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Caring attitudes and behaviors are rooted in a person's capacity for empathy. Research (Kestenbaum, Farber, and Sroufe 1989; Brazelton and Greenspan 2000; Hoffman 2000) shows that quality of care and security of attachment affect children's later capacity for cognitive development, emotional regulation, and behavioral control. Nurturing caregiving in a safe environment allows for continued development of neural pathways, which in turn, allows for mastery of increasingly sophisticated cognitive skills necessary for emotion regulation, and social perspective taking (Selman 1980), prerequisites to empathic behavior (Bryant 1985). True empathy requires that an individual possess the capacity to discriminate another person's affect, see a situation from another person's perspective, and respond with genuine emotion (Minuchin and Shapiro 1983). However, contextual factors such as extreme poverty, homelessness, chronic exposure to violence, and insufficient nurturing or childcare practices can interfere with cognitive and emotional development, obstructing the capacity to care about others and to behave empathically.

Americans live in a violent place. In fact, the United States is the most violent industrialized country in the world today (Thornton et al. 2002; Hamblen and Goguen 2005; Youcha 2005). Violence among children and teens is a more pressing problem in the United States than in any other country (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2003). A national survey of children ages ten to sixteen found that more than one-third were directly victimized by violence, including aggravated assault, attempted kidnapping, and sexual assault (Boney-McCoy and Finkelhor 1995). Marans and Schaefer (2001) reported on a study conducted at a Boston hospital showing that one of every ten children seen in the primary care center had witnessed a shooting or stabbing before the age of six (Taylor et al. 1992).

Children's exposure to violence cuts across all socioeconomic, racial, and cultural strata, as demonstrated by Hill and Jones's (1997) study of nine- through twelve-year-old children's exposure to violence in low-risk versus high-risk neighborhoods. While children in both samples had witnessed assaults, stabbings, gang-related violence, robbery and rape, only 9 percent of those in the low-risk sample had witnessed a murder, compared to 32 percent of those in the high-risk sample (Hamblen and Goguen 2005).

Children are also exposed to violence through the media. Topics once considered only appropriate for the eleven o'clock television news are presented at all times of day, with little regard for the cognitive ability and psychosocial safety of the developing child. Film clips of beheadings; the torture of prisoners of war; war-zone hostages begging for their lives at gunpoint, and war-torn victims cradling the bloodied bodies of family members can be viewed from a computer desk chair or livingroom couch.

War and threats of terrorism on U.S. soil further complicate children's psychosocial development, affecting their sense of personal safety as well as their understanding of what constitutes humane behavior. War may be an appropriate topic for teenagers to grapple with as they begin to think about their own developing values and beliefs. However, younger children lack the cognitive ability to view the ramifications of war from multiple perspectives while also mak-

ing appropriate choices about their own behavior.

The impact of violence exposure varies, depending on internal factors (e.g., age, temperament), degree of violence exposure, protective factors in the environment (e.g., a nurturing parent), and the availability of resources (Osofsky 1995). However, a growing body of research shows that consistent exposure to violence may have long-lasting consequences, affecting children's cognitive and social development (Osofsky 2001; NYU Child Study Center 2006). For young children, repeatedly witnessing violence undermines a basic sense of trust (Youcha 2005) necessary for mastery of more advanced psychosocial tasks such as playing independently, interacting appropriately with peers, and developing a sense of agency. These children tend to develop a view of the world that is hostile (NYU Child Study Center 2006) rather than empathic and caring.

The Question

How does an elementary school teacher foster kind and compassionate behavior in children exposed to so much inhumane behavior? How does she teach them the importance of respect for the natural world when they live in environments characterized by so much disrespect? This question was not posed in the study described in this chapter. Rather, it emerged as a result of reading respondents' hastily scribbled notes along the margins and on the back of surveys. In analyzing teachers' responses to survey questions, it became clear that many intertwined, complex contextual factors affect whether and how teachers promote humane and environmental values and if and how students make sense of these lessons.

