

April 24, 2024

John Campbell  
Superintendent  
Kings Canyon Unified School District

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Campbell:

I'm writing from [TeachKind](#), PETA's humane education division, which works with thousands of educators throughout the U.S. to help bring compassion into their curricula. We saw a [report](#) out of Reedley that the 12-year-old who was allegedly seen entering a yard, chasing a chicken, and kicking a guinea pig to death had been identified by the Reedley Police Department. The abuse was apparently documented on the animals' guardian's Ring doorbell camera, and in [the disturbing footage](#), the suspect can allegedly be seen lifting the enclosure shared by two guinea pigs and punting one of the animals twice before fleeing the scene of the vicious attack.

As law enforcement is reportedly working with the Kings Canyon Unified School District in response to the alleged assault, there's no doubt that your community is grappling with the heavy news. TeachKind is dedicated to providing free humane education tools to support young people in processing such information and to assist leaders like you in preventing future acts of cruelty. [An epidemic of youth violence is surging](#) throughout the U.S., and your district is far from alone. We have dialogues with staff from schools nationwide on a regular basis about similar situations and can share how others have responded to such tragedies by using them as opportunities for growth.

**As mental-health and law-enforcement experts know well, [cruelty to animals](#) and violence against humans are inextricably linked.** Tracking this concerning connection, the FBI's extensive criminal database categorizes acts of cruelty against animals on par with serious felony offenses, such as arson, burglary, assault, and homicide. Many educators are aware that serial killers and school shooters tend to have a history of cruelty to animals, and [Sandy Hook Promise](#) includes cruelty to animals on its "[10 Critical Warning Signs of Violence](#)" list. Research indicates that it's 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. Considering that schools across the country continue to experience violence with staggering frequency, it's imperative that you and your staff be familiar with this critical warning sign and take it seriously—many lives could depend on it.

A recent [study](#) on the connection between violence against animals and violence against humans concluded, "Teaching children to be more humane, compassionate, and respectful towards living beings can help reduce all types of violence." It's critical that schools set a standard of compassion by fostering empathy for animals throughout their lessons and activities, and [research suggests that this can even help students academically](#).



Existing programming can easily be bolstered by incorporating [humane education](#) into your curricula, which would allow you to reach susceptible kids *before* they engage in violent behavior. It would also help your school comply with [California's law](#) that educators “[e]ndeavor to impress upon the minds of the pupils the principles of morality” and “kindness toward domestic pets and the humane treatment of living creatures.”

To support this meaningful work without burdening your budget, **we're sending you our free resources, including [Empathy Now](#), our step-by-step trauma-informed guide to addressing and preventing youth violence against animals**. We're also sending our [Share the World](#) program, which is the perfect resource for teaching young students the Golden Rule and the importance of kindness and compassion, and our [Challenging Assumptions](#) curriculum, which is designed to encourage empathy and promote a positive school culture by supporting secondary students in examining discrimination and other social justice issues. Last, we're sending a set of our [anti-bullying posters](#), which can be displayed throughout your school district to remind kids that they have the power to help others by reporting abuse when they see it.

These resources are ideal for supporting essential aspects of social-emotional learning, such as self-awareness and relationship skills, and were created to empower students as they become the next generation of global leaders—responsible critical thinkers who honor the dignity and individual needs of all sentient beings, including those who neither look nor behave like them.

Our team consists of [former classroom teachers](#), and we're committed to providing educators with free resources to help them develop students' academic skills and empathy for others simultaneously. We're available to host [virtual presentations](#) for your students by experts on various animal rights topics as well as to work directly with teachers in your district—whatever would serve your team best.

On behalf of PETA and our many members and supporters who live in California, thank you for considering this important matter. I look forward to connecting with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Julie Everett (she/her)

Correspondence and Project Administrator

[TeachKind](#) | PETA's Humane Education Division

cc: Lori Botkin, Assistant Superintendent, Elementary Education ( [REDACTED] )  
Eddie Nolen, Assistant Superintendent, Secondary Education ( [REDACTED] )

