



OSSE NON-REGULATORY GUIDANCE

Effective Date: September 10, 2012

NON-REGULATORY GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES:

ANIMAL DISSECTION OPT-OUT CHOICE FOR DISTRICT STUDENTS

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDANCE

The purpose of this guidance is to provide Local education agencies (LEA) with instructions for properly implementing choice for District students in the animal dissection application within science instruction.

Introduction

OSSE recommends that LEAs that elect to include animal dissection as a part of their science instruction also create an **Animal Dissection opt-out** form for SY2012-13. Where a school does implement an opt-out policy, OSSE recommends that alternative activity(ies) to provide instruction on the same standard(s) be provided.

Although schools and teachers are free to use dissection as a part of their lesson plan, students who do not wish to dissect an animal for moral or religious reasons can be provided with an alternative lesson that accomplishes the same level of mastery. Alternatives to animal dissection may include web-based dissection, plastic or clay model dissection, videos/films, books, transparencies and any other activities crafted by educators that address the same standard(s).

OSSE suggests that LEAs require a guardian's signature supporting the student's choice to opt out of dissection activities. Schools will be expected to notify parents of the opt-out option within two weeks of dissection activities.

Applicability

This guidance applies to all Local Education Agencies within the District of Columbia who use animal dissection as a portion of their science instruction.

Definitions

OSSE defines an **animal dissection** as an application involving the manipulation of properly preserved animals or animal parts for the purpose of scientific study, which includes incising and may be followed by inspecting, touching, handling, and mounting.



OSSE defines **web based animal dissection** as an interactive application which involves the manipulation of a digital model for the purpose of scientific study as an alternative to live animal dissection.

OSSE defines a **model dissection** as the reusable application which involves manipulation of a hands-on model for the purpose of scientific study as an alternative to live animal dissection.

LEA Protocol

Any LEA that elects to provide the option to opt-out from dissection activities must implement a protocol that includes the following minimum requirements:

LEAs should provide notice of alternative techniques to animal dissection within the course syllabus. See <http://www.dissectionalternatives.org/resources.cfm> for suggestions for alternative methods.

Protocol must not allow a student's grade to be lowered as a result of the decision not to dissect; nor should voluntarily taking a null grade on the assignment be permitted as an alternative method to dissection.

A student who elects not to participate in animal dissection should not be discriminated against for exercising his or her right to do so pursuant to the LEA's policy.

A student who follows the opt-out procedures established by the LEA must be excused from both participation in dissection and in viewing dissection.

The alternate techniques should be reasonably chosen to provide the students with knowledge that is comparable to that which is expected to be obtained by other students within the course who perform, participate in, or observe active, hands-on dissection. Examples include length of time to complete, effort required, and depth of learning.

Schools will be expected to notify parents of the opt-out option at least fourteen (14) calendar days in advance of classroom dissection activities. Students who object to participating in animal dissection should be substantiated by a parental/guardian signature alongside the opt-out form.

Contact Information

For information regarding this guidance, please contact John Neral at john.neral@dc.gov.