Findings discussed in this chapter were extrapolated from a comprehensive evaluation of *KIND*

News, a humane and environmental education program of the National Association for Humane and Environmental Education (NAHEE). *Kind News* (*http://www.kindnews.org/about.asp*) is a classroom newspaper for elementary school children. Published since 1983 by the youth education affiliate of The Humane Society of the United States, it is read by more than a million children nationwide. Its goal, according to its website, "is to encourage good character in children with an emphasis on kindness to animals, respect for natural habitats, good citizenship, and peaceful conflict resolution." Content includes facts about animals, brainteasers, KIND Club Projects, inspirational celebrity profiles, an opinion forum, and original short stories. It is published at three reading levels: (grades K–2), (grades 3–4), and (grades 5–6). It is delivered in bulk to classrooms monthly from September through May accompanied by a teacher's guide. It is available to teachers directly or as a gift through NAHEE's Adopt-a-Classroom program.

This chapter focuses on one of many themes in the data, challenges teachers face when striving to promote humane and environmental values and behaviors, and challenges students face in constructing knowledge and internalizing values. Only findings related to this theme are described. (For other evaluation data, contact NAHEE: 67 Norwich-Essex Turnpike, E. Haddam, CT 06423-1736).

Methods

Sample
Respondents targeted were fifth- and sixth-grade teachers in a New England city with a population of 175,000. Home to several colleges and universities, hospitals, and numerous trade and service indus-

tries, it is racially, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse.

Data Collection
A survey was enclosed with each of the district's fifth- and sixth-grade teachers' packages of *KIND News* newspapers (see appendix A) (n = 270). Due to a low response rate, two shorter surveys were developed and distributed to those who had not returned the original survey. In all, 16 original surveys, 7 subset-one surveys, and 10 subset-two surveys were received (n = 33).

Instrument
Designed for this evaluation, the survey tapped into four areas: school and classroom demographics; teacher's knowledge about humane and environmental topics; teacher's motivation and personal commitment to teaching about humane and environmental topics; and teaching strategies used in the classroom.

Data Coding and Analysis
A correlation was run as a way of determining all possible connections among variables. Both simple and multivariate regressions were run, and statistically significant correlations were examined in light of teachers' responses to open-ended questions and findings from an earlier tier of investigation. Open-ended questions were examined through use of Open, Axial, and Selective coding (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Throughout the process, coding categories were generated and refined. As themes emerged, coding paradigms were developed and examined.

Findings

Upper Grade Teachers Are Giving Up Their Subscriptions
1. Although subscriptions were originally distributed to fifth-

and sixth-grade classes only, teachers of lower grades have acquired subscriptions.

2. Not all students are reading the edition appropriate to their grade level (e.g., third graders reading an edition designed for fifth/sixth graders).

Stability of Basic Human Needs

1. At least 278 of the 628 students represented met eligibility requirements for free and reduced meals, a government program for families living near or below the federal poverty level.

2. Of twenty-three teachers queried, nine reported at least one student in their class living in transitional circumstances (sleeping in a shelter or car, on the street, temporarily with others, or in short-term foster care).

Campus Environment and Evidence of Disrespectful Behavior

1. Of the twenty-four teachers reporting bullying in their classroom, twenty reported that relational violence (ostracizing, shaming, name-calling, verbal threats) was either as evident as or more evident than physical violence (hitting, punching, spitting on, pushing, tearing/removing clothing, use of weapons). There was no relationship between gender and type of violence.

2. Of the thirty-three teachers queried about problematic behaviors on campus, twenty-two reported littering and bullying; eight reported excessive relational aggression; four reported excessive physical aggression; six reported graffiti; six reported evidence of gang activity; and four reported incidences of students bringing weapons to school. Vandalism to cars,

fights with weapons, threats to the safety of others (e.g., bomb threats), and destruction of the natural environment were each reported by three or fewer teachers. Only one teacher reported knowledge of cruelty to animals.

Teachers' Commitment to Teaching Humane/ Environmental Lessons

1. Eleven of twenty-six teachers surveyed said they feel personally committed to teaching humane/environmental lessons. However there was no association between teachers' personal commitment and whether they actually teach such lessons. Their commitment did not predict use of *KIND News* as a tool to promote those values, nor did it predict teacher-led discussions about *KIND News* articles.

2. Fourteen of twenty-six teachers queried stated they used supplemental materials in addition to *KIND News* to promote humane, environmental, and character values.

Students' Academic Abilities

1. The proportion of students per classroom reading below grade level ranged from 8 percent to 100 percent. The mean percentage was 32.

2. Classrooms with high percentages of students reading below grade level also had high proportions of students reading above grade level ($p = .025$).

