

May 10, 2022

Dear HHS Students and Parents/Guardians of HHS Students:

A policy approved last night by the Hingham School Committee will enable HHS to benefit from the services of a comfort dog. I hope you will join me in welcoming [Opry](#), a mixed breed rescue pup, who will accompany our School Resource Officer to school, while also spending lots of time in our counseling office, beginning on Thursday, May 12th.

Comfort dog programs at other schools, including nearby high schools in Hanover, Marshfield, Brockton, Norwell, and Weymouth, lend further support to what several research studies have already demonstrated: Comfort dogs can make a very positive impact on a school's culture and climate, delivering powerful social-emotional benefits, not only for individual students in crisis but for also for the community as a whole.

For several years now, HHS counselors and special education teachers have repeatedly expressed a hope that our school could implement a comfort dog program. Similarly, students in the HHS Unity Project have envisioned a comfort dog as one instrument that could help bring our school community together. Now, thanks to collaboration between the school district and the police department, that dream is finally poised to become a reality. We're grateful to the School Committee for drafting the new policy language that makes the program possible; to the numerous donors who have provided private funding; and, especially, to Officer Ford, who has cared for Opry since last spring, participating in the extensive training that has led to the attainment of all necessary certifications.

Opry loves people and enjoys showing off her tricks but, like all comfort dogs, she will interact only with people who approach her. Anyone who prefers to avoid dogs will easily be able to do so. However, those who get to know Opry will profit from engaging with an incredible animal who has passed all her classes with flying colors. As you can see on her Instagram page ([@Oprydoghpd](#)) and in a recent [Harbor Media profile](#), she seems born for the role of comfort dog! Especially in light of the unprecedented challenges, strife, and stress of the past two years, our school is very fortunate to have this opportunity. I am wholly confident that this initiative will make an immediate and positive impact on our school while delivering countless smiles to the members of this community.

Sincerely,

Rick Swanson
Principal

