87R77 JES-D

By:  Thierry H.B. No. 204

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to requiring school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to provide a landline telephone or panic button in every classroom.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Sections 37.108(a) and (f), Education Code, are amended to read as follows:

(a)  Each school district or public junior college district shall adopt and implement a multihazard emergency operations plan for use in the district's facilities.  The plan must address prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery as defined by the Texas School Safety Center in conjunction with the governor's office of homeland security and the commissioner of education or commissioner of higher education, as applicable.  The plan must provide for:

(1)  training in responding to an emergency for district employees, including substitute teachers;

(2)  measures to ensure district employees, including substitute teachers, have classroom access to:

(A)  a landline telephone or panic button, if the plan applies to a school district, allowing for immediate contact with district emergency services or emergency services agencies, law enforcement agencies, health departments, and fire departments; or

(B)  a telephone, including a cellular telephone, or another electronic communication device, if the plan applies to a junior college district, allowing for immediate contact with district emergency services or emergency services agencies, law enforcement agencies, health departments, and fire departments;

(3)  measures to ensure district communications technology and infrastructure are adequate to allow for communication during an emergency;

(4)  if the plan applies to a school district, mandatory school drills and exercises, including drills required under Section 37.114, to prepare district students and employees for responding to an emergency;

(5)  measures to ensure coordination with the Department of State Health Services and local emergency management agencies, law enforcement, health departments, and fire departments in the event of an emergency; and

(6)  the implementation of a safety and security audit as required by Subsection (b).

(f)  A school district shall include in its multihazard emergency operations plan:

(1)  a chain of command that designates the individual responsible for making final decisions during a disaster or emergency situation and identifies other individuals responsible for making those decisions if the designated person is unavailable;

(2)  provisions that address physical and psychological safety for responding to a natural disaster, active shooter, and any other dangerous scenario identified for purposes of this section by the agency or the Texas School Safety Center;

(3)  provisions for ensuring the safety of students in portable buildings;

(4)  provisions for ensuring that students and district personnel with disabilities are provided equal access to safety during a disaster or emergency situation;

(5)  provisions for providing immediate notification to parents, guardians, and other persons standing in parental relation in circumstances involving a significant threat to the health or safety of students, including identification of the individual with responsibility for overseeing the notification;

(6)  provisions for supporting the psychological safety of students, district personnel, and the community during the response and recovery phase following a disaster or emergency situation that:

(A)  are aligned with best practice-based programs and research-based practices recommended under Section 38.351 [~~161.325, Health and Safety Code~~];

(B)  include strategies for ensuring any required professional development training for suicide prevention and grief-informed and trauma-informed care is provided to appropriate school personnel;

(C)  include training on integrating psychological safety and suicide prevention strategies into the district's plan, such as psychological first aid for schools training, from an approved list of recommended training established by the commissioner and Texas School Safety Center for:

(i)  members of the district's school safety and security committee under Section 37.109;

(ii)  district school counselors and mental health professionals; and

(iii)  educators and other district personnel as determined by the district;

(D)  include strategies and procedures for integrating and supporting physical and psychological safety that align with the provisions described by Subdivision (2); and

(E)  implement trauma-informed policies;

(7)  a policy for providing a substitute teacher access to school campus buildings and materials necessary for the substitute teacher to carry out the duties of a district employee during an emergency or a mandatory emergency drill; [~~and~~]

(8)  the name of each individual on the district's school safety and security committee established under Section 37.109 and the date of each committee meeting during the preceding year; and

(9)  certification that the district is in compliance with Section 37.116, which requires each classroom in the district to be equipped with a landline telephone or panic button.

SECTION 2.  Subchapter D, Chapter 37, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 37.116 to read as follows:

Sec. 37.116.  REQUIRED CLASSROOM LANDLINE TELEPHONE OR PANIC BUTTON. Each school district and open-enrollment charter school shall provide each classroom in the district or school with a landline telephone or panic button that allows for immediate contact with district emergency services or emergency services agencies, law enforcement agencies, health departments, and fire departments.

SECTION 3.  This Act applies beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

SECTION 4.  This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2021.