

2020

Pets in the Classroom

# Annual Report



pets in the  
classroom

Dear Pets in the Classroom Sponsors and Supporters,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of the Pet Care Trust, thank you for your support of the Pets in the Classroom Grant Program this year. The year 2020 will always be remembered as the year of COVID-19. Unforeseen events forced organizations to make quick adjustments to fulfill their stakeholders' needs and to pursue long-term goals with adjusted game-plans. Pets in the Classroom was no different.

The use of virtual classrooms resulted in fewer requests for classroom pets and our grants were down 50% from the prior year. As a result, we took a look at the organization and focused on how we could use 2020 to prepare to better serve more teachers and to strengthen the Pet Care Trust and Pets in the Classroom program for the future.

We identified five (5) strategic objectives for upcoming years, each of which supports either the expansion of the program or the depth of learning that comes from having a pet in the classroom. The five objectives are: increase our classroom penetration beyond our current level of approximately 5%; provide teacher and student development tools; continue research programs on documenting the impact of the program on student development; provide strong public-private partnerships and raise over \$1 million per year; and expand the program to include partnerships with public aquariums and develop classroom initiatives to include dogs.

The word "development" best describes our efforts in 2020 as we worked hard to develop new programs, update existing tools to support teachers, and accelerated fundraising development efforts.

The placement of pets in the classroom is not for the entertainment of students, but is to benefit their personal and educational development. To assist in this effort, we offer care sheets and lesson plans to support teachers on our website. In 2020, Greg Costanzo, DVM, PetSmart joined The Pet Care Trust board. He and fellow board member Whitney Miller, DVM, Petco have taken an active role in helping to enhance our educational materials for teachers and students alike.

In addition to supporting our teachers, we had a very strong fundraising development year. Using an "all hands on deck" approach we engaged the entire board and staff to raise more than \$300,000. This banner fundraising effort was by far the largest we have ever achieved in total dollars raised and was made possible by the generous matching support of the American Pet Products Association (APPA) and World Pet Association (WPA). These funds will help us reach more classrooms, pursue more Title I schools, and develop our new dog program.

We thank our many supporters and sponsors. We like to remind them and all our stakeholders that their support benefits three (3) important causes with one gift: students, education, and pets.

Thanks again!

Jackie King, Executive Director, Pet Care Trust  
Clancy Lavins, President, Pet Care Trust Board of Directors



# Positively impacting kids across the U.S. and Canada

- Over 171,000 grants provided to teachers since 2011.
- Over 26,000 grants awarded to place pets in the classroom in the 2019-20 school year.
- Nearly 7 million students have experienced the joys of interacting with and caring for pets as a result of receiving a Pet in the Classroom grant.

## A program that works, and that everyone can feel good about

- Teachers love the program, and their testimonials demonstrate this.
- About 49% of our grants go to Title 1 schools and 44% go to classrooms serving students with disabilities.
- This program has involvement from pet industry leaders including manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and trade organizations.
- Pets in the Classroom supports 3 important causes: Kids, Education, and Pets.





