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### **Teacher Survey Reveals Positive Impact of Classroom Pets**

*A survey produced by the Pets in the Classroom grant program shows the impact the program has had on students during the 2022-23 school year.*

**FOREST HILL, MD (June 28, 2023)** - The Pets in the Classroom grant program is thrilled to release the results of its 2023 teacher survey. The survey, which polled teachers across the United States and Canada who have received funding for classroom pets through their grant program in the past two years, received an overwhelming response, with over 3,100 teachers participating. The findings of the survey showcase a wide range of positive outcomes for students who are given the opportunity to interact with pets in an educational environment.

Ninety-nine percent of respondents said that having a pet in the classroom has been a positive experience, and teachers reported that interacting with classroom pets helped improve attendance, reduce anxiety levels, foster empathy and compassion, enhance test and academic performance, develop social skills, boost self-esteem, and decrease disciplinary measures. The data, coupled with the comments that teachers shared through the survey, demonstrate the impact classroom pets are making:

**Attendance:** Nearly 80 percent of teachers saw an improvement in attendance due to their classroom pet. One teacher shared, *"I have a student who missed 54 days of school last year. This year, he is the classroom pet guru. He feeds, 'waters,' and takes care of our leopard gecko... He is now the first one in the room each morning. I have seen his attendance and his behavior improve so much this year."*

**Decreased anxiety:** Nearly 95 percent of teachers saw a decrease in anxiety among students. A teacher remarked, *"I have a student with extreme anxiety and having my guinea pigs has helped him tremendously! Anytime he gets upset he asks to hold Flash, one of our guinea pigs, and he will sit and hold him for a good 20-25 minutes, and it puts him right at ease and able to get back into our class routine."*

**Empathy/compassion:** Over 98 percent of teachers saw an increase in empathy and compassion, thanks to a classroom pet. *"I have a student that can become dysregulated and aggressive in the classroom. When I added a fish to our classroom, his behaviors virtually stopped because he didn't want the fish to be scared. The lessons and discussions we have had about empathy have been amazing...It has truly been life changing for this student. Thank you!"*

**Test/academic performance:** Nearly 79 percent of teachers saw an improvement in test/academic performance. One teacher stated, *"[We've had] great improvement in reading test scores because my students would read to our Betta."*

**Responsibility:** Over 98 percent of teachers saw an increase in student responsibility: *"Ever since I've had a guinea pig, the students in my class have matured tremendously. Their level of responsibility is unmatched. They are quieter in the room to ensure that they are keeping an appropriate noise level. They work for the ability to hold and pet our guinea pig. It has been such a delight and has made a tremendous positive impact in our room."*

**Self-esteem:** Around 93 percent of teachers surveyed saw an improvement in self-esteem in students. One teacher commented, *"One of my students has very low self-esteem and is very shy because he came here from a different country. Our class pet has helped this student build confidence and friendships."*

**Increased social skills:** Nearly 96 percent of teachers saw an increase in social skills: *"As a special education teacher, we always work on social skills. By having pets in my classroom, I am able to invite general ed students in and my SPED students are able to talk to their peers about their classroom pets...Students are forming friendships that would never have formed before. I love it!"*

**Student engagement:** Nearly 98 percent of teachers saw an increase in student engagement. One teacher said, *"My students wanted to participate in small group reading and math more because Ringo, our bearded dragon, would sit at the table during those times. They had more engagement and enjoyment, when before they were not as receptive."*

**Decrease in necessary student disciplinary measures:** Of the teachers surveyed, 87 percent saw a decrease in necessary student disciplinary measures: *"Since Covid, we have seen a large increase in behavior in first through third graders in our building. Five students across those grade levels have behavior plans where they are able to choose holding my class pet as a reward. It's helped decrease behavior in so many ways and I am so thankful to have been given this opportunity to help my students learn and grow in different ways."*

The statistics, coupled with the heartwarming comments shared by teachers about how pets are transforming their students' lives, truly show the impact of the program. One teacher stated, *"I have been using pets in the classroom for many years... All the schools I've taught in are high poverty with all of the issues that come along with that. Pets in the Classroom is the one thing that I can count on to make my students' classroom experience better.... A classroom pet means they will have a chance to care for, not just feed, another living creature. They are calmed by sitting by the aquarium reading or drawing. They feel safe and loved when they hold our rescue guinea pig.... Thank you, Pets in the Classroom, for supporting teachers while we try to change the world one child at a time."*

The Pets in the Classroom grant program was established by the Pet Care Trust with the knowledge that classroom pets can be a valuable teaching tool that many teachers do not have access to because of a lack of funding. During the 2022-23 school year, 26,288 Pets in the Classroom grants were awarded to teachers (an increase of over 7,000 grants from the previous school year), bringing the total number of grants issued to 228,985 since the program's inception in 2010. This means that an estimated 9.1 million children have experienced the joys and benefits of pet care through the program.

As teachers look for more ways to support their students in the upcoming school year, the Pets in the Classroom grant program is ready to help by providing funding for classroom pets to pre-K – 9th grade teachers across the U.S. and Canada beginning August 1.

Learn more about the Pets in the Classroom grant program by visiting [www.PetsintheClassroom.org](http://www.PetsintheClassroom.org).