

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter begins with a description of the study on humane education and credentialed educators. Each research question assisted in the examination of ways in which educators conceptualized, understood, and perceived humane education, as well as their intent to include humane education in their personal practice and their knowledge of strategies for integrating humane education concepts into their classroom work. Further analysis of data provided by educators in the pre- and post-surveys, as well as their postings and assignments in the humane education professional development course, are discussed. Recommendations for practice and recommendations for further research are included.

The majority of teachers, much like the general public, are not familiar with humane education. Thomas and Beirne (2002) pointed out that most individuals feel that humane education refers to how individuals treat and respect animals. A requirement for training related to humane education does not yet exist in university or college teacher training programs or in-service professional development. Additionally, a mandate or law for providing humane education to students exists only in 16 states. Federal mandates are increasingly focused on numeracy and literacy, with accountability and related testing in these areas only. These are not the only subjects that are related to student success. “Social, emotional, academic, and ethical education can help children” reach their academic goals, yet these types of training are not regularly provided to teachers (Cohen, 2006, p. 204).

Other studies that have focused on humane education have concentrated on specific treatments (Malcarne, 1983), how humane programs impact youth, and the impact on students regarding if the program is presented by certified educators versus visiting informal educators (Vockell & Hodal, 1980). Little literature exists specifically examining humane-

themed professional development or how professional development in humane education influences credentialed teachers.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of an eight-week online humane education professional development course on credentialed educators. Through the course materials and assignments, educator understanding of humane education, value of humane education, intent to include humane education, and knowledge of strategies to include it were explored. The participants in the study included 25 credentialed educators from various states in the United States, Vietnam, and British Columbia. Each educator took part in an eight-week online course totaling approximately 15-18 hours. Additionally, a researcher-developed pre-survey and post-survey (Appendices E and F) were included to measure any participant changes. The statistical analyses of this study included *t* tests and logistic regression.

### **Findings About the Course Curriculum**

The eight-week online course, Standards for Success in Humane Education, was offered by Humane Society University, where I was employed. The course successfully provided educators with an understanding of humane education. After completion of the course, educator definitions included more than animal welfare and indicated a greater understanding of the tenets of humane education. The readings, especially *Ethics Without Indoctrination* (Paul, 1988), presented a variety of views of humane education and information about how to present prosocial or moral education in a way that allows students to think critically and form personal opinions. Through the readings and the discussions that followed, participants formed their own views and understanding of the spectrum that makes up humane education. Discussion forums in weeks one and two allowed the participants to

share how their understanding of humane education had changed or stayed the same, and to discuss the impact that the new information had upon them. Readings and assignments in weeks three, six, and eight allowed educators to practice aligning academic subject areas and standards with humane content.

Standards for Success in Humane Education will run again in future terms offered by Humane Society University. Moving forward, the course will benefit from a reduction in the amount of reading in weeks one through four, moving some of the content into later weeks. Participants often worked during the day and completed the class in the evening. Spreading the readings out allows participants to spend more time with each concept. Another option to allow participants more of a chance to work with the ideas presented each week is to make the term longer. Nine to ten weeks would allow course participants a longer time to collaborate on the final lesson plan with their colleagues and learning community.

### **Discussion of Research Questions**

#### **Conceptions and Understanding of Humane Education**

Research question #1 was, “In what ways do educators’ conceptions and understanding of humane education change as a result of professional development?” All 25 participants were asked to define humane education in their own words in the pre-survey. Additionally, the participants were asked to report their level of familiarity with humane education. For the purpose of this study, humane education is defined as the teaching of kindness and compassion to people, animals, and the environment. Upon completion of the course of study, I hoped to see educators understand and have strategies for incorporating all three components of humane education into their definition and work.

