



Mernda Park
PRIMARY SCHOOL

40 Riverdale Blvd
Mernda, Vic 3754

(03) 8776 9700

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www.merndaparkps.vic.edu.au

Welcome Maggie to MPPS



Mirella Stovell is Maggie's handler and both Mirella and Maggie have successfully completed the Foundation Animal-Assisted Interventions and Therapy –Dog Certification Course. This is a whole school program that we are very excited to be introducing for our students. The goal of Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) is to help improve a student's social, emotional or cognitive functioning. The research supports the physiological, psychological and social benefits of interactions with animals and the therapeutic potential of animal-assisted programs in a wide range of settings including schools (Walsh, 2009).

As animals are non-judgmental and provide an unconditional love, they can assist in increasing the engagement and sense of connection children can experience at school.

Research shows AAT can assist to reduce anxiety, increase relaxation, social interaction, communication and engagement. The reason for this is that animals, in particular dogs, unlike people, communicate through body language alone and not a unique and often confusing mix of verbal, subtle facial and body cues, and underlying social rules.

Another benefit of AAT, especially for those students who may be apprehensive or nervous around animals, is to develop resiliency and confidence in a safe and supportive environment. The aim is for students to then be able to transfer this learning to other situations.

<https://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/2017/02/13/how-reading-aloud-to-therapy-dogs-can-help-struggling-kids/>

We have undertaken much research at MPPS about Maggie's Beaglier breed. Beagliers are a small and docile dog which, makes a Beaglier an excellent choice as a therapy dog and also as a first dog for families who have children, no matter their age, and they are also tolerable of other dogs. The Beaglier's fur tends to be short in length and may be wavy and silky-smooth, or it may have the course qualities of the Beagle which means Maggie will not overly shed hair.

<http://www.petguide.com/breeds/dog/beaglier/>



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Maggie's introduction to the students and the wider MPPS community will be a gradual process. Maggie will begin her work at MPPS in the Yan Yean LC and at the early stages will always be in the presence of Mirella.

Our AAT program involves interacting with and handling Maggie and as such the following practices will be in place and implemented

- Maggie will undergo routine vet checks and preventative medicine (including vaccinations, worming and flea treatments) to maintain her health, however there are some illnesses which can pass between humans and dogs.
- Students will be educated to practice personal hygiene, for example washing hands.
- Students will be expected to follow the directions of staff members at all times.
- Maggie is trained and assessed as competent to work with people, however despite Maggie's training, and supervision by Mirella, there are of course always risks associated with being in contact with dogs. The school has developed a number of "risk management strategies" to meet these risks. If you would like more information about these strategies, please contact the school.





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COMPLETE THIS FORM TO OPT OUT

Please complete the form below if your child is unable to participate in our MPPS Animal-Assisted Therapy program. Please contact our office if you would like any further information or clarification about Maggie.

I wish to opt-out my child (full name), _____ of

_____ Learning Community from participating in The MPPS Animal-Assisted

Therapy Program. The reason for my child's opt out is

_____ (optional)

As a result, I understand my child will not have access to Maggie and any activities and programs involving Maggie.

Parent / Guardian Signature: _____

Parent / Guardian Name: _____

Date: _____