INSTRUCTION

Alternatives to Animal Dissection

The Virginia General Assembly amended the “Code of Virginia” to include § 22.1-200.01 directing the Virginia Board of Education to establish guidelines for local school divisions regarding instructional alternatives to animal dissection.

I. Definition: “Dissection” involves the surgical manipulation of animals, or their body parts, for scientific study and may be preceded or followed by inspecting, touching, handling, and/or mounting specimens. Examples of animals and their body parts include, but are not limited to, biological warehouse products, frozen or fresh items designated for human consumption, owl pellets, and wildlife specimens collected from outdoor settings.

All students enrolled in courses that involve detailed study of individual animals and animal groups or comparative study of internal and external anatomy shall be provided with suitable alternatives to the dissection technique in the event it is used as an instructional or assessment strategy. Relevant subject areas and courses include, but are not limited to:

A. Elementary school: Grades K-5 Science;

B. Middle school: Grades 6-8 Health and Grade 7 Life Science; and

C. High school: Grades 9-10 Health, Biology I, and advanced level and elective courses that include biological science content.

II. Teachers shall adhere to the following requirements:

A. Include in their syllabi a statement regarding students’ right to decline participation in animal dissections, a list of alternatives available to those who choose to exercise this right, and an opt-out form to be signed by the parents or legal guardians of such students.

B. Keep on file for the remainder of the school year signed opt-out forms for students who decline to participate in animal dissection activities.
C. Excuse a student from participating in dissections as part of classroom instruction or assessment. If an opt-out form has not been signed, teachers shall excuse the student from the activity and notify parents or guardians of the student’s request.

D. Require any student excused from participating in animal dissection to complete an assignment using an alternative technique specified in the course syllabi.

III. The Supervisor of Science and Family Life Education (or designee) shall post a list of suitable animal dissection alternatives on the Division website and update it annually.

A. Alternative techniques can include, but are not limited to, Internet virtual dissection simulations or animations, digital programs and application software tutorials, videotapes and CD/DVDs, manipulatives and models, and posters and charts.

B. Alternative techniques shall be equivalent in rigor to the dissection activity and require comparable investment of time and effort by the student. Alternatives to animal dissection shall not include students involuntarily observing the dissection activity, taking a lower grade, or dropping the class.

C. Alternative techniques shall be reasonably chosen to provide the student with adequate opportunities to master course standards. Adequate assistance shall be provided by the teacher for all students who choose alternatives.

D. Alternative techniques shall not require, as a part of their assessment, students to use dissected specimens.

The Associate Superintendent for Student Learning and Accountability (or designee) is responsible for implementing and monitoring this regulation.

The Associate Superintendent for Student Learning and Accountability (or designee) is responsible for reviewing this regulation in 2020.

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS