

small paws



Big Awareness

An Animal-assisted Intervention Programme for schools



Executive Summary:

Aquatic EDEN, in partnership with Creatherapy, proposes an experiential Animal Assisted Intervention (AAI) programme designed to support emotional regulation, interoceptive awareness, and stress management for small groups of identified students. The 45-minute intervention uses guinea pigs as therapeutic partners during recess, offering structured observation and reflection that links physiological states with coping strategies. Sessions are facilitated by a trained counsellor/coach, include student snacks provided by the school, and are priced at \$200 per session. Outcome metrics will assess gains in self-awareness, regulation skills, and reductions in stress indicators.

Purpose
and
Rationale



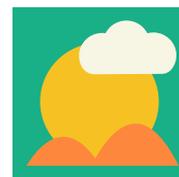
Target
Group



Session
Structure



Measurable
Outcome
metrics



Budget and
Pricing



Purpose and Rationale

Many students experience stress, dysregulation, avoidance, and difficulty interpreting internal states — particularly under academic and social pressures. Animal Assisted Interventions (AAI) involve structured, purposeful interaction with animals to support therapeutic and developmental goals.

Using guinea pigs, this programme offers experiential learning in interoception – the ability to notice internal bodily cues – which research indicates is foundational to emotion regulation and mental wellbeing.

Target Group

Population:

- Small groups of up to **10 identified students** who demonstrate challenges in regulation, stress, interoception, or school engagement.

Facilitator:

- Structured by a **trained counsellor** and a **behavioural consultant** experienced in child development and Animal Assisted Interventions.

Location & Time:

- Conducted during **recess period** in a designated indoor/outdoor space.
- **45-minute session**, priced at **\$200 per session**.
- **Snacks** to be provided by the school.

Session Structure

A. Welcome & Grounding (10 minutes)

- Establish safe engagement practices with the animals
- Grounding exercise (breath awareness or body scan)

B. Interoceptive Observation (10 minutes)

Students are guided through structured prompts such as:

- “What do you notice about the guinea pig’s body language?”
- “Where in your body do you notice similar signs when you feel watched, stressed, or calm?”

C. Linking Animal States to Self-Regulation (10 minutes)

- Identify physiological markers of stress vs. calm
- Bridge to personal interoceptive awareness

D. Coping Strategies (15 minutes)

- Introduction of practical regulation tools (breathing, grounding, sensory resets)
- Practice strategy with reflection

Measurable Outcome Metrics

To evaluate impact, the following will be monitored:

Outcome Domain	Measurement Indicator	Assessment Method
Interoceptive Awareness	Ability to describe internal state cues	Counsellor observation + student self-report
Emotional Regulation Skills	Use of coping strategies independently	student self-reflection
Stress Indicators	Reduction in behavioural distress during session	Behavioural observation
Coping Self-Efficacy	Student confidence in stress management	Brief pre/post session rating scale

These metrics will be collected per session and aggregated to demonstrate programme progress over time.

Budget and Pricing

Item	Cost
45-minute AAI Session (up to 10 students)	\$200 per session
Includes:	Facilitation by trained counsellor/behavioural consultant, resource materials, structured activities
School Provides:	Snacks for students, designated space

Sliding scale and longer programme options are available upon request.

Contact Us

To schedule a pilot session or discuss integration into your support programming, please contact:

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Important information:

Safety & Animal Welfare

- All guinea pigs are verified healthy by a veterinarian, well-socialised and habituated to gentle handling.
- Hygiene protocols (handwashing & surface sanitation) will be observed.
- Students will be briefed on safety guidelines prior to engagement.
- The counsellor/trainer will monitor both student and animal wellbeing throughout.

Evidence Base (Selected Research)

- **Stern, C., & Chur-Hansen, A. (2013).** A systematic review of animal-assisted intervention in schools: research and implementation. *Anthrozoös*.
- **Pendry, P., Carr, A., & Roeter, S. (2014).** Companion animals support health and wellbeing in student populations: A randomized controlled study. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*.
- **Nimer, J., & Lundahl, B. (2007).** Animal-assisted therapy: A meta-analysis. *Anthrozoös*.
- **Fine, A. H. (Ed.). (2015).** *Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy* (4th ed.). Academic Press.

These demonstrate outcomes in stress reduction, emotional regulation, and enhanced engagement with therapeutic processes.

