

The Benefits of Animals in the Elementary School Classroom

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Abstract

Background: During the past decade, animals in elementary classrooms have been much more prevalent now than ever before, improving the education of children in addition to mental and physical health.

Objective: This study aims to research the theories behind having animals in the elementary classroom and the benefits to the students. This study examined teachers' attitudes and experiences regarding animals in the classroom. The study aimed to discover the environmental benefits of stress reduction, educational purposes, and personal development in young students.

Design and Method: The research method is based on peer-reviewed literature consisting of scholarly articles, journals, dissertations, online articles, children's books, and infographics. Thus including literature from 2000 to current studies and novels being written. The research performed is qualitative and descriptive in itself and, when dissected, becomes arrayed with similarities and differences. The main research questions studied are: *Do animals benefit elementary school-aged students in the classroom setting? What are the most common benefits received? Can the benefits be emotional, physical, and environmental? Can engaging in animal-assisted classrooms help children in the future?*

Results: The significance of this study is that when teachers introduce animals, such as dogs, lizards, or rabbits, into the classroom, they can provide various benefits to the individual child physically, emotionally, and psychologically.

Conclusions: When introducing classroom pets, such as therapy dogs (Friesen, 2009), or educational animals like frogs and reptiles, there are often positive outcomes for the young individual to be able to incorporate life into education, emotional benefits, and psychological

benefits. Some often worry about including animals in their classroom with possible high upkeep and costs, fear of animals aging, and young students seeing death. This study concludes that when incorporating animals into not just education but life, these are often common in any animal owner's life. Students learn compassion, empathy, and the life cycle from the living organism in a setting where they spend most of their time at school. Bringing animals into the classroom can be costly, but the experience and learning the children receive are significant and can be life-changing.

Keywords: *Elementary Education, Therapy Animal, Empathy, Elementary School, Classroom Pets, Animals in the Classroom*

Chapter 1: Introduction

During the past decade, human-animal studies (HAS) have been conducted to explore the lives of humans and animals in school and their interactions in educational settings (Smilie, 2020). The primary locations are schools and classrooms. Though class pets have been found throughout the classrooms in the United States, there is not much research or statistical evidence showing if they are beneficial.

The elementary grades are the first time many children leave their parents for an extended period and are consistently trying new things during that time. Animals were introduced into classrooms primarily for educational purposes at first. As research has slightly progressed on this topic, it was found that AAA (Animal Assisted Activities) and HAI (Human-Animal Interaction) have a significant effect on children because of their educational use and recently found emotional, mental, and therapeutic benefits. Having classroom pets has been found to help students learn empathy, self-awareness, management, and relationship building. While evidence of this relationship between animals and students (as well as teachers and staff) has been established within schools all over the country, there have also been some minor concerns with having classroom pets. However, given the research investigated, the benefits mostly outweigh the concerns.

The American Humane Association worked with Pet Care Trust, creating a research study about pets in the classroom. Pets in the Classroom is an organization that helps teachers receive grants that help with monetary funding for AAAs and HAIs. In addition to finding animal-based lesson plans for most subjects and a community to ask and answer other educators' questions about animals in their classrooms.

This study will be investigating the benefits of animals in the elementary school classroom for students both neurotypical and neurodivergent, as well as children on the Autism Spectrum. The research will primarily be about the emotional, educational, and psychological findings in prior studies and articles on this topic. Due to COVID-19, there were not a lot of chances for me to go to schools and interview teachers about their experiences with animals in their classrooms. The study will investigate and cross-reference between the American Humane Association study and other supporting articles by authors that cite each other's works and readings, such as Anderson, Olson, Friesen, Rud and Beck, Birkholz and Theran, as well as, Herbert and Lynch.

The study would be broken down into several paragraphs about different topics within the research question. But, first, I will discuss and research the benefits of PIC for both neurotypical and neurodivergent students, primarily with ASD. Those benefits are emotional, social, psychological, in addition to being educational and fun.

