

WellBeing International

## WBI Studies Repository

1-2012

# Humane Literacy and Formal Educators

Stephanie Itle-Clark

*Humane Society Academy*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://www.wellbeingintlstudiesrepository.org/acwp\\_he](https://www.wellbeingintlstudiesrepository.org/acwp_he)



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Humane Education Commons](#), and the [Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Itle-Clark, Stephanie, "Humane Literacy and Formal Educators" (2012). *Education Collection*. 2.  
[https://www.wellbeingintlstudiesrepository.org/acwp\\_he/2](https://www.wellbeingintlstudiesrepository.org/acwp_he/2)

This material is brought to you for free and open access by WellBeing International. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of the WBI Studies Repository. For more information, please contact [wbisr-info@wellbeingintl.org](mailto:wbisr-info@wellbeingintl.org).



## **Humane Literacy and Formal Educators**

### **Abstract**

Formal educators (those with formal education degrees versus informal educators who may work in shelters or nature centers) in the K-12 system are tasked with facilitating academic, character, and social and emotional learning in the classroom. As part of this learning, the teaching of critical thinking revolving around and reinforcement of “kindness . . . care and compassion towards” people, animals, and the environment and the interconnection among the three can work to prevent needless suffering and create community building attitudes (Selby, 1995, p. 7). Based upon knowledge of state mandates involving humane education, the Humane Literacy Coalition (HLC) was formed to study basic educator knowledge of humane education and their understanding of mandates concerning humane topics. HLC was also formed to review the creation and potential use of humane education benchmarks on the part of formal educators. HLC hypothesized that educators were not aware of humane education nor whether humane education was required in their state. HLC also wished to learn the opinion of educators, administrators, and policy makers concerning the creation of benchmarks that would help educators to infuse humane education into standards-based work. Based on these assumptions and questions, HLC developed a questionnaire that was disseminated both at national education conferences and online. Results showed that educators, administrators, and policy makers at both elementary and secondary levels believed that all areas of humane education were important and felt that humane values were likely to be infused into the standards-based curricula. Results also showed that educators had varied levels of understanding concerning humane education and little

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

knowledge of state requirements. Additionally, results indicated that educators and policy makers supported the utilization of humane education benchmarks when preparing lessons if such benchmarks were available. A possible implication is that teacher preparation and in-service programs are not including the concepts of humane education, and that given benchmarks for humane education, formal educators would more often include all three components of humane education in their work.

**Key Words** humane education, social and emotional learning, character education, standards, benchmarks

## **Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

### **Humane Literacy and Formal Educators**

This article examines the connection between humane and character education, and social and emotional learning. The article also examines connections to the standards-based movement in education and how humane education can be utilized as a way to combine academics and social growth. More importantly, this article includes information about the reported beliefs and knowledge of educators as they relate to humane education, and research results that indicate that formal educators are open to receiving professional development on how to infuse humane education into their curricula.

Humane education has often been thought of in terms of animal welfare education, yet it extends far beyond this narrow lens. As a form of “character education and a partner to social and emotional learning, humane education encourages empathy and compassion for humans, animals, and the environment as well as assesses the intimate connection among the three” (DeLisle & Itle-Clark, 2011). Humane education in schools and after-school programs has often been relegated to covering only the care and respect for cats and dogs, yet with the ever growing concern about educating the whole child, the anti-bullying movement, and existing character education legislation in a majority of states, we see an indication that the United States educational system is moving toward a new era in education that includes the building of critical thinking skills and prosocial behaviors such as empathy, kindness, respect, honesty, and responsibility (CEP, n.d.). As education embraces the needs of the whole child, schools will be looking for resources and programs that help schools to be “safe, healthy, engaged, supported, and challenged” (ASCD, n.d.). With this in mind, the Humane Literacy Coalition (HLC), comprised of representatives from RedRover, Humane Society University, the Association of

## **Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

Professional Humane Educators, the World Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and the American Anti-Vivisection Society came together to obtain a better understanding of how humane education is perceived in its holistic form by formal educators (those with formal education degrees versus informal educators who may work in shelters or nature centers), administrators, and those who set educational policy. The HLC collaboration also wished to learn whether this audience had an interest in humane education benchmarks to assist them in infusing humane education into the standards-based classroom. HLC hypothesized that educators were not aware of humane education nor whether humane education was required in their state. HLC also wished to learn the opinion of educators, administrators, and policy makers concerning the creation of benchmarks that would help educators to infuse humane education into standards-based work.

### **History of Humane Education**

Humane education, including the full repertoire of animal welfare, environmental concerns, and human interactions, is not a new idea and can be traced to the time of John Locke. In 1693, Locke made a prominent statement about the need to correct the cruelty of children. “This tendency should be watched in them, and, if they incline to any such cruelty, they should be taught the contrary usage. For the custom of tormenting and killing other animals will, by degrees, harden their hearts even toward men; and they who delight in the suffering and destruction of inferior creatures, will not be apt to be very compassionate to benign to those of their own kind” (as cited in Adamson, 1912, pp. 90-91).

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

Over time, the insights and writings of John Locke influenced others in the growing understanding that childhood experiences truly impacted character. These included Harriet Beecher Stowe (Angell, 1892; Crane, 1996), Horace Mann (Curti, 1937), and George T. Angell (Curti). George Thorndike Angell is very important to the history of humane education, specifically animal welfare. Angell was interested in a variety of social justice issues, including the anti-slavery movement, public health, and food safety. He became one of the best known persons in history to advocate for humane treatment of animals and is often considered the "father of humane education" (MSPCA, n.d.) Angell understood the role of education as the key to preventing cruelty and appreciated that teaching children kindness and respect for animals encouraged overall moral development (MSPCA, n.d.).