#### **Familiarity with and definitions of humane education.**

Participants in the study reported in the pre-survey that they had a high level of familiarity with humane education prior to the course. Forty-four percent of the participants felt that they were “strongly familiar” with humane education before participating in any part of the course. The participant pre-survey self-reports were based on the humane education definitions that they held before the humane education intervention course. Interestingly, animal welfare education was the component of humane education most included in the definition provided by participants in pre-surveys. Eighteen of the pre-survey definitions of humane education (72%) included animal welfare in the definition. Only eight of the participating educators (32%) included all components of humane education, *teaching kindness and compassion to people, animals, and the environment*, in their pre-survey. The emphasis placed upon animal welfare education prior to the course was not surprising since a majority of humane education takes place at or is facilitated by animal welfare organizations (Olin, 2000).

The overall group improved in their understanding of humane education. The definition of humane education, according to the literature in the study, included the teaching of kindness and compassion to people, animals, and the environment and the interconnectedness among the three. Participants were introduced to the types of humane education through readings in weeks one and two, and they began to incorporate the types or frameworks into their personal definitions and practice. Humane education is made up of strands or interrelated pieces, and each piece is often called something different. Selby (1995) expounded on the disconnect and lack of relationship between those who teach similar types of prosocial education, arguing that all strands strive to teach compassion. For example, environmental educators teach about care of the Earth, yet they do not always relate

their work to animal welfare. Animal welfare educators teach about care and protection of animals, yet they do not always teach about the components of peace education and how animals are impacted by a lack of peace. These strands or frameworks include, but are not limited to, environmental education, character education, peace education, animal welfare education, and service-learning (Roakes & Norris-Tirrell, 2000; Savesky & Malcarne, 1981; Selby, 1995; Unti, n.d.).

### **Changes in Educators' Value of Humane Education**

Research Question #2 was, "In what ways do educators' individual perceptions of the value of humane education change as a result of professional development?" Participants in the study were inclined to value components of humane education before taking part in the study. By the end of the course, educators discussed how a comprehensive approach to humane education supported students' academic and moral development, including character education and interpersonal and animal violence. Participants also valued humane education and discussed the importance of creating or providing lessons that do not indoctrinate. Ideal lessons are based on factual information. As was advocated in the professional development curriculum through the readings provided in week one, indoctrination does not build critical thinking or allow students to think as individuals and make moral or ethical choices (Kohn, 1997; Paul, 1988).

#### **Violence.**

Participants commented early on in the course that they had experienced situations with students who had participated in or been witness to violence involving animals. These experiences ranged from work with youth who were in juvenile facilities to those in a traditional elementary classroom. Teachers reported hearing stories from students about how

the family pet was treated inhumanely, or cruelty in which the student had participated personally. Research indicates that early aggressive behavior is linked to later anti-social behaviors or criminal actions (Arluke & Lockwood, 1997; Coie & Dodge, 1998; Rutter, Giller, & Hagell, 1998). Of the various anti-social behaviors, there is “growing evidence that animal abuse is correlated to neglect and abuse initiated toward adult partners, the young, and the elderly” (Arluke & Lockwood, 1997, p. 26). Educators, upon discussion in the course, reported that they had had experiences with youth who were either victims of violence or who had perpetrated violence. Through the shared discussion forums, the participants connected their work in anti-bullying education to humane education.

Participants discussed how they were in a position to report suspected abuse, as well as model proactive behaviors. Participants shared that they recognized the possible severity of situations in which students who participated in or who were part of interpersonal or animal violence perpetuated the cycle. The majority of educators noted that the presence of animal abuse does not cause other abuse or interpersonal violence; its presence can make other forms of violence more likely and reduce the likelihood that empathy with another being is possible. Animal abuse is one of the earliest indications of conduct disorder in children and should serve as an early warning sign of a child who may benefit from mental health intervention (Ascione, 1996).

Educators who are familiar with the warning signs of cruelty can report cases as needed to proper authorities, as well as provide alternative behavior options through modeling of humane treatment of animals. The teacher is an important part of the development of students’ social skills (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). The activities that teachers share can support students’ development beyond academics (Wideen, Mayer-Smith,

& Moon, 1998). Teachers who are trained in the tenets of humane education promote healthier relationships and are more likely to recognize signs of abuse.

