

## Alternatives to Dissection Notification Guidelines

In June 2000, Governor Ryan signed legislation amending the Alternatives to Dissection Act. This legislation has direct impact on life science classrooms in Illinois public and private schools.

The pertinent components of this legislation include:

Section 1 Short title.

This Act may be cited as the Dissection Alternatives Act.

Section 5. Findings and purpose.

(a) The General Assembly finds and declares that the appropriate use of dissection in research and education has contributed a great deal to the advancement of medical and biological science. Without dissection the science of anatomy could not have advanced, and it is the bedrock supporting the modern practice of surgery in its many forms. The appropriate use of dissection has brought many benefits to the people of this State, and it continues to play important roles in medical and veterinary practice, research, and education.

(b) The General Assembly also finds that the remarkable progress of the last few decades has produced significant advances in computing and the graphic and representational arts, and that these developments have resulted in the creation of many new technologies for teaching anatomy, physiology, and other medical and biologic sciences. In certain circumstances these new technologies are capable of providing an education experience superior to dissection, and they have often proven to be less expensive and more humane.

(c) The General Assembly also finds that the use of dissection, when inappropriate or poorly supervised, can result in the inhumane treatment and unnecessary suffering of animals. The inappropriate or careless use of dissection in schools has also in some instances traumatized students and contributed to a failure to teach proper respect for life and living creatures.

(d) It is the purpose of this Act to encourage schools in this State 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.

Section 10. Definitions.

For the purposes of this Act, unless the context otherwise requires:

“Student” means a pupil at public or private elementary or secondary school in Illinois.

“Teacher” means a person who is teaching at a public or private elementary or secondary school in Illinois, regardless of whether that teaching is on a full-time or part-time, temporary or permanent, or regular or substitute basis/

“Dissection” includes cutting, killing, preserving, or mounting of living or dead animals or animal parts for scientific study; but does not include the cutting, preserving, or mounting of (1) meat or other animal products that have been processed for use as food or in the preparation of food or (2) wool, silk, glue, or other commercial or artistic products derived from animals.

Section 15. Alternative student projects.

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 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. The alternative project should be consistent with any guidelines for alternative projects that have been adopted by the State Board of Education.

Section 20. Guidelines for notification of students and parents.

(a) The State Board of Education shall develop and make available guidelines that may be used by the public elementary and secondary schools within this State to give appropriate notice of the following to students and their parents or legal guardians:

(1) Which, if any, of the courses taught at the school ordinarily require or allow the student to perform, participate in, or observe dissection.

(2) Whether or not the school makes available to students the opportunity to complete an alternative project.

(b) When offering high school students an opportunity to choose between dissection or an alternative project, teachers should encourage the students to take into consideration the expectations and requirements of the colleges and graduate programs that they may be interested in attending.

Section 25. Discrimination prohibited.

A student may not be penalized or discriminated against in any way for refusing to perform, participate in, or observe dissection.

Section 99. Effective date.

This Act takes effect upon becoming law and first applies to the 2000-2001 school year.

The Illinois State Board of Education suggests the following guidelines for notification of students and parents, as well as local school district's administration and teachers, related to the choices associated with dissection in classroom applications. These guidelines are meant to provide ideas for questions to consider, ask and answer at the local level.

For Students making curricular choices for classes which incorporate life science activities which may include dissection lessons:

- Which classes best fit my own needs for career and college challenges in the life sciences?
- How can I most effectively incorporate my own philosophy for animal life and dissection possibilities, including life science studies and animals in research into my course choices, graduation requirements and my high school's science programs?
- How can I be excused for participating in dissection activities if I object to them? What alternative options are available? To what degree of separation from these activities is better for me?

For Parents whose children are learning about the life sciences:

- Which, if any, of the courses, programs, units taught at our school ordinarily require or allow the students to perform, participate in or observe dissection?
- What alternatives for these activities are incorporated that provide an educational experience that is equal or superior to the traditional use of dissection?
- How can my child be excused for participating in dissection activities if he/she objects to them? What alternative options are available? To what degree of separation from these activities is appropriate, necessary and desirable?

- How can we participate in curriculum planning as parents to assure that life science learning opportunities build on the scientific habits of mind?
- How are students encouraged to incorporate career and college course planning prerequisites and syllabi to make informed decisions about potential future educational choices when they make decisions on high school's science and applied science courses?

For Classroom Teachers associated with curricular programs which may include dissection activities:

- Which, if any, of the courses taught at our school ordinarily require or allow the students to perform, participate in or observe dissection?
- How can alternatives to dissection activities be incorporated into curricular planning and budgeting in order to provide an educational experience that is equal or superior to the traditional use of dissection for our students?
- How can I facilitate students' objections to participation in dissection activities as they choose courses? as the course begins? as the unit(s) begins? as the activity begins?
- How can multiple life science learning opportunities be managed equitably and effectively in classrooms?
- How can we assure that all students are provided with opportunities to learn and build on their own philosophies for scientific habits of mind in the current, past and future roles of medical and veterinary practice and research in my courses?
- How can life science learning opportunities at our school incorporate state-of-the art technologies, standards-based curricular choices and the constraints of program priorities from the perspective of alternatives to dissection legislation and potential activities?
- How can I assess student mastery of lesson/unit/course goals and objectives equitably and effectively and without punitive implications when alternative activities are facilitated in my classroom?
- How will field trips and bringing experts into the classrooms be affected by this legislation (i.e., blood sampling, field/stream exercises for agriculture or environmental science classes, etc.)?
- How can I evaluate my courses' lessons, units and resources to assure that we are providing the most effective standards-led learning opportunities in the life sciences with respect to current research, research parameters and technologies with a special focus on ILS 11A and 13A?
- How broadly do the legislation's definitions impact our full science program's activities?
- Have all safety regulations and recommendations about the handling, storage and disposal of dissection specimen been considered appropriately?

For District and Building Administrators (including counseling staff) associated with curricular programs which may include dissection activities:

- How broadly do the legislation's definitions impact our full K-12 science and applied science programs' activities (i.e., elementary and secondary insect collections and studies, Science Fair projects, Biology, Anatomy and Physiology, etc., as well as Career and Technical programs, such as Health Occupations and Agriculture, and the associated Occupational Skill Standards)?
- How can students and their parents be encouraged to make informed decisions about career and course-planning prerequisites and syllabi at local/state and national colleges?
- How can students and their parents be notified most effectively about the choices of life science coursework which ordinarily requires or allows the students to perform, participate in, or observe dissections? How can students and their parents be notified most effectively

about the options for alternative projects in these courses? To what degree are the student preferences for dissection alternatives and classroom capabilities manageable and assessable?

- How can life science learning opportunities at our school incorporate state-of-the-art technologies, standards-based curricular choices and the constraints of program priorities from the perspective of alternatives to dissection legislation and their related activities?
- How can we more positively incorporate family and personal perspectives into the decision-making for scientific curricular studies associated with animal life?
- How can we assure that all students are provided with opportunities to learn and build on their own philosophies for scientific habits of mind in the current, past and future roles of medical and veterinary practice and research in our courses?
- How can we be on guard against inappropriate or poorly supervised activities which could result in the inhumane treatment and unnecessary suffering of animals?
- How can our life science teachers become more knowledgeable about the proper handling of live pets and animals in their classrooms? What district policies are in place to support such learning activities and their implications in our classrooms?