Humane education grew and even earned a statement of support from the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) in 1931<sup>1</sup> and 1933 (National Parent Teacher Association, 2006; Haar, 2002, p. 70). Sadly, humane education diverged into a variety of subsets around the time of the Depression and World War I with a lack of national funding, the growth of science education, and the lack of support in institutionalizing humane education in the training of formal educators (Unti & DeRosa, 2003).

Humane education had a difficult time becoming institutionalized in the middle of the 20th century due to humane education not being consistently taught in teacher-training schools, a lack of laws mandating humane education, as well as little to no enforcement ensuring that local

---

<sup>1</sup> The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) placed the 1931 humane education item related to influence of commercialized rodeos and events with animal cruelty on a list of 200 resolutions to rescind in 2009. The reason for rescinding was stated as being outdated.

## **Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

and regional schools were actually following through with any existing requirements to teach humane lessons and humane education (Unit & DeRosa, 2003). Additionally, science education rose to prominence, leaving little room for empathy in the study of animals (Unti & DeRosa, 2003). As science became more standardized and biology became more and more common in schools, nature-study and humane education were phased out of the classroom. Humane educators were not prepared to deal with the change (Unti & DeRosa, 2003).

Competing interest groups presented a second difficulty as they rose to challenge humane education in schools. Agricultural societies, industry associations, religious groups, and science education groups all fought for a place in the classroom. Many of these groups had conflicting beliefs from those of humane educators (Unti & DeRosa, 2003).

### **Humane Education and Current Character and Social and Emotional Learning**

When including components of humane education in a curriculum or lesson, it is important for educators to use their existing knowledge of character and social and emotional education. They should also differentiate between information that assists in helping children to create personal values or principles that are non-moral and those that “tell” a student what to believe or do, or in essence indoctrinate the learner. Character education and social and emotional learning have been successfully integrated into the school system because the traits taught and modeled do not reflect a moral value; they instead encourage students to look at how their actions impact them, others, and the community (Character Education Informational Handbook & Guide, NC Department of Public Instruction, 2001; Nucci, 2001). In this regard,

## Humane Literacy and Formal Education

humane education has a symbiotic relationship with emotional intelligence or social and emotional learning and is a natural extension (Ascione, 1992; Elksin & Elksin, 2003).

Education professionals of today face a problem similar to that of the late 1900s in that they generally receive little formal training concerning humane or character education, specifically training in how to combine these reflective items with academics (Gore & Zeichner, 1991). Educators who learn to combine family, community, and personal understanding with academics become truly effective in building learning relationships (Elias, 2003, pp. 7-9).

Humane education can be successfully infused into academic content while simultaneously increasing school or program culture and allowing for modeling of important character traits. Findings from a review of 213 studies of after-school programs demonstrated that teacher-led evidence-based initiatives designed to promote academic, social, and emotional skills improved test scores, as well as reduce behaviors that put students at-risk for academic and social failure (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

### **Hypothesis**

HLC hypothesized that educators were not aware of humane education nor whether humane education was required in their state. HLC also wished to learn the opinion of educators, administrators, and policy makers concerning the creation of benchmarks that would help educators to infuse humane education into standards-based work. This desire led to the creation of the following hypotheses:

- 1) Formal educators, administrators, and policy makers supported the ideas of humane education.

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

- 2) Formal educators, administrators, and policy makers had little formal understanding of humane education or policies in their states.
- 3) Formal educators, administrators, and policy makers would be more likely to include humane education in the curriculum if they had benchmarks or further training in how to implement a program.

**Methods**

The study used survey methodology to capture both quantitative and qualitative information. Quantitative data were gathered in phase one of the study, and qualitative data were gathered in phase two of the study. The phase one, three-item survey composed of multiple choice, or closed-ended questions, was administered at national education conferences during 2011. Phase two, a 16-item open and closed-ended question survey, was administered via an online survey-development program. The phase two survey was housed online by the Humane Research Council. A definition of humane education was provided only in phase two of the survey. The surveys were developed by the HLC.

*Phase one and phase two.*

The purpose of phase one of this study was to determine whether the general population of educators was familiar with humane education and to see if average formal education professionals knew whether or not their state required humane education in any form. Phase one survey questions were:

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

1. How familiar are you with the concept of humane education?
2. Does your state require that primary/secondary school teachers incorporate humane education into their lessons?

Phase two was designed to pool individuals from phase one and learn their perceived importance of humane education and whether respondents would find benchmarks, if created, to be useful. Phase two research questions were:

1. In general, how important do you think it is for teachers to incorporate humane education into their lessons??
2. How important do you think it is for teachers to have guidelines to incorporate humane education?
3. What area(s) of humane education do you think would most benefit from a set of benchmarks as described? Please mark all that apply. Choices included:
  - \*Humane education as it relates to animals and animal issues
  - \*Humane education as it relates to people and social justice issues
  - \*Humane education as it relates to the environment and environmental issues
4. How valuable do you think the described set of benchmarks would be for educators?
5. What area(s) of humane education do you think would most benefit from a set of benchmarks as described? Please mark all that apply.

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

6. If this set of benchmarks were available today, how likely is it that you would make use of them?

**Phase One**

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of phase one of this study was to determine whether the general population of educators was familiar with humane education and to see if average formal education professionals knew whether or not their state required humane education in any form.