Students' Peer Behavior

1. The higher the grade level, the less likely the teacher was to report improvement in peer behavior since the start of *KIND News* exposure ($p = .037$).

2. The larger the percentage of students reading below grade level, the less likely

the teacher was to report improvement in children's behavior toward one another ($p = .049$).

KIND News as a Useful Tool for Addressing Aggressive Behaviors

1. Fourteen of twenty-six teachers found *KIND News* helpful in addressing antisocial behaviors. Nearly as many respondents did not find it helpful.

2. The data revealed a highly significant correlation between grade level and teachers' perception of *KIND News* as a useful tool for addressing bullying behavior ($p = .005$). The higher the grade level, the less useful it seemed to be.

3. Teachers who stated that *KIND News* was a useful tool for discussing bullying tended to see improvement in students' behavior toward one another since the start of *KIND News* use ($p = .049$).

Discussion of Findings

Although this data was collected in one large New England city, the sample is representative of the larger population of the United States (see appendix B).

Who are *KIND News* readers? In the sample city, *KIND News* subscriptions are given to fifth- and sixth-grade teachers only, as a gift from a generous donor. However, children actually receiving *KIND News* range from grade one to grade six/seven (including one multi-grade special education class). Some fifth- and sixth-grade teachers are passing their subscriptions on to teachers of lower grades.

Because surveys were included in each teacher's subscription packet, teachers who gave up their subscriptions did not have the opportunity to participate in the evaluation. Upper grade teachers

may have more time-consuming curriculum demands, minimizing the time they have to spend on humane/environmental issues. As evidenced in the data, aggressive peer behavior seems to be a serious problem, especially in the upper grades; upper grade teachers may view peer aggression as a priority over kindness to animals and the natural world.

The passing of subscriptions has resulted in mismatches between some children's cognitive and academic abilities and the edition of KIND News they currently use.

Classroom populations. A number of languages are spoken in the average classroom, including English, Swahili, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Creole, Korean, Portuguese, and Vietnamese. While not the majority, some children have little or no experience with nature or the natural world (e.g., have never walked in a forest, climbed a tree, peeked into a bird's nest, or visited national/state park).

A significant number of children live in dire circumstances. The backgrounds in a single classroom ranged from high-income, highly educated families with access to numerous resources and opportunities to those living at or below the federal poverty level. Approximately one third of students and their families hover at this level.

A disturbing number of students live in transitional circumstances. Nine of twenty classrooms possessing the data reported at least one student living in transition. One teacher reported that nearly 30 percent of students in his class live in such circumstances. These figures may not reflect reality, however. Children living in transition tend to be embarrassed by their circumstances, often hiding the fact of their homelessness. Those living in battered women's shelters or staying outside the school district may have been warned about the importance of keeping such information private.

Children's attitudes and behaviors toward animals are generally positive but their attitudes and behaviors toward one another leave much to be desired. While some teachers reported improvement in children's attitudes and behavior toward animals, few reported improvement in children's behavior toward one another since the start of KIND News exposure. Only one teacher reported cruelty to animals, while more than half the sample reported bullying as a serious problem.

What to make of this finding? Few teachers are in positions to observe their students interacting with animals, making accurate response difficult. The publication may affect children's attitudes toward animals more than their attitudes toward peers, due to its editorial focus on animals. Although students may construct knowledge and internalize respect for animals, they don't seem to be transferring that knowledge to peer relationships.

KIND News appears to be a useful bullying-intervention tool for younger children, but not for older ones. Teachers of lower-grade students who use KIND News as a tool for discussing bullying tended to report improvement in students' behavior toward one another since the start of KIND News use. Most fifth- and sixth-grade teachers did not find this to be the case, however. It's impossible to discern how much of the credit belongs to KIND News and how much is related to extraneous variables (e.g., Sunday school lessons, values imparted by family members) and how much relates to the teacher who manages to find the time to discuss bullying with her students. Self-fulfilling prophecy and self-efficacy may also have affected findings. Teachers who believe KIND News is a useful tool for this purpose and who actually use it as such may be more likely to believe that it actually has improved peer behavior. It's possible that teachers who believe they can improve children's peer behavior, and try to do so, actually do improve their behavior. Only a carefully designed controlled experiment can tease out extraneous variables and provide more information.

