Baldwin County Public Schools

Student Dissection Choice Procedures and Guidelines

Baldwin County School administrators recognize that a growing number of students have moral, ethical, religious, or other objections to animal dissection and that modern non-animal teaching methods (e.g., interactive computer software) are available and have been shown to be as effective as or more so than traditional animal dissection. Consistent with the recommendations of leading science education organizations, to accommodate these students and create an inclusive learning environment, any K-12 student who objects to dissecting or experimenting on animals or animal parts may opt out of dissection activities.

- At the start of each school year, teachers of courses that include dissection of animals, animal parts or other potentially harmful exercises involving animals shall give students written notice of their right to opt out of these activities.
- Students or parents of students, wishing to opt out of dissection should inform their teacher in writing via letter or e-mail.
- Teachers shall provide these students with an alternate project (i.e., completing modules on interactive computer software) that does not involve participating in or observing dissection and through which they can learn and be assessed on the material required by the course. The alternate project should be selected by the teacher and entail a comparable amount of work to the dissection activity.
- No student shall be punished or discriminated against based upon his or her decision to opt out of animal dissection activities.
- A student who is reluctant to voice his or her concerns about animal use in a particular course, or who thinks these concerns have not received proper attention, may seek assistance from their principal or the Baldwin County Public Schools Instructional Support Division at 251.972.6862.

Professional organizations’ positions on student dissection choice

The Baldwin County School administrators recognize that the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT), and the Human Anatomy and Physiology Society (HAPS) all advise teachers to make humane alternatives to dissection available to students who object to animal use.

- The NSTA’s position statement on the use of animals in education reads, in part, that the “NSTA recommends that science teachers … [b]e prepared to present an alternative to dissection to students whose views or beliefs make this activity uncomfortable and difficult for them.” (Available at http://www.nsta.org/about/positions/animals.aspx)

- The NABT’s position statement of the use of animals in education reads, in part, that “NABT encourages teachers to be approachable and responsive to substantive student objections to dissection and to provide appropriate lessons for those students.” (Available at http://www.nabt.org/websites/institution/index.php?p=97)

- The HAPS’ position statement on animal use reads, in part, that “HAPS also encourages educators to be responsive to student concerns regarding use of animals and to provide
students who object to animal use with alternative learning materials.” (Available at http://www.hapsweb.org/?AnimalUsePosition)

The NSTA and HAPS position statements also endorse teachers’ decisions to fully replace animal dissection in their classrooms with nonanimal methods.