**Survey Questions**

Phase one survey questions were:

1. Type of educator (choose your primary role.)
2. How familiar are you with the concept of humane education?
3. Does your state require that primary/secondary school teachers incorporate “humane education” into their lessons?

**Setting and Participants**

The population of interest for both phases of the study was formal teachers, administrators, and educational policy makers. In phase one, the population that was accessible to the study consisted of attendees at 2010-2011 general national education conferences, including ASCD, the Celebration of Teaching and Learning, the National Education Association, the California Science Teachers Association, and the National Science Teachers Association conference. These conferences were chosen because the coalition felt they best represented the

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

general education audience, would allow access to teachers from a variety of states, and attendees would have little bias for or against humane education.

Phase one involved a simple random sample to gather data. Coalition representatives exhibited at the educational conferences and distributed a three-question paper survey, which was turned in at the booth. (See Appendix A). This resulted in a sample size of 909 persons for phase one of the survey.

Participants in phase one were formal educators or administrators from a variety of US states. Due to the locations of the largest education conferences in 2010-2011 (see Appendix B), the highest concentration of responses were from Texas ( $n = 79$ ; 8.7%), New Jersey ( $n = 127$ ; 14%), and California ( $n = 145$ ; 16%). As shown in Table 1, of the 909 survey participants in phase one, the highest percentage of respondents were secondary educators ( $n = 354$ ; 38.9%) who taught grades 7-12.

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of Phase One Survey Participants (N = 909)*

Characteristic	N	%
Secondary (7-12)	354	38.9
Primary (K-6)	268	29.5
Other	204	22.4
Administration	83	9.1

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

---

Total	909	100.0
-------	-----	-------

---

**Instrument**

Phase one involved coalition representatives exhibiting at the educational conferences and distributing a three-question paper survey, which was turned in at the booth. A three-question paper survey was distributed in the exhibit hall of the educational conferences described above. Each paper survey asked for optional participant contact information including name, school, email address, and state in which the participant taught. This information allowed the participants to be entered into a random prize drawing. The three multiple choice questions were:

1. Type of educator (choose your primary role)
2. How familiar are you with the term humane education?
3. Does your state require that primary/secondary school teachers incorporate “humane education” into their lessons?

**Data Analysis**

The IBM Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 19.0, was used to run descriptive statistics including frequency tables that were analyzed with Chi-square tests of association. In instances of ratings of familiarity, ANOVA (with related F test) was used.

**Phase Two**

**Purpose of the Study**

In phase two of the study, participants from phase one were sent emails and asked to

respond to a 16-item questionnaire that included more in-depth questions about their interest in the specific areas of humane education and humane education benchmarks. Respondents could also share qualitative information in phase two.

### **Survey Questions**

Along with general contact information and grade level identification questions, quantitative phase two survey questions were:

1. In general, how important do you think it is for teachers to incorporate humane education into their lessons?
2. How important do you think it is for teachers to have guidelines to incorporate humane education?
3. How frequently do you incorporate humane education into your lessons?
4. How valuable do you think the described set of benchmarks would be for educators?
5. What area(s) of humane education do you think would most benefit from a set of benchmarks as described?
6. If this set of benchmarks were available today, how likely is it that you would make use of them?

Qualitative research questions were:

1. Into what subjects or specific lesson topics have you incorporated humane education?
2. What do you think is the most effective way to incorporate humane education concepts into a curriculum like yours?

### **Setting and Participants**

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

Phase two questions were housed online, via a site created by the Humane Research Council, to allow for a wider respondent pool. Participants from phase one, those who responded to the three-question survey, were sent an email to the survey link. Participants from phase one of the survey were asked to complete the online survey.

Of the 179 phase two survey participants (see Table 2), a majority were primary educators ( $n = 111$ ; 62%) who taught grades K-6, with secondary educators who taught grades 7-12 ( $n = 47$ ) making up only 26% of the respondents. Educational administrators ( $n = 16$ ) and policy makers ( $n = 15$ ) made up 17.22% of the respondents. While these are small numbers, these responses were of value and interest, as their decisions impact most educational professionals in their states or districts.

Table 2

*Demographic Characteristics of Phase Two Survey Participants (N = 179)*

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Primary (K-6)	111	61.67
Secondary (7-12)	48	26.67
Administration	16	8.89
Policy Maker	15	8.83
Other	6	3.34
Total	909	100.0

## **Instrument**

The 16-question online survey asked participants to identify their role in education, grade and subject they taught in 2010, optional contact information, and the questions described above. The survey also provided a definition of humane education. “For the purposes of this study, humane education is defined as: a process that fosters compassion, respect and responsibility towards people, animals and the environment and encourages an awareness of the interdependence of all living things.” Much of the survey in phase two was made up of multiple choice questions; but two areas were provided to allow for additional sharing of information from the participants.

## **Data Analysis**

The survey platform set up by the Humane Research Council provided the ability to review data in numeric form, as well as in charts and graphs. The data were also placed in the SPSS program where ANOVA, a Chi-square test of association, and a Chi-square test for independence were run. Incomplete survey items were not considered in the analysis, of the 270 surveys submitted, 90 items were incomplete, and one entry was a test entry and was removed from the final analysis. This left 179 completed surveys remaining.

## **Results**

### *Phase One*

#### Demographics of Participants

Question one asked participants to define their primary role in education to help us better understand the demographics of the participants. The respondents in phase one included primary, secondary, post-secondary, administrative and policy professionals, those who work in other

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

areas of the school, and university students. For the purposes of this survey, the main areas of interest were primary, secondary, and administrative and policy professionals. (See Table 1.)