Teachers lack the time necessary for integrating humane and environmental education consistently into their curriculum. Regardless of how committed they are to imparting humane and environmental values to their students, most respondents appeared to be barraged by increased curriculum demands and pressures related to standardized testing outcomes. Of those few teachers who practice humane and environmental education, such lessons tend to be scattered and "squeezed in" when time allows it or when they find "teachable moments."

Respondents cited creative uses for KIND News, including using it for homework, to promote literacy skills, and as a vehicle to address bullying. Teachers enclosed thank you notes with their surveys expressing appreciation for the publication. Their gratitude and creativity may reflect satisfaction that by distributing KIND News, they are satisfying, to some degree, their need to impart humane and environmental values.

A large number of students are reading below grade level, especially those in the fourth grade and above, where the emphasis has shifted from learning to read to reading to learn (Chall 1983). In order for KIND News to be effective in classrooms where teachers do not have the time to review and discuss articles with their students, children must be independent enough readers to master the concepts on their own. Unfortunately, wide variations in reading abilities, however, may prevent

some students from benefiting fully from *KIND News*.

Discussion

American Childhood in the Twenty-first Century: A Contextual Perspective

The ecological systems perspective (Bronfenbrenner 1979) locates the child at the center of a set of concentric circles representing systems (e.g., family, local community and wider social and economic systems) in which children's lives are rooted. Interactions between the child and these systems are bi-directional and constant, affecting and affected by one another. Optimal social development is most likely to occur when children experience strong, supportive links between systems and when those systems share common values regarding developmental outcomes (Miller-Heyl, MacPhee, and Fritz 2000).

Economic systems, along with other systems in children's lives, present challenges to teachers and humane environmental organizations. These systems also present obstacles to children's development of kind and respectful behavior.

The Quest for Basic Human Needs

For an increasing number of children, the ability to learn is hampered by a lack of basic needs. In 2003 17 percent of infants and children in the United States were living in poverty (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2004). More than 14 million children under the age of eighteen live in "food-insecure" households (Alaimo, Olson, and Frongillo 2001). Numerous studies document significant negative effects of food insecurity and poverty on children's cognitive and verbal skills (McLoyd 1998; Alaimo, Olson, and Frongillo 2001).

A study of homeless children in Worcester, Massachusetts, found significant decreases in developmental, interpersonal, and cognitive functioning, which the researchers attribute to the cumulative effects of the many risk factors of homelessness (Traveler's Aid Family Services 2004). While lack of stable housing per se does not affect a child's cognitive and intellectual abilities necessary for school success, the ramifications of these situations prevents him from achieving his full potential. Homeless children tend to miss significantly more school compared with housed children (Rubin et al. 1996); 12 percent are not even enrolled in school (U.S. Department of Education 1999). Approximately 22 percent of homeless children have been separated from their families at least once during the past year, and 25 percent have witnessed family violence (Weinreb 2004). Homeless children are four times more likely to score at or below the tenth percentile in receptive vocabulary and reading (Zima, Wells, and Freeman 1994) and twice as likely to repeat a grade as housed children (National Coalition for the Homeless 2005).

Forty-seven percent of children living in transition are afflicted with mental health problems (Weinreb 2004), including clinical depression and severe anxiety disorders (see Bassuk, Rubin, and Lauriat 1986; Bassuk and Rubin 1987; Zima, Wells, and Freeman 1994), behavior problems, and symptoms of social withdrawal (Weinreb 2004). Because families often can't afford mental health services, don't qualify for them, or move too frequently to take advantage of them, psychological and behavior problems tend to remain untreated (Hart-Shegos 1999).

Media Influences and the Changing Culture of Childhood

Marketing messages penetrate every area of children's waking lives, often influencing minds that have not yet developed the cognitive capacity to make fully informed decisions. Unlike a number of other industrialized countries, where advertising toward children is closely regulated or banned, "in the United States, selling to children is simply, 'business as usual'" (American Academy of Pediatrics 2006, 2563). Some marketing strategists work with child psychologists who tell them how to create an ad that will not only appeal to children, but will also begin to shape their attitudes—a marketing goal termed "early brand loyalty" (Consumers Union 2006).