Studies have been conducted to analyze the benefits of animals in the classroom (Anderson & Olson, 2006; Birkholz & Theran, 2000; Friesen, 2009; Gee et al., 2017; Herbert & Lynch, 2017; O'Haire et al., 2013; Rud & Beck, 2003). Educators generally know what is beneficial for their students through their pedagogical training. Yet, few have been exposed to how animals help students learn (Herbert & Lynch, 2017; Rud & Beck, 2003; Friesen, 2009). Furthermore, educators have little training about safely implementing an animal program into the classroom, as told by Birkholz and Theran as well as O'Haire. They do not know what to consider when choosing from the most common classroom pets like fish, amphibians, reptiles, guinea pigs, rats, and insects. In addition, there are animal visitation and reading to dog programs. The concept of animals in the classroom spurs many opinions and questions. The topic

is vast, and it has been narrowed to only the elementary grades for this study. This study aims to answer the following research question:

***RQ #1:** Do animals benefit elementary school-aged students in the classroom setting?*

Chapter 3 summarizes the chosen methodology, and Chapter 4 outlines and explains the results.

Abbreviation and Explanation

AAA — Animal-Assisted Activities

AAI — Animal Assisted Intervention

AAT — Animal Assisted Therapy

ASD — Autism Spectrum Disorder

HAI — Human-Animal Interaction

HABRI — Human-Animal Bond Research Institution

PIC — Pets in Classrooms

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Students in elementary school classrooms go through a multitude of challenges both emotionally and mentally that may “impact their full access to and participating in learning” (U.S. Department of Education, 2021, p. 1) (Herbert & Lynch, 2017, p.1). The addition of classroom pets may be beneficial for multiple categorizations of young students: the neurotypical, the neurodivergent, and the Autism Spectrum. Deciding which pet will perform best in each classroom depends on the teacher as well as licensing regulations between states and each school’s budget. Animals as class pets are not only educational but comforting and social helpers for elementary-aged children while helping teachers integrate an opportunity that only about 50% of children in the United States have at home (Rud Jr. & Beck, 2007, p.1). The benefits of having animals in the classroom are not often researched, yet they are always deemed to be serviceable when treated in a humane and caring way.

Animals serve a huge role in education for children by displaying key learning points, such as the life cycle and animal ethics. “Classroom animals may serve a role in humane education which is designed to ‘nurture respect, kindness, empathy and positive attitudes to people and other animal’s” (Herbert & Lynch, 2017, p.15). They can also help students develop observation and listening skills and may motivate students in math, language, history, and geography lessons (Birkholz & Theran, 2000). Specifically, in science classes, having animals present leads to higher engagement rates and motivation from students. Pets in the student setting are also considered “social lubricants,” helping young students converse between themselves more, as well as with their teachers, acting as social buffers for children with social skill deficits associated with developmental disorders, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (Gee, Griffin, &

McCardle, 2017, p.3). Animals have often been labeled as an attachment or transitional object for children, which provides comfort and can reduce stress and anxiety, such companion animals “might stimulate a young child’s cognitive growth through curiosity and learning while also providing a source of emotional support” (Gee, Griffin, & McCardle, 2017, p.3).

The study by O’Haire et al. (2013) of an 8-week classroom-based program indicated that parents and teachers reported an improvement in students’ social skills and reduction in problem behaviors. This study indicates that children’s impulses and problem behaviors are reduced with the presence of animals in the classroom providing a calming effect (O’Haire et al., 2013).

Although not all animals do well as class pets, “the success or failure of a classroom pet depends on your commitment to meeting its physical, behavioral, nutritional, and medical needs”

(Birkholz & Theran, 2000). Animals affect children educationally and can help young growing students emotionally and mentally as well. The feeling of loneliness starts to go away; there is a feeling of quiet comfort and support that can come from having an animal present in the classroom (Herbert & Lynch, 2017 p.14).

When introducing class pets, it can be very unsettling at the beginning. Acclimation into a new classroom, where they are about to meet many new students, who also are unsure of their fears of certain animals. Young students are not well educated about animal care and handling, which can lead to fear or anger. Over time, students begin to bond with the animal physically, emotionally, and mentally. There are two classifications of learners: the engaged learner and the disengaged learner. The engaged learner is seen as “the interplay of motivation, conceptual knowledge, strategies and social interaction during literacy activities' ' (Friesen, 2009. p.108).