### **Moral development and prosocial frameworks.**

Educators from each grade level were predisposed to support ways in which they could support the development of moral and prosocial behaviors such as compassion, sharing, and empathy. These and similar traits have been linked conceptually and empirically with perspective-taking skills (Eisenberg, 1986; Kohlberg, 1981, 1984). Prosocial frameworks included in the professional development course were environmental education, peace education, anti-bullying education, service-learning, and animal welfare education.

Participants in the study reported a limited understanding of humane education in the pre-survey. Additionally, assignment posts from the first half of the course showed that educators were unaware of the interconnection of prosocial frameworks. Most educators were familiar with anti-bullying and service-learning, but less so with peace education or global education. Upon completion of the professional development course, educators reported knowledge of humane education and each of the frameworks. Creating knowledge of humane education and related prosocial frameworks was a first step to supporting inclusion of humane themes in traditional classroom pedagogy.

Educators can support individual student actions through modeling, and they can support student growth in prosocial moral reasoning. It is important that educators are provided with professional development opportunities and are aware of how they can support moral development as well as inspire academic learning. The success of the online course supports the possibility of an educational system that incorporates humane pedagogy and

prosocial learning so teachers will have the tools that are best suited to the needs of their classroom and community, as well as support students' affective and cognitive growth (Berkowitz, & Grych, 2000; McBride et al., 1995; Thompson, & Gullone, 2003).

### **Lessons without indoctrination.**

Educators were concerned about indoctrination when they were asked to add humane issues to develop lesson plans to teach the students in their classes. The teachers did not want to impart only their own beliefs and knew that they were in a position of power in the classroom. Many times, programs related to moral and ethical development are based around the beliefs and perspectives of those creating them (Paul, 1988). Participants shared experiences in which they were told how they should think or act versus being given a chance to come to decisions on their own. In many cases, participants shared personal memories of negative experiences. The course allowed participants to understand how to present humane education lessons in a way that was not value-laden and that supported students as the key players in their personal education. Teachers practiced creating questions for students and built the questions upon the understanding that rote question techniques were not successful at helping their students to think critically.

The results of this study have implications for classroom teachers. Lesson planning designed around scientific or factual information allows students to come to personal conclusions and increases their critical thinking. Instead of programs that pass down “moral distortions, and close-mindedness,” programs using best practices of humane pedagogy will “*educate* rather than to indoctrinate our students, to help them cultivate skills, insights, knowledge, and traits of mind and character that transcend narrow party and religious affiliations and help them think beyond biased interpretations of the world” (Paul, 1988, p.



11). Moral development based upon the culture and values of the students should be based on fact and knowledge versus previously held beliefs, and framed in a way that allows for authentic learning so that the student relates to the new material (Freire, 1970).

While the participants were inclined to value humane education, they valued it even more after discussing the ways that humane pedagogy or teaching practices that incorporated humane content worked to reduce the possibility of indoctrination and violence in the lives of students. Additionally, teachers developed lesson ideas in which students could incorporate cognitive strategies to build critical thinking and growth in empathy. The strategies ranged from the micro-skills, such as kindness to an individual animal or person, to macro-skills, such as service-learning that served the entire community. The learning approaches and cognitive strategies modeled in the curriculum included engaging in Socratic discussion, examining moral assumptions, and recognizing moral contradictions (Paul, 1988).

Educators who value humane pedagogy, which is the art and science of teaching to engage the learner at the cognitive and affective level, integrate moral development into the teaching and learning process. When teachers use a holistic approach, students are able to categorize their own values and internalize ethical practices (Itle-Clark, 2013). Educators can avoid indoctrinating students by using moral affective strategies such as suspending their own moral judgment and helping students to develop insight into sociocentrism, or the tendency for a group to assume their group is superior to another, in educational practice.

