



BILL HASLAM
GOVERNOR

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

CANDICE MCQUEEN
COMMISSIONER

Via Electronic Mail and USPS

May 11, 2017

Dr. Mike Winstead, Director of Schools
Maryville City Schools
833 Lawrence Avenue
Maryville, TN 37803-4857
mike.winstead@maryville-schools.org

Re: Waiver for Average Class Size for K-12 Classes

Dear Dr. Winstead:

I am in receipt of your April 29, 2017 letter requesting a waiver of the class size average for all K-12 classes found in T.C.A. §49-1-104 for Maryville City Schools for the 2017-2018 school year.

The commissioner's waiver authority under T.C.A. §49-1-201(d) is limited by T.C.A. §49-1-104(a), which states that "neither the commissioner nor the state board of education shall grant waivers from the maximum class sizes established in this section."

With the understanding that none of the K-12 classes in all seven schools within the Maryville City School district will exceed 25, the maximum number of students per class specified in the above referenced law, your request for a waiver of the class size average is hereby granted for the 2017-2018 school year.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

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

Candice McQueen
Commissioner



Director of Schools

Mike Winstead, Ph.D.

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Assistant Director of Schools

Rick Wilson, Ed.S.

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April 29, 2017

Candice McQueen, Commissioner
Tennessee Department of Education
Andrew Johnson Tower
710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Dear Commissioner McQueen:

I am writing to request an extension of all class size average mandates in grades K-12. Maryville City has operated under the class size waiver the past three school years. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-1-201(d) allows LEAs to submit application for waiver to any State Board rule or statute that inhibits or hinders the LEA's ability to meet its goals (with exception to certain federal and state regulatory and statutory requirements). It is my understanding that I have to resubmit my request annually.

The Maryville City Schools Board of Education would like to apply for a waiver of all class size average mandates K-12 in all seven of our schools, while we continue to adhere to the **class size maximums only**. Our reason for this waiver request is directly related to Goal 1 of our Strategic Plan that calls for "all students to master core academic standards... while demonstrating a rigorous and relevant learning that goes beyond minimum requirements." In support of this major goal, our Administrative Leadership Team is most interested in employing strategies that can expand the reach of our most effective teachers. Increasing the class size of selected teachers will require flexibility with the class size average mandates.

Through our participation with the TDOE's Compensation Accelerated Planning Cohort, we have designed a strategic compensation plan to include components that:

- have a high impact on student outcomes;
- have broad support; and
- require minimal investment or are budget neutral.

The main focus of our plan enables our highest performing teachers to move into differentiated school roles and responsibilities that leverage their skills. Being able to assign these teachers additional students or more challenging groups of students will capitalize on this "reach effect": the increased percentage of students that excellent teachers reach in the course of their work as defined by the Public Impact research which was shared through the cohort.

At the elementary level, teachers assigned larger classes would be "compensated" by receiving an additional Teacher Assistant (currently we have one full time TA per class). In grades 4-12 this strategy will focus primarily on increasing the size of our advanced classes. Compensation may be in the form of additional pay for these teachers. The strategy would be used as needed based on enrollment and teacher expertise. The model would operate on an opt-in basis for the selected teachers.

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Maryville Board of Education

Bethany Pope, Chairman Candy Morgan, Vice-Chairman Christi Sayles, Secretary Bob Proffitt, Member Nick Black, Member

Based on existing research that ties teaching effectiveness to student outcomes, this strategy was rated as a "high return" action in the findings of the Harvard Strategic Data Project, *Learning about Teacher Effectiveness: The SDP Human Capital Diagnostic*, Center for Education Policy Research, 2011.

Waiving class size average mandates will give us the flexibility we need to maximize the impact of our most effective teachers by having them teach more students.

In his first term, Governor Haslam proposed legislation to modify the current class size requirements in light of the research which renders suspect to the impact of lower class sizes to higher student achievement. Unfortunately the legislation stalled. With the granting of this waiver, we would hope our approach could serve as a pilot to class size modifications and show evidence of a positive impact this strategy can have on student achievement. We fully believe it can help advance our system toward our longer reach to goals of student growth.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mike Winstead
Director of Schools