

Texas Humane Network's Third-Grade Curriculum

Background.

A humane curriculum is a course of study with lessons that teach kindness and empathy to animals. Texas currently has no humane curriculum requirement in place for elementary school students. The Texas Humane Network has created a Third Grade Humane Curriculum to address this need.

Without a curriculum teaching the fundamentals of pet care and kindness towards all animals – including stray animals and wildlife – this responsibility falls on humane societies and non-profits. These resources are limited, and when we rely solely on them, we reach only a fraction of the students in our state. Children in under-resourced communities are those in Texas who would benefit the most from a humane curriculum in public schools.

The Need for a Humane Curriculum: Then and Now.

Almost a century ago, in 1933, the National Parent Teacher Association Congress issued the following statement:

"Children trained to extend justice, kindness, and mercy to animals become more just, kind, and considerate in their relations with each other. Character training along these lines will result in men and women of braver sympathies, more humane, more law-abiding in every respect, more valuable citizens."

That statement supporting humane education is as true now as it was then, especially in Texas. For example, Texas currently leads the nation with the highest number of homeless companion animals. Texas has only five Animal Cruelty Investigation Units spread thin over 254 counties, an overabundance of stray and feral animals, and limited animal control resources.

This means that children who do not understand how to interact with those animals safely are at risk for dog bites or worse. Likewise, children who lack humane education are also at risk for participating in the mistreatment of homeless pets.

Even children who have lived with pets in their homes may not know the proper handling of animals. A Texas shelter vet stated it is common for kids to think picking up a cat by the tail is proper. Simply put, we are failing our students by not educating them on how to treat animals properly.

The Solution.

The Texas Humane Network, a 501c3 nonprofit focused on education and training, has developed the Third Grade Humane Curriculum that fosters empathy, ethical decision-making, critical thinking, and compassionate behavior toward animals.

It is undisputed that humane education addresses the root causes of animal abuse and can spur the development of empathy and compassion. Humane education has many positive outcomes, like preventing bullying, teenage pregnancy, and drug use. Humane education also increases school attendance rates, enhances children's behavior in the classroom, and improves academic achievement.

Teaching children a humane curriculum is a critical step in raising humane Texans for generations to come.