



St. John Ambulance

**SAVING LIVES**  
at work, home and play

## **Therapy Animals Involved in Literacy Skills (TAILS)**

TAILS is a motivational, confidence building, low stress canine-assisted reading program for children who are experiencing difficulties with reading. It is based on the premise that children who are struggling with reading will be more comfortable reading aloud to a dog rather than a person. A dog provides a totally non-judgmental, less intimidating reading environment for children. Research also indicates that children who participate in dog-assisted education activities are more likely to increase their word recognition and reading fluency.

In addition, students' decreased absenteeism, improved self-confidence and pride in accomplishments, increased involvement in school activities, improved hygiene, gentler and respectful interactions with animals, increased borrowing of books and an increase in volunteering to read aloud in class have been observed.

### Objectives of TAILS

- To reduce stress and anxiety when reading aloud
- To increase interest in reading
- To celebrate progress and accomplishment in reading aloud
- To improve word recognition and reading fluency
- To provide children with an opportunity for positive relationship with an encouraging adult and a dog.


### How it Works

Children are matched with a therapy dog and handler for approximately half an hour during which they read to the dog. The handler will talk through the dog as in "I don't think Rover understood that. Could you explain what it happening in this story?" Books are chosen by the child with the assistance of a parent/guardian and the library staff. They would be selected suitable to the child's level and interests and to develop their reading skills. Ideally the same child reads to the same dog team on a weekly or bi-weekly basis for a set of 6 to 10 weeks.

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