

September 2019

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Interboro School district will be introducing a Therapy Dog Program and would like to share with you the objectives of the program as well as guidelines and procedures for students and staff. The **PAWS to Learn Program** would introduce Certified therapy dogs and their handlers into Interboro for visitation and stays throughout the day. The objective of the program is to create an opportunity for students to interact with the therapy dogs. Therapy dog teams have been used in many settings to help students to feel better by reducing stress with non-judgmental "visits", meeting and making a new friend, and using other social and emotional supports to help students have a "good day". Currently, Interboro will bring in Therapy Dog certified from Alliance Therapy Dogs, who qualify and meet the requirements of the School Board Policy.

**Identified Areas therapy Dogs will assist our students:**

- Anxiety
- Stress
- Relationship problems
- Confidence
- Academic stress (before tests, midterms, final exams, new schedule changes at the semester break, graduation, etc.)
- Family stress (divorce, agreements with parent/guardian)
- Identity issues for students who are finding "themselves"
- Crisis Intervention
- Health Issues

**Academic Benefits of Therapy Dog in the school:**

- Improves attendance and decreases tardiness
- Students turn in homework more often and increase performance in other subjects
- Reinforces learning
- Stimulates the senses
- Facilitates counseling
- Does not judge, criticize, or laugh

**Social Benefits of a Therapy Dog in the school:**

- Students build self-esteem, confidence, social skills, and communication skills
- Trusting relationships are formed
- Fosters feelings of safety and acceptance
- Decreases loneliness, anxiety, anger and depression
- Teaches unconditional love and acceptance
- Teaches to "give" instead of "receive"
- Encourages positive social behavior
- Lowers blood pressure and increases relaxation
- Inspires people to laugh, smile, and have fun!

Certified Therapy Dogs Terms consist of a dog and a handler who have been certified as a Therapy Dog Team.

The program is 100% voluntary, and parents/guardians may opt out of the program by returning the bottom section of this letter to the student's main office or sending an email to the Principal.

My student **MAY NOT** participate in the **PAWS to Learn Program**.

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_