

January 29, 2020  
Ian Deonise, Principal  
Paradise Valley High School

Dear Principal Deonise,

I'm writing from TeachKind, the humane education division of PETA, which works with schools and educators around the country to bring compassion for animals into the classroom. We are excited to let you know that PETA will be unveiling a billboard across the street from Paradise Valley High School today with an important message: It's time to unlearn speciesism. Students at PVHS will likely have questions about the neighborhood's new addition—especially if they're not yet familiar with the term *speciesism*—and we'd like to offer your staff our support in facilitating these important classroom conversations.

As you may know, the struggle for animal rights is one of the most important and fastest-growing social justice movements of our time—and compassion for our fellow humans often grows when we develop compassion for animals. At the core of the animal rights movement is *speciesism*, which is a bias in favor of humans over other animals (just as one particular set of humans may be biased against another). It can also come in the form of valuing the lives of one type of animal over another (for example, the way one might think of a dogs as family members but pigs as dinner). Simply put, it's the misguided belief that one species is more important than another.

But *all* animals deserve kindness and consideration, regardless of our opinion of them. While most of us were raised with speciesist views and have continued to encounter them throughout our lives, each of us can overcome this destructive way of thinking. As educators, you are uniquely positioned to help students dismantle such biases, and this billboard presents your school with the perfect opportunity to start this compassion-building and mind-expanding conversation with them.

TeachKind would like to offer free Skype presentations for interested PVHS classes. And we have an age-appropriate, interactive experience for students to help them understand the impact that our society's ingrained speciesism has had on their worldview and to provide them with ways to unlearn this bias. We also invite PVHS educators to browse our collection of [free online lesson plans and activities](#)—which can be used to meet Common Core State Standards and fulfill character education standards. Included are plenty of resources to help students unlearn speciesism, such as [daily empathy-building writing prompts](#), lessons on the [cognitive dissonance in the ways we treat animals](#), and bias-challenging videos such as "[How Bigotry Begins](#)." You might also consider sharing some of the research studies, scholarly articles, editorials, and other student-friendly resources listed in our [speciesism debate kit](#).

All animals—human and nonhuman alike—have the right to live free from exploitation and prejudice. Young people will begin to unlearn speciesism and learn to act with integrity and kindness toward all living beings when educational institutions start incorporating into the curriculum discussions, lesson plans, and materials that encourage students to relate to and identify with animals—viewing them as



fellow sentient beings who are deserving of rights and consideration rather than objects or "others." And now, PVHS is in the perfect position to begin implementing these compassionate practices.

We're certain that this billboard will encourage critical thinking around speciesism in PVHS students and the rest of the community, too—and we would love to help support your school in fostering the progressive, nondiscriminatory way of thinking encouraged by the billboard by offering our free educational resources. Please let us know if we can assist. We look forward to being in touch.

Sincerely,

Megan Snyder  
TeachKind Coordinator