# pets in the classroom **by the Numbers**



**+171,000**  
grants issued



**nearly 7 million**  
students impacted



**36%**  
of families with  
children who interacted  
with a classroom pet  
got their pet as a  
result\*.



**27%**  
Sustaining  
Grants

**73%**  
New Animal  
Grants

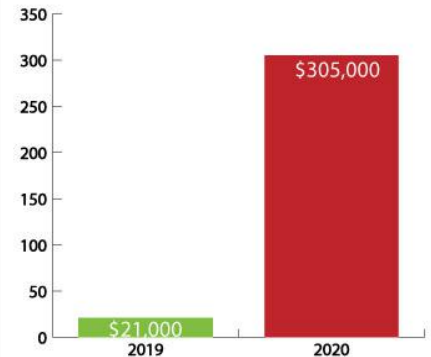
Type of Grant  
Issued



**300+**  
Lesson Plans

**12**  
Animal Care  
Sheets

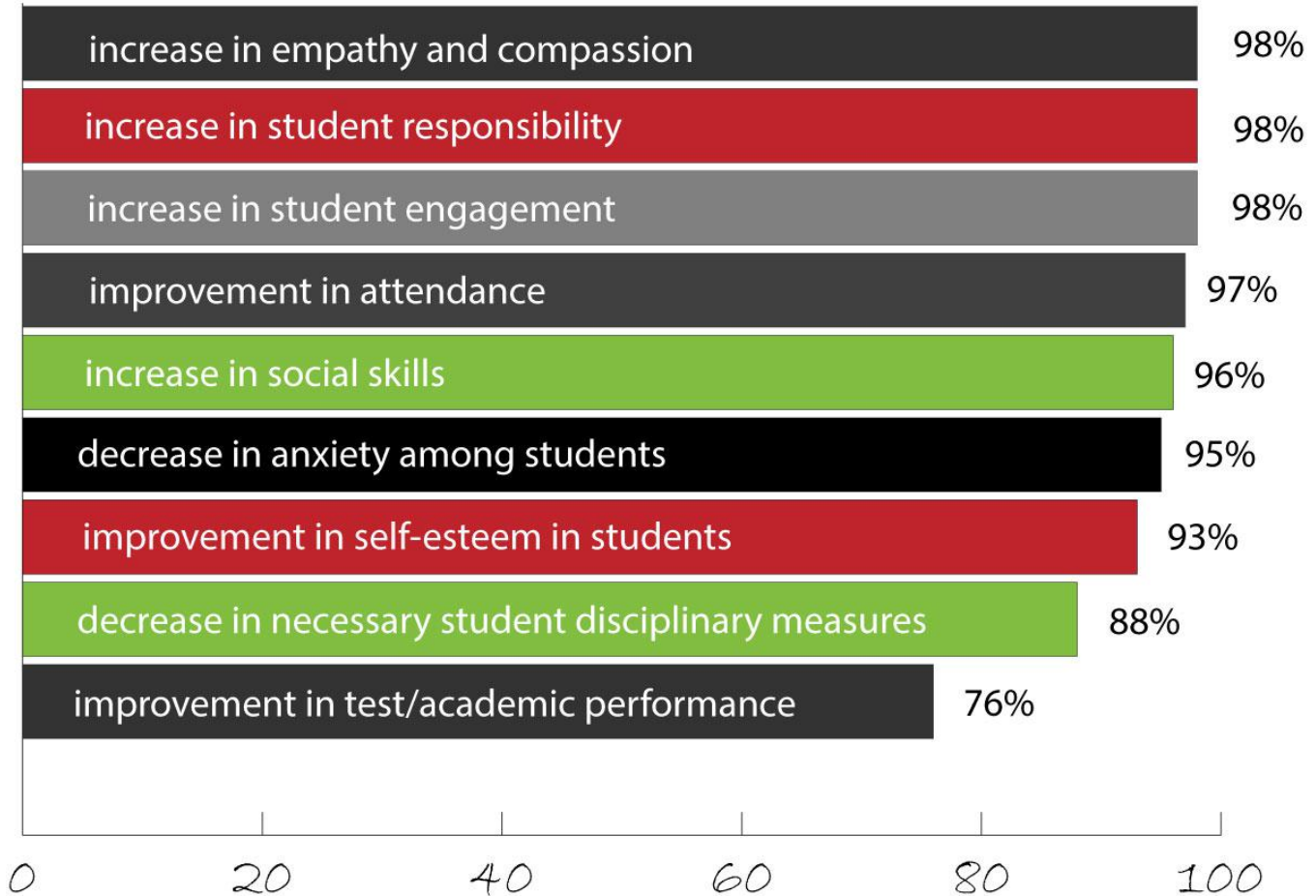
Resources for  
Teachers



Money Raised

# 2020 Spring Teacher Survey Results

Percentage of teachers who indicated their students had demonstrated changes in the following areas:



**67% of teachers incorporated their classroom pet in virtual learning.**

\*2,684 Grant recipients responded to a survey created by the Pets in the Classroom Program in May 2020.

# An Unprecedented 2020 in Education

As 2020 has brought about unprecedented changes in education, many children are experiencing some form of difficulty readjusting to the “classroom.” In addition to adding social distancing measures to possible in-school learning, there are likely other issues that teachers face, such as anxiety, difficulty focusing, self-control issues and other emotional and behavioral problems on an even greater scale than prior to the pandemic. Pets in the Classroom is one of the tools teachers can utilize to give students emotional support during school, in whatever form it occurs.

Near the end of this past school year, Pets in the Classroom conducted a survey of teachers across the U.S. and Canada who had been recent grant recipients. The survey showed that teachers are using pets, both in the classroom and in remote learning, and that students are benefiting from them.

**Nearly 69 percent of survey respondents indicated that they still incorporated their pet into virtual learning.** As teacher Cynthia Lloyd 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.”*



Photo Credit: Cynthia Lloyd

Teacher Tracy Lech stated, *“During mandatory stay-at-home, students were very worried about Alexandria. I decided to post a daily picture of her. I have incorporated these pictures into travel, pop culture, geology and more. I include coloring pages and links to websites so students can learn more. Out of 960 students, 641 have signed up voluntarily for my Google Library Class to see Alexandria and learn what she has been up to each day.”*

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.”*



Photo Credit: Sasha Lugo

We don't know what this school year will look like for each teacher and classroom, but we do know that **pets have a transformative effect on students.** It is our hope that, if teachers are safely able to, they will include a pet in their learning environment.



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# Pets in the Classroom Research Report

In 2019, Phase II of the American Humane Research Study on pets in the classroom was published in the Human Animal Interaction Research Bulletin. Key results:

“The utilization of classroom pets in the 3rd and 4th grade U.S. classrooms appears to hold significant benefits for children’s social, behavioral and academic development.”

Amy McCullough, PhD, Principal Investigator and Senior Research Advisor --  
American Humane

Teachers with classroom pets reported significantly greater increases in overall social skills (including communication, cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, engagement, and self-control); better social competence; and improved academic reading competence.

Parent respondents indicated they saw significantly greater increases in pro-social behaviors among their children compared to parents with children in classrooms without pets.

Research Citation: McCullough, A., Ruehrdanz, A., Garthe, R., Hellman, C., and O’Haire, M., (2019) Measuring the Social, Behavioral, and Academic Effects of Classroom Pets on Third and Fourth-Grade Students. Human Animal Interaction Bulletin. Advance online publication. <https://www.petsintheclassroom.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Pets-in-the-Classroom-Publication-Press-release-Final-.pdf>



Jessica Bonin’s fish tank is a calming area for students who need a break as well as a favorite reading spot.



Teacher Samantha Allen works in an urban area where students have little interaction with animals.



Athena, the leopard gecko, helps calm Rebecca Pruiem's students who struggle with anxiety.





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The Pet Care Trust ~ providing Educational Grant Funding for Teachers

Phone: 443-921-2825 x 120

[www.petsintheclassroom.org](http://www.petsintheclassroom.org)