*Familiarity with Humane Education*

Question two was designed to allow a better understanding of participant familiarity with the idea of humane education. Participants were asked to rank their familiarity with the term humane education using choices of *very familiar*, *somewhat familiar*, or *not familiar*. Of the phase one respondents, 57.9% of primary educators ( $n = 149$ ), 66.2% of secondary educators ( $n = 247$ ), and 85% of administrators and policy makers ( $n = 39$ ) were somewhat or very familiar with humane education.

A one way ANOVA test comparing Primary Teachers vs. Secondary Teachers vs. Administrators for familiarity scores in phase one (where familiarity was scored 0 to 3) revealed a significant group effect ( $F_{(2,713)} = 6.60, p < .001$ ). Post-hoc tests revealed that administrators reported being significantly less familiar ( $SD = .98$ ) with humane education requirements than primary ( $SD = .88$ ) or secondary educators ( $SD = .87$ ). There were no differences between primary and secondary educators ( $p = .07$ ).

*Humane Education State Requirements as Reported by Primary/Secondary School Teachers*

Survey participants were asked to self-report their understanding of state laws as they related to humane education in question three. Locations of respondents for phase one of the survey were coded as being states with definite humane education requirements, those with no requirements, and those that may possibly have some requirements that could not be definitively

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

determined. Fifty-two percent of the states in which respondents taught ( $n = 464$ ) had no requirement, and 32.8% of the states in which respondents taught ( $n = 292$ ) reported a requirement. The closed-ended three-question survey asked respondents to report their understanding of humane education and any requirements.

A crosstabulation of self-reported state humane education requirements, in response to the question, “Does your state have a humane education requirement?” indicated that over 50% of participants did not know if their states had any type of requirement. As indicated in Table 3, 57.2% of respondents ( $n = 167$ ) who lived in a state with a humane education requirement, reported being unaware of any requirement and only 12% ( $n = 35$ ) in the same category reported correctly that their state required humane education.

A sub 2x2 table from the Table 3 was examined for significance. The 2x2 combined the survey responses concerning belief of humane education requirement with known knowledge of humane education laws in each US state. The results were not significant (Chi-square = 3.63,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .06$ ), suggesting that participants generally had inaccurate knowledge about humane education requirements. It should be noted that 67.9% of those from states with a clear mandate ( $n = 74$ ) responded by saying their state did not have a mandate.

**Table 3**

*Self-Reported State Requirement*

Requirement		No	Not Sure	Yes
No Requirement	<i>n</i>	148	239	42

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

	%	31.9%	51.5%	9.1%
Requirement	<i>n</i>	74	167	35
	%	25.3%	57.2%	12.0%
May require (no definitive determination)	<i>n</i>	16	82	21
	%	11.9%	60.7%	15.6%
<b>Total</b>	<i>n</i>	238	488	98
	%	26.7%	54.8%	11.0%

We next examined question three, the self-reported requirement responses, focusing on those of educators from states with mandates that had clear consequences for not implementing the mandate. A Chi-square test of association revealed no significant effect (Chi-square = 0.46,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .79$ ) suggesting that consequences for not implementing state mandates did not translate into more accurate awareness of whether or not the state had a mandate. It is also of some note that only a small percentage (24%) of educators ( $n = 35$ ) were accurate regarding their states even having a mandate. Table 4 displays the full description of the percentage of educators who thought their state required humane education.

**Table 4**

*Percentage of Educators Who Thought Their States Required Humane Education Among Educators in States Without Consequences and Educators in States With Consequences*

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

Awareness of State Mandates	Educators in States Without Consequences		Educators in States With Consequences	
	N	%	n	%
No	66	27	8	23
Not Sure	144	60	23	66
Yes	31	13	4	11

**Phase Two**

*Demographics of Participants*

Phase two of the survey consisted of an open and closed-ended questionnaire in which participants reported their belief of importance regarding infusing humane education into the curriculum. Respondents in phase two totaled 179 and were primarily made up of primary school educators (62%;  $n = 111$ ) with secondary educators totaling 47 (26.26%) and other respondents totaling 11.74% ( $n = 21$ ). (See Table 2)

Survey Questions

In question one, participants were asked to identify how important they thought it was for teachers to incorporate humane education into their lessons. Of these respondents, 97% of primary school teachers ( $n = 109$ ) felt that incorporating humane education into their work was very important or somewhat important, with 70.27% ( $n = 78$ ) saying it was very important. Although smaller in number, 100% of secondary educators ( $n = 47$ ) reported that incorporating humane education into their work was very important or somewhat important, with 76.60% ( $n = 36$ ) saying it was very important.

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

When comparing all phase two respondents and their view of the importance of humane education, all respondents except policy makers had similar views. A Chi-square test for independence indicated no significant association between the current role in the field of education and the importance of incorporating humane education into their lessons for the roles of primary school teacher [ $\chi^2 (3, n = 179) p = .50, phi = .12$ ], secondary school teacher [ $\chi^2 (3, n = 179) p = .63, phi = .10$ ], school librarian [ $\chi^2 (3, n = 179) p = .76, phi = .08$ ], teacher assistant [ $\chi^2 (3, n = 179) p = .76, phi = .08$ ], and school administrators [ $\chi^2 (3, n = 179) p = .28, phi = .15$ ].

