

April 6, 2022

Jay C. Lebrun  
Superintendent of Schools  
Plattsburgh City School District

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Lebrun:

I'm writing from [TeachKind](#), PETA's humane education division, which works with thousands of educators nationwide to bring compassion into the curriculum. We saw a [report](#) that police have charged a Plattsburgh High School student with cruelty to animals after the 18-year-old allegedly hurled a cat against a wall, as was apparently captured in a video that was reportedly posted to social media. In light of this disturbing account, we urge you to equip your staff with tools to prevent similar such horrific incidents, 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**—to that end.

As mental-health and law-enforcement experts well know, [cruelty to animals](#) and violence against humans are **inextricably linked**. Many educators are aware that serial killers and school shooters tend to have a history of cruelty to animals, but it's also common for young people to have witnessed the abuse of animals, which can be a [form of trauma](#), and children who have observed acts of cruelty to animals are more likely to abuse animals themselves. Schools can help mitigate the effects that traumatizing incidents in their community can have on students.

Given that [young people all around the country are acting out and becoming violent](#), likely in part because of the challenges and trauma resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, it's vital that schools set a standard of compassion. According to [New York law](#), schools are required to provide instruction "in the humane treatment and protection of animals." You recently mentioned that "the district will manage this situation within the context of what is afforded by law and regulation." Incorporating [humane education](#) into your schools' curriculum can help fulfill Plattsburgh district's legal requirements under New York state education law. May we ask how your district is satisfying this mandate? We'd be happy to support your efforts in fostering compassion for animals in Plattsburgh even further.

While you may have seen some of PETA's attention-grabbing campaigns, you may not be as familiar with TeachKind's work. We're [former teachers](#) who strive to find common ground with school leaders and create educationally sound materials that help meet students' unique needs while developing their empathy. 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 would love to provide additional materials and even host virtual presentations for your students—all free of charge. We'd also be happy to work directly with teachers in your district.

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

Sincerely,

Andrew Burton  
TeachKind Assistant

