



North East Independent School District

8961 Tesoro Drive, Suite 403, San Antonio, TX 78217

Curriculum and Instruction: Science

DATE: August 30, 2017

SUBJECT: Living and Preserved Specimens

Anytime a living animal or preserved specimen is to be used for classroom instruction, the teacher must be able to articulate the purpose for the use of the animal with specific standards (TEKS) cited for that justification. Teachers must also ensure that student safety is always taken into consideration when making the decision to use living and preserved specimens. This includes taking into consideration the possibility that students may have allergic reactions to animal dander, bedding, fecal matter, preservatives used for specimens, or other possible allergens.

It is also important for teachers to be sensitive to student and parental beliefs or feeling toward the use of animals in the classroom. Some students may feel uncomfortable having live animals in the classroom, and may not want to participate in activities that require their use. Many students are opposed to dissection, and may not want to participate in such activities. It is also important to make sure that teachers are providing appropriate supervision during activities involving live animals and dissections. Students must show proper respect for preserved specimens. Teachers should place limits on students use of phones and cameras during these activities. In recent years, images and video from dissection activities has been posted to social media sites. People who are opposed to the use of dissection in schools can become offended by these images, and have asked that dissection be discontinued in our district.

In response to those opposed to dissection, the district convened a committee to address how dissection would be used in. The committee studied course standards, position statements from various organizations, contacted institutions of higher learning and other school districts to help determine an appropriate response to the role dissection should play in North East Independent School District.

The committee decided that dissection is appropriate and beneficial to student learning in 7th grade science classrooms, high school Biology classrooms, and high school Anatomy & Physiology classrooms. In addition, our course syllabi with our dual credit partner college includes dissection as a lab component.* The committee further recommended that specific specimens be used within those classrooms so that repetition of dissections does not occur and that they are purchased from reputable sources. This recommendation was approved by the district Executive Staff in March 27, 2017. These recommendations are listed in the table below:

Course Allowable Dissections in NEISD

Grades k-5 Current curriculum does not support the use of dissection in these classes

Grades 6-8 Curriculum in grades 6 & 8 science does not support the use of dissection.

Curriculum in grade 7 science justifies the use of dissection for human body systems and adaptations. Dissection specimens for grade 7 should be obtained through Region 20 Living Science, which offers earthworms, Frogs, owl pellets, sheep eyes, and crayfish.

Students wishing to opt out of dissection can participate in alternative assignments. Alternative assignments cannot be punitive in nature. Alternative assignments can utilize virtual dissection software such as Froguts, Digital Frog, or McGraw-Hill Virtual Frog Dissection.

High School Biology Curriculum in biology justifies dissection for studying biological systems and adaptations. Dissection specimens for biology can be obtained through Region 20 Living Science, which offers earthworms, Frogs, owl pellets, sheep eyes, and crayfish. In addition, fetal pigs and rat specimens can be purchased through campus funds from approved scientific supply vendors (Carolina Biological, Biocorp, Ward's Science, Flinn Scientific, and Nasco). In addition wildlife organizations often offer schools quail specimens to schools that can be used for dissection purposes.

Students wishing to opt out of dissection can participate in alternative assignments. Alternative assignments cannot be punitive in nature. Alternative assignments can utilize virtual dissection software such as Froguts, Digital Frog, or McGraw-Hill Virtual Frog Dissection.

High School Anatomy and Physiology Curriculum in Anatomy and Physiology justifies dissection for studying organs and organ systems. Dissection specimens for Anatomy and Physiology include sheep hearts with pericardium, sheep brains with dura, sheep eyes, sheep testes, pig ovaries, and mink specimens (**Cats are no longer to be purchased for dissection purposes in NEISD**). The sheep eyes can be obtained through Region 20 Living Science. Additional specimens are typically purchased using CTE funding sources at the district level from approved scientific supply vendors (Carolina Biological, Biocorp, Ward's Science, Flinn Scientific, and Nasco).

Students wishing to opt out of dissection can participate in alternative assignments. Alternative assignments cannot be punitive in nature. Alternative assignments can utilize virtual dissection software such as Froguts, Digital Frog, or McGraw-Hill Virtual Frog Dissection

In classrooms where dissection is taking place, and the school activity conflicts with the parent's religious or moral beliefs, the parent may deliver a written statement authorizing the removal of the child from the class or school activity (NEISD Administrative Regulation EMB (Legal) Teaching About Controversial Issues)**. This policy does not exempt a child from satisfying grade level or graduation requirements. In such cases, teachers are asked to provide the students with an alternative assignment that has comparable learning outcomes to the dissection activity.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.