A significant difference in view of implementation and importance of humane education was found in surveying those responsible for creating policy. A Chi-square test for independence indicated a significant association between the participants current role in the field of education and their belief in the importance of incorporating humane education into their lessons [ $\chi^2 (3, n = 179) p = .003, phi = .28$ ].

**Table 5**

*Importance of Incorporating Humane Education into Lessons by Role in Education*

<b>Current Education Role</b>	<b>Perceived as Very Important by Current Role</b>		<b>Importance Perceived by All Other Roles</b>		<b>X<sup>2</sup>(1)</b>	<b>P</b>
	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>		
Primary Educators	78	70%	51	75%	2.356	0.5
Secondary Educators	36	77%	93	71%	1.736	0.63

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

Librarians	3	100%	126	72%	1.183	0.76
Teachers Assistants	3	100%	126	72%	1.183	0.76
Administrator	9	56%	120	74%	3.854	0.28
Policy Maker	13	87%	116	71%	13.999	0.003

In question two, participants were asked to indicate how important they thought it was for teachers to have guidelines to incorporate humane education. Of the respondents, 70.88% reported that humane education guidelines were either very important ( $n = 99$ ) or somewhat important ( $n = 64$ ). Only 5.17% reported that they felt guidelines would be not very important ( $n = 7$ ) or not at all important ( $n = 1$ ). When looking at specific categories and numbers of respondents, a larger number of primary (47.58%;  $n = 59$ ) than secondary (46.30%;  $n = 25$ ) educators reported that guidelines were very important. Administrators and those who create educational policy had similar responses to those of secondary educators (46.30%;  $n = 25$ ).

In question three, respondents were asked to describe how frequently they incorporated humane education into their lessons. The percentages of self-reported frequency showed the highest reported frequency as “some of my lessons” (36.21%;  $n = 84$ ). When looking at primary versus secondary educators, the reported results were similar, with “some of my lessons” being the answer with the highest percentage. Forty-five percent of primary educators ( $n = 57$ ) and 50% ( $n = 27$ ) of secondary educators reported that they incorporated humane education into “some” of their lessons.

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

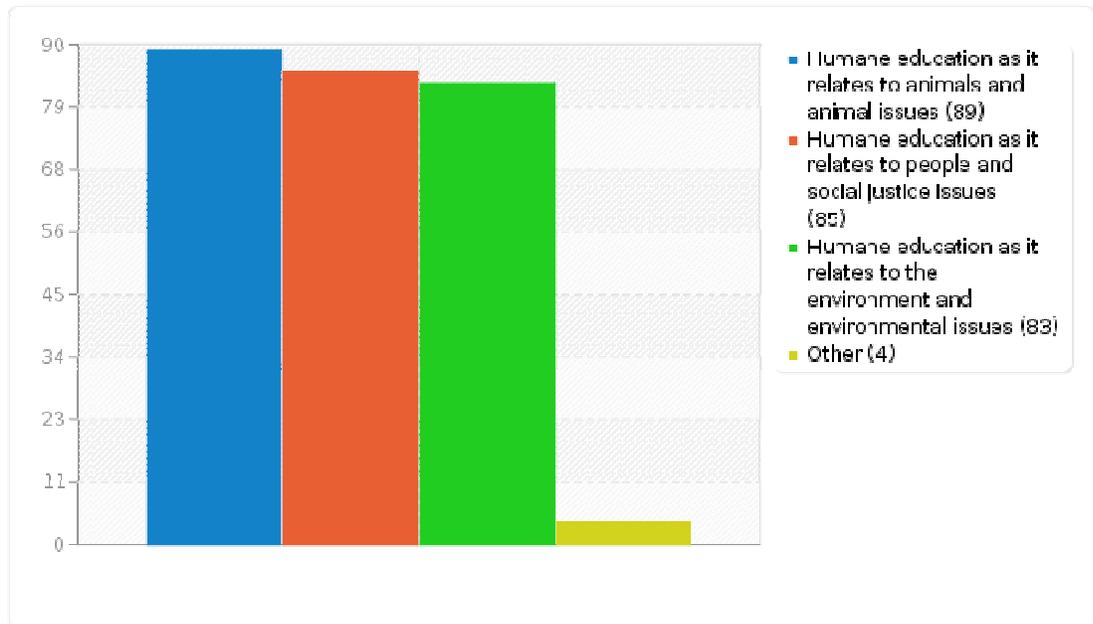
When asked to share their beliefs about the value of humane education benchmarks in question four, 92.18% of all phase two respondents ( $n = 167$ ) reported that benchmarks would be either very valuable or somewhat valuable, with 46.37% ( $n = 83$ ) reporting that benchmarks would be very valuable.

Of the 111 primary educators, 45.95% ( $n = 51$ ) reported that humane education benchmarks would be very valuable. Secondary educators ( $n = 17$ ; 36.17%) and administrators ( $n = 10$ ; 66.67%) also reported that humane education benchmarks would be very valuable.

