

October 27, 2022

Kent Kern
Superintendent
San Juan Unified School District

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Kern:

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 Orangevale that 18-year-old Colin Lendewig was charged with cruelty to animals and petty theft on Tuesday for allegedly stealing unattended cats from residents' yards. These cats were later found dead or were missing. A neighbor of one of the most recently killed felines said, "Cats are dying almost nightly." In light of these disturbing allegations, we'd like to open a dialog about how you can equip your staff members with the tools they need to address students' aggressive actions, foster prosocial behavior throughout the entire student population, and help prevent further tragedies. 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](#), [Nikolas Cruz](#), and [Ethan Crumbley](#)—tend to have a history of cruelty to animals, and [Sandy Hook Promise](#) has cruelty to animals on its list of the "[10 Critical Warning Signs of Violence](#)."

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 pandemic, it's vital that schools set a standard of compassion. According to [California law](#), educators are expected to teach students "kindness toward domestic pets and the humane treatment of living creatures." Existing programming can be bolstered by incorporating [humane education](#) into your schools' curricula, which would allow you to reach susceptible kids before they engage in violent behavior.

At TeachKind, 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 curriculum designed to encourage empathy toward others regardless of species, race, gender, sexual identity, age, or ability. Our staff is on standby to provide you and your teachers with 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 California, thank you for your consideration. May I please hear from you as soon as possible?

Sincerely,

Megan Snyder
Manager of TeachKind

cc: Melissa Bassanelli, Deputy Superintendent of Schools and Programs ([REDACTED])
Christine Moran, Director of Multi-Tiered System of Support ([REDACTED])