### **Changes in Educators' Intent to Include Humane Education Concepts in Personal Pedagogical Practice**

Research Question #3 was, "In what ways do educators' intent to include humane education concepts in their personal pedagogical practice change as a result of professional development?" Responses from participants indicated growth in the intent to include

humane education in regular classroom work. The participants indicated the academic subjects in which they felt they could infuse humane education, and they shared the humane education theme that they were most likely to use. Additionally, participants shared why they believed humane education was not currently included in the curriculum.

### **Curriculum and lesson plans.**

Educators were inclined to incorporate humane-themed lessons most often in language arts and science. The factual components of science support teachers and their academic requirements as they introduce humane education topics such as animal welfare education and environmental education without bias. Participants from each grade level indicated their intent to include humane education in their practice as well as the best way to do so.

Language arts was the subject most often selected when participants were asked to report how they planned to infuse humane education into their lessons. It is no surprise that humane education and literature are so closely tied. Stories allow students to “form connections with the characters, see themselves in stories, examine multiple perspectives, and cope with their own problems” (Ridgeway & Shaver, 2006, p. 18). Literature helps students to build awareness of the world around them and develop ways to participate in society. Stories provide a way for students to develop empathy toward a character, allow listeners or readers to understand new traits or feelings, and support comprehension of situations present in their personal lives. A story that portrays characters who are different from the reader helps to promote consciousness and understanding (Prater, Dyches, & Johnstun, 2006). Additionally, literature reflecting real-life challenges, in conjunction with proposed solutions, can assist students in developing social skills (Cartledge & Kiarie, 2001).

**Humane themes most often selected.**

Participants created various lesson plan ideas throughout the eight-week period. The humane theme most often chosen was animal welfare education. Narrowing down the subset of animal welfare education even further, companion animals appeared as a topic of discussion more frequently than did other strands of animal welfare. In the participants' submissions the eighth week, 19 lesson plans involved animal welfare. Fifteen of these lesson plans were about companion animals, or dogs and cats. Seven educators noted that they selected companion animal issues because they would not be considered controversial. Teachers are under a lot of pressure to maintain a classroom that is not controversial (Fry, 2013).

**Lack of support.**

In the pre-survey, 11 participants reported that time was the top reason that humane education was not included in their classroom teachings, and only 6 participants reported that lack of support from the school or district was the main reason that humane education was not part of regular practice. Post-survey results differed, with 15 participants reporting that the top reason humane education was not included in their personal practice or school curriculum was a lack of support in the school or district for humane education. In the assignment for the fourth week when participants were asked about mandating humane education, 11 educators noted that humane education could easily be woven into the curriculum without any extra time.

A secondary educator observed that the standards and required high-stakes testing are not excuses to keep humane education out of the curriculum and school culture. Another secondary educator described how affective learning and humane education are difficult to

test, so it is not considered important. She argued that that humane education must be part of the general curriculum and school culture.

Seven participants shared in the same assignments the fourth week that they felt little support for humane education from their schools or districts. One elementary teacher noted that humane education infused into the classroom would diffuse problematic situations and actually ease the fear and stress caused by standardized testing. Four educators reported that their districts did not provide professional development or supplemental materials to help educators in the district learn how to teach humane education.

Professional development or ongoing teacher education is a way to hone the teaching craft and increase school and student success (Fullan, 1993). The ongoing learning provided by professional development is vital to teacher and school morale, allowing teachers to “contribute to their growth, and enhance their effectiveness with students” (Guskey, 2002, p. 382). A main deterrent for educators is the lack of professional development and school or district support for prosocial and humane education. Generally, the professional development offerings of schools will focus on high-stakes testing, standardized test scores, or in some cases, character education. Numerous studies have been completed on professional development designed to support academic subjects such as reading and math programs (Garet et al., 2008; Richardson & Placier, 2001). Humane education has not been part of these national studies.

### **Changes in Educators’ Knowledge of Strategies for Integrating Humane Education Concepts into a Classroom**

Research Question #4 was, “In what ways do educators’ knowledge of strategies for integrating humane education into a classroom change after professional development?”