In question five of the survey, respondents were asked to share which areas of humane education would most benefit from a set of benchmarks. Respondents were able to choose any areas that applied. Of the primary school respondents, almost equal numbers of individuals conveyed interest in the areas of humane education, with 80.18% ( $n = 89$ ) reporting animal welfare interest, 76.58% ( $n = 85$ ) reporting interest in humane education as it relates to people and social justice, and 74.77% ( $n = 83$ ) reporting interest in environmental education issues. (As shown in Figure 1) Secondary educators showed similar responses in their areas of interest, with 70.21% ( $n = 33$ ) reporting interest in animal welfare, 74.47% ( $n = 35$ ) reporting interest in humane education as it relates to people and social justice, and 76.60% ( $n = 36$ ) reporting interest in environmental education issues. (See Figure 2)

**Figure 1**

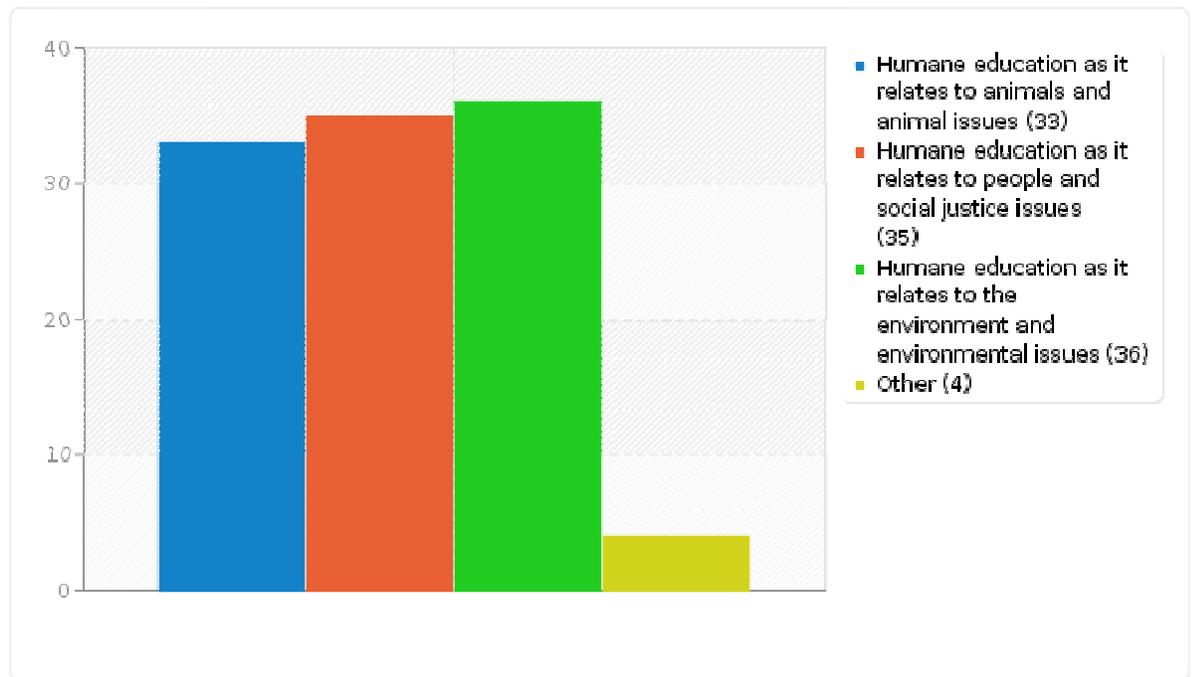
**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**



*Figure 1 Primary educators interest in areas of humane education*

**Figure 2**

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**



*Figure 2 Secondary educators interest in areas of humane education*

In question six, participants were asked about the likelihood of benchmark use if they were now available. A large number of participants reported that they would be “very likely” (34.91%;  $n = 81$ ) to use the benchmarks if they were available. Additionally, 33.19% ( $n = 77$ ) reported that they would be “somewhat likely” to use the benchmarks. Only 1.72% ( $n = 4$ ) of the participants reported that they would be “not at all likely” to use the benchmarks.

When looking at primary versus secondary educators, we found that primary educators were more likely to embrace the benchmarks than secondary educators. Primary educators ( $n = 55$ ) reported “very likely” (44.35%), while secondary educators ( $n = 18$ ) reported “very likely”. Primary educators also reported that they were “somewhat likely” (38.71%;  $n = 48$ ) to use the benchmarks. Secondary educators reported a similar response, with 40.74% ( $n = 22$ ) saying that

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

they, too, would be “somewhat likely” to use the benchmarks. Only 1.61% ( $n = 2$ ) of primary educators and 1.85% ( $n = 1$ ) secondary educators stated that they would be “not at all likely” to use humane education benchmarks.

*Qualitative Research Questions*

Survey participants responded to qualitative items along with the quantitative survey questions described above. Three questions allowed participants to share additional information about their understanding of or interest in humane education.

In question one, participants were asked to describe the subjects or specific lesson topics into which they had incorporated humane education. Multiple subjects were allowed in the responses. Responses were categorized into the main subject areas; “social studies”, “science”, “mathematics”, and “language arts”, as well as a category for “character education” and one titled “others”. Of the 169 responses received, 59 participants indicated that they had incorporated humane education into science lessons, and 44 participants said that they had infused humane education concepts into language arts. Smaller numbers were seen in social studies ( $n = 36$ ), mathematics ( $n = 7$ ), character education ( $n = 6$ ), and other ( $n = 17$ ). (See Table 6.)

Fourteen responses (12.6%) to the question, “Into what subjects or specific lesson topics have you incorporated humane education?” seemed to indicate a disconnect between the definition of humane education (specifically animal welfare) and how humane education is taught in independent classrooms. Responses included: *Animal testing and dissections, biology, and medical testing*. The responses were short; therefore, more information is needed to know

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

exactly what was meant by each of these responses and why/how the educator felt that humane education was included. One respondent specifically stated that *animals are not allowed to be used in science fairs and did not dissect*. Other respondents who wrote about dissections and science fairs may have meant to convey a similar idea, while others may have felt that animal testing and dissection were part of a humane education curriculum. Table six includes sampling of open-ended responses regarding how educators self-reported their infusion of humane education into the curriculum.

