



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

January 11, 2018

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

Dear Commissioner Morath:

I have read with deep concern the recent monitoring letter sent to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) from the U.S. Department of Education (DOE). The past dereliction of duty on the part of many school districts to serve our students and the failure of TEA to hold districts accountable are worthy of criticism. At the state and local level, the practices that led to the DOE monitoring letter will end.

Going back to 2004, the letter points to multiple failures by local school districts to adequately address the needs of our most vulnerable students. Of particular concern were local compliance failures stemming from the long-standing 8.5 percent representation policy. Such failures are not acceptable, and TEA must take steps now to significantly increase the oversight provided to ensure our special education students are receiving the services they deserve.

Thankfully, actions taken by you and our legislature put an end to that representation policy last year. But while the problems identified in the report started long before your arrival at TEA, our parents and students demand significant actions be taken now to improve special education in Texas.

Federal officials have provided no definitive timeline for action by TEA, but parents and students across our state cannot continue waiting for change. I am directing you to take immediate steps to prepare an initial corrective action plan draft *within the next seven days*.

Because no plan crafted solely by the agency could possibly serve the needs of all students around the state, the draft should be shared with representatives of parent groups, special education advocacy groups, as well as administrators and educators throughout the state. There must be full and meaningful input before the final plan is put into action.

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I also ask that you develop potential legislative recommendations for my review that can help ensure local school districts are in compliance with all federal and state laws regarding special education.

Throughout your tenure, you have advised me of changes taking place at TEA to strengthen and better support special education in Texas. Through your efforts, much has already been done. However, it is obvious that more can be done, and more must be done.

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