

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Deputy Superintendent, Instruction and Curriculum

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ROUTING

SUBJECT: BULLETIN NO. M-61 (Rev.)
USING PRESERVED AND LIVE
ORGANISMS IN SCIENCE CLASSES

Administrators
Science Teachers

DATE: April 15, 1998

DIVISION: Instructional Services

APPROVED: CARMEN N. SCHROEDER, Associate Superintendent

For further information, please call Chris Holle, Science Coordinator, at (213) 625-6410.

This revision replaces the Office of the Associate Superintendent, Instruction, Bulletin No. 61 (Rev.), June 5, 1987, "Using Preserved and Live Organisms and Teaching About the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research." It indicated that providing alternatives to dissection, which was formerly District policy, is now covered by law. Also, additional information is given on the preparation in natural science expected of entering college and university freshmen and on presentations in schools about the use of animals in biomedical research.

I. PRESERVED AND LIVE ORGANISMS IN SCIENCE INSTRUCTION

A. Required alternatives to dissection and other uses of animals

Community organizations, parents or guardians, and students have expressed concern regarding student participation in science laboratory activities involving the dissection of preserved organisms. Newly enacted state legislation, effective January 1, 1989, recognizes their concern and now requires that students with a moral objection to participation in science laboratory instruction in which animals are used must be informed of the opportunity to be excused or provided with alternative activities.

B. Authorized use of preserved organisms and other uses of animals

District required and elective science courses in the life and biological sciences frequently involve the dissection of preserved organisms including invertebrate and vertebrate animals and other activities which use invertebrate animals in laboratory instruction. District courses of study and adopted textbooks in the biological sciences include activities

involving dissection of preserved invertebrate and vertebrate animals, which are purchased from scientific supply companies for distribution to schools. These publications also include other laboratory activities which use invertebrate animals.

Dissection of preserved organisms and the use of animals are practiced nationally in science education today and have long been an integral part of study in the biological sciences. They provide students with an understanding of the functions of internal structures and relationships of internal structures more effectively than through the use of models, charts, textbooks, or other instructional materials. Dissection of commercially obtained specimens and the use of invertebrate animals in the study of life processes also provide an introduction to laboratory procedures for students who will pursue higher educational programs in the biological sciences.

C. College and university requirements in science

Secondary school courses taken in the biological sciences to meet college and university entrance requirements and which do not include dissection of preserved organisms may not be in compliance with the July 1986 publication of the Academic Senates of the California Community Colleges, the California State Universities, and the University of California, titled "Statement on Preparation in Natural Sciences Expected of Entering Freshmen." Suggested Laboratory Exercise No. 6 on page 23 calls for, "Dissection of a representative preserved invertebrate and a representative preserved vertebrate. Description (with drawings) of anatomical features: Suggested invertebrates: earthworms, crayfish, grasshoppers, and sea urchins. Suggested vertebrates: fish, frogs, and fetal pigs."

D. Alternative activities

Teachers may wish to consider any one of the following alternatives that may be substituted for dissection or other activities involving the use of animals:

1. The study of reference books, charts, and models
2. Drawing and labeling diagrams with names of systems, organs, tissues
3. Constructing models of organisms, systems, organs, or tissues and labeling of parts
4. Writing projects on organisms, explaining the structure and functional interrelationships of systems, organs, and tissues, and life processes

5. The use of videotapes, videodiscs, films, or computers

Teachers must require effort which is equivalent to activities involving dissection and accept these activities for equal credit.

The amount of work required must not be excessive, punitive, or require student time exceeding the time spent on the entire dissection or other activity involving the use of animals.

It is suggested that students who object to dissection be counseled not to take the science elective Physiology AB or other electives in which dissection of preserved organisms or other uses of animals are integral parts but to take alternative courses in which these activities are not included or could be made optional. At the beginning of an elective course, teachers must list activities in which dissection or other uses of animals are integral parts, thus encouraging concerned students to enroll in alternative elective courses.

F. Procedures for assigning alternative activities

At the beginning of the first semester or quarter of the regular school term, parents or guardians must be notified regarding their rights and responsibilities under current legislation as described in Section II of this bulletin. In all classes with biological and life science content, a course description with requirements and expectations must be sent to parents or guardians of students in these classes. If animals are to be used in the manner described in current legislation, the course description should include a statement such as:

“Laboratory experiments will be conducted in this course. Since one of the goals of the course is to have students understand the structures in various organisms and the relationships between those structures, dissection of preserved invertebrate and vertebrate animals specimens and laboratory activities which use invertebrate animals will be conducted. If you or your son or daughter has a moral objection to participation in these activities, please ask the teacher for a form which will permit your son or daughter to be excused from the activity. Consent of the parent or guardian must be given for students to be excused from these activities. The teacher may assign an alternative activity. The completion of this activity will ensure that the student’s mark in the course will not be adversely affected. If the student’s objection is based only on a statement of distaste for the activity, you may wish to consider encouraging your son or daughter to observe the activity. Experience has shown that students who work in the laboratory with preserved specimens learn a great deal from the activity.”