Responses provided by participating educators indicated growth in knowledge of strategies to teach humane education during the eight-week intervention course, Standards for Success in Humane Education. Participants discussed strategies, including questioning techniques, literature and language arts, science, and character education requirements.

### **Questioning techniques.**

Participants reviewed a variety of ways to build critical thinking and shared reasons they believed that questioning techniques were an important part of teaching. In the discussion assignment for the eighth week, 14 teachers shared that they planned to use questioning techniques and active non-directive teaching. An administrator shared that she combined language arts and questioning techniques to help students answer personal questions they may have and to compare their thoughts and feelings to others in their peer group.

Educators consider the development of higher order thinking among students of all ages an important educational goal. Fostering student thinking has been the focus of numerous studies and research articles (Adey, 1999; Bruer, 1993; Burden & Williams, 1998; Chance, 1986; Perkins & Grotzer, 1997; Perkins & Unger, 1999). Humane education by nature lends itself to active learning and critical thinking. Questioning techniques support this active learning and allow students to participate in metacognitive activities or learning through which they are thinking about the things they are doing (Bonwell, 1998).

### **Literature and language arts.**

The participants selected literature and language arts strategies as those most likely to be included in classroom practice. Role-play as a language arts strategy was introduced by the participants as a way to incorporate standards-based learning into the classroom by

teachers 16 times throughout assignments 4, 6, and 8. Role-play was mentioned by two teachers who wanted to increase perspective building as well as assist students in developing oral speaking skills. Stories and related language arts teaching strategies were supported by course participants. Ten participants shared book titles or stories that they had used in the past or planned to use in future lessons. One teacher described how she regularly incorporated stories into her lessons.

Well-written literature and well-crafted stories lend themselves to discussion and review of a moral dilemma. After all, a plot depends upon some sort of turmoil and an antagonist. The reader or listener must discern for him or herself the answers to moral questions presented. Stimulating students to reflect upon questions like these in relationship to story episodes and their own experiences enables them to draw upon their own developing moral feelings and ideas, to reason about them in systemic way (Paul, 1988).

Critical pedagogy promotes self-reflection and tolerance. Moral issues in literature allow students to generate contrasting perspectives and learn how they feel, as well as respond to the ideas presented (Bielby, 2003). Stories and language arts support the discussion of social justice and humane issues. “More education programs are reflecting and promoting a sociocultural perspective” and an “understanding of how students from diverse segments of society” experience the world (Nieto, 2009, p. 3).

### **Science.**

The second most popular strategy or method for including humane content was science education. Science is factual and lends itself to neutrality. The educators in the study described this neutrality as imperative to reduction of indoctrination. Nine educators indicated that science was a good place for humane education because the factual

representations of animals supported discussion and scientific theory. Another educator stated that science education allowed a teacher to introduce humane concepts without fear of bias or indoctrination.

### **Character education requirements.**

Participating educators from all grade levels supported the inclusion of humane education in the character education programs that are already part of traditional schooling programs. Fifteen of the participants' assignments in lesson five included descriptions of the character programs being implemented in schools, and educators shared ideas for building upon existing programs. Four educators noted that their schools did not require character education, but they did allow teachers to include it in their work. One elementary teacher indicated that her school requires character education, and she explained how she could weave humane themes into the lessons provided by the counselor. Another teacher stated that she builds character education into the class rules or expectations. She asks students to be kind and compassionate while in her room.

Character education, like any of the prosocial frameworks, is best taught by modeling. The "most persuasive moral teaching we adults do is by example" (Coles, 1997, p. 31). Character and "social competence is linked to sympathy and empathy, and thereby prosocial behavior" (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura, & Zimbardo, 2000, p. 304). Correlational studies of prosocial characteristics in children and behaviors or actions of teachers have found that students tend to display more prosocial behaviors when teachers and students have less opposition in the classroom and when students feel secure in the classroom (Copeland-Mitchell, Denham, & DeMulder, 1997; Howes, 2000; Kienbaum, 2001).