Disengaged learners are often seen as “the children who, despite being cognitively capable,

rarely choose to read or volunteer to read aloud unless explicitly requested to do so by their teacher” (Friesen, 2009, p.108).)in the classroom. Friesen’s study of how therapy dogs help students read demonstrates animals rerouting children instead of disengaging them. Class pets may also offer physiological, emotional, social, and physical support (Friesen, 2010). In addition, Anderson and Olson’s (2006) research states that these dogs help students facing severe emotional disorders to cope in school. Teachers found that keeping classroom animals provides students opportunities to “grip students’ emotional responses as well as their interests in social and ethical implications of scientific knowledge and practice - to enhance students' engagement in science learning” (Herbert & Lynch, 2017, p.23). Friesen states, these animals may offer unique and valuable social and emotional support precisely because they are active and willing participants, but with the qualifier that it is outside the realm of their (the animals) communicative abilities to verbally judge the child’s progress (2010). Rud and Beck found in their study that boys, in particular, appear to learn important values and attitudes from animals, such as the importance of nurturance (Rud & Beck, 2003). In addition to therapy dogs, many other animals can be well suited as pets for the classroom, such as rabbits, guinea pigs, frogs, or even sea monkeys.

Prior animal knowledge and new research are crucial when finding a compatible suitor for a teacher’s classroom. Birkholz and Lutheran's *Guide for Animals in the Elementary and Secondary Educators* were used as a base for the cross-referencing between articles used in this study to see which animals would do best in a classroom environment (Birkholz & Theran, 2000). Throughout all the articles used in this study, they have all recommended dogs and guinea pigs, and the most commonly found animals in the classroom were fish, hamsters, bearded

dragons, and rabbits (Gee et al., 2017). Not all animals can adapt to young classroom life. Those that are not trained for the occasion the way that therapy dogs are hardy, able to thrive in captivity, enjoy habitats that can be readily duplicated in the classroom, withstand the temperature range and other environmental features of school buildings, and their care is simple. (Birkholz & Theran, 2000). It was found in several articles that the teachers that did not have classroom pets allowed students to bring animals in as “visitors” (Friesen, 2009, Rud & Beck, 2003, p.24). Classroom pets are a long-term classroom responsibility for the teacher.

Although class pets can be beneficial, they can also potentially be seen as a concern. “Classroom animals are seen to be an inconvenience” was grouped with other similar statements, such as “...seen to involve a cost “emotional, time, financial & space costs” (Herbert & Lynch, 2017, p.9). In Anderson and Olson’s study, it was noted that it would have been canceled had allergies or a fear of dogs been discussed (2006).

Selecting an animal that does not shed, which is bathed and groomed regularly, is vaccinated, and is pretreated before classroom visits and therapy sessions with anti-allergen powder to help reduce danger are all important considerations to minimize potential allergies (Friesen, 2009).

Other concerns teachers had when dealing with classroom pets are the potential liability and some mention of the moral dimensions (such as teaching care and responsibility) of having companion animals in classrooms (Rud & Beck, 2003). Animals are living, breathing species that need attention and care like anything else living. Being that a pet lives in a classroom and not at home is not a signifier that those pets deserve less care or respect. Being handled by dozens of different children per day for the rest of their lives is not a task they chose or is simple. The

primary concern is the monetary aspect of bringing pets into the classroom. Generally, teachers like the idea and find that it benefits the children as well as themselves.

Elementary school children going through all the emotions and stages of growth need a copartner that can help them reground and calm them and motivate and educate them. The significant benefits of Human-Animal having an animal permanently or as a visitor will change a child's headspace for the time being (Gee, Griffin, McCardle, 2017, p.1). The students all appreciate the comfort a pet can give, especially when they don't have pets at home. The benefits of having animals in the classroom are not often researched, yet they are always deemed to be serviceable when treated in a humane and caring way.

Chapter 3: Methods

The design of this study is to show the importance and significance of animals in the elementary school classroom. This study is qualitative and descriptive. I have been at the Long Island Children's Museum as an animal educator, teaching young children about animals and their importance for two years this December. Seeing animals benefit children educationally, emotionally, and physically significantly altered my perspective of animals in the education system. I chose this topic aside from a previous job, which is my personal experience with animals inside and outside the classroom. Animals positively impact everyone around them in a school setting. The school communities, staff, teachers, and the students, both neurotypical and neurodivergent, would benefit from this research. The research design is focused on a hybrid of scholarly articles and several popular sources. Most of the study was generated by searching the Purchase College Library online databases and Google Scholar.

I choose to explore the following research question:

RQ #1: *Do animals benefit elementary school-aged students in the classroom setting?*

Specific terms and keywords were also used to search for academic studies, articles, and news articles. Search terms I used included: *Animals in Classrooms, Animals in Elementary School, Animals Helping Children, Elementary School Children and Animals, Benefits of Class Pets in Elementary School*, among many more. Data was found using the search tool on the Purchase Library website. Google Scholar was used to finding additional peer-reviewed sources using a systematic literature search. Once articles and studies were found, I highlighted and made notes in the margins for future review. The articles had a lot of cross-referencing between similar

sources. There were many crossovers between categories of study and similar animals across classrooms in the world. Much of the articles have close release times in terms of years; the idea of animals in classrooms is relatively recent.