Tweens (children between the ages of eight and twelve) are a fast growing consumer market. More than 40,000 television ads are directed at them yearly (Strasburger 2001); they are also exposed to marketing influences via the Internet, cell phones and other electronic media, in magazines and in the schools.

Marketing to a Captive Audience

Many businesses promote their products (and brand loyalty) in the schools. ABC lettering charts and other learning materials may be decorated with slogans and icons from fast food, movie, cereal, and toy companies. They tend to be high quality, slick, and colorful, with lots of stickers, puzzles, or photos of poplar celebrities, making them especially appealing to children. Such products are appealing to teachers and administrators, too; funding shortages make high-quality free supplemental materials hard to resist.

Messages conveyed through in-school promotions are not always

in children's best interests. Some may even conflict with the values of the school, the child's family, or of humane and environmental organizations. Unfortunately, children tend to assume messages conveyed through in-school promotions are credible, because they are introduced in the classroom.

Marketing Meanness: Condoning Mean-Spirited Behavior

The spirit of ads and messages to children has shifted drastically over the last decade. A study of food product ads on television marketed toward children between 1987 and 1998 reflects a disturbing shift away from pro-social and healthy themes in 1987 to antisocial and self-harming themes in 1998 (Howard 2003). Ads from the later years imply a kind of normalcy or social approval of aggressive and mean-spirited behavior.

K. Hymowitz (2000, 126) describes a popular jeans company depicting cool, confident pre-teen girls peering into the camera asking the viewer, "Have you ever seen your parents naked?" or stating, "I hate my mother." A popular sneaker company recently ran an ad in an equally popular teen magazine depicting a group of apparently popular girls (wearing the sneakers) whispering about and ostracizing a less popular girl, also featured in the ad. Such an ad does more than foster children's desire for the product, it promotes relationally aggressive behavior by playing on the reader's worst fear—rejection.

Moreover, this ad appears to encourage readers to identify with and want to emulate the aggressor (and her henchwomen) rather than the peer-rejected girl who happens to be wearing the wrong shoes. Children know that adults create the ads; the covert message then, is that adults sanction this kind of behavior. Even well behaved and/or typically non-aggressive children come to believe that, although they don't like being

on the receiving end of it, aggressive and unkind or humiliating behavior toward one another is an acceptable social behavior.

Recent bullying research shows a disturbing shift taking place as children stand on the edge of adolescence; bullying behavior *increases* popularity and social acceptance among peers (Cillessen and Mayeux 2004a, b). The current generation of children appears to be learning that antisocial and destructive behaviors are not only acceptable; they're also desirable (Howard 2003) and are likely to be rewarded with much-desired peer approval. Even children who don't like behaving aggressively may find themselves emulating aggressive popular children as a way of moving up the social ladder.

Bullying in the Twenty-first Century

Until recently, bullying has been generally considered harmless schoolyard activity. Child development advocates, however, are beginning to recognize the ramifications of bullying behavior (NYU Child Study Center 2006). Easier access to weapons and weapon-making materials allow for increasingly dangerous acts. Relational violence, too, has become more serious as perpetrators, with the help of technology, spread rumors, photos, and images worldwide, in efforts to humiliate their victims before larger audiences. D. Alexander, director of the National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD) asserts, "Being bullied is not just an unpleasant rite of passage through childhood: it is a public health problem that merits attention" (NICHD 2001, 1).

A nation-wide study of bullying in schools indicated that 29 percent of school children are involved in bullying—13 percent perpetrate it, 10.6 percent are victimized by it, and 6.3 percent perpetrate *and* are victimized (Ericson 2001). These figures don't include the unknown number

of child witnesses who agonize over whether to intervene. Such children tend to experience significant distress including feeling helpless and ashamed. As they develop the capacity to care and empathize with others, so, too, do they experience guilt related to their conflicted feelings between needing to intervene and needing peer acceptance.

Teachers: Managers of the Twenty-first Century U.S. Classroom

Data from the *KIND News* evaluation reflect three areas obstructing teachers' efforts to teaching humane and environmental lessons: (1) teachers' job descriptions and the resources available to them; (2) social/political differences between *KIND News* and other systems in students' lives (e.g., family, place of worship); and (3) students' current behaviors regarding respectful practices. All three categories are inextricably intertwined, affecting not only whether educators teach humane and environmental lessons, but also why and how they use *KIND News* in the process.

