



AAE COVID-19 Risk Management Plan

Review of our Why?

Our mission is to engage, inspire, and empower our students.

AAE serves as one of many district wide interventions that provide a scaffolding for living the mission and promoting the health and well-being of our students. It is also part of a trauma-informed pedagogy in the health education classroom.

AAE Mission

“Enhance student engagement, facilitate social and emotional learning, and amplify a positive school climate.”

Brief Review of the Science

“The presence of a dog in an educational setting seems to support concentration, attention, motivation, and relaxation reflecting reduction of high stress levels which inhibit effective learning and performance. Also, the presence of a dog creates a pleasant social atmosphere, which is known to be an essential component for optimal executive functioning (Diamond and Lee, 2011), which represents a precondition for learning.”

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00234/full>

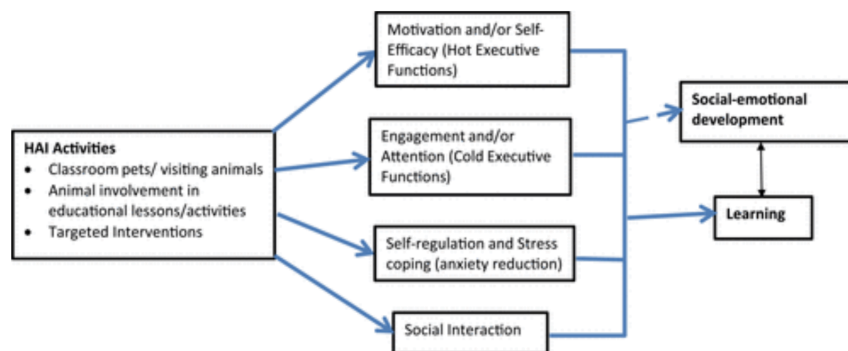


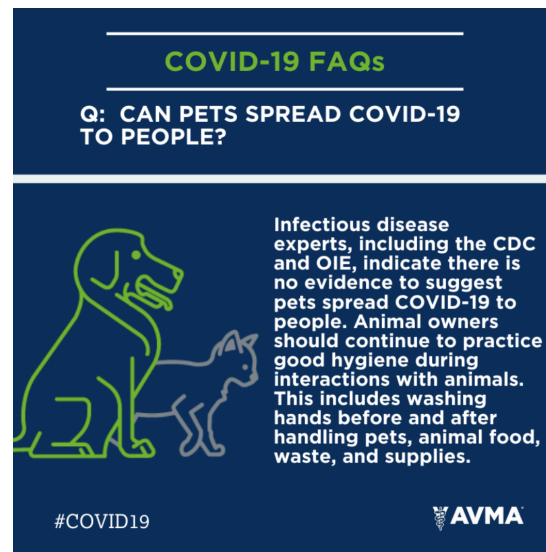
Figure 1. This theoretical framework depicts direct effects of human–animal interaction (HAI) on children’s motivation, engagement, self-regulation, and social interaction, as well as indirect effects on social-emotional development and learning, all indicated by thick lines. The dashed line indicates a possible, though to date unexplored, pathway of indirect effect for HAI on learning through social-emotional development.

Source: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2332858417724346>

How does COVID-19 impact the AAE Program?

The [World Health Organization](#) stated that to date (march 2020) there is no evidence at present that dogs can spread SARS-CoV-2. “ To date, all transmission has been human-to-human, after the initial jump from bats (most likely) to humans”.

According to the [CDC](#): “At this time, there is no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Based on the information available to date, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low. If you have a service or therapy animal, follow your local guidance for acceptable business and social practices.”



Source:

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19/covid-19-social-tools>

How does a “Do Not Pet” Policy influence the AAE intervention?

Out of an *abundance of caution*, the AAE program is shifting to a “do not pet” policy. Research documents that “a student's exposure [defined as looking at, and not petting] to a therapy dog, can reduce levels of stress hormones and prime [positive emotions](#). The reduction of stress hormones may, over time, have significant benefits for physical and mental health.” Thus, a “do not pet” policy that enables the therapy dog to be present in school, during COVID-19 pandemic, may continue to alleviate the detrimental effects of stress on our students, and continue to prime emotional and social engagement.



Sources:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/canine-corner/201609/just-looking-dog-can-make-you-smile>

<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2018/02/power-pets>



Comparison of PRECOVID and POST COVID Risk Management Plan

Risk Management	COVID-19	Methods
Dog bathed within 24 hour of entering a public facility.	Addition of bath-wipes for use in the classroom space in the event that a student comes in contact with the therapy dog.	Professional dog wash station in handler's residence. Bath wipe containers.
Annual Vaccinations and monthly preventative care.	No change	Cumberland Animal Clinic. Records on file at GHS and central office.
Wash hands or use hand sanitizer after petting the therapy dog.	Encouraging a "Do not pet" option. If a student does come in contact with dog wash hands before and after contact.  	Sink in classroom space. Hand sanitizer. "Do not pet" patches attached to the therapy dog vest.
Pre-scheduled therapy dog visits to various learning spaces for intervention.	Limit therapy dog to the health education classroom space and nearby hallway/exits. Follow local guidance and facility protocols for social distancing, masks/shields.	Handler/ program facilitator
Handing of all toileting responsibility is that of the handler. Poop bags. Outdoor trash can near learning space.	No change	Handler/ program facilitator
Pet bedding laundered weekly and the workbench and water bowl wiped down weekly.	Pet bedding washed on wednesday and saturday - adjusting for two student cohorts. Workbench and water bowl disinfected bi-weekly as well.	Handler/ program facilitator
Any signs that the therapy dog is not well - the dog remains out of the building until clearance of the veterinarian.	No change.	Handler/ program facilitator. Dr. Benito DVM.
Therapy Dog volunteer insurance through Alliance of Therapy Dogs - "work" insurance through Business Insurers of Carolinas.	No change.	Records on File at GHS and central office. ADT rules, policies, guidelines. MSAD 51 "Animals in the Classroom - AAE" policy.