This study aims to find authorities and ways that animals help in the education field and animal science. Being in a classroom as a young child is challenging enough; having animals as either a “social lubricant” or for educational purposes helps those young kids have an easier time adjusting to the academic environment. Emotional benefits have also been found when animals are introduced into classroom settings. There have been several cases where animals have been found to educate and rehabilitate students.

There were some limitations during my data search for the topic chosen. Due to COVID-19 closing physical libraries around me and the Purchase College Library, it was harder to find all the information I was looking for during this search. The gist of my research was limited to the time of the semester as well; online classes made everything seem much more spaced out and much more task-heavy. Finally, due to COVID-19, a global pandemic, I could not set up interviews with school personnel in my local area and the Purchase area about animals in their classroom. The interviews would have added more depth to the research question.

I have gone back to work since starting the second semester of my research. Therefore, I can pay attention to the young visitors at the museum and how they interact with the animals and how they interact with the animals and me. However, it is different from going in and meeting students, teachers, and their class pets in the classroom environment. Many critical physical factors of education went missing due to COVID-19.

As the researcher, I chose this topic because of my passion for animals and a personal interest in integrating more animal science into education. Growing up, I did not have many classroom pets in comparison to the kids in the articles. Though, I had many pets growing up at home. Progression in school boards and the education system lead to this push to have animals in classrooms. This bias I hold over animals in classrooms was something that I had to remove from the research being conducted. Although this bias is similar to most of the readings found, using my bias as external information was beneficial. Information I had learned from working with animals and having my animals has helped back up and highlight other information from the research.

I intend to use this research to discuss how animals can benefit elementary school-aged children both emotionally and educationally in the classroom. Finally, in Chapter 4, I will describe the results of my study.

Chapter 4: Results

This section describes four categories evidenced through several peer-reviewed readings, online cases, and studies through databases concerning animals in elementary school classrooms (Table 1). In addition, this section creates the outcome space. These categories represent a couple of general statements made by teachers and researchers through interviews that can get into the emotion of having animals in the classroom and the numeral tables.

Table 1

Elementary School Teachers Perceptions of Classroom Animals

Category	Perception of Classroom Animals
Category A	Teachers' perceptions for having animals in the general classroom. (Non-traditional education purposes).
Category B	Classroom animals are perceived to be valuable for general and humane education. (Herbert & Lynch, 2017, p.11).
Category C	Classroom animals are perceived to be valuable emotionally and can be used as motivation (Rud Jr. & Beck, 2003, p.244).
Category D	Classroom animals are perceived to be an added burden in the classroom (Herbert & Lynch, 2017, p.11).

Category A: Teachers' Perceptions Of Having Animals in the General Classroom.

In most cases, teachers either have classroom pets, have animals come in as “visitors,” or take their students on trips to zoos, farms, or aquariums (Rud Jr. & Beck, 2003; Gee, Griffin & McCardle, 2017). Including these live animals into the classroom in many creative and flexible ways with the purpose of education and how pets can enhance learning. Reasons given by teachers for bringing animals to the class included “enjoyment,” “hands-on teaching”, “psychological well-being,” in addition to “teaching responsibility and how to care” (see Table 2) (Rud Jr. & Beck, 2003, p.246). Anderson and Olson had stated best, “Many new teaching methods appear to work because the teacher is encouraged, that is, pumped by the expectation of better results, and that enthusiasm is communicated to the students” (Anderson & Olson, 2006, p.48). The best-suited animals for young classrooms include goldfish, insects, small rodents such as gerbils, rats, mice, and sometimes larger animals like dogs (see Table 3) (Friesen, 2009; Birkholz & Theran, 2000; Rud Jr. & Beck, 2003). What each classroom has as a pet is ultimately up to State laws, school rules, and regulations, and the final verdict is up to the teacher. Does the teacher want to have a class pet? What are the teacher’s comforts in regards to animals and animal care? Then the teacher must start to think about the children’s comfort and adaptations to the possible new class pet and vice versa. “Though they spend most of their time in school, classroom pets are the long-term responsibility of the teacher”(Birkholz &Theran, 2000, p.3).