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study was limited in that it only included data from 25 educators. Still, there was adequate power to run the paired-samples *t* tests. During the course, educators were able to share a variety of experiences for eight weeks in the discussion forums. If the group had been much larger, some students may have felt overwhelmed by the discussion posts or felt lost in the virtual setting. Additionally, in order to have a course that is manageable for the instructor and that allows for student-to-student interaction, the number of participants for one course was limited to 30 students. A maximum of two classes would have been run if there had been interest and enough qualified participants.

Participation in the study was limited to credentialed educators because credentialed educators have more time with students and can model behaviors over a longer time. Humane education programs are often directed by informal educators. Informal educators were excluded because they often have limited contact with students and offer short-term or one-time programs. The study excluded them, as well as community leaders who may have been interested in infusing humane concepts into youth outreach programs. A larger study including both credentialed and non-credentialed (or informal) educators would have provided data about how adults in protective roles impact humane growth in students.

The online setting did limit available participants to those who had a computer, as well as internet access. Educators who did not have access to the needed technology were unable to participate. The technology requirement also meant that some educators needed to participate before or after school because they had limited access to a computer during their work hours.



The study was limited in that participating educators were predisposed to value humane education. If participants were not self-selected, they may not have reacted so positively to the course. Further testing must be done to determine the reaction of individuals who are not interested in humane education.

The professional development course was limited because it was an asynchronous training. The teachers built a community of learners; however, they had no contact other than that in the weekly discussions.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

This study was conducted to understand ways in which an online professional development course impacted the way educators conceptualized, understood, and perceived humane education, as well as their intent to include humane education in their personal practice and their knowledge of strategies for integrating humane education concepts into their classroom work before and after a humane education intervention course. In this section, recommendations for practice are suggested to teachers for increasing humane education offered in classrooms and in student activities. Recommendations are also given for professional developers.

### **Recommendations to Teachers for Including Activities Related to Humane Education**

Teachers are expected to teach lessons that are directly related to the academic standards. During standards-based lesson planning, the present study showed that with training, educators can include more modeling of humane and empathetic behaviors. Through exposure to modeling, a student will be more likely to exhibit similar actions (Bandura, 2002; Yarrow, Scott, & Waxler, 1973). Schools and districts can support humane

pedagogy by providing and supporting humane education professional development opportunities.

Educators who integrate humane content into the curriculum work toward building critical thinking and moral development. It is recommended that credentialed educators learn how to infuse humane education into the curriculum. Active teaching and interaction between the student and educator allows the teacher to support learners in developing critical thinking (Kienbaum, 2001). Educators who include critical thinking and humane education strategies will help students to develop the ability to see the perspective of another. These questioning techniques can assist students in developing their own moral ideas (Paulson & Faust, n.d.). Students will benefit from participating in lessons that allow them to become skilled in using critical thinking and humane concepts (Bierhoff, 2002; Paul, 1988).

Educators can share strategies to include humane education content and to build critical thinking in students in lessons designed to incorporate humane and prosocial frameworks such as animal welfare education, environmental education, and service learning. It is recommended that teachers demonstrate critical thinking and reduce personal bias in lessons by modeling humane behaviors and by recognizing their own beliefs. By examining individual values, educators are able to understand why they have these beliefs and respect those of their students. By including humane education, teachers can help students to connect to real world issues and become involved citizens.

Teachers can increase their understanding of humane education through professional development, including online courses. As teachers learn strategies, they will become adept at infusing humane education into standards-based programs. Professional development

provided in-person or online helps educators to become familiar with a holistic model or one that engages academic and emotional intelligence.

### **Recommendations for Professional Developers**

Outcomes of this study point to educator professional development as a means to strengthen educator understanding and knowledge of strategies to support inclusion of humane education in schools. Every educator, every teacher, decides what is worthwhile to include in his or her classroom, and professional development mobilizes educators to bring new and relevant material into the classroom. Through professional development, educators will lead reform and introduce humane education content into traditional pedagogy.