Teachers' Job Descriptions and Resources

Teachers' individual roles within a particular system affect their perceived ability to present humane/environmental lessons. The departmentalized teacher's subject specialty may play a role in whether he tackles humane and environmental education. Language arts, social studies, and science teachers may find features of *KIND News* useful for achieving learning goals and objectives, whereas math teachers may not. Departmentalized teachers tend not to spend the majority of their day with the same group of students, further limiting the possibility of squeezing in humane and environmental lessons.

Time—or lack of it—was the reason most often cited for not teaching humane and environmental les-

sons. While teachers understand that teaching children to be kind and compassionate today may help to create a more humane world tomorrow, they lack the ability to adjust their current curriculum to support long-term social developmental outcomes.

Mandated curricula and wide variations in students' academic abilities, among other factors, leave little time for humane and environmental education.

Social-Political Differences

The second obstacle to teaching humane and environmental lessons concerns social-political differences among teachers, families, and the educational institution. Not only must teachers walk a fine line between their own values and beliefs and those of their students' families (e.g., family's practices regarding responsible pet ownership), they must also navigate the values of the school system, which may or may not closely parallel the values of the teacher and/or families. Working with children and families in a litigious society presents added challenges for educators. One teacher stated that he is "not allowed" to let students know his personal beliefs about humane/ environmental issues. Teachers implied and occasionally commented on the fact that they "must be careful" about what they say and how they say it. They worry about doing or saying the wrong thing. As a result, some teachers may choose not to overtly teach about or promote humane values. To the personally committed teacher, distributing *KIND News* may provide some reassurance that she is promoting the values she feels otherwise barred from presenting.

Attitudes and Behavior

Students' attitudes and behaviors, the third area of obstacles to teaching humane and environmental values, reflect not only students' con-

textual backgrounds, including implicit and explicit values, but also their social-emotional and cognitive developmental abilities.

Nationwide, teachers cite large numbers of students lacking age-appropriate social skills (e.g., sharing, waiting one's turn). Increasing numbers of elementary school children are unprepared to function in age-appropriate ways in the classroom (Evans 2004). Teachers in this position may believe that teaching children to be kind to animals or to respect nature falls farther down on their list of priorities when, as one respondent stated, "they don't even have basic manners."

Conclusions

If basic human needs are met, elementary school children tend to be enthusiastic and motivated to learn. Unfolding cognitive skills allow increasing abilities to manage and focus attention, especially regarding topics they are motivated to understand (Berger 2005). As they peek around the corner of adolescence, they discover strategies for learning, accumulate constructed knowledge, and begin applying that logic to abstract topics such as morality or humaneness.

NAHEE, in efforts to reach students, publishes an award-winning program designed to foster humane and environmentally respectful attitudes and behaviors in children, especially in regard to animals and the natural world. However, it must compete on at least three levels with powerful systems.

First, NAHEE must compete with the corporate world in striving for children's attention. Many corporations have well-known (and sometimes well-respected) icons, celebrity endorsements, and slick, well-crafted, well-placed marketing strategies. In terms of appeal, *KIND News* may pale in comparison. It is colorful, but not glossy; the illustrated characters are generally unnamed, rounded and cute

rather than familiar, sharply angular, and coolly aloof.

Second, NAHEE faces the challenge of imparting values and behaviors that conflict with messages children receive from numerous resources throughout a single day. For every article a child reads in *KIND News* fostering compassionate responsible behavior, he may be bombarded with multiple messages promoting just the opposite. A well-written *KIND News* article on the importance of kindness to animals must compete with the details of immoral, illegal, and inhumane acts perpetrated by senators, congressmen, presidents, priests, and other individuals in positions of trust.

Last, NAHEE competes with previously developed attitudes and beliefs of a fair number of children with low self-efficacy and a poor sense of agency. Children who are exposed to chronic violence, live in poverty, or are homeless tend to be streetwise. They're more likely to be cynical about articles encouraging kindness or respect. These messages may pale in comparison to the daily realities of their lives. Such a child may be too busy figuring out the safest route home to pay attention to the fact that the earth revolves around the sun; respecting the earth and atmosphere when he hasn't yet developed a sense of safety in his own neighborhood may seem irrelevant.

