

RESEARCH ON ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY (AAT) IN SCHOOLS

Therapy Dogs as a Tool for Struggling Readers

According to a study conducted by the University of California, Davis, students who participated in a program with trained canine reading partners increased their reading fluency by between 12 and 30 percent.

Interacting with therapy animals:

- Improves students' reading skills,
- stimulates memory and problem-solving skills,
- optimizes executive-functioning skills,
- supports concentration, attention, and motivation,
- reduces stress levels that inhibit effective learning and performance
- reduces negative behavior and aggression
- increases positive social behavior

Psychosocial and Psychophysiological Effects of Human-Animal Interactions: The Possible Role of Oxytocin

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research over the past 30 years indicates that therapy dogs may offer physiological, emotional, social, and physical support for children, and provide a **supplement to an educational objective** in school contexts.

Friesen, L. (2010). *Exploring animal-assisted programs with children in school and therapeutic contexts*. *Early Childhood Education Journal* 37(4): 261-267

"Among the benefits are development of responsibility, and self-help, **decision making and problem solving skills**, social interaction with adults and peers in the community and school."

Law, S. and S. Scott (1995). *Tips for practitioners: Pet care: A vehicle for learning*. *Focus on Autistic Behavior* 10(2): 17-18.

"Interaction with dogs has been found to **increase positive behaviors**, such as sensitivity and focus, in children with social disabilities."

Reed, R., et al. (2012). *Natural healers: a review of animal assisted therapy and activities as complementary treatment for chronic conditions*. *Revista latino-americana de enfermagem* 20(3): 612-618.

Visits with Monkey and Melodie

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When it comes to being a therapy animal, Monkey doesn't monkey around! Monkey and her handler Melodie have been registered with Therapy Animals of Utah since 2016, and volunteer at the Park City Library for their Paws to Read Program, at Kamas Elementary School for reading sessions in their after-care program, and at Sante Assisted Living in Heber City.

The team conducts weekly visits, usually rotating through the different facilities. They also volunteer at several special events. Monkey especially loves stress relief events during Finals week at the University of Utah.