**Table 6**

*Academic Subject Areas into Which Humane Education has been Infused and Sample Items*

Variable	Definition	Sample Item	Number of Items
Social Studies	Teaching of geography, history, government, and sociology.	Science extensions & Social Studies	36
Science	Teaching of the physical or material world gained through observation and experimentation.	Science fair (use of animal subjects in research); tissues and body systems (why we don't dissect); independent projects (I currently have one student doing a project	59

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

---

		on horse slaughter); several environmental lessons, like our Sea Turtle unit and our Sharkwater (shark finning) project	
Math	Teaching of procedures, operations, and properties.	soc. studies; economics, lang. arts	7
Language Arts	Subjects, including reading, spelling, and composition.	I have promoted the preservation of wildlife through nonfiction readings. I have also expanded my student's understanding of animal rights, preservation, and human rights issues throughout the globe. I teach in an academy that focuses on humanities.	44
Character Education	Teaching of moral, civic,	"Virtue of the Month"	6

---

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

---

	anti-bullying, and/ or social and emotional learning.	program that I incorporate throughout my curriculum as part of a character education.	
Other	Any subject area that is not described by the other variables.	Global warming- becoming vegetarian reduces carbon footprint, and we talk about treatment of food animals	17

---

In question two, participants were asked to describe what they felt was the most effective way to incorporate humane education concepts into their curriculum. A variety of responses (10% ;  $n = 17$ ) mirrored the mission and definition of humane education and included *The message should be that all living things are special, important, and necessary, Providing students with real-world connections and by using day-to-day situations as examples of ways to become better people, and I teach them to respect each other and their differences.*

Nine (8.1%) individuals responded that humane education *must be incorporated across the curriculum*, and 14 (12.6%) felt that *stories, literature, and skits* were a way that humane ideas could be connected to numerous subjects. One response indicated that humane education needed to become more *mainstream* instead of *what tree-huggers do*. Responses such as this

## Humane Literacy and Formal Education

indicate that past humane education has not done a good job of aligning current educational needs with the needs of those in academics.

Other responses indicated a concern over time availability, professional development, and the need for social modeling. Responses included much about time: *time is what is missing when introducing new curriculum, time to train as well as time to practice, creating lessons that integrate humane education into the core subjects, and lessons must be incorporated as at least one major focus issue* (which means it would need to be standards-based.)

### Discussion

#### *Limitations of the Study*

The study was limited by the number of respondents in phase two, specifically in the number of secondary, administrative, and policy maker responses. It must be acknowledged that the low response rate in phase two limits the importance of the phase two results, with the exception of elementary educators. While the numbers in phase two were low, they were representative of a general education population and indicate that audiences in secondary, administrative, and policy are open to humane education as part of character and social and emotional learning. By broadening the sample pool or focusing on one particular group, HLC would learn specific interests of each group and how to work with them.

Additionally, because the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) conference was so large, an unequal level of science educators may have been represented. This is most heavily realized in the qualitative responses. This large number of responses from science

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

educators may show unequal representation; however the information was useful in allowing the researchers to see the range of understanding in this specific discipline.

Survey questions concerning the benchmarks may appear vague, yet they were intentionally written to allow participants to express general opinions about them. In future research, it would be of benefit to focus more directly on the benchmarks and what would allow them to be most useful to educators.

*Implications for Humane Education*

The results of this study support the hypotheses and initial expectations. The hypotheses suggested that formal educators, administrators, and policy makers supported the ideas of humane education but had little formal understanding of humane education or policies in their states or how to implement humane education programming within a standards-based curriculum.

The study showed that participants had a great interest in the main topics of humane education, and that respondents felt benchmarks would be useful. Although not the largest group, policy makers showed the highest level of interest. This result would suggest that education policy makers would be open to the ideas represented in humane education and policy makers would support such work.

There are two possible explanations for the overall survey outcome. First, a majority of educators receive little or no training in humane education during pre-service classes or in-service developments. They also receive little or no training in how to facilitate humane critical thinking skills. The social sciences and social and emotional learning have been discussed for decades by scholars who support the idea that development is often qualitative, or changes occur

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

based upon experience and modeling (e.g., Bandura, 1986; Piaget, 1990; Vgotsky, 1978). Still, education professionals receive little training beyond the concepts of each important learning theory. Educators would benefit from further study in undergraduate and graduate programs of developmental frameworks in which they examine how social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of emotions, reasoning, and intellect. In addition, education professionals would benefit from receiving sample activities in which academic subjects are infused into humane education. Second, the states that do support humane education (laws can be seen at [http://teachhumane.org/heart/?page\\_id=13](http://teachhumane.org/heart/?page_id=13)) primarily do so by creating mandates instead of standards, often with no retribution if the mandate is not followed. Even states such as New York and others with humane education laws rarely enforce the penalty for schools that do not include humane education as required (HEART, n.d.).

On a general level, the results of this study may promote growth in standards-based humane education programs that encourage academic and social-emotional development. Given the perceived importance of humane education in the results of the survey, educators seem to want professional development and preparation, as well as benchmarks to assist them in defining the areas of humane education and knowing how to incorporate these ideas into an academic curriculum.

*Recommendations for Future Research*

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

The current study contained a small sample of those who develop academic policy. Response results of those policy makers indicate an obvious area for future research to see if the smaller sample results can be replicated in a larger sample pool.

