

Dear Principal

I recently learned that my child's class (or insert class/year) plans on hosting a hatching program.

I was disappointed to learn that our school has these plans as many other schools have, in line with advice from the RSPCA and other animal welfare organisations, phased hatching programs out and chosen alternative projects that are kinder to animals. You might not be aware that the RSPCA has released a clear policy requesting schools not to use or breed live animals.

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-animal-welfare-issues-with-chickhatching-in-schools/>

I understand that these programs are often undertaken to teach kids about life cycles, observe animal habits, and share the planet. Yet, the RSPCA outlines how hatching programs fail to demonstrate these in the following ways:

1. Lifecycles and caring for life

Let us teach children that when we bring life into the world, including animals and pets, we have an ongoing responsibility to take care of that animal for their natural life. As the RSPCA paper outlines, statistically, 50% of the chicks who hatch will be male. As male chicks cannot lay, they are killed at birth in the egg industry; this would be their fate if they returned to the company. Attempts to rehome roosters can be incredibly challenging as many areas don't permit keeping them, and there are already far more seeking homes (from backyard breeding chickens).

2. Understanding nature and animal habits

A mother hen continually turns each of her eggs throughout the day and night. She uses many parts of her body, her beak, feet and wings, to ensure each egg maintains the property temperature, moisture, ventilation and position. This level of care is vital to the developing embryos, preventing the chick from becoming stuck to the inside of the shell. With competing priorities in the classroom, a teacher can't provide the same level of care.

The incubator egg process is far removed from nature. Chicks imprint on their mother almost as soon as they hatch; if she is not around, they imprint on humans who, in a school environment, aren't around over the weekend or overnight. This can be very stressful for young chicks. The relationship between the mother hen and her chicks, an integral part of a chick's life, is absent for chicks hatched in incubators.

Having spoken with other parents about this issue, others share our concern and would like to follow the RSPCA's advice to keep live animals out of the classroom. The paper mentioned above is a fantastic resource, and after consulting it, many educators have decided to seek alternatives such as books, models, and charts or to study life cycles.

If the school would like some interactive experiences, we'd recommend visiting an animal sanctuary, such as Little Oak Sanctuary. A sanctuary tour provides an educational experience that involves observing and interacting with rescued animals in their environments under their terms.

Thank you so much for reading this and considering choosing options that are kinder to animals.

Kind regards,