



John Boyle, Chair  
Fylde Coast Academy Trust

Via e-mail: [esther.mellor@fcad.org.uk](mailto:esther.mellor@fcad.org.uk)

1 November 2017

Dear Mr Boyle,

I am writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) Foundation and our more than 1.2 million members and supporters after learning about plans for children across the Fylde coast to dissect pigs.<sup>1</sup> As a former teacher, I would like to share some information about the benefits of replacing animal dissection with humane, non-animal teaching methods and urge you to cancel the dissection event planned for 7 November. I also wish to share PETA's new informative resource for teachers that is fully referenced and aligned with the biology curriculum: "[Humane Alternatives to Animal Dissection: A Practical Guide to Cutting Out Dissection](#)". The guide provides ethical alternatives to both live-animal physiology experiments and dissection of animals and their organs.

### Benefits of Non-Animal Teaching Methods

Nearly every comparative study published has found that students who are taught both basic and advanced biological concepts using non-animal methods – such as computer software and clay models – learn as well as or better than their peers who dissect animals.<sup>2,3,4</sup> Studies also show that students taught via humane methods learn faster and are more confident in the material.<sup>5</sup> Unlike crudely cutting apart organs from pigs, freely available interactive tutorials and narrated videos designed for schools, such as "Let's dissect",<sup>6</sup> teach students how the living body looks and works and allow them to repeat material until they are proficient and confident.

Using simulation tools also saves substantial instructional time and money because there is virtually no set-up time, no need to monitor student misbehaviour with animals, no requirement for dangerous tools or chemicals, no concern about allergies and health hazards, no messy clean-up, and no need to keep purchasing animal cadavers and dissection supplies. Many programs need only be purchased once and may then be used forever without any additional licensing fees, and several are available free of charge online.

### Ethical Considerations

We must consider the value of care and compassion in education. All animals obtained for the purpose of dissection – whether from biological supply houses, laboratories, pet shops, aquatic centres, abattoirs, or the wild – suffered as a result. Consequently, the use of a mobile animal-dissection laboratory at Blackpool Aspire Academy constitutes a lack of empathy for other living beings. Such disregard for the value of animals' lives sends students a dangerous message: that life is disposable and that animals' suffering is secondary to humans' own needs and interests.

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- PETA Netherlands

## Student Perspectives

Additionally, a growing majority of students now oppose experiments on animals and are too upset and distracted to learn when forced to dissect.<sup>7,8,9,10</sup> The vast majority of nearly 1,500 students questioned in England believe they should have the choice to opt out of dissecting animals in class.<sup>11</sup> If students are required to participate or even observe their peers participate in behaviour that they deem unethical, they may be psychologically traumatised, which can compromise both their short- and long-term education and cause them to lose interest in science.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, when they are forced to accept animal experiments as part of their education, they may suppress their feelings of empathy.<sup>13</sup> Research has shown that there is a relationship between exposure to cruelty to animals in childhood and aggression towards other humans in later life.<sup>14,15</sup>

## Careers in Biosciences

Dissecting animals is not a core skill deemed necessary for pursuing a career in human or veterinary medicine. No animals are dissected for training purposes within UK medical schools, and many of the leading veterinary schools opt for a policy of dissecting only those animals who have died of natural causes or been euthanised on veterinary grounds. If medical students can be trained in anatomy, surgery, physiology, and pharmacology without the use of animals, Fylde Coast Academy Trust students certainly can as well.

I urge you to replace animal dissection with one of the many effective, non-animal teaching methods available and to share PETA's "[Humane Alternatives to Animal Dissection: A Practical Guide to Cutting Out Dissection](#)" with colleagues and teachers delivering the science curricula at Fylde Coast Academy Trust academies.

If you would like free hard copies of the guide or wish to discuss this matter further, you can reach me at [JuliaB@peta.org.uk](mailto:JuliaB@peta.org.uk). Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



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<sup>1</sup>Pupils to dissect pigs when school hall is turned into autopsy lab. *The Gazette*. 26 October 2017.

<http://www.blackpoolgazette.co.uk/news/health/pupils-to-dissect-pigs-when-school-hall-is-turned-into-autopsy-lab-1-8825696>. Accessed 31 October 2017.

<sup>2</sup>Patronek GJ, Rauch A. Systematic review of comparative studies examining alternatives to the harmful use of animals in biomedical education. *J Am Vet Med Assoc*. 2007;230(1):37-43.

<sup>3</sup>Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. Dissection alternatives.

<http://www.pcrm.org/research/animaltestalt/animaltesting/dissection-alternatives>. Accessed 1 November 2017.

<sup>4</sup>Knight A. The effectiveness of humane teaching methods in veterinary education. *ALTEX*. 2007;24(2):91-109.

<sup>5</sup>DeHoff ME, Clark KL, Meganathan K. Learning outcomes and student-perceived value of clay modeling and cat dissection in undergraduate human anatomy and physiology. *Adv Physiol Educ*. 2011;35(1):68-75.

<sup>6</sup>University of Bristol Centre for Applied Anatomy. Let's dissect. <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/anatomy/elearn/lets-dissect/>. Accessed 1 November 2017.

<sup>7</sup>Solot D, Arluke A. Learning the scientist's role: Animal dissection in middle school. *J Contemp Ethnogr*. 1997;26(1):28-54.

<sup>8</sup>Stanisstreet M, Spofforth N, Williams T. Attitudes of undergraduate students to the uses of animals. *Stud High Educ*. 1993;18(2):177-196.

<sup>9</sup>Goodman JR, Borch CA. *Trends in Americans' Attitudes Toward Animal Testing: 2001-2013*. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Chicago, February 2014.

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- <sup>10</sup>Oakley J. Dissection and choice in the science classroom: student experiences, teacher responses, and a critical analysis of the right to refuse. *J Teach Lear*. 2012;8(2):15-29.
- <sup>11</sup>Murray I, Reiss M. The student review of the science curriculum. *Sch Sci Rev*. 2005;87(318):83-93.
- <sup>12</sup>Capaldo T. The psychological effects on students of using animals in ways that they see as ethically, morally or religiously wrong. *Altern Lab Anim*. 2004;32(Supp 1B):525-531.
- <sup>13</sup> Philips T. Taking animal cruelty out of education. 28 February 2012. <https://www.globalanimal.org/2012/02/28/taking-animal-cruelty-out-of-education/>. Accessed 31 October 2017.
- <sup>14</sup>Overton JC, Hensley C, Tallichet SE. Examining the relationship between childhood animal cruelty motives and recurrent adult violent crimes toward humans. *J Interpers Violence*. 2012;27(5):899-915.
- <sup>15</sup>Arluke A, Levin J, Luke C, Ascione F. The relationship of animal abuse to violence and other forms of antisocial behavior. *J Interpers Violence*. 1999;14(9):963-975.