It would seem appropriate to more rigorously analyze existing data in the areas of humane education and formal educators, as well as university and professional development concerning humane education. Future studies concerning how widespread the use of benchmarks would be, if such existed, would also be beneficial and appear needed. It would also be interesting to examine the long-term or wider effect of infusing humane education into a school culture and curricula. Would standards-based humane education improve the school and classroom culture and have an impact on youth development?

Future research with each sample population would also assist HLC in learning about needs and creating humane-based professional development and educational tools to assist educators in meeting their academic and social goals each school year.

**Conclusion**

Humane education as an educational tool allows educators to bring both academics and the building of values and character into the classroom. Similar to the mission of character education, humane education is a proactive effort to teach critical thinking and model traits such as kindness, compassion, and responsibility. The main difference is that humane education includes modeling of these traits in regard to treatment of both human and non-human animals.

Children spend close to 900 hours in school, thus, educators and schools are paramount in joining the community and families in building humane and civic-minded individuals (Freedom Forum, N.D.). Classrooms that include humane education can do so in many ways, with the most

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

powerful being the infusion of humane concepts into all components of the academic and social curriculum. Ideally, humane education programs would be developed in conjunction with the teachers and community, and they would be designed to address local needs.

While this study has not determined at what level educators are receiving support and professional development in the areas of humane education, this study suggests that in-service educators are open to humane education and benchmarks to help them implement this as a strategy for empowering the whole child.

Educators wishing to learn more about humane education can do so by contacting coalition members or utilizing the resources provided on their websites. Resources available include a variety of lesson plans, professional development opportunities, and free resources such as dissection alternatives.

## References

- Adamson, J.W. (Ed.) (1912/2011). *The educational writings of John Locke*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Angell, G. T. (1892). *Autobiographical sketches and personal recollections*. Boston, MA: American Humane Education Society. Retrieved from <http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=oIIDAAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=george+angell+father+of+humane+education&ots=JptJ3Hvr5O&sig=Mb4-si0U0Z6P9O2upZPzQlwJnvU#v=onepage&q&f=false>.
- ASCD. (2011). *Making the case for educating the whole child*. Retrieved from <http://www.wholechildeducation.org/resources/WholeChild-MakingTheCase.pdf>.
- Ascione, F. (1992). Enhancing children's attitudes about the humane treatment of animals: Generalization to human-directed empathy. *Anthrozoos*, 5(3), 176-191.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- CEP. (n.d.). *Character education legislation*. Character education partnership. Retrieved from <http://www.character.org/charactereducationlegislation>.
- Character Education Informational Handbook & Guide, NC Department of Public Instruction. (2001). Public Schools of North Carolina. Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/charactereducation/handbook/content2.pdf>.
- Crane, G. D. (1996). Dangerous sentiments: Sympathy, rights, and revolution in Stowe's antislavery novels. *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 51(2), 176-204.
- Curti, M. (1937). The great Mr. Locke: America's philosopher, 1783-1861. *The Huntington Library Bulletin*, 11, 107-151.
- DeLisle, S., & Itle-Clark, S., (2011). Humane education: A way to empower youth, enhance humane behaviors, and promote animal welfare. *Silhouettes*. Retrieved from [http://www.atriskeducation.net/pdf/Silhouettes-2011-Fall-DeLisle-Humane\\_Education.pdf](http://www.atriskeducation.net/pdf/Silhouettes-2011-Fall-DeLisle-Humane_Education.pdf).
- Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D., & Schellinger, K. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405-432.
- Elias, M. J. (2003). Academic and social emotional learning. Educational practices series-11. *International academy of education*. Bellegarde, France: SADAG.

**Humane Literacy and Formal Education**

- Elksnin, L.K., & Elksnin, N. (2003). Fostering social-emotional learning in the classroom. *Education, 124*(1), 63-48.
- Freedom Forum. (N.D.). Finding common ground: A guide to religious liberty in public schools, Chapter 13. Retrieved from <http://www.freedomforum.org/publications/first/findingcommonground/B13.CharacterEd.pdf>.
- Gore, J. M., & Zeichner, K. M. (1991). Action research and reflective teaching in preservice teacher education: A case study from the United States. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 7*(2), 119-136.
- Haar, C. K. (2002). *The politics of the PTA*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- HEART. (n.d.). *New York state laws related to humane education*. Humane education advocates reaching teachers. Retrieved from [http://teachhumane.org/heart/?page\\_id=13#ny](http://teachhumane.org/heart/?page_id=13#ny).
- MSPCA. (n.d.). *George Thorndike Angell: A vision unfolds*. Retrieved from [http://support.mspca.org/site/PageServer?pagename=aboutus\\_History\\_George\\_Thorndike\\_Angell](http://support.mspca.org/site/PageServer?pagename=aboutus_History_George_Thorndike_Angell).
- National Parent Teacher Association. (2009). *Resolutions to rescind*. Retrieved from [http://www.pta.org/All\\_Resolutions\\_to\\_Rescind\\_04\\_09.pdf](http://www.pta.org/All_Resolutions_to_Rescind_04_09.pdf).
- Nucci, L.P. (2001). *Education in the moral domain*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois.
- Piaget, J. (1990). *The child's conception of the world*. New York, NY: Littlefield Adams.
- Selby, D. (1995). *Earthkind: A teachers' handbook on humane education*. London, England: Trentham Books.
- Unti, B., & DeRosa, B. (2003). Humane education: Past, present, and future. In D.J. Salem and A.N. Rowan. (Eds.), p.27-50. *The state of the animals II*, Washington, DC: Humane Society Press.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.