Texas

Safety

Standards

Kindergarten-Grade 12
Science

2006
Chapter 8

Live Animals in the Classroom

Occasionally, live animals may be brought into the classroom to facilitate student observations of, and respect for, living organisms and the conditions under which they thrive. The National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) supports these experiences as long as participants observe the guidelines developed by the scientific and educational communities for the proper care of and respect for all living animals (see Appendix B for copies of relevant NABT statements).

Guidelines for the Study of Live Animals

- Do not perform investigations on any animal that might cause suffering or pain, or that might pose a health hazard to the teacher or students.
- Animals brought to the classroom should be observed carefully by a science instructor. The health and safety of the animal and the students should be a priority during classroom activities.
- Animals that “live” in the classroom should be treated with care and respect while sharing the living space with students.
- Be aware of any allergies students may have related to animals.
- Wear personal protective equipment when caring for animals, especially animals that are not domesticated. Some wild (non-domesticated) animals may carry infectious diseases or organisms that can be transmitted to humans.
- Students should notify the teacher prior to bringing an animal to the classroom. This way, potentially dangerous situations can be prevented.

Teachers and students must be aware of the responsibilities involved with the study of live animals. The statement below was developed to assist with the introduction of live animals into the classroom or laboratory.

“Any use of animals must convey substantive knowledge of biology and be appropriate for the classroom and for the age of the students. National Association of Biology Teachers supports these experiences so long as they are conducted within the established guidelines of proper care and use of animals, as developed by the scientific and educational community. NABT encourages the presence of live animals in the classroom with appropriate consideration to the age and maturity level of the students (elementary, middle school, high school or college).”

The Use of Animals in Biology Education, National Association of Biology Teachers, 2003
Handling Live Animals

Use precautions when keeping live animals in the classroom. Teachers should be aware that diseases such as salmonellosis can be transmitted to students who handle classroom animals.

Always insist that students wash their hands before feeding the animals, as well as after they have handled the animals or touched materials from the animals' cages.

The small painted turtle that frequents elementary school classrooms has been found to carry salmonella. Keeping the cages clean of fecal remains will reduce the presence of bacteria that may cause an illness.

"NSTA encourages teachers to be sensitive to students’ views regarding dissection, and to be aware of students’ beliefs and their right to make an informed decision about their participation. Should a teacher feel that an alternative to dissection would be a better option for a student or group of students, it is important that the teacher select a meaningful alternative."

_responsible use of live animals and dissection in the science classroom_,
National Science Teachers Association, 2005
The Use of Animals in Biology Education

The study of organisms, including nonhuman animals, is essential to the understanding of life on Earth. NABT recommends the prudent and responsible use of animals in the life science classroom. Biology teachers should foster a respect for life and should teach about the interrelationship and interdependency of all things.

Classroom experiences that involve nonhuman animals range from observation to dissection. As with any instructional activity, the use of nonhuman animals in the biology classroom must have sound educational objectives. Any use of animals must convey substantive knowledge of biology and be appropriate for the classroom and for the age of the students. Biology teachers are in the best position to make this determination for their students.

NABT supports these experiences so long as they are conducted within the established guidelines of proper care and use of animals, as developed by the scientific and educational community. NABT encourages the presence of live animals in the classroom with appropriate consideration to the age and maturity level of the students (elementary, middle school, high school or college).

No alternative can substitute for the actual experience of dissection or other use of animals. NABT urges teachers to be aware of the limitations of alternatives. When the teacher determines that the most effective means to meet the objectives of the class do not require dissection, NABT acknowledges the use of alternatives to dissection including, models and the various forms of multimedia. NABT encourages teachers to be sensitive to substantive student objections to dissection and to consider providing appropriate lessons for those students where necessary.

To implement this policy, NABT endorses and adopts the “Principles and Guidelines for the Use of Animals in Precollege Education” of the Institute of Laboratory Animals Resources (National Research Council). Copies of the “Principles and Guidelines” may be obtained from the ILAR at 500 Fifth Street NW, Washington, DC 20001, phone 202 334-2590, e-mail ILAR@nas.edu. The Principles and Guidelines may be downloaded at http://dels.nas.edu/ilar/prin_guide.asp.

Adopted by the Board of Directors, May 2003. This policy supersedes and replaces all previous National Association of Biology Teachers statements regarding animals in biology education.
Position Statements
Responsible Use of Live Animals and Dissection in the Science Classroom

Responsible Use of Live Animals and Dissection in the Science Classroom

Introduction

NSTA supports the decision of science teachers and their school or school district to integrate live animals and dissection in the K-12 classroom. Student interaction with organisms is one of the most effective methods of achieving many of the goals outlined in the National Science Education Standards (NSES). To this end, NSTA encourages educators and school officials to make informed decisions about the integration of animals in the science curriculum. NSTA opposes regulations or legislation that would eliminate an educator’s decision-making role regarding dissection or would deny students the opportunity to learn through actual animal dissection.

NSTA encourages districts to ensure that animals are properly cared for and treated humanely, responsibly, and ethically. Ultimately, decisions to incorporate organisms in the classroom should balance the ethical and responsible care of animals with their educational value.

While this position statement is primarily focused on vertebrate animals, NSTA recognizes the importance of following similar ethical practices for all living organisms.

Including Live Animals in the Classroom

NSTA supports including live animals as part of instruction in the K-12 science classroom because observing and working with animals firsthand can spark students’ interest in science as well as a general respect for life while reinforcing key concepts as outlined in the NSES.

NSTA recommends that teachers

- Educate themselves about the safe and responsible use of animals in the classroom. Teachers should seek information from reputable sources and familiarize themselves with laws and regulations in their state.
- Become knowledgeable about the acquisition and care of animals appropriate to the species under study so that both students and the animals stay safe and healthy during all activities.
- Follow local, state, and national laws, policies, and regulations when live organisms, particularly native species, are included in the classroom.
- Integrate live animals into the science program based on sound curriculum and pedagogical decisions.
- Develop activities that promote observation and comparison skills that instill in students an appreciation for the value of life and the importance of caring for animals responsibly.
- Instruct students on safety precautions for handling live organisms and establish a plan for addressing such issues as allergies and fear of animals.
- Develop and implement a plan for future care or disposition of animals at the conclusion of the study as well as during school breaks and summer vacations.
- Espouse the importance of not conducting experimental procedures on animals if such procedures are likely to cause pain, induce nutritional deficiencies, or expose animals to parasites, hazardous/toxic chemicals, or radiation.
- Shelter animals when the classroom is being cleaned with chemical cleaners, sprayed with pesticides, and during other times when potentially harmful chemicals are being used.
- Refrain from releasing animals into a non-indigenous environment.