

September 23, 2025

Scott Gemes
Superintendent
Warsaw R-IX School District

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Gemes,

I'm writing from [TeachKind](http://TeachKind.org), which works with thousands of schools throughout the U.S. to help bring compassion for animals into the learning experience. We've been following [reports](#) out of Benton County that a pair of students allegedly recorded themselves submerging a caged cat into a pool of water, apparently intentionally drowning the animal. In the alleged video [footage](#), the boy filming can be heard stating, "So, let's drown this cat," before dropping the cage into a muddy baby pool and watching the feline panic and attempt to escape. They can apparently be heard anticipating the animal's death with excitement, counting down—"3, 2, 1, bye bye!"—as the cat continued to fight for their life, eventually pulling the cage out of the water and proclaiming them "dead."

Whether or not the students involved attend Warsaw R-IX School District, it's clear that [your community is grappling with the news](#), with many people expressing concern for potential future acts of harm. But it's critical to note that Benton County is far from alone; [an epidemic](#) of youth violence is surging throughout the U.S., and educators are uniquely positioned to help children process such traumatic events and prevent future acts of cruelty. Mental health and law-enforcement experts consistently point to the well-established [link between animal abuse and interpersonal violence](#), so much so that Sandy Hook Promise includes cruelty to animals on its list of "[10 Critical Warning Signs of Violence](#)."

The good news is that this link works both ways—teaching kindness helps prevent future harm. A [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."** By learning to extend compassion to other animals, [students strengthen the same empathy and resilience skills that protect their peers and themselves](#), and our free resources are designed to do just that. They also align seamlessly with the Missouri Trauma-Informed Schools Initiative by equipping educators with tools that foster safe and supportive environments and address social-emotional well-being.

To enhance your existing programming, we are sending you a selection of free materials and would be glad to provide additional copies for students and staff throughout the district. These include:

- [Empathy Now](#), our step-by-step guide developed with trauma-informed principles to help schools address and prevent youth violence against animals.



- Our [Elementary](#) and [Secondary](#) school programs, which integrate empathy and compassion into core subjects.
- [Empathy for All](#) posters, which remind students that they have the power to speak up and seek help if they witness abuse.

TeachKind's mission is to support schools as they rise to meet challenges like this one. We've walked alongside many communities facing similar situations, and we are committed to helping Warsaw R-IX staff and students heal, grow, and lead with compassion.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Julie Everett
Writer and Engagement Coordinator
[TeachKind](#) | PETA's Humane Education Division

Cc: Shannon Deckard, Assistant Superintendent ([REDACTED])
Cody Wright, Principal of John Boise Middle School ([REDACTED])

