



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 11, 2015

Via Electronic Mail

Dr. Bruce Borchers, Director of Schools
Oak Ridge City Schools
304 New York Avenue
Oak Ridge, TN 37831

btborchers@ortn.edu

Dear Dr