

SOUTHOLD UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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ANTHONY J. MAURO, Ed. D.
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

February 28, 2023

Dear Southold School Community Members,

It is with great pleasure that I inform you that we are fortunate to offer Therapy Dog services to our students and staff. Beginning in March, we will have a therapy dog team present in our schools for a few days each week. Denim and her handlers will be there to support students and staff. She will also visit classrooms to offer support and encouragement as students go through their day-to-day experiences. Please know that the dog that is scheduled to be in our schools is not only a certified Therapy Dog of Long Island, Denim is also AKC Good Citizenship Training certified.

Numerous research studies have shown the benefits of therapy dogs in schools. Therapy dogs have been working in schools across the nation for quite some time, and are needed more than ever as we see students and staff experiencing isolation, depression, and anxiety. Evidence indicates that benefits of Therapy Dogs include: companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game playing, encourages responsibility, wellbeing, and focused interaction with others. School dogs improve self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety. Interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses. Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dog's presence has on children as well as the fact that a dog will listen to children read without being judgemental or critical.

If you would NOT like your child to have close contact with the therapy dogs for whatever reason, please contact Mr. Flanagan at sflanagan@southoldufsd.com. If you do not contact Mr. Flanagan by March 6, 2023, it will be assumed that you give permission for your child to have contact with the therapy dogs. If you have any questions regarding the Therapy Dog program, please feel free to contact me, Mr. Flanagan or the building principal.

Sincerely,



Dr. Mauro Superintendent of Schools
Southold U.F.S.D.