

February 24, 2023

Gerald Wright  
Superintendent  
Dorchester School District Four

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Wright:

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 Dorchester County that two juveniles were filmed falling over with laughter after one of them slammed a stray cat to the concrete ground. The juveniles were apparently identified, and the individual who threw the cat is facing charges. 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 help prevent further incidents of cruelty. 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 [many 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. Fostering empathy for animals throughout the curriculum is easy, and it will help your district meet [South Carolina's character education goals](#). 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 support school leaders in a variety of ways to help them simultaneously develop students' academic skills and empathy for others. 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. 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. 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 South Carolina, thank you for your consideration of this important matter. May I please hear from you as soon as possible?

Sincerely,

Andrew Burton  
TeachKind Assistant

cc: Corey Prentiss, Chief Academic Officer, Dorchester School District Four ([REDACTED])

