



Comfort Dogs

Breed of Dog

The breed of dog is not as important as the dog's temperament. The dog needs to be well behaved around a large number of people and be ok with loud noises such as fire drills.

If students are allergic to dogs, they will look at the dog from a distance.

If the dog is purchased through [Interquest CARES](#), then the dog is chosen for the campus by Interquest CARES, the dog belongs to the district and is assigned a handler (district employee) who cares for the dog.

Dog Ownership

If the dog is bought from Interquest CARES, it is owned by the district.

The dog can also be owned by a staff member that is interested in Comfort Dogs. Many dogs are owned by the campus principal or counselor.

If the dog is owned by the district, the designated handler should care for him/her on nights and weekends. If the dog is owned by a district employee, that person will care for the dog.

Care for the Dog

The dog will have regular veterinary check-ups and will be kept up to date on all shots, heartworm and flea/tick medications.

The dog's owner will be responsible for the cost of veterinary care, heartworm/flea/tick medications, and dog food.

Training of the Dog

The dog should be trained to follow basic commands such as sit, stay, and come. He/she should be well socialized.

Location of the Dog

The dog stays with the handler, except if he/she is doing classroom visits. Staff members can sign up to host the dog in their classroom on a limited basis.

The Dog's Schedule

The dog has a daily schedule that includes regular restroom, water, and rest breaks given by the handler or designee (district employee). All waste products will be disposed of properly. There should be designated water and rest areas in the front office.

Daily activities of the dog include classroom visits during read-alouds, puppy pets at recess, use by the counselor in grief/trauma situations, use as an incentive, being a reading buddy for a student/classroom.

The dog should have a calendar so teachers can request a visit by him/her to their classroom. This ensures the dog is not over stimulated.



It is recommended to allow older students to sign up to care for the dog on a rotating schedule. The duties would be to fill the water bowl, brush the dog, and tidy up the dog's area each morning before school starts.

Interaction with Students

The dog would have supervised interaction with the students such as puppy pets at recess, classroom visits, and being an incentive for a student. Because of this reason, the dog's temperament would need to be such that loud noises or interactions with many different individuals would be tolerated.

Resources about Comfort Dogs

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/4-legged-sel-how-start-therapy-dog-program/>

[Bedford ISD](#)

[Interquest CARES](#) trains comfort dogs

School districts that have comfort dogs:

HEB, Lampasas, Cy-Fair, Klein, San Antonio, North East

HEB Q&A Response

HEB. Principal says they love having Baxter (the honorary Bobcat) on campus! We can reach out with any other questions we might have.

She said they have a calendar used for teachers to sign up for sessions with Baxter. This is similar to the other schools I have read about. Most of the articles said the dog stays with one primary person, who takes the dog with them on their daily tasks throughout the school and that it's better to have the dog with someone who goes throughout the building rather than in one central location.

What types of dog did you consider? [Interquest CARES determined the dog that we received](#)

Who owns the dog? [our school district and campus own the dog](#)

Where does the dog go at night/weekends/holidays? [Our Speech teacher was a large driver in funding for and facilitating a comfort dog on campus, so she was invested in caring for the dog; she is Baxter's primary handler; she was trained by Interquest CARES to receive her Canine Good Citizen Certificate. Our counselor is a secondary handler and was also trained to receive her Canine Good Citizen Certificate. Our Speech teacher takes him home 90% of the time for nights/weekends/holidays, but myself and another staff member also care for Baxter when our Speech teacher needs a break or goes out of town.](#)

How do you handle restroom breaks? [Baxter has a calendar and has scheduled restroom breaks; our Speech teacher's schedule also allows her to step out quickly and come back in when needed.](#)



How much access does the dog have to kids? Baxter is regularly in Speech lessons and guidance lessons; he goes out to recess every other week for puppy pets in all grade levels; teachers can request him to visit by assigning their class to a slot on his calendar; our 6th graders have signed up to "care" for him in the mornings by making sure he is brushed/has fresh water/etc.; teachers also use Baxter-time as incentive and will sign-up students to visit on his calendar.

How was the dog trained? Baxter was trained by Interquest CARES