Funding for Classroom Pets Available to Teachers

Pre-Kindergarten through 9th grade teachers who are interested in owning or already own a classroom pet can apply to receive funding through the Pets in the Classroom grant program.

The Pet Care Trust’s Pets in the Classroom grant program is now accepting applications for the 2020-2021 school year.

The grant program provides funding for a small animal or pet supplies to Pre-Kindergarten through 9th grade teachers in both private and public schools who desire to introduce a pet into the classroom or who already have a pet in the classroom. Interested teachers are welcome to apply.

The program was established by the Pet Care Trust with the knowledge that, while pets are a valuable teaching tool, many teachers have very limited resources for the support of classroom animals. Through the grant program, teachers have the option of obtaining a pet from one of the program’s participating retailers — Petco, Petsmart, Pet Supermarket, Pet Supplies Plus, and Petland — or of purchasing their pet from a local pet store through a rebate grant. Past grant recipients are not eligible to receive funding for a new classroom pet, but are welcome to apply for a sustaining grant, which provides up to $50 to maintain an existing classroom pet. With seven different grant types available, each teacher has the opportunity to choose the grant that is right for him or her through a direct, no-hassle application on the Pets in the Classroom website (www.PetsintheClassroom.org).

While the methods of classroom instruction have changed this past year, the transformative power of classroom pets has not. Through a survey conducted this spring by the Pets in the Classroom grant program, teachers across the U.S. and Canada have shared valuable insight into how teachers are using pets, both in the classroom and in remote learning, and the multitude of ways that students are benefiting from them. According to the survey, 97 percent of respondents said that having a pet in the classroom has been a positive experience, with nearly 69 percent incorporating their pet into virtual learning. One teacher stated, “This is an awesome program and even through distant learning, our class leopard gecko has been a part of our daily Google Meets. Especially during these unusual learning experiences, our class pet has helped students with anxiety and engagement. I have had feedback from many parents that seeing our Little Leo was something that helped their kids during this time.”

During in-class instruction, teachers saw improvements in attendance, empathy/compassion, responsibility, testing/academic performance, self-esteem, and student engagement. Teachers also reported that pets help students improve their social skills and decrease anxiety. As one teacher stated,
“To say that having class pets is beneficial would be an understatement. It is therapeutic for both staff and students. I am amazed at how my students responded in such a positive way to our pets. It opened the floor for honest conversations about managing emotions, stress, and how our actions and reactions affect others.”

The survey results, coupled with studies and thousands of previously shared teachers’ experiences, show the many benefits that pets can provide to students. One little pet can help shy kids open up, struggling readers build confidence, aggressive children develop nurturing tendencies, and apathetic students gain a new desire for learning. During the 2019-20 school year, 26,309 Pets in the Classroom grants were awarded — the largest number of grants awarded in a single year — bringing the total number of grants to over 171,196 since the program’s inception in 2011. As we anticipate unprecedented challenges when children transition back to school, whether in-person or through virtual learning at home, the Pets in the Classroom grant program is ready to help by providing funding for classroom pets to PreK – 9th grade teachers across the U.S. and Canada.

For more information, visit www.PetsintheClassroom.org.