Attachment A is a suggested form for parents or guardians whose son or daughter objects to participation in science activities involving certain uses of animals.

II. LEGISLATION ON ORGANISMS IN SCIENCE INSTRUCTION

The following legislation on the treatment of animals in schools or school-sponsored activities appears in Section 51540 of the California Education Code under the title "Humane Treatment of Animals":

In the public elementary and high schools or in public elementary and high school-sponsored activities and classes held elsewhere than on school premises, live vertebrate animals shall not, as part of a scientific experiment or any purpose whatever:

- (a) Be experimentally medicated or drugged in a manner to cause painful reactions or induce painful or lethal pathological conditions.
- (b) Be injured through any other treatments, including, but not limited to anesthetization or electric shock.

Live animals on the premises of a public elementary or high school shall be housed and cared for in a humane and safe manner.

The provisions of this section are not intended to prohibit or constrain vocational instruction in the normal practices of animal husbandry.

In addition, Section 44806 of the California Education Code states in part that "each teacher shall endeavor to impress upon the minds of the pupils. . . A true comprehension of the rights, duties, and dignity of American citizenship, including kindness toward domestic pets and the humane treatment of living creatures. . ."

Additional legislation on the use of animals in schools appears in the California Education Code in Chapter 2.3 (commencing with Section 32255) titled "Pupils' Rights to Refrain From the Harmful or Destructive Use of Animals."

According to Chapter 2.3 of the Education Code, "animal" means any living organisms of the kingdom animalia. No distinction is made between living and preserved animals.

If a student expresses a moral objection to participation in a portion of the course of instruction involving the harmful or destructive use of animals, the teacher may work with the student to develop and agree upon any alternative education project as a method of obtaining the required learning. The alternative education

project must require a comparable time and effort investment by the student. It must not, as a means of penalizing the student, be more arduous than the original education project. Students choosing an alternative educational project must pass all examinations of the respective course of study in order to receive credit for that course of study. However, if tests require the harmful or destructive use of animals, a student must be given alternative tests.

The Code also indicated that in order to have an alternative assignment, a student must have a note from his or her parent or guardian, that each teacher teaching a course that makes use of animals or animal parts must inform students enrolled in that course of their rights in objecting to assignments involving animals, and that teachers or administrators must not discriminate against students for their exercise of those rights.

Portions of the regulations regarding the study of live animals in the classroom are covered in Division of Instructional Services Bulletin No. M-83 (Rev.), April 15, 1998, titled, "Study, Care, and Treatment of Live Animals in the Classroom."

III. TEACHING ABOUT THE USE OF ANIMALS IN BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH

Although the three sections of the Education Code cited in Section II above do not prohibit the use of animals in biomedical research, some humane organizations consider the practice to be a controversial issue. Some of these organizations have contacted District schools with offers to make presentations, show films, or provide other instructional materials. School participation in presentations dealing with specific controversial issues is not required. However, if a school or teacher chooses to present a controversial issue, District procedures for presentations of controversial issues in the schools make it incumbent on administrators and teachers to ensure that both sides of an issue are presented. For the animal research issue, presentations and materials which emphasize the detrimental aspects and the negative position only are readily available. School staff members may wish to obtain speakers, media, and materials which present the positive position useful in the presentation of a balanced approach by contracting the California Biomedical Research Association, 3010 Wilshire Blvd., Box 238, Los Angeles, California 90010. Telephone (213) 466-6210.

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Division of Instructional Services

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ATTACHMENT A

FORM FOR PARENTS OR GUARDIANS WHOSE SON OR DAUGHTER
OBJECTS TO PARTICIPATION IN SCIENCE ACTIVITIES INVOLVING CERTAIN
USES OF ANIMALS

Date: _____

Name of School: _____

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your son or daughter is enrolled in a course in science at our school which includes dissection of preserved invertebrate or vertebrate organisms. If your son or daughter has moral objections to participation in these activities, alternative activities not involving dissection or the use of other animals may be assigned. Alternative activities will require equivalent effort, and upon the successful completion of these activities, students will receive credit equal to that received in activities involving dissection or the use of animals in other ways.

Please indicate on the tear-off below if you wish your son or daughter to be excused from science instructional activities involving dissection or the use of animals in other ways. Your consent is required for your son or daughter to be excused and for an alternative educational project to be assigned.

Principal

-----Tear-Off-----

TO: _____
(Name of Principal)

DATE: _____

(Name of School)

I request my son or daughter to be excused from science instructional activities involving the dissection of preserved organisms or the use of animals in other ways. I agree alternative assignments must be completed for equivalent credit.

Name of Son/Daughter _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Address _____