



**MAQUOKETA COMMUNITY  
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

www.MaquoketaSchools.org



Maquoketa Middle School  
200 East Locust Street  
Maquoketa, Iowa 52060  
Phone: (563) 652-4956

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are incredibly excited to introduce to you a new staff member that will be joining us this fall. We will be welcoming Rosie to our Middle School team as a Certified Therapy Dog. Rosie is a Fox Red Labrador Retriever. She has been in training for just over a year and is very excited to become an integral part of our school community. Below, we have set out the benefits of site based school therapy dogs, and have also tried to address some concerns that you may have.

**What are the benefits of having a school dog(s)?**

Numerous research studies have shown the benefits of therapy dogs in schools. Therapy dogs have been working in schools across the nation for quite some time now, and have at times been a part of our district staff before.

Evidence indicates that benefits include:

- Cognitive- companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game playing.
- Social- a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing, and focused interaction with others.
- Emotional- school dogs improve self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety.
- Physical- interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses.
- Reading- reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dog's presence has on children as well as the fact that a dog will listen to children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence to read aloud.

**Some challenges to consider:**

My child is allergic to dogs-

It is understandable that some of you may be concerned about possible allergic reactions to a school dog. However, Rosie has been and will be subjected to the most thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. She will also only be allowed in situations with pupils who voluntarily wish to work with her. Rosie will also be located primarily in the front part of the building and away from the classrooms. She will work with students in one on one or small group capacities, in specified areas, so the possible spread of dander is limited throughout the building. If you would like to request that your student does not work with Rosie, please contact the main office and let us know so that we can make the appropriate accommodations.

**Chris Hoover**  
Superintendent of  
Schools

**Amanda Bonjour**  
Middle School  
Principal

**Tara Notz**  
Director of Professional  
Growth & Student Learning

**Jill Bresnan**  
Director of Student  
Services

**Kate Kramer**  
Guidance Counselor



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Will Rosie be properly cared for?

Rosie will be extremely well looked after, and will be working with Mrs. Bonjour at school a couple days each week. She will stay safely in the office until proper acclimation has been completed. She will then begin by meeting with students in small groups settings, and may even spend time listening to pupils read in a controlled setting. No matter where she is working, she will always be accompanied by a trained adult. She will continue to undergo her rigorous training courses and will be extremely well-behaved. Rosie will be assessed daily before coming to school utilizing the Daily Checklist that is part of our board policy for the program. While Rosie is in middle school, she will have access to a dog crate in her home area where she can relax during the day. This is where they will spend most of their time initially. She will also visit the vet regularly for all of her vaccinations as well as regular check-ups. If Rosie is unwell for any reason, she will stay home for the day and be reassessed the following day before returning.

My child is scared of dogs-

Some children may have had upsetting experiences and thus have a fear of dogs (or other animals). Rosie will only be in contact with children that want to work with her. She has completed training that helps her to remain calm and be gentle around children. This training is ongoing and will continue to take place for as long as she is a school based therapy dog. Experience and research has shown that with proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and grow in respect and appreciation for them. If for any reason you would like to opt your student out of the therapy dog program, please contact the school and we will add them to our no contact list.

We hope you will join us in welcoming Rosie to the Maquoketa Community Schools family, and embrace all that they have to offer the school. More information about this can be found in the Professional Therapy Dog board policy at the following link: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1agA-21QNrtY3y8ssL0wh6rF-66lii0uSziH6HGPCLMM/edit?usp=sharing>

If you have any concerns regarding this, please email [abonjour@maquoketaschools.org](mailto:abonjour@maquoketaschools.org) with the heading “School Dog”.

Thank you for being an integral part of our team!  
In this together,

Amanda Bonjour  
Maquoketa Middle School Principal

**Chris Hoover**  
Superintendent of  
Schools

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Middle School  
Principal

**Tara Notz**  
Director of Professional  
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