Table 2: Reasons for Having Classroom Animals

Reasons	Number	Percent
Enjoyment	305	37.4
Hands on teaching	186	22.8
Psychological well-being	180	22.1
Teaching responsibility	80	9.8
Teaching how to observe animals	48	5.9
Teaching caring	17	2.0
Total	816	100.0

Table 3: Numbers and kinds of animals found in classrooms

Species	Number	Percent
Fish (including guppies, goldfish, beta and tropical fishes)	66	27.5
Mammals (including chinchilla, gerbils, guinea pigs, hamsters, mice, white rats, hedge hogs and rabbits)	63	26.3
Amphibians/Reptiles (including anoles, iguanas, legless lizards, snakes [e.g., corn, boa constrictor, and garter], turtles[including box turtles], salamanders, frogs [including African and tree frogs] and toads	53	22.1
Insects/Spiders (such as ants, butterflies, caterpillars, cockroaches [including hissing], crickets and mealworms)	28	11.7
Invertebrates/others (including worms, hermit crabs and crawdads, sea anemone, snails and spiders, e.g., tarantula)	26	10.8
Birds (including parakeets and finches)	4	1.6
Total	240	100.0

(Rud Jr. & Beck, 2003, p.245)

Category B: Classroom animals are perceived to be valuable for general and humane education.

In this category, teachers referred to classroom animals as providing opportunities to learn about general animal education and animal ethics, such as animal rights. This exposure is significant for those children who had no previous experience with pets (Herbert & Lynch, 2017, p.14). “Teachers commonly referred to opportunities to support the learning of the science curriculum as well as the role played by the animals in motivating children to engage with science learning” (Herbert & Lynch, 2017, p.12-13). Animal ethics and the potential for wider applicability of compassionate values such as honesty, patience, and compassion can all be subconsciously taught through just having a pet in the classroom. Birkholz and Theran said it best, “students can also be encouraged to observe normal living functions of pets, fish, or other domestic animals, including classroom pets; to observe the normal growth and development of

humans and other animals” (2000, p.5). Rud and Beck went further into questioning how pets can be used in the classroom to further educational goals, to prompt a “teachable moment” where an example or activity leads to learning. Teachable moments occur regularly and are displayed in typical animal behavior: eating, sleeping, exercise, pet play, and in some cases, the end of the life cycle, death (2003, p.246). As evidenced in some teachers’ responses:

Several years ago, I had a hamster in the sixth-grade classroom. Toward the middle of the school year, the pet died. The students arranged a full funeral, including a preacher, songs, and taps, all performed by members of the class. (Rud Jr. & Beck, 2003, p.246)

Sometimes the most lost or difficult child seems to relate to and care for an animal. We buried (they dug the grave, found a stone, wrapped in a baby blanket) a baby duck we had hatched that died. Each child said a kind thing about Quackers. We covered the grave in our school woods with a stone. (Rud Jr. & Beck, 2003, p.246)

(The story) most remembered is when “PeeWee,” our little intimidated starving anole, lingered on and on looking like a green skeleton for days, we were so sad, and finally he died. We had a full-blown funeral service complete with casket, flowers, a preacher, gospel songs, etc. It was so wonderful because we talked about death, etc. My students were very upset over PeeWee’s death, but we were relieved that he wasn’t suffering. (Rud Jr. & Beck, 2003, p.246)

When animals are used to support humane education, including engagement with specific curriculum areas and provide such a focal point for cross-curricular learning and development of children’s “socio-emotional education and motivation, and the learning potential which spans science and humane education with connections to other areas of the curriculum” (Herbert & Lynch, 2017, p.16), the animals motivate the children to want to come to school, learn, and have the opportunity to have a hands-on experience with the class pet that day. Animals being used this way in the classroom is somewhat common.

Category C: Classroom animals are perceived to be valuable emotionally and can be used as motivation.

In this category, teachers discussed and referred to the contributions of the stability of their student's emotions due to having an animal in the classroom, using this class pet not just as a science lesson but also as motivation and emotional help. Rud and Beck's interviewed teachers reported that "pet animals provided motivation and behavior modification for students with special needs" (2003, p.244). Teachers and researchers speak to the importance of multi-sensory experiences "in which students see, hear, feel, smell, and touch ... the physical environment for purposes of inquiry in motivating situational interest" (Friesen, 2009, p.113). In Anderson and Olson's study, six students with severe emotional disorders were placed in a classroom with a dog.

