As you are aware, we lost 17 Florida students and educators in the tragic shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Broward County. This is an unbelievably difficult time for their community, the State of Florida and our nation as a whole, and I, along with many Florida Department of Education staff, have been in touch with leaders and educators in Broward County Schools.

At the district’s request, we have deployed a student services team that specializes in crisis management to offer support in Broward County for as long as it is needed. We understand that their needs will evolve as the community continues to grieve and begins the lengthy process of healing, and we remain committed to providing any assistance Broward County Schools needs in the coming weeks and months.

We are not stopping there. We are also taking action to ensure every student, educator and visitor is safe in our state’s schools.

Following the shooting, Governor Scott called for meetings with state and local leaders to discuss ways to keep Florida students safe. I was proud to lead an education workshop last Tuesday that brought together U.S. Department of Education staff, district superintendents, teachers, school counselors, parents and other stakeholders. I am grateful to these individuals for taking the time to share their input and for all that they do to benefit their schools and communities. If you were unable to watch this workshop live, it has been archived on the Florida Channel’s website: Part 1 and Part 2.

That evening, Governor Scott hosted a roundtable with leaders from each of the day’s workshops, and the productive conversation continued. We also created an online forum for all Floridians to share their thoughts on school safety improvements and updating school security protocols and emergency plans.

Using the input he has received, on Friday, Governor Scott announced a major action plan, on which he will working aggressively with the Florida Legislature over the next two weeks.

I also want to share that I had the opportunity last week to meet with Broward County students who traveled to the Florida State Capitol to ask questions of their local and statewide leaders and to share their thoughts and concerns. Like each of you, students are the reason I entered the teaching profession, and they are on the forefront of my mind every single day. I appreciated their taking the time to share the impact of these recent tragic events from the students’ perspective, and I assured them that we hear them and that we are working at the local, state and national levels to prevent another devastating, senseless act like this from ever happening again.
In your role as a teacher, you bring valuable insight, and we hope you will share your thoughts through the online forum.

As always, we appreciate your contributions to Florida’s students.

Sincerely,
Commissioner Pam Stewart
River Ridge High School’s New Teacher Academy, led by 2016 Pasco Teacher of the Year Beth Hess, began their
journey across Florida on Tuesday, February 20th, to #InspireTheDesireToTeach. Fifty-one of the academy’s students visited four universities, the Florida Department of Education and State Capitol. During their tour, students engaged in panel discussions with University Deans and Professors, education major students, and also shared their experiences as members of the RRHS New Teacher Academy.

The New Teacher Academy students at RRHS learn about the teaching profession while getting hands-on experience. Students apply their learning from courses like Introduction to the Teaching Profession and resources such as Teach Like a Champion and Mindset to the work they engage in with students at Hudson Elementary School in Pasco County. Throughout the four-year program, students obtain as much as 250 hours of practice in the field.

To learn more about the New Teacher Academy, follow the academy, @rrhsnta, and Beth Hess, @bethhess12, on social media.

TWEET OF THE WEEK

Gov. Scott Convenes Florida Leaders to Work on Solutions to Keep Florida Students Safe: bit.ly/2HthTST

Governor Scott said, "I have spent the last week in Parkland talking to members of the community, students and families of the victims who are suffering following this horrific shooting. While there are only three weeks left of the legislative session, we must make changes to keep students safe. A tragedy like what occurred in Broward County must never happen again and swift action is needed now. I am bringing local and state leaders together to find solutions on how to prevent violence in our schools and keep guns out of the hands of mentally ill individuals. This is an urgent matter that we must address quickly." 

The education workshop held on February 20, 2018 included a Broward County student, parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, superintendents, among other Floridians. To see a full list of participants, click HERE. If you were unable to watch this workshop live, it has been archived on the Florida Channel’s website: Part 1 and Part 2.