Educational institutions must support the growth and development of teachers who can be leaders of educational reform (Blase & Blase, 2004; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Elmore, 2006; Lieberman and Miller, 2005). Research has shown that in order for educators to teach in a way that helps students to build humane or prosocial traits into their personal practice, teachers themselves must understand and display the qualities they wish to see in their students, and independent learning must be a quality that teachers themselves display (Ball, 1990; Vrasidas & Zembylas, 2004).

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Those “who are affected by the consequences of asking, including students who have the greatest vested interest . . . are often left out of the process” (Schubert, 2009, p. 24).

Keeping this in mind, I recommend that further research be done in which teachers are provided with humane-themed professional development. In particular, future research could be done over a period of at least six months to allow educators to form a community of like-minded practitioners. Long-term educator acceptance of new strategies is supported through

learning communities where new practices or strategies are shared and student development is tracked (Guskey, 2002). Professional development could be offered through online or on-site models.

Future humane education research studies might benefit from program designs that delineate interventions specifically for subject-specific educators or elementary or secondary educators. This would allow these specific populations to focus on concerns relevant to their students or academic content. Teacher reaction to humane topics or frameworks could then be compared.

### **Conclusion**

Educators have maintained that preparing students to be active and civic adults requires more than academic content (Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, & Damon, 2001); these concepts include “value education, moral development, critical thinking and critical pedagogy” (Veugelers, 2000, p. 38). Teachers who infuse concepts of prosocial teaching models (including humane education) into their classroom practices and culture have reported fewer conduct problems and aggressive behavior (Durlak, et al., 2011). The amount of time that students spend with classroom teachers presents the educational system with a chance to incorporate humane education and moral development into educational practices. Many educators wish to include humane education in their personal pedagogical practice, yet have received little to no training or support. Knowledge of humane education is a valuable component in the ecological methodology, and one that an educator can use to facilitate students’ academic learning and help children to develop morally and socially (Pass & Willingham, 2009).

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to assess the effectiveness of an eight-week online professional development course and to learn how educators gain a better understanding of humane education and how it can be woven into pedagogical practice. Participants in this study were credentialed teachers from the United States, British Columbia, and Vietnam. The study examined teacher understanding and conceptions of humane education and the intent of credentialed educators to incorporate humane education strategies in the classroom, both before and after an eight-week professional development intervention. Educators participated in intervention discussion forums and activities on the Blackboard ANGEL Learn platform and provided evidence of the degree of growth in comprehension of skills related to humane education and their intent to incorporate humane education strategies into their classroom work.

Results indicate that after the eight-week professional development intervention, participants had a greater understanding of humane education and an increased intent to include humane concepts in their practice, as well as increased knowledge of strategies for integrating humane concepts into their professional work. While results show that the educators did not have a complete understanding of each tenet of humane education at the beginning of the study, the humane themes resonated with their desire to engage students and teach prosocial behaviors. Themes that emerged concerning humane education topics of interest were critical thinking and questioning strategies, animal welfare education, and the connection between animal and interpersonal violence. Factors reported as impediments were lack of support from districts and schools for inclusion of humane education, and lack of strategies in teacher repertoires to allow for them to practice humane pedagogy in the standards-based classroom. A recommendation to overcome the impediments would be for

educators to receive humane education professional development that aligns with reform models and standards-based education in order to increase their knowledge of strategies and to infuse humane education into traditional pedagogy.

It is promising to see the ways in which humane education can be facilitated in the traditional classroom. The positive and prosocial components of humane education can act to reduce hatred, injustice, and intolerance, as well as acts of cruelty to human and non-human animals. Educators can increase the humane and prosocial frameworks present in schools by supporting teacher professional development and supporting provision for humane education in the cognitive and affective domains of learning.

*We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals.* - Immanuel Kant