

February 1, 2024

Wendy Dau
Superintendent
Provo City School District

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Dau:

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](#) that a teenager in Provo was arrested and charged with two counts of misdemeanor property damage for allegedly duct-taping fish—both dead and alive—to a variety of objects and stuffing a cigarette in several of their mouths. Reportedly, the teen documented his cruelty on social media, apparently both in Provo and the surrounding area, claiming, “No fish were harmed in the process.” However, noted experts have [established](#) that fish are extremely complex individuals with nervous systems that are virtually identical to those of mammals and are capable of experiencing fear, pain, and stress, so victims of this alleged abuse would surely have suffered immensely.

Whether or not this young man is currently enrolled in your school district, your students have likely heard the news reports. TeachKind is dedicated to providing humane education tools to support young people in processing such information and to assist leaders like you in preventing future acts of cruelty.

As mental-health and law-enforcement experts know well, [cruelty to animals](#) and violence against humans are inextricably linked. 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.

It's vital 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 the curricula, which would allow you to reach susceptible kids *before* they engage in violent behavior. It would also help your district comply with [Utah's law](#) requiring that character education be “achieved through an integrated school curriculum” promoting “integrity, morality, civility,” and other “qualities of character which will promote an upright and desirable citizenry.”



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 tool for teaching young students the Golden Rule and the importance of kindness and compassion, and our "[Words Matter](#)" language guide, an extensive resource for facilitating a compassionate evolution of communication. These materials can equip your staff members with the tools they need to foster students' prosocial behavior, address potential aggression, and help prevent further incidents of cruelty in your community.

For your secondary educators, we're sending our [Challenging Assumptions](#) curriculum, which is designed to encourage empathy and promote a positive school culture by supporting students in examining discrimination and other social justice issues. And we'd be happy to send free delicious vegan [Gardein f'sh filets](#) to Timpview High School for students and staff to enjoy. It would be a great way to celebrate Valentine's Day—showing compassion for all sentient beings. We're ready to set up the delivery, so just let us know a date and time that would work for you. We'd also be happy to chat with you about our similar collaborations with schools around the country.

In addition to providing free materials, TeachKind is available to host virtual presentations for your students as well as to work directly with educators in your district—whatever would serve your team best.

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

Sincerely,

Julie Everett (she/her)
Correspondence Coordinator
[TeachKind](#) | PETA's Humane Education Division

cc: Jason Cox, Deputy Superintendent ([REDACTED])
Anne-Marie Harrison, Assistant Superintendent Over Teaching and Learning
([REDACTED])
Judy Rose, Director of Curriculum ([REDACTED])
Scott McCauley, Assistant Director, Behavior, Mental Health, and Related Services
([REDACTED])

