



# Dissection Alternatives

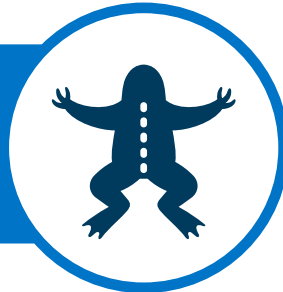
Public Act 91-771 and 90-566

In 2000, the Illinois General Assembly recognized the importance of appropriate dissection for educational purposes. Concurrently, the Illinois General Assembly acknowledged the great strides that have been made in software and technology, which can offer the same – or in some cases better – educational experiences as an alternative to animal dissection. The General Assembly subsequently enacted the **Dissection Alternatives Act**.

## State Policy

It is the purpose of the Dissection Alternatives Act to encourage schools to make available and use alternatives to dissection when those alternatives are appropriate and can provide an educational experience that is equal or superior to the traditional use of dissection. It is not in any way the intention of this Act to discourage the appropriate use of dissection in research or when it provides a valuable educational experience to students. Pursuant to **Public Act 90-566**, the Illinois State Board of Education has curated the following list of teaching materials for districts to consider as an alternative to dissection:

- Biosphera
- Easy Anatomy
- Getting Nerdy
- Merge EDU
- The Science Bank
- Victory XR
- Z Space



## Recommendations for School Districts

A school may excuse a student enrolled in a course in which students are ordinarily expected to perform, participate in, or observe dissection who objects for any reason to performing, participating in, or observing that dissection and instead allow the student to complete an alternative project. The alternative project should be nonpunitive and should be 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. Please note: Discrimination is prohibited. A student may not be penalized or discriminated against in any way for refusing to perform, participate in, or observe dissection.

**The Illinois State Board of Education has developed a sample policy for districts that opt to make alternative dissections available to their students.**



## Sample Policy

In accordance with the Dissection Alternatives Act (105 ILCS 112/5), our school district has developed the following policy.

Participation in hands-on science is important to learning science, and dissections are a valuable learning experience in which all students are encouraged to participate.

When considering participation in dissection or the alternative project, the student has been made aware of the expectations and requirements of the colleges and graduate programs that they may be interested in attending. Upon written request of a student's parents or guardian, our school will permit a student who objects to dissection activities to demonstrate competency through an alternative method.

The chart below lists the current courses that ordinarily require or allow the student to perform, participate in, or observe dissection. Specific dissection and dissection alternative activities will be listed in the course syllabi, which are available upon request to students before enrolling in these courses.

Course	Dissection Alternatives	Dissection Alternative Activity

The procedure for a student to participate in an alternative activity in place of dissection is as follows:

- The student will notify the science teacher of the student's choice to participate in an alternative activity in place of participating in a dissection.
- The student will submit a written request from his or her parent/guardian to the science teacher or to the school principal.
- The student will be provided with an alternative activity to be determined by the teacher, who will specify in writing what is expected of the student. Alternative activities will allow students to gain the same content knowledge as the dissection activities and will require a comparable investment of time and effort by the student.
- The student will accept responsibility for completing the alternative activity within the assigned time and is expected to learn the same content knowledge as if the student were performing the dissection activity.
- The student will be subject to the same course standards and examinations as other students in the course.



## Sample Parent/Guardian Form Letter

*Note: A student's parent/guardian is not required to use a particular form to request that the school provide the student with an alternative to dissection. This sample is provided for the convenience of school personnel and parents/guardians who wish to use it.*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (Principal or teacher)

I understand that participation in hands-on science is important to learning science and that dissections are an important component of comprehensive science and life science education. I also understand that alternatives to dissection are available and that, upon written request of a parent/legal guardian, the school will permit a student to demonstrate competency through an alternative method, such as computer simulations and other appropriate research activities. I further understand that students participating in alternative activities instead of dissection are subject to the same course standards and examinations as other students in the course.

I request my child, \_\_\_\_\_, be permitted to demonstrate competency through alternative activities rather than participating in dissection.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent or guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of parent or guardian

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

