

# ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY AT PARKLANDS IN 2019

Research clearly identifies that animals are a valuable tool for increasing oxytocin production and therefore reducing cortisol levels which directly reduces the experience of stress or anxiety in humans.

Animals not only help increase a relaxed and fun environment which increases learning engagement but are also a social lubricant offering unconditional acceptance regardless of an individual's circumstance therefore down regulating stress activation.

We are very excited to announce that in 2019, we will have our own dog to work with the Student Care & Wellbeing team to support students with behavioural, wellbeing and learning needs. The dog will be an Australian Cobberdog. These are specially bred hypoallergenic dogs that are genetically designed for their quiet temperament.

For the first year, the puppy will undergo significant training. Class visits and school wide engagement will not commence until it has completed its 12 months of obedience and assistance training.

Some things to keep in mind and to consider telling your children:

Please do

1. Only approach dogs when their handler is present.
2. Always ask permission from the handler before approaching a dog.
3. When allowed to approach the dog, move slowly and quietly.
4. Hold out the back of your hand slightly toward the dog, but not in its face. Let the dog choose to sniff you.
5. Always allow the dog to choose to approach you before you touch it.
6. If the dog is sleeping, leave him alone as they might startle easily.
7. Only approach the dog one at a time.
8. Remain quiet and focused if the dog enters the classroom.
9. Start by petting their chest. Gentle scratching is also fine. From there you can gently pat or scratch their neck. Go in the direction of the fur.
10. Understand that the dog is in the process of training and be gentle!

Please don't

1. Interfere with the dog while they are eating or playing with their toy as they may think you are going to take it off them.
2. Put your hands over the face and head.
3. Pull their ears, tails or feet.
4. Hug the dog. This makes many dogs uncomfortable.
5. Don't put your face close to the dog's face. This may invade its personal space.
6. Run away from the dog. This may evoke a predatory response.
7. Yell or scream around the dog. Excessive noise can scare, excite or annoy some dogs.



# Meet the Student Care & Wellbeing Team



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