The first conclusion was that a dog, placed in a self-contained educational setting for students with severe emotional disorders, had positive emotional effects on all six of the students. A second conclusion drawn from the data analysis was that integration of the dog into this self-contained setting for students with severe emotional disorders provided each one with lessons in respect, responsibility, and empathy. (Anderson and Olson, 2006 p.47)

The motivation attribute in "socio/emotional development was expressed as being particularly relevant to students who might not otherwise traditionally be interested in schooling or science" (Herbert & Lynch, 2007, p.13).

Category D: Classroom animals are perceived to be an added burden in the classroom.

The last category highlights a different perspective about classroom animals. This category focuses on examples teachers had given about the opposing view when being interviewed or studied while discussing animals in the classroom setting. Integrating animals can be a great way to get children to become more motivated and interact more, but the other

problems are not often discussed. “Keeping animals in the classroom requires a commitment of time, effort, and money on your [the teachers] part” (Birkholz & Theran, 2000, p.4). Some of Herbert and Lynch’s participants had mentioned the animal's care to be just one more thing added to their workload (2007, p.19). Teachers most commonly found that the most significant constraint was the cost of having an animal in the classroom. They were discussing the “concerns about the monetary value of the animals and the infrastructure required for their upkeep being money which could be better spent on other initiatives” (Herbert & Lynch, 2017, p.16). Others were concerned about the impact on children when animals die (Herbert & Lynch, 2017, p.16; Rud Jr. & Beck, 2003, p.246) or what would happen to the animals during vacations and the holidays, thus put under a burden. Rud and Beck’s teachers that had also been interviewed reported concern with potential liability in dealing with animals, as well as some mention of the moral dimensions (such as teaching care and responsibility) of having companion animals in classrooms (2003, p.244). Their research explores the specific link between the presence of pets in the classroom and learning effects by asking questions to the classroom teachers, not sitting in during and watching the students interact with the animals. Allergies were not often discussed as a concern regarding classroom pets until it came to more fur-having animals like rabbits, guinea pigs, and dogs. Anderson and Olson had mentioned that allergies were noted in their research through all students and fear of dogs (Anderson & Olson, 2006, p.47). No research can be done if the group’s population all have possible fear of animals or some kind of allergies.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The potential benefits of classroom animals are often underestimated and solely associated with the science and learning curriculum. Animals can be used for many different reasons in the classroom. The results of this study provide many insights into teachers' perspectives on several topics regarding animals in their classrooms, including caretaking, responsibility learning, teachable lessons, costs, and animal ethics. The outcome of these perceptions reveals the diversity in teachers and teaching styles, how they use animals in which

techniques to help acclimate children into school and the daily class life expressed by the participants about keeping pets in their classrooms or having them come as visitors. The outcome space is split into four categories evident in the data representing aspects of the occurrence, which differ from one category to another. The presence and use of animals in the classroom is still a phenomenon that has not been commonly studied or researched but should be in the future with the rise of them.

The inclusion of animals into the classroom may be beneficial for young children's social functioning and is worthy of further investigation (O'Haire et al., 2013).

Including animals in primary school classrooms may be an ideal way to incorporate interaction with living creatures into an increasingly hectic, technology-driven world. Particularly for children without companion animals in the home, the classroom may provide a convenient arena for facilitating child-animal interactions. (O'Haire et al., 2013, p.10)

Animals are important for day-to-day life and are seen as motivators. Rud and Beck stated, "Spontaneous interactions between child and animal, or naturally occurring animal behaviors, provide potent "teachable moments" that encourage learning. Such teachable moments occur regularly with typical animal behavior, and even the animal's death (which could be seen as a concern) provides poignant moments for teaching that will be important to that child" (2003, p.48).

Further research is also needed into why some teachers opt entirely out of having animals in the classroom. There are many policies per each state, school, and teacher regarding classroom animals and trips to visit animals, but why strip the privilege completely if there is an opportunity for education, emotional and mental development there? Most teachers, through

these studies, had positive attitudes and experiences with pets in classrooms (Herbert & Lynch, 2011). Animals are a part of our day-to-day lives as humans in many countries and are slowly becoming more popular in the educational lives of elementary-aged children. “ Therefore, we need a better understanding of whether, when, and how the inclusion of animals in education is effective while assuring the welfare and wellbeing of both the animal and the student” (Gee et al., 2017, p.7). This study provides insights into considerations of the establishment of animals in the classroom to maximize the benefits for children’s learning while minimizing the disadvantages and highlighting the concerns.

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