

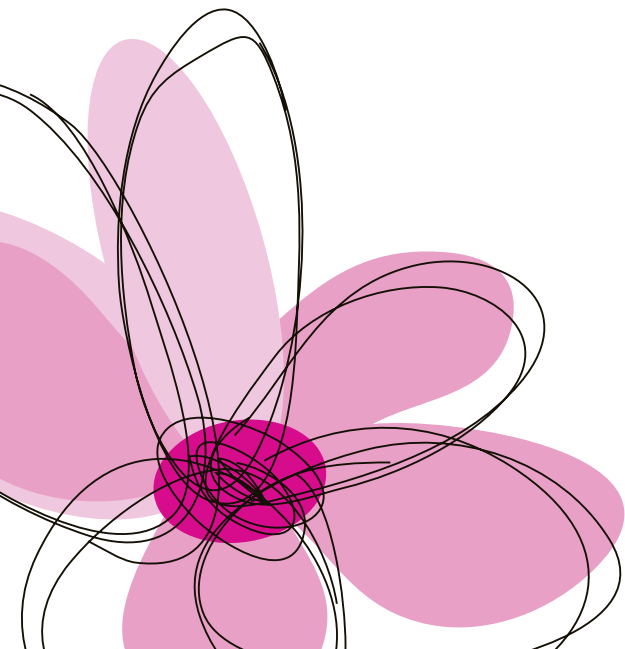


CHARLOTTE'S **LITTER**

Good dogs. Great listeners.



Therapy Dogs and Your Child



If you are reading this link,

you are probably already concerned that your child's social and emotional needs are not being fully met in their educational environment. If you haven't seen it already, I encourage you to read the link titled [Bringing Therapy Dogs to Your School](#) (in the Educators section of the site). This link will give you insight on how a Therapy Dog Program can benefit your school, and help define the process and the obstacles. As a parent, your objective should not be to introduce a whole/inclusive program for your entire school. Leave that to the administrators and instead focus on integrating a Therapy Dog assisted program specific to your child. We have found that once one dog is volunteering at the school and the teachers and staff see the undeniable benefits, this dog will start to be used in other areas, and soon more and more dogs will be walking the hallways on their way to work.



Here are some steps:

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1. Do your homework

There are many helpful links on our website to get you started. It would be wise to contact a local registering Therapy Dog organization in your area. They will be a great resource and could provide references. If you have found a Therapy Dog organization you are comfortable with, you could ask them to contact the school in conjunction with you. A list of national organizations can be found on our helpful resources page.

2. Consult with your child

Once you have done some research, speak to your child. Is this something in which they would be comfortable participating? Young children will probably agree eagerly, but older children may be fearful of stigma. It is important to discuss ways to overcome that stigma and protect your child's privacy.

3. Schedule a meeting with guidance, school psychologist, teachers, and administrators

Discuss your concerns, research, and vision. Provide collaborative information such as downloading the [Bringing Therapy Dogs to your School](#) (in the Educators section of the site) and any other research that may support your request. This process may take several meetings, extra time, and negotiating. Remember your vision and advocate for your child. They may be excellent and experienced educators, but you know your child best.

4. Prepare for adjustments

Once you have a program in place, make sure it is working as you and your child envisioned. Don't be afraid to tweak it, and as time progresses the program will likely need to evolve just as your child matures. If your child has a 504 or an IEP, consider having it written into their plan.

5. Advocate and share

Continue to share with the teachers and staff the progress you see. Encourage them to consider a wider scope that could benefit other children. Share with other parents your experience, but only in situations where your child's privacy is protected.

