



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 9, 2015

Via Electronic Mail

Tim Blankenship, Director of Schools
Monroe County Schools
205 Oak Grove Road
Madisonville, TN 37354

tim@monroe.k12.tn.us

Dear Mr. Blankenship:

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 instructional days for Monroe County Schools. Pursuant to my above referenced authority, I hereby grant a waiver to Monroe County Schools of three instructional days during the period of February 21-March 2, 2015. Please revise the calendar in EIS to indicate the three days that are waived. Thank you for continuing to notify the Department of revisions to your school calendar.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Candice McQueen".

Dr. Candice McQueen

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**Monroe County
Department of Education**

TIM BLANKENSHIP

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240 Martin Road
Tellico Plains, TN 37385
3rd District

JO T. CAGLE
127 Oak Street
Tellico Plains, TN 37385
3rd District

February 27, 2015

Dear Commissioner McQueen:

As Director of the Monroe County School System, I would like to request a waiver of three (3) instructional days. Monroe County has nine (9) stockpiled days built in to our calendar, and at this time, we have exceeded that by one (1).

At the end of January and beginning of February, our school system experienced a large outbreak of sickness. Flu and a particularly difficult stomach virus went through all of our schools and caused an excessive number of absences of both students and staff. We had over 10% of students absent in each of our 13 schools, and in one of our schools, the number was near 20%. Over 10% of our faculty and staff were also absent. At that point, we made the decision to close school for two days—February 5, 2015, and February 6, 2015—to allow these illnesses to hopefully run their courses and get everyone healthy and back in school.

On February 16, 2015, Monroe County was hit with an ice storm. Over 8700 residences lost power, and all of our county was covered in ice and snow. Temperatures were in the single digits and well below zero with windchill, and we made the decision to close in order to keep our students and staff safe. The temperatures did not rise above freezing and power was not restored to most residences until Friday, February 20, 2015. Therefore, we missed February 17 – February 20, 2015. This was four (4) more school days and brought us to six (6) total missed.

We returned to school on Monday, February 23, 2015, and then a snowstorm hit in the early morning hours of February 24, 2015. With that storm, Monroe County received another four (4) inches of snow. Temperatures remained below freezing, and on Wednesday, February 25, 2015, another snowstorm hit. That one brought an additional nine (9) inches. Due to the speed with which the storms hit, the fact that they were back to back, and the dangerous road conditions created by them, we had to close schools Tuesday – Friday, February 24 – 27, 2015. This was an additional four (4) days, bringing us to a total of 10 days used.

Monroe County is a large county, and it encompasses many different types of geographic areas. We hope to never go over our stockpiled days, but with the sickness, the storms, and the power outages, the safety of our staff and students had to come first.

Our calendar includes four (4) days to use to make up inclement weather days if we exceed our stockpiled days. Those four days are marked for Staff Development, unless they are used to make up days. Unfortunately, all four Staff Development days had already past when the last two storms hit. This will make it difficult on us to put in any other instructional days into our calendar.

We hope that spring will arrive quickly and be kind to Tennessee. However, this is also the time of year that we often experience flooding or tornadoes. We have only exceeded our days by one (1), but we would like to request the waiver of three (3) days. We hope to not use them at all.

We appreciate your understanding of the trials of Tennessee weather and the state of emergency in which it has put us. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Tim Blankenship

Paul Rainwater

From: gary@monroe.k12.tn.us
Sent: Thursday, March 05, 2015 5:05 AM
To: Paul Rainwater
Subject: Monroe County Schools Waiver
Attachments: Monroe .pdf

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

Let me know if you need anything else.

Gary Sharp
Director of Technology
Monroe County Schools
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