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Virginia Board of Education Guidelines
Alternatives to Animal Dissection

House Bill 1018, the 2004 General Assembly
Code of Virginia § 22.1-200.01

June 23, 2004

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Introduction

Pursuant to House Bill 1018, the 2004 General Assembly amended the Code of Virginia to include § 22.1-200.01 directing the Board of Education to establish guidelines to be implemented by local school divisions regarding alternatives to animal dissection.

The Board of Education recognizes that divergent opinions may exist about the role of animal dissection as a means of achieving certain instructional goals in the biological sciences. Therefore, in order to ensure the integrity of the instructional program, while respecting legitimate objections to animal dissections, the *Alternatives to Animal Dissection Guidelines* must be observed. These guidelines will apply to all public schools.

Code of Virginia § 22.1-200.01

§ 22.1-200.01 Alternatives to animal dissection.

Local school divisions shall provide students with alternatives to animal dissection techniques within the relevant public school curriculum or course. The Board of Education shall establish guidelines to be implemented by local school divisions regarding such alternative dissection techniques. Such guidelines shall address, but shall not be limited to, (i) the use of detailed models of animal anatomy and computer simulations as alternatives to dissection; (ii) notification of students and parents of the option to decline to participate in animal dissection; and (iii) such other issues as the Board deems appropriate.

Definition(s)

Dissection

“Dissection” involves the manipulation of properly preserved animals or animal parts for scientific study, which includes incising and may be followed by inspecting, touching, handling, and mounting.

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Board of Education Guidelines

Alternatives to Animal Dissection

- **Alternatives to animal dissection must be available within the relevant public school curriculum or course.**
- **One or more alternatives to animal dissection techniques, including, but not limited to, computer programs, Internet simulations, plastic models, videotapes, digital videodiscs, and charts, should be available in the relevant biological sciences classes that incorporate dissection exercises.** The alternative technique should require a comparable amount of time and effort as the dissection exercise. Requiring more arduous effort on the part of the student than would have been required by the specimen dissection is considered penalizing. In addition, not providing the student comparable depth and scope of learning is also considered penalizing. Alternatives to animal dissection do not include students involuntarily taking a lower grade or dropping the class.
- **The alternative technique should be reasonably chosen to provide the student, through means other than dissection, with knowledge similar to that expected to be gained by other students in the course who perform, participate in, or observe the dissection.**
- **Testing procedures that do not require the use of dissected specimens should be an option for those who choose an alternative technique.**

Notification

- **The school division should include notice of alternatives to animal dissection in the relevant biological sciences syllabi, student course selection guides, or local school division policies or directives.**
- **Students choosing the alternative should be given information on specific activities and resources to use as their alternative technique.** Assistance should be available for all students who choose alternatives.
- **A student's objection to participating in an animal dissection should be substantiated by a signed note from his or her parent or legal guardian.**