

Joint Letter on Campus Security in Round Rock ISD

April 19, 2018

The Round Rock Independent School District, Williamson County Sheriff's Office, and Round Rock Police Department are committed to keeping our students safe and campuses secure.

While Round Rock ISD's goal is to provide a world-class education and prepare students for a successful future, it is imperative to keep children free from harm while in the District's care. Without feeling safe, our children cannot thrive.

For many years, the District has partnered with the Round Rock Police Department and Williamson County Sheriff's Office to provide School Resource Officers to protect students and staff on the District's 55 campuses. This partnership has been an outstanding arrangement — School Resource Officers not only safeguard our campuses, they educate and mentor students, and create positive interactions with law enforcement during a child's formative years.

Williamson County Sheriff's Office and Round Rock Police Department leadership agree that Round Rock ISD needs assurance moving forward that resources will be available to provide the level of coverage our children deserve. This includes full-time officers at each secondary school, as well as officers who can provide ongoing security oversight at elementary campuses.

The nature of existing arrangements, however, creates gaps in coverage. For example, Pearson Ranch Middle School is currently staffed by an officer from Austin Community College and the full-time position at Grisham Middle School is now vacant, though the Williamson County Sheriff's Office is seeking candidates to fill it.

This patchwork approach is a concern. Leaders of the Round Rock Police Department, the Williamson County Sheriff's Office, and the School District agree the most prudent step is for Round Rock ISD to form its own police department, as most large school districts (and many small districts) in Texas have done. This approach will allow the District direct oversight over recruitment and staffing with a prime focus on school safety. It should be noted the District already pays salary costs during the school year for the police officers and sheriff's deputies who

staff the schools, though the shift will require investment for items such as equipment and vehicles.

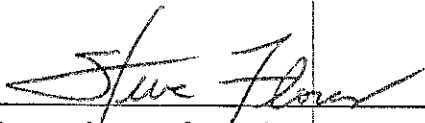
School-based law enforcement began in the 1950s in the United States, and is especially prevalent in Texas, where public school enrollment tops five million and is growing at a significantly faster rate than the rest of the nation. In 2015, the Texas Legislature passed a law mandating officers serving in districts with at least 30,000 students to require specialized education and training to work in schools. The training covers topics such as de-escalation techniques, mental and behavioral health needs, mental health crisis intervention, child and adolescent development and psychology, positive behavioral supports, conflict resolution techniques, and restorative justice.

Focusing on these types of issues, as well as crisis scenarios unique to a school setting, will provide sophisticated, comprehensive security at the schools in our community.

Both the Round Rock Police Department and the Williamson County Sheriff's Office stand ready to provide protection through the transition period and to assist and support the District as it builds its department, if the Board of Trustees so chooses. It is paramount all work together to develop a plan ensuring consistent protection for those on Round Rock ISD campuses – all parties are committed to the success of this program. The partnership with local law enforcement agencies is not going away; it is evolving.

As Round Rock ISD's Board of Trustees continues to consider next steps, we pledge to keep the community updated. As always, our ultimate goal is to ensure the best possible protection for everyone in our community. We firmly believe the creation of the Round Rock Independent School District Police Department will help best accomplish that goal.

Respectfully,



Superintendent Steve Flores, Ph.D.

Round Rock Independent School District



Chief Allen Banks

Round Rock Police Department



Sheriff Robert Chody

Williamson County Sheriff's Office