

Pet Partners



Dear JES family and friends,

With much excitement I am pleased to let you know that our school dog Texas will be continuing this year as a member of the counseling staff at JES. For those families new to Johnson, Texas has *trained* to become qualified to work at JES. He has passed his certification test and is a member of a national organization called Pet Partners through the Delta Society. Texas is a 6 year old, Yellow Labrador Retriever. Animal Assisted Counseling, a nationally recognized program, is based on the established fact that the simple presence of an animal in counseling significantly increases the impact of a counseling session. Some of the benefits of having an animal to assist with students are:

- ✓ Development of social and personal skills
- ✓ Development of appropriate calming strategies
- ✓ Development of self-esteem
- ✓ Development of positive human-animal interaction

Some students may be selected to participate in a short-term individual counseling program with Texas on a weekly basis to enhance skills specifically relevant to that student's needs. Typical counseling sessions are 15 – 20 minutes once a week and we will adhere to that guideline for Pet Partners as well.

When appropriate, Tex may be used to enhance the teaching of specific skills in guidance lessons throughout the course of the year. In this setting, most of the students' interactions with him would be primarily through observation.

While Tex will not be able to work with each child that I see, he will be coming to “work” on a regular basis. Students who visit the counseling office on those days may have the added benefit of the presence of Texas in the session. This will not extend the session nor will it involve “working” directly with him on specific skills. He will simply be in the room where counseling takes place with the student and me. His purpose in this fashion is to simply make a counseling session more at ease for the student.

If your student is invited to participate in a session that requires direct contact with Texas either through regularly scheduled, short-term individual counseling or through small group counseling, you will notified by phone and/or by letter for parental permission before the sessions begin. When Texas is used for a guidance lesson in the classroom or if your child requests to see me on a day that he is on campus, no further notification will be given. If you would prefer that your child NOT interact with Texas at school, please notify me, through a letter, email or phone call so that your child may be protected, as much as possible, from the likelihood of interacting with him.

This program has the potential to make a significant difference in the lives of children who utilize it. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions or concerns, or need further information regarding Animal Assisted Counseling. Tex and I are looking forward to working with you and your children this year!

Sincerely,

Ziba Johnston

JES Counselor
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