

August 30, 2022

Jesus F. Jara, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Clark County School District

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Dr. Jara:

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 Las Vegas that a young teen is facing a felony charge of cruelty to animals after allegedly drowning a dog in a community swimming pool in July. In light of this disturbing account, we urge you to equip your staff members with the tools they need to address students' aggressive actions, foster prosocial behavior throughout the entire student population, and prevent further tragedies such as this alleged incident. To that end, we're offering our free resources—including "[Empathy Now](#)," our [step-by-step trauma-informed guide to addressing and preventing youth violence against animals](#).

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—including [Salvador Ramos](#), [Payton Gendron](#), and [Ethan Crumley](#)—tend to have a history of cruelty to animals, but research shows 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. While this incident may seem isolated and unique in its circumstances, research shows that young people witness and/or perpetrate animal abuse far more frequently than is reported. Embedding lessons in empathy and kindness to animals into tier 1 of the district's [Multi-Tiered System of Supports](#) would help prevent children from hurting animals by reaching susceptible kids before they engage in violent behavior.

Although 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. We can send these resources to every teacher in your district upon request. Our staff would love to provide you and your teachers with additional materials and even host virtual presentations for your students—all free of charge. We're also available to provide teachers with professional development in order to help them integrate our materials into the existing curricula.

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

Sincerely,

Andrew Burton
TeachKind Assistant

cc: Alaina M. Criner-Wilson, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Professional Development Center, Clark County School District ([REDACTED])

