

FAQ: GOFF THERAPY DOG PROGRAM

1. WHAT ABOUT STUDENTS WHO HAVE DOG ALLERGIES OR ASTHMA?

- Students will never be forced to interact with the dog. If a student's allergies are sensitive enough to be triggered by a hypoallergenic dog, the dog will not enter that student's classroom.

2. WHAT ABOUT STUDENTS WHO ARE AFRAID OF DOGS?

- In exposing students to dogs at a young age, we can work to overcome and combat this fear before it develops into a phobia. This will be done sensitively, with minimal exposure to start, building students' confidence and comfort through the guidance and support of educational professionals and a trained animal. In addition, no child will ever be forced to have contact with the dog.

3. WILL TAXPAYERS HAVE TO PAY FOR THE DOG?

- No. Goff Middle School's therapy dog is owned by Principal Jill Barker. In addition, to cover ongoing costs such as treats and toys over the years, we may be fundraising at Goff. Taxpayers will not be paying for the dog.

4. WHAT IF THE DOG HAS AN ACCIDENT IN THE SCHOOL BUILDING?

- Through training, we are confident that the dog will be able to communicate its needs to its handlers. This would be yet another learning opportunity for students. Accidents happen, we are not perfect, but we don't let these moments define us. We clean up, talk about how we could have perhaps prevented the accident, and move forward. The handlers, Mrs. Barker and Mrs. Yovine will be responsible for situations of this sort.

5. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DOG DURING SCHOOL HOURS?

- Mrs. Barker and Mrs. Yovine will be the two trained handlers, therefore they will be the only persons responsible for the dog when the dog is in the building.

6. WILL THE DOG COOPERATE IN SAFETY DRILLS AND EMERGENCY SITUATIONS?

- The extensive training the dog will complete will prepare the dog to appropriately handle safety drills and emergency procedures. Dogs in all other districts are trained for such occasions, similar to dogs in medical facilities and nursing homes who are trained to handle medical emergencies and high stress situations. Our dog will be present for all drills, and we will monitor, track, and record his behavior during these drills, which we would address with additional training if need be.

7. WHAT KIND OF DOG IS IT?

- Goff's therapy dog is a small Havanese named Bandit. The Havanese breed is highly trainable and surprisingly energetic. They tend to work as therapy dogs and assistance dogs, sniff out mold and termites, and are known to show off their clownish antics as performing dogs. They are highly rated for their friendliness toward strangers, training ability, intelligence and low tendency to bark.

8. WILL STUDENTS BE TAUGHT HOW TO APPROPRIATELY INTERACT WITH THE DOG?

- Yes, students will be taught how to interact with Bandit through lessons during CCS, as well as assemblies and other programming. Students will learn how to handle the dog, when it is appropriate to interact with the dog, how to read the dog's mood and energy level, proper health and hygiene practices for the dog and the students, etc. This is a process, not a one time educational experience. The dog would be part of our school culture.

9. WILL THE DOG BE SHARED EQUALLY AROUND THE SCHOOL?

- The dog's presence will be felt around the school. The dog will be working primarily with 6th grade classes and with students who require counseling services. However, the dog will be part of the school culture, visiting classrooms whenever invited. The dog will also be present at school wide events such as assemblies and parent evenings/after school events.

10. WHAT IF MRS. BARKER LEAVES GOFF MIDDLE SCHOOL?

- Mrs. Barker has no intention of leaving Goff. However, if she does leave, she would keep Bandit and the school district would consider getting a new therapy dog to be handled by another staff member.

11. WHAT IF THE DOG GETS ILL?

- Unfortunately, just like people, dogs get sick. Students will be involved in the educational process of what it takes to keep a dog healthy and well, just as it is important to consider what it takes to keep themselves alive and well. This educational process includes but isn't limited to a healthy diet, physical activity, hydration, a sleep/rest schedule, and interaction/connection with other beings.

12. WHAT IF BANDIT CAN'T PASS THE TRAININGS? DO WE HAVE A BACK-UP PLAN?

- In the off chance that this occurs, we will try to bring in a new dog.

13. WILL THE DOG BE A DISTRACTION TO STUDENTS?

- We do not feel as though the puppy would be a distraction to the students. Just as the puppy will be trained as a working dog, the students will be taught about proper ways to interact with the dog, and when interacting with the dog is and is not appropriate.