NAHEE provides informative, age-appropriate, accurate, and up-to-date information about humane and environmental topics in the form of a newspaper. However, accurate information is only part of the equation necessary for children to develop humane and environmentally respectful attitudes and behaviors. The other half of the equation includes, ideally, trustworthy nurturing mentoring relationships allowing children the necessary room to develop the cognitive and social skills necessary to empathic development.

Empathy and care are intertwined with the ability to think about the feelings and needs of others and to regulate one's emotions appropriately. While the most common pathway for developing caring behavior is via secure relationships with family members, alternative pathways are possible (Chase-Landsdale et. al. 1995). Trustworthy mentors, using developmentally appropriate literature such as *KIND News* in the context of a high quality, multi-systemic program, may indeed foster the development of a kinder, more humane generation.

Recommendations

The success of intervention and prevention programs is determined by the soundness of the program, its acceptability to the intended recipients, and the quality of its implementation (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000). Effective programs support and are supported by multiple systems; focus intervention on social context; maintain developmental appropriateness and target children over a long period of time; are implemented by qualified individuals in a safe environment; and are evaluated consistently and funded adequately.

Use a multi-systems approach. Successful prevention and intervention programs include in their design and implementation an understanding of and respect for children's families, neighborhoods, cultures, schools, and other systems in which children's lives are nested. Moreover, they work collaboratively with individuals in those systems to promote and achieve program objectives and goals. Lessons in program literature presented by the after-school program staff, for example, are ideally reinforced (or at least, not contradicted) by teachers, community center staff, and individuals in other systems.

Focus intervention programs on social context. School-based interventions targeting changes in the social context appear to be more effective than those attempting to change individual attitudes, skills, and risk behaviors (National Institute of Mental Health 2006). The same may be true for humane and environmental education programs. Focusing, for example, on taking pride in one's school by promoting clean-up projects may be more effective than instructing children to refrain from littering. This is especially true if the valued behaviors conflict with those of children's family or other systems. By overtly focusing on changes in context, adults allow children to come to their own conclusions and to internalize constructed knowledge and developing values as their own.

Begin prevention and/or intervention programs early and keep programming developmentally appropriate. Program literature and lessons are most effective when they appeal to a child's desire to feel more grown-up. Literature or lessons that seem too "babyish" are likely to elicit scoffs. Role models and characters should be two or three years older than the target audience and appear respected by peers as well as adults.

Early intervention, especially among disadvantaged children, leads to long-term positive results. Younger children are interested in being "good" and take great pride in learning and doing good deeds. This is an ideal time to introduce and foster social skills development as well as age-appropriate humane and environmental topics.

Slightly older children (third to fourth grade), think fairly concretely at some times and more abstractly at others. They are eager learners and will, if the context allows, ask questions in efforts to make sense of complex issues, even though cognitive limitations may not allow them to fully comprehend abstract principles. They tend to be curious learners and care very much about issues of fairness. Short lessons integrated with hands-on tasks that use motor skills (e.g., building a birdhouse) and rapidly developing cognitive skills, are bound to result in knowledge construction.

Successful programming for preteens includes reasonably challenging cognitive tasks that allow them to test newly developing abstract thinking abilities. Although still dependent upon parents and other adults, preteens strive for a sense of autonomy and tend to resist messages that appear to tell them what to do or how to think. Lessons appealing to their developing ability to think more abstractly and to come to their own conclusions will be well received, albeit often with an air of pseudo-boredom. For example, an activity encouraging students to debate both sides of the question of spaying and neutering pets may be more likely to promote the construction of knowledge than the notion of spaying and neutering.

In the presence of authentic role models, pre-teens may develop the necessary comfort and trust to begin exploring their own beliefs and behaviors, asking profound questions as they struggle to make sense of the many contradictions encountered when exploring humane and environmental topics. This exploration and questioning is necessary for them to internalize humane and environmental values as their own.

Use quality implementation strategies in safe environments. The quality of implementation is as important to a program's success as is the program itself. Programs are more likely to be successful if the mentors and other adults implementing them have a high degree of self-efficacy and earn the genuine respect of the program participants. A primary step in program design is the development of self-efficacy in adults implementing the program (Miller-Heyl, MacPhee,

and Fritz 2000). If program mentors believe they can design and implement a successful program, they are more likely to persevere, even in the face of opposition. They will persist when not entirely sure their results will be successful (Miller-Heyl, MacPhee, and Fritz 2000). When adults feel competent and confident, the children in their presence tend to believe that they, too, are capable (Miller-Heyl, Mac-Phee, and Fritz 2000).

Effective programs are implemented in safe environments. Safety needs must be met before mentors can focus on teaching and before children can focus on learning.

Ensure adequate, long-term funding and consistent evaluation. Building and grounds maintenance, transportation, salaries for competent staff, and money for supplies and various other expenses require adequate funding over a long period of time. Evaluation activities must be included in the budget and conducted over the course of the program. Ideally, adjustments in program implementation are considered as data are analyzed and explored.

Summary

Childhood has changed in a number of important ways over the last two decades, affecting not only children's lived experiences, but also teachers' practices, which in turn, affect if and how humane and environmental education programs are implemented. More children are living in poverty, are exposed directly and indirectly to violence, have reasonably easy access to weapons, and experience difficulty escaping negative peer influence and gang activity. They are bombarded with media-driven messages that may conflict with goals of humane organizations. In-school promotions are especially effective in gaining children's attention; they tend to be colorful, glossy, and highly appealing. High

quality writing and accurate reporting about humane and environmental topics in *KIND News* may pale in comparisons to glossy supplemental materials featuring licensed characters and other highly valued cultural icons.

Continuous cognitive, motor, and social changes in the developing child affects how he thinks about the world, interacts with others, and regulates his emotions and behavior. The likelihood of a child becoming a kind, caring, respectful citizen is much greater if certain protective factors (e.g., nurturing, safety needs) are in place. However, even children lacking such protective factors may develop into highly caring, empathic adults when certain resiliency factors (e.g., mentors who believe in the child's goodness and capacity to be a kind, compassionate humane being) are in place.

Teachers face increasing curriculum demands, wider variations in students' academic and social skills, and increasingly aggressive behavior among students. Although many teachers believe humane and environmental education is important, few teach these lessons consistently. They may rely instead on students' ability to read *KIND News* and/or other supplemental materials related to humane and environmental topics. Findings from the *KIND News* evaluation reflect the fact that, while children's attitudes and behaviors towards animals are not problematic, their behavior toward one another is aggressive, especially in the upper grades.

For humane education to be effective, programs must consider the shifting contexts of childhood; work collaboratively with multiple systems; be developmentally appropriate; be implemented over longer periods; foster self-efficacy among program staff and administrators; and be evaluated consistently and funded adequately.

With long-term participation in quality programs, children are more likely to think critically about conflicting messages related to ethical, moral, and humane practices, and as they move into adolescence, to struggle constructively with personal choices for their behavior and make informed decisions reflecting the values of the people and institutions they have come to genuinely respect.

(*Editor's note: in 2007 NAHEE was renamed Humane Society Youth.*)

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Appendix A
Sample Issues
of *Kind News*

Appendix B
Demographic Comparisons of
City Sample and U.S. Population

(All figures are in percentages, unless otherwise indicated)

Variable	Sample City	U.S. Population
Household and Family		
Average household size		
(number of people in the household)	2.41	2.60
Average family size		
(number of people in the family)	3.11	3.14
Racial Makeup		
White	77.11	76.00
Black or African American	6.89	12.00
Native American	0.45	1.00
Asian	4.87	4.00
Pacific Islander	0.06	0.05
From other races	7.24	6.00
From two or more races	3.39	2.00
Percentage of Hispanic or Latino individuals of any race	15.15	15.00
Age		
Percentage of population under age 18	23.60	25.00
Percentage of population over age 65	14.10	12.00
Median age	33.00 years	36.40 years
Education (Highest Level Attained)		
High school diploma/GED	29.30	28.60
Some college	24.00	27.40
Earned bachelor's degree	13.60	15.50
Graduate/professional degree	9.80	8.90
Income		
Median family income	$42,988.00	$46,242.00
Number of children age 18 and younger		
living *below* poverty level	24.60	19.00
Number of people age 65 and above		
living *below* the poverty level	11.60	10.00
Poverty Status (1999)		
Families w/ children under 18	10.50	13.60
Families w/children under 5	13.10	17.00
Families w/children headed by female (no father present)	24.40	26.50
Families w/female head (no father present), children under 18	33.10	34.30
Families w/female head (no father present), children under age 5	48.90	46.40

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000).