



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

February 21, 2018

The Honorable Mike Morath
Commissioner
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701-1494

Commissioner Morath:

All of Texas grieves the tragedy that occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School last week. As Governor, I take seriously the safety of all Texas residents, and as an American, I mourn the loss of 17 Floridians in a cruel and senseless act of violence. State and national leaders must work towards solutions that reduce, and eventually eliminate, such heinous crimes. Education leaders, including you, must take immediate action to ensure that our school children are safe in Texas schools. To help prevent tragedies like the Parkland shooting from happening in our state, I ask that you take the following steps:

1. Catalog and share all available information from the Texas School Safety Center on school safety programs and distribute this information to all school districts, charter schools and education service centers across the state. To the extent possible, distribute this information to private schools and childcare providers as well. The goal is to ensure that all schools have access to the best, most up to date information about strategies to protect schools and students from attacks like the one in Parkland.
2. Ensure that all Texas public schools have completed their statutorily required school safety audits and have submitted confirmation of these audits to the Texas School Safety Center. Also, ensure that all districts have a multi-hazard emergency operations plan in place and ensure that schools have conducted safety and security audits on all facilities, both instructional and non-instructional.
3. Publish on the Texas Education Agency website and via Agency press release a list of any school districts that have not completed the statutory requirements referenced in point two above within 45 days.

4. Work with the Texas School Safety Center, the Texas Department of Public Safety and my office to draft recommendations to the Texas Legislature on changes to the school safety architecture of our state. This could include:
 - a. increased quality controls on school safety audits and emergency operations plans, including a mechanism for TEA intervention when audits or plans are deemed inadequate;
 - b. requiring charter schools to be subject to the same school safety requirements of school districts;
 - c. improvements to the school safety committee, including requiring certain local and school officials to participate on the committee or requiring the committee to submit findings to the school board;
 - d. required reporting procedures that school districts must follow when terroristic or other threats are received, including provisions for parental notification of certain threats; and
 - e. provisions for increasing the safety of portable buildings and school sporting events.

Our first duty as a government is to protect our citizens from harm. These first steps must be taken to keep our students and communities safe, with the understanding that more will be expected in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Abbott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Greg Abbott
Governor

GA:jck