TeachKind
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December 3, 2025

Amy Arcurio D.Ed.
Superintendent
Greater Johnstown School District

Via e-mail: [redacted]

Dear Dr. Arcurio,

I'm writing from TeachKind, which works with thousands of schools throughout the U.S. to help bring compassion for animals into the learning experience. We saw a report out of Johnstown that a juvenile is in police custody following an ongoing investigation into a video that appears to show two individuals carelessly tossing two small dogs into a makeshift outdoor pen from a great height. The dogs reportedly required veterinary treatment following the incident, insinuating injuries were sustained after being physically thrown. This incident comes on the heels of another alleged instance of cruelty to animals in the area—reportedly, in July, a teen allegedly stabbed a family member's dog with a grill fork following a late-night argument over getting a ride to the gas station—we're reaching out in the spirit of support.

Whether or not the young people involved in these events attend the Greater Johnstown School District, your community is grappling with the news. Your students have likely heard the reports as well, and TeachKind is dedicated to providing free resources to help them process such information and assist leaders like you in preventing future hostility and aggression.

An epidemic of youth violence is surging throughout the U.S., and Johnstown is far from alone. In light of this disturbing trend, we urge you to equip your staff members with humane education tools to foster prosocial behavior and help them be proactive against potential acts of aggression. Because, **as mental health and law-enforcement experts know well, cruelty to animals and violence against humans are inextricably linked.** So much so that it's even included in Sandy Hook Promise's list of "10 Critical Warning Signs of Violence." Thankfully, this link works both ways: 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**."

We applaud your district's dedication to social-emotional learning and your personal commitment to supporting whole child development. Our services are designed to enhance SEL initiatives to include other animals and are easy to incorporate into existing programming. This engagement-boosting approach aims to foster children's respect for all sentient beings, including their peers, and help prevent future harm. Research indicates that incorporating humane education can help students academically, and doing so would help you comply with Pennsylvania's statute that mandates humane education to be provided "[t]o all pupils up to and including the fourth grade."

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To support this meaningful work without burdening your budget, **we're sending you a selection of our free resources, including Empathy Now, our step-by-step guide for schools to address and prevent youth violence against animals.** This tool was developed with trauma-informed principles at its core as a direct response to frequent similar instances that have occurred nationwide. We're also sending a copy of our Elementary and Secondary school programs, which are designed to encourage empathy and compassion, as well as assorted books about kindness to animals. And to remind kids that they have the power to help others by reporting abuse when they see it, a set of our Empathy for All posters can be displayed throughout your schools.

We would be happy to send additional copies for students and staff district-wide and would love to meet to discuss how we can best support your community.

On behalf of PETA and our many members and supporters in Pennsylvania, thank you for considering this important matter. I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Sincerely,

Julie Everett
Writer and Engagement Coordinator
TeachKind | PETA's Humane Education Division

Cc: Dino Scarton, Director of Education ([redacted])