

January 10, 2025

Edith Walker, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Ascension Public Schools

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Dr. Walker:

I'm writing from [TeachKind](#), PETA's humane education division, which works with thousands of educators throughout the U.S. to help bring compassion for animals into their curricula. We saw a [report](#) that a group of teens were suspected of violently attacking a 6-week-old kitten with Roman candles on New Year's Eve in Gonzales. A local citizen involved with animal rescue [reportedly](#) arrived during the assault and witnessed the feline tied to a leash to prevent their escape as several teens allegedly shot fireworks directly toward the animal from a short distance away before fleeing into the surrounding neighborhood. The kitten apparently suffered a severe eye injury which may require the eye to be surgically removed.

Since these individuals are suspected of living in the area surrounding the attack, there's no doubt that [your community is grappling with this heavy news](#). TeachKind is dedicated to providing free resources to help young people process such information and to assist leaders like you in the weighty task of preventing future acts of hostility and aggression. [We applaud your district's commitment](#) to supporting students' development into noble citizens capable of thinking critically and embracing diversity, and we are on standby to help enhance your existing programming.

[An epidemic of youth violence is surging](#) throughout the U.S., and your district is far from alone. Whenever a case of a child who has abused an animal is reported, we reach out to area schools, offering free humane education tools to help them be proactive against future violence and build a kinder future for us all. 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](#)." Studies show 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. It's critical that you and your staff are familiar with these dangerous indicators and take them seriously — many lives could depend on it.

Fortunately, that link works both ways: 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."** Considering that communities across the country continue to experience violence with staggering



frequency, it's vital that schools take every opportunity to encourage compassion and consideration in their students. Plus, research indicates that incorporating humane education can [help students academically](#), meaning there's no need to sacrifice teaching time. By acting now and incorporating [humane education](#) into your schools' curricula, you can help prevent future acts of cruelty by reaching susceptible kids before they engage in violent behavior. Doing so would also help your district comply with [Louisiana's character education laws](#).

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, and 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 your students and staff.

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

Sincerely,

Julie Everett (she/her)

Correspondence and Project Administrator

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

Cc: A. Denise Graves, Assistant Superintendent ([REDACTED])
Carli Francois, Chief Instructional Director ([REDACTED])

