

MEET LEO



If you step into the halls at Roig Academy, you'll find Leo, a standard poodle, right in the heart of all the action. Leo is more than just a furry friend, he is a trained therapy dog that has become an integral part of daily life at Roig. His presence is seamlessly integrated into many aspects of the school's routines and activities. From participating in classroom visits to lending a "paw" of emotional support during designated sessions, Leo's presence provides a sense of security and comfort, helping to improve students' attitudes about learning while reducing anxiety. His fluffy ears perk up as he listens intently to students reading aloud, and with an enthusiastic wag of his tail, he can bring about positive emotional responses— all of which contribute to the supportive environment Roig is dedicated to fostering. Leo has many important jobs on campus. He loves to

play catch, join in on school assemblies, and attend parent-teacher conferences, but his favorite part of the day is during carpool duty when he gets to greet Roig students. Leo is lovingly cared for by the heads of the school, Mr. Gus and Mrs. Jenni Roig, who, along with this gentle giant, have undergone rigorous training. While on campus, Leo is always under the supervision of a designated person to ensure everyone's safety—including his.

Amidst the bustling school life at Roig, you'll find Leo, spreading laughter and positivity wherever he goes. We did a Q&A with the Head of School, Jenni Roig, to learn more about the loveable poodle with the infectious energy and warmth that make him an indispensable part of their school community.

Q How did Leo get his name?

Mr. Gus and Mrs. Jenni Roig came up with the name because they liked the ring it had to it. Coincidentally Leo means "to read" in Spanish which a parent brought to our attention saying, "The Roig thinks of EVERYTHING even naming the dog Leo in a school where so many children attend to improve their reading skills."

Q What inspired the decision to introduce a therapy dog at Roig?

The decision to bring a therapy dog to the Roig Academy was inspired by a desire to enhance faculty and student well-being, create a supportive environment, and provide additional emotional support resources to help meet the needs of the entire school both faculty and students.

Q How did using a therapy dog align with Roig's mission and values?

Every approach in our school is supported by research, and Leo is no exception. A recent study found that interactions with dogs could decrease stress and induce positive emotional responses. This study also found that humans felt comfortable and natural while walking with a dog and relaxed when petting one.

Q How has Leo fostered community and connection at Roig?

Leo has strengthened our sense of community and connection among students and staff by providing a shared source of comfort and joy, facilitating positive interactions, and fostering a supportive environment where relationships can flourish within our school. Our parents also enjoy having Leo present in meetings.



Q How has Leo contributed to creating a supportive academic environment?

Students love to read out loud and deliver class presentations to Leo. He makes a remarkable reading buddy, assisting students in developing their literacy skills and promoting a love for learning through interactive reading sessions. Students feel more comfortable reading aloud and are more open to taking risks when Leo is nearby. Many of our students shied away from reading aloud at their previous schools, but they know Leo will not judge their reading skills and is always eager to listen. Students also enjoy completing class assignments alongside Leo, whether they are working independently or on group assignments, his presence always provides a boost of encouragement.



Q Tell us about a time Leo had a direct impact on student's life?

I remember a particular day when a middle school student was having a tough time and needed a break. Playing catch on the field with Leo made a significant difference. Just taking a 10-minute break with Leo helped him relax, refocus, and get back to the task at hand.

Q Are there particular training or certification prerequisites for bringing a therapy dog onto campus?

Yes, Mr. Gus and Mrs. Jenni Roig are trained handlers and Leo has gone through rigorous training to ensure his adaptability to various environments, such as schools, libraries, and hospitals. In addition to working with Leo, students have learned how to approach, pet, and interact with him appropriately. They enjoy asking him to perform tricks for them such as "paw shake" or seeing him follow a command such as sitting.

Fun Facts about Leo:

Leo, a standard poodle, is bilingual and understands commands in both English and Spanish. He can open office doors and will invite himself to parent-teacher conferences.



"Everything at Roig is done with purpose, and Leo is no exception. Leo makes everyone smile, and brings a great calming energy to the school. My son adores him and so do I!"

- Roig Parent

If you would like to learn more about the Roig Academy's global curriculum and specialized approach, please visit www.roigacademy.com



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