



STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
9th FLOOR, ANDREW JOHNSON TOWER
710 JAMES ROBERTSON PARKWAY
NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0375

BILL HASLAM
GOVERNOR

CANDICE MCQUEEN
COMMISSIONER

March 12, 2015

Via Electronic Mail

Scott Benson, Director of Schools
Lebanon Special School District
701 Coles Ferry Pike
Lebanon, TN 37087

scott.benson@lssd.org

Dear Mr. Benson:

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3004(a) (6), in the event of a natural disaster or serious outbreaks of illness affecting or endangering students or staff, the commissioner of education may waive the requirement for school district calendars to include one hundred eighty (180) days of classroom instruction for the current school year.

On February 21, Governor Haslam declared a Level 2 State of Emergency – Major Disaster – due to the extreme weather conditions throughout the state. This State of Emergency extended through March 2, representing six school days. Because of the unique and rare circumstances of our recent weather and the impact on school districts throughout the state, and because of the Level 2 State of Emergency declaration, the department is accepting requests to waive a maximum number of three instructional days during the period of February 21-March 2, 2015.

You have submitted a request to waive an instructional day for Lebanon Special School District. Pursuant to my above referenced authority, I hereby grant a waiver to Lebanon Special School District of one instructional day during the period of February 21-March 2, 2015. Please revise the calendar in EIS to indicate the one day that is waived. Thank you for continuing to notify the Department of revisions to your school calendar.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Candice McQueen".

Dr. Candice McQueen



March 11, 2015

Commissioner McQueen
Tennessee Department of Education
710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Commissioner McQueen:

Based upon circumstances described in T.C.A 49-6-3004 (e)(1), specifically the weather related 'natural disaster' circumstances which prompted the governor to declare a Level 2 State of Emergency, the Lebanon Special School District would like to request a waiver of one (1) day from the mandated 180 days for the 2014-15 school year.

LSSD exceeds the six and one-half (6 ½) hours of legally mandated instructional time by one-half hour each day to accumulate a total of 13 days for use as instructional or inclement weather time.

For the benefit to students and to support teachers, LSSD requested and was granted the use of five (5) of the 13 days for stockpile/professional development for the 2014-15 academic year. Four (4) of the professional development days have already been utilized to integrate reading into all content areas and teach reading strategies (September 12, 2014), integrate writing into all content areas and teach writing effectively (November 25, 2014), literacy across the curriculum and differentiated instruction (January 2, 2015) and using PLCs and RTI² to support students with a focus on learning and tracking skill by skill for each student (February 9, 2015). The last half of each professional development day is designated for professional learning communities (PLC) to analyze student benchmark results and appropriate individual student interventions/enrichment based upon the data. The last professional development day is scheduled on April 6, 2015, and will focus on preparing students for state mandated testing (for complete agendas, please see attached documents).

LSSD designated eight (8) of the accumulated 13 days for inclement weather for the 2014-15 academic year. Due to extreme weather conditions this winter and for the safety of our students, the district has had to use nine (9) days for inclement weather.



Other than being granted the waiver, LSSD has two options for making-up the 180th day. The first option is to use the last stockpile day as a student instructional day. Preparing our teachers with the necessary assistance to teach students test taking strategies, how to de-stress, motivational skills and how to prepare emotionally for high stakes TCAP testing is essential for our students' academic success. The last half of this day will be the final PLC collaboration time for our administration and faculty to discuss student benchmark data and design a program for student interventions/enrichment pertinent to academic achievement. Subsequently, using this professional development day as an instructional make-up day would negatively impact our students.

Option one would only satisfy the additional student instructional day but will create an issue for teacher schedules. The district will have to add a stockpile day after the Memorial Day holiday for faculty to complete the requirements of their 200 day contract. This option is problematic for teachers in terms of attendance since vacations have been prearranged based upon the approved calendar.

The second option is for LSSD to extend the school year by one (1) instructional day. Currently, the 2014-15 school year is scheduled to end on May 23, the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend. Adding one (1) instructional day would mandate the students attend Tuesday, May 26. We have many parents/guardians and staff that schedule vacations based upon the approved calendar and consequently, attendance after May 23, 2015, would be problematic.

As you can understand, LSSD has limited options to include the 180th day in its current calendar. Both options described above would negatively impact students, either by not providing support to aide students or by student absenteeism. Furthermore, since LSSD is currently on Spring Break, there is not a possibility to utilize one of those designated days. For these reasons, LSSD respectfully requests one (1) day be waived from our 180 mandated school days.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Benson", written over a horizontal line.

Scott Benson
Director of Schools

Paul Rainwater

From: Commissioner McQueen
Sent: Thursday, March 12, 2015 10:56 AM
To: Paul Rainwater; Christy Ballard
Subject: FW: Request for wavier for LSSD
Attachments: ATT00004.htm; DOC-13.pdf; Professional Dev Days and Agendas.pdf; ATT00005.htm; Calendar Approval 2014-15.pdf; ATT00006.htm

From: Scott Benson [<mailto:scott.benson@lssd.org>]
Sent: Thursday, March 12, 2015 10:36 AM
To: Commissioner McQueen
Cc: Paul Rainwater
Subject: Request for wavier for LSSD

***** This is an EXTERNAL email. Please exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email - OIR-Security. *****

Dear Commissioner McQueen,

Please see the below three attachments concerning the request for wavier for LSSD.

Thank you for your consideration,

*Scott Benson
Director of Schools
Lebanon Special School District*

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