



ROCK VALLEY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



Educating Today's Students for Tomorrow

Rock Valley Elementary is excited to share that we will have a licensed therapy dog on staff at school this year. Our Elementary School Counselor, Mrs. Koerselman, along with her two year old Poochon, Ollie, have completed an official training and certification process. As part of the aforementioned training, Mrs. Koerselman and Ollie earned their "Pet Therapy Team" certification from the Alliance of Therapy Dogs (ATD). To obtain certification with ATD, dogs must be a minimum of one year old, and must meet several requirements including: being tested and evaluated by a Certified ATD Evaluator on their temperament and skills in various settings, maintain good health shown through regular veterinary visits, and teams must also agree to adhere to all ATD regulations like staying current on vaccinations and keeping their dog leashed when not in a controlled area.

Research has shown that therapy dogs support psychological and academic growth, while increasing social skills and self-esteem in children and adolescents. Therapy dogs have been trained to provide emotional support, which positively impacts reading skills, emotional functioning and communication skills. In addition, the use of therapy dogs may decrease anxiety, improve self-esteem and increase overall academic achievement in students. We truly believe that Ollie can make a positive impact on all of our students, whether that be greeting them in the halls, visiting classrooms, attending small groups, or even while meeting individually with Mrs. Koerselman.

While we are looking forward to welcoming Ollie to our Rock Valley Elementary School Team, we also understand that some students may have allergies or a known fear of dogs. For your awareness, Ollie is part of a hypoallergenic breed, which means that because he does not shed, the allergy-causing dander that sticks to his fur doesn't get released into the air or onto the floor, making reactions less likely. Additionally, please know that students who are afraid of dogs will never be required to interact with Ollie until they are ready and choose to do so. Likewise, all students will learn the expectations of how to interact with Ollie appropriately in the school setting.

OPT-OUT FORM

_____ **NO**, my child does **not** have permission to be in contact with Ollie, a certified therapy dog, at Rock Valley Elementary for the 2022-2023 school year.

Student Name: _____ Grade/Teacher: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____