

October 7, 2022

James A. Davis II  
Chair, Board of Trustees  
The North Carolina Leadership Academy

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Davis:

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. This letter is in response to [a disturbing case](#) involving Winston-Salem resident and North Carolina Leadership Academy (NCLA) graduate Caleb Daniel Dewald, who evidently pleaded guilty to 10 felony counts of cruelty to animals for his alleged years-long killing spree in which multiple wild animals of various species were tortured to death, many on camera. Some of the alleged acts include drowning, bludgeoning, and mutilating animals and even setting them on fire. According to reports, NCLA administrators were aware of Dewald's alleged proclivities while he was a student there, but adequate steps do not appear to have been taken to prevent further violence toward animals. In light of this disturbing account, 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 [North Carolina law](#), "Each local board of education shall develop and implement character education instruction." In addition, according to NCLA's discipline policy, "[t]he care and safety of ... students is of utmost importance" to school leaders. Addressing the violent actions of this student and others, especially in light of the documented link between animal abuse and interpersonal violence, is an important step toward meeting these goals. Regardless of where Dewald may have harmed animals, the educators and leaders of NCLA can play a critical part in ensuring the safety of all sentient beings in the community.



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 North Carolina, thank you for your consideration. May I please hear from you as soon as possible?

Sincerely,

Andrew Burton  
TeachKind Assistant

cc: Renee Faenza, Principal ( [REDACTED] )  
Jenna Guldberg, Assistant Principal ( [REDACTED] )  
Amal Wood, Assistant Principal ( [REDACTED] )  
Joseph Orenstein, Secretary of the Board of Trustees ( [REDACTED] )  
A.B. Henley, Board of Trustees Member ( [REDACTED] )  
Chandra Parker, Board of Trustees Member ( [REDACTED] )