Animal-Assisted Therapy
School Therapy Dog

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**What is Pet Therapy / Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)?**

- Pet therapy is a broad term that includes animal-assisted therapy and other animal-assisted activities. Animal-assisted therapy is a growing field that uses dogs or other animals to help people recover from, or better cope with health problems; as well as aid in the education and well-being of individuals with special needs. AAT is designed to promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional, and/or cognitive functioning. AAT is provided in a variety of settings and may be group or individual in nature.
Benefits of AAT Programs

Goals of AAT Programs: Animals can be incorporated into a variety of programs. They can be used to:

- Improve fine motor skills.
- Increase verbal interactions between students and between students and staff.
- Increase attention skills (i.e., paying attention, staying on task).
- Reduce anxiety.
- Increase vocabulary.
- Improve knowledge of concepts such as size, color, etc.
- Increase motivation.
- Improve willingness to be involved in a group activities.
- Improve interactions with others.
- Reduce self-stimulatory/repetitive behaviors.
- Develop leisure/recreation skills.
- Increase self-esteem.
- Improve knowledge of concepts such as size, color, etc.
- Improve wheelchair skills
What are Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA)?

The formal definition of Animal-Assisted Activities is:
- Animal-assisted activities are casual "meet and greet" activities that involve pets visiting people. The same activity can be repeated with many people.

The key features of AAA:
- Specific treatment goals/lessons do not need to be planned for each visit.
- Visit content is spontaneous and visits last as long or as short as needed.
Difference between Service Dog and Therapy Dog

- **A service dog** is a type of assistance dog specifically trained to help people who have a disability. The dog performs a service to the individual.

- Service dogs are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide is directly related to the person's disability.

- Service Dogs are protected under ADA.

- **A therapy dog** is a dog trained to provide affection and comfort to people in hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, schools, hospices, disaster areas, and to people with special needs.

- A therapy dog does not provide a service directly related to an individual's disability.

- A therapy dog is not protected under ADA.
Savannah

- Savannah was trained through Prestigious Paw in Flemington NJ. Her trainer, Lisa Wance, is a certified professional dog trainer- knowledge assessed and an Associate Certified Animal Behavior Consultant with The International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants.

- Savannah and Mrs. Friedrich began working with Lisa when she was 10 weeks old. She started with Puppy Kindergarten and has progressed through family manners, loose lease walking, intermediate and advanced behaviors.

- She completed her Canine Good Citizen assessment in November 2014.

- She completed her Therapy Dog evaluation through Therapy Dogs International ("TDI") in November 2014.

- The TDI evaluation consisted of 13 steps broken down into 2 phases. The test is set-up to mimic a hospital setting.
What will Savannah do at SBS?

- Savannah will primarily be located within Mrs. Friedrich’s classroom. The other self-contained classes will visit Savannah to begin, and eventually she will join their classrooms to work with the students.
- Students will learn how to approach and treat an animal.
- Students will read to Savannah.
- Students will practice math facts with Savannah.
- Students will learn to take care of her.
- Savannah will motivate students to complete difficult tasks.
- Savannah will help increase social language and recall skills.
- Savannah will help decrease student anxiety.
Allergies and Phobias

**Allergy Concerns**

- Most people who have an allergy to a dog are allergic to the dander, flakes of dead skin, as well as the saliva. Mrs. Friedrich will bathe Savannah every week (or as needed) to reduce the dander on her fur. If necessary, she can also use anti-dander spray or wipes every day that Savannah comes to work.

- Mrs. Leister has scanned all of our student medical files and identified the students who have related allergy concerns on file.

- Savannah will not enter the work spaces of students who are allergic to dogs.

**Fear of dogs**

- Savannah will be kept away from any students who are afraid of dogs. We will maintain a list of these students, and avoid walking past their classrooms when Savannah travels the halls to come in/out of work, and to go outside.

**Students and parents are encouraged to communicate any allergies and/or fears of dogs to Mr. Gardella directly.**

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Introducing Savannah to our students

Savannah will be introduced to our students in two phases.

- Video Introduction
- Personal Introduction
Video Introduction

- Students will view a short video in their classrooms on January 6th and 7th. The video will include the following content, presented in student friendly language.

- Savannah’s purposes at SBS. (This will include a portion explaining that she is not our pet or mascot!)

- Expected student behavior around Savannah.
  - Ask before petting - This is a key safety measure both for Savannah and the kids. Students must ask to pet Savannah, and Mrs. Friedrich must respond back to them before they pet her. This ensures that Mrs. Friedrich is aware of both Savannah’s behavior and the students’ actions. Savannah is still considered a puppy (up to 2 years of age) and we want to make sure no “fears” are created in both her and/or the students.
  - Present a hand to Savannah before petting. Savannah has been taught to sit when greeting someone and we can teach the students Savannah’s sit command.
  - Students will be required to wash their hands immediately after they have had contact with Savannah.
Video Introduction

- Expectations for approaching Savannah.
  - Students will be taught when it is appropriate to approach and interact with Savannah.
  - Only 3 students at a time can be with her.

- Some of Savannah’s commands and responses.

- What to expect from Savannah.

- How to communicate with the teacher if you are allergic or afraid of dogs.
Personal Introduction

- Mrs. Friedrich will bring Savannah to visit each classroom on January 8th and 9th.

- At this point, we will be aware of allergy concerns, as well as of any children who may be afraid, and will make the necessary accommodations to ensure that Savannah doesn’t infringe on their space.
More information on Animal Assisted Therapy

- www.schooldogs.org
- http://www.tdi-dog.org
- http://www.habri.org
- Model School http://www.greenchimneys.org
- http://www.habic.chhs.colostate.edu
Research Articles and Videos


- Effect of Animal-Assisted Play Therapy on facilitating social behavior for children with autism: a preliminary comparison study [https://habricentral.org/resources/43892](https://habricentral.org/resources/43892)

