



SCHOOL DISTRICT 63 (SAANICH)

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BRIEFING NOTE

To: Board of Education

Prepared By: Dave Eberwein
Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Administrative Procedure Update

Date: January 8, 2026

BACKGROUND

Policy 14 – Role of Superintendent specifies that the Superintendent is to manage and keep current, all district Administrative Procedures (APs). Specifically, sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 states:

Policy 14.4

- 4.2 *Develops and keeps current an Administrative Procedures Manual that is consistent with Board policy and provincial policies, regulations and procedures.*
- 4.3 *Appropriately involves individuals and groups in the Administrative Procedures development process.*
- 4.4 *Ensures system adherence to Policies and Administrative Procedures.*

Policy 6 – Policy Making and Review indicates that the Superintendent must inform the Board of any new administrative procedure or any substantive change to an existing one, as an information item on a Board Meeting agenda.

NEW ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

AP174 – ASSISTANCE DOGS

NEW

- We recognize that there may be instances where a certified Assistance Dog may play a significant role in supporting students with physical or developmental disabilities.
- This Administrative Procedure provides clarity on the purpose, approval process and expectations for permitting an Assistance Dog in our schools.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Eberwein".

Dave Eberwein
Superintendent of Schools

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ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE 174 – ASSISTANCE DOGS

Background

The Saanich School District recognizes the significant role that a certified Assistance Dog may play in supporting students with physical or developmental disabilities in assisting them in equitable access to services, programs, and activities. Assistance Dogs may be permitted in schools, buses, or District Facilities when their presence is essential to a student's educational program.

The Assistance Dog is trained to support individuals with diverse disabilities by avoiding hazards or performing tasks. Assistance Dogs must be certified by [Assistance Dogs International](#)(ADI), the [International Guide Dog Federation](#) (IGDF), or equivalent as determined by the District, ensuring alignment with the [Guide Dog and Service Dog Act](#).

Assistance Dogs support individuals with conditions that affect daily living including:

1. Autism Support: calming the student when overwhelmed, preventing self-harm or elopement, and aiding in social interactions
2. Health Conditions: alerting or responding to conditions such as seizure disorder, epilepsy, diabetes, or cardiac issues
3. Hearing Impairment: alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing
4. Mobility Needs: assisting individuals who use a wheelchair or have significant mobility challenges
5. Vision Impairment (Legally Blind): providing guidance for individuals who are blind, deafblind, or have low vision.

Note: Therapy or Emotional Support Dogs are not considered Assistance Dogs in BC and do not have the same public access rights. They are not eligible for certification under the *Guide Dog and Service Dog Act*.

Procedures

Eligibility Criteria

1. A student may be eligible to receive the support of an Assistance Dog if:
 - 1.1 They have a current *BC Ministry of Education and Child Care* designation (Physically Dependent, Physical Chronic Health Condition, Visual/Hearing Impairment, or Autism Spectrum Disorder)
 - 1.2 Their Individual Education Plan (IEP) specifies the need for an Assistance Dog
 - 1.3 The Assistance Dog holds a valid BC Guide Dog and Assistance Dog Provincial ID Card

Application

1. Prior to the admittance of an Assistance Dog to the school, the parent/guardian must:
 - 1.1 Submit a formal request to the Principal that includes:
 - 1.1.1 Letter of need
 - 1.1.2 Training/certification documentation for Assistance Dog
 - 1.1.3 Health/vaccination records
 - 1.1.4 Proof of liability insurance
2. Provide professional confirmation of disability and recommendation for an Assistance Dog
3. Provide a Certificate of Training for the Assistance Dog from the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF), Assistance Dogs International (ADI), or equivalent as determined by the District
4. Agree to pay for any additional costs incurred by the District related to the Assistance Dog (e.g. appropriate training for District staff, bus, and/or classroom modifications)
5. Ensure that a dog care schedule is created (daily bio-breaks, bedding, water)
6. Designate an alternate handler when the primary dog handler is absent
7. Annually provide proof of a municipal dog license, re-certification, and vaccination

District Responsibilities

1. The Principal will:
 - 1.1 Ensure that the Assistance Dog's use aligns with the student's IEP
 - 1.2 Arrange a planning meeting to discuss the Assistance Dog's purpose, care, classroom adjustments and transition plan. The meeting may include:
 - 1.2.1 Parent/Guardian
 - 1.2.2 School staff including classroom teacher(s) and educational assistant(s)
 - 1.2.3 The student (when appropriate)
 - 1.2.4 Representative from the agency with expertise on the Assistance Dog's capabilities (if required)
 - 1.2.5 Others as determined by the District or Principal
 - 1.3 Arrange an after-hours site visit before any service begins
 - 1.4 Communicate the transition plan to staff along with any required training
 - 1.5 Ensure that the Assistance Dog's presence does not create barriers to other students' learning
 - 1.6 Post appropriate signage at the school entrance informing visitors that there is an "Assistance Dog at Work"
 - 1.7 Request information from school parents/guardians about any allergies or extreme fear of dogs

- 1.8 Coordinate with Learning Services and the Transportation Department regarding any transportation requirements
- 1.9 Notify the students and their families who share school bus transportation with the Assistance Dog

The District and school are not responsible for the training, feeding, or caring of the Assistance Dog.

Pre-Service Expectations

1. Prior to any service commencing the following may be required from the parent/guardian:
 - 1.1 Pre-Transportation: meet with the school bus driver to teach key commands, enforcing the requirement of the dog to remain at the feet of the student while being transported, as well as understanding the expectation to load the dog via the bus stairs and not the lift
 - 1.2 Student Orientation: meet with students who ride the bus to explain the Assistance Dog's role and rules of interaction
 - 1.3 Emergency Drills: participate in school emergency drills (fire, lockdown, earthquake) with the dog

Assistance Dog Restrictions

1. For safety reasons, the Assistance Dogs may be excluded from certain areas of the school including the following areas:
 - 1.1 Science laboratories
 - 1.2 Technology Education shops
 - 1.3 Mechanical rooms / custodial closets
 - 1.4 Food preparation areas
 - 1.5 Any other areas as determined by the Principal

Decisions to restrict access for an Assistance Dog will be made on a case-by-case basis, considering safety, health, and operational requirements.

Removing or Excluding Assistance Dogs from School

1. The District reserves the right to remove or exclude an Assistance Dog from school facilities or property when necessary, including when the dog:
 - 1.1 Poses a direct threat to the health or safety of students, staff, or others
 - 1.2 Causes a significant disruption to school activities
 - 1.3 Jeopardizes the safe operation of the school or a school-sponsored activity
 - 1.4 Urinates or defecates in inappropriate locations
 - 1.5 Uses unnecessary vocalizations (e.g. barking, growling, or whining)
 - 1.6 Solicits or steals food or other items
 - 1.7 Fails to reliably perform the service for which it was approved

- 1.8 Increases the health risk of others due to parasites or a communicable disease
- 1.9 Other behaviours that are deemed unacceptable
- 1.10 The student, or the parent/guardian, neglects to abide by any conditions or the terms of an IEP regarding their Assistance Dog's role as support.

References: [Guide Dog and Service Dog Act,](#)
[Assistance Dogs International](#)
[International Guide Dog Federation](#)

Approved: January 2026