

January 12, 2026

Shelly Whitten
Superintendent
Battle Ground Public Schools

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Superintendent Whitten:

I'm writing from [TeachKind](#), which works with thousands of schools nationwide to integrate compassion for animals into the learning experience. We've been following the [news](#) that a Battle Ground High School senior was [arrested and charged](#) with multiple counts of cruelty to animals for allegedly shooting squirrels with blow darts in Lewisville Regional Park in late 2025. Several wounded squirrels were apparently discovered at the park: one attempting to eat with a dart penetrating their jaw, another with a dart embedded in their neck, and a third confined with a dart lodged between their back and shoulder blades. According to police, the teen apparently admitted to shooting the squirrels with blow darts as well as darting animals at other locations, an issue that has reportedly [terrorized Clark County for over a year](#). Notably, he allegedly told investigators that he "enjoys killing small animals," and officials are reportedly calling this case "particularly cruel and deliberate."

There's no doubt that your community is [grappling with the news](#), and students have likely heard the reports as well. TeachKind is dedicated to providing free resources to help them process such information and assist leaders like you in preventing future hostility and aggression.

It's important to note that Battle Ground is far from alone, as [youth violence continues to surge](#) throughout the U.S. We've had dialogues with staff from districts nationwide about similar situations and can share how others have responded to such events by using them as opportunities for growth. To that end, we urge you to equip your staff members with humane education tools to foster prosocial behavior and help them be proactive against potential acts of harm. Because, as mental health and law-enforcement experts know well, [cruelty to animals](#) and **violence against humans are inextricably linked**. So much so that it's even included in Sandy Hook Promise's list of "[10 Critical Warning Signs of Violence](#)." With your [commitment](#) to creating a safe and caring learning environment for your students in mind, we urge you and your staff to take this critical warning sign seriously—**many lives could depend on it**.

Thankfully, this link works both ways: A [study](#) on the connection between violence against animals and violence against humans concluded, "Teaching children to be more humane, compassionate, and respectful towards living beings can help reduce all types of violence." Our services are designed to enhance SEL initiatives by incorporating other animals and are easily integrated into existing programming. Research indicates that incorporating humane education can [help students academically](#),



and doing so would help you comply with Washington's [law](#) requiring all teachers to “[s]tress the importance of...kindness to all living creatures”.

To support this meaningful work, **we're sending you a selection of our free resources, including [Empathy Now](#), our step-by-step guide for schools to address and prevent youth violence against animals.** This tool was developed with trauma-informed principles at its core as a direct response to frequent similar instances that have occurred nationwide. We're also sending a copy of our [Elementary](#) and [Secondary](#) school programs, which are designed to encourage empathy and compassion. Additionally, we're including assorted [books](#) about kindness to animals, and a set of our [Empathy for All posters](#) that can be displayed throughout your schools.

We would be happy to send copies for students and staff district-wide and would love to meet to discuss how we can best support your community.

On behalf of PETA and our many members and supporters in Washington, thank you for considering this important matter. I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Sincerely,

Julie Everett
Senior Writer and Engagement Coordinator
[TeachKind](#) | PETA's Humane Education Division

Cc: Lynnell Tsugawa-Murray, Assistant Superintendent ([REDACTED])

