

May 21, 2021

Charles E. Dupre, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
Fort Bend Independent School District

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Dr. Dupre:

I'm writing from [TeachKind](#)—PETA's humane education division, which works with thousands of educators nationwide to bring compassion into the curriculum—regarding [reports](#) that a former Fort Bend Independent School District teacher has been charged with four counts of cruelty to animals after allegedly admitting to torturing and killing cats. In light of this disturbing accusation and to support the district's efforts to safeguard the emotional well-being of its students, we would like to offer you our free resources—including [“Empathy Now,” our step-by-step trauma-informed guide to addressing and preventing youth violence against animals](#)—in order to help preempt any such acts of cruelty in the future.

It's important to recognize that it's common for young people to have witnessed animal abuse, that doing so is [a form of trauma](#), and that children who have observed acts of cruelty to animals are more likely to abuse animals themselves. According to Dr. Barbara Boat, director of the Program on Childhood Trauma and Maltreatment at the University of Cincinnati, “Exposure to animal cruelty can have a significant impact on the developing child, including promoting desensitization and decreasing empathy ... and leading to the imitation of abusive behaviors.” Given that the alleged offender was a trusted member of your school community whom students learned from and looked up to and that many of them are undoubtedly troubled over the news of his alleged crimes, we urge you to do more than make well-trained counselors available to the teacher's former students—it's imperative that this urgent matter be addressed with every Fort Bend student.

In light of the established link between cruelty to animals and interpersonal violence as well as of the traumatic effects that witnessing and participating in animal abuse can have on a young person's well-being, we'd like to work with you to enhance the social and emotional learning programs that you already have in place with [trauma-informed violence-preventing measures](#) for all students in your district. Our multitiered approach provides every student with empathy-building lessons—which can boost their resilience and therefore better equip them to handle challenging or traumatizing experiences—and offers more specialized support and interventions for those who have witnessed animal abuse or engaged in violent behavior themselves.

Given the current focus on bullying and its often tragic results, it's both vital and timely that a standard of compassion be set and that educators make clear to all students that harming any sentient being is wrong. According to [Texas law](#), teachers are expected to stress positive character traits, including “kindness, empathy, [and] compassion.” These goals can be achieved by incorporating [humane education](#) into your schools' curriculum, which would allow you to reach susceptible kids before they've engaged in any violent behavior.

We're mailing you our free [“Share the World”](#) curriculum. It's the perfect tool for teaching young students the Golden Rule and the importance of compassion and empathy. We're also mailing you [“Challenging Assumptions”](#)—our free social justice curriculum designed to inspire empathy toward others regardless of species, race, gender, sexual identity, age, or ability. Our staff is always available to provide additional materials and even host virtual teacher training workshops—all free of charge.





**TeachKind**

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On behalf of PETA's more than 6.5 million members and supporters worldwide, many of whom live in Texas, thank you for your consideration. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Megan Snyder

TeachKind Assistant Manager

ASCD-Certified in Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools

