limited canine access to school campuses, we believe our program should be an exception due to its significant benefits.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Melanie Sadek, President
Valley Humane Society