

November 1, 2021

Andrew Houlihan, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Union County Public Schools

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Dr. Houlihan:

I'm writing from [TeachKind](#), PETA's humane education division, which works with thousands of educators throughout the U.S. to bring compassion into the curriculum. We saw a [report](#) out of Indian Trail that teenagers allegedly stole a dog named Hera from her yard; tethered her outside for several days in the elements with no access to food, water, or her medicine; and threatened to "cut her up and eat her." One of the boys also allegedly told rescuers that they had done this to a family's cat, too. Hera reportedly died shortly after being reunited with her family. In light of this disturbing story, we urge you to equip your staff with the tools that they need to prevent further issues like this and we're offering 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 acts of cruelty in the future.

**As mental-health and law-enforcement experts well know, [cruelty to animals](#) and violence against humans are inextricably linked.** While many educators are aware that serial killers and school shooters tend to have a history of cruelty to animals, they also must recognize that it's common for young people to have witnessed animal abuse, which can be a [form of trauma](#), and that children who have observed acts of cruelty to animals are more likely to abuse animals themselves.

Given that [young people all around the country are acting out and getting violent](#), likely partially a result of the challenges and trauma brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, it's vital that schools set a standard of compassion. According to [North Carolina law](#), "Each local board of education shall develop and implement character education instruction." This goal 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 or otherwise malicious behavior.

We're sending 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 sending you "[Challenging Assumptions](#)," our free secondary school social justice curriculum designed to encourage 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 presentations for your students—all free of charge.

On behalf of PETA and our many members and supporters who live in North Carolina, thank you for your consideration. May I please hear from you as soon as possible?

Sincerely,

Megan Snyder  
Manager of TeachKind  
ASCD-Certified in Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools

cc: Kasha Giddins, Director of Student Support ([REDACTED])

