

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The social and emotional well-being of our students and staff is extremely important to our school climate. We are excited to announce that we will be implementing a therapy dog program for the upcoming school year. There are many proven physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and mental health benefits of pet therapy. We are eager to offer this unique and therapeutic resource with our school community. It has been incredibly successful at a charter school in the upstate.

Over the summer, our handling team has been working diligently to complete specialized training and testing with the Alliance of Therapy Dogs. Throughout the school year, our dog, Jackson will work on specially assigned tasks and participate in activities with our school community. Research has shown that therapy dogs in schools can increase reading skills, as well as contribute to social and emotional development. A therapy dog’s presence has been shown to reduce anxiety, help students work through anger management hurdles, reduce bullying tendencies, and address other personal/social issues.

All students will have the opportunity to interact with GCA’s therapy dog, Jackson. However, if you choose to have your child not interact with the dog in their classroom, we will do our best to honor your wishes. The dog will be in the hallways, at school events such as assemblies, after-school events, and athletic events.

**This form is an opt-out form.** If you do not send this form back with your signature, then it is our understanding that you are giving permission for your student to interact with Jackson. If you choose to turn this form in, please send it back to the front office by your student’s first day of school.

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**GCA Therapy Dog Program Opt-out Form**

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YourStudent’s Full Legal Name

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Grade-level

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Parent/Guardian’s Name

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Parent/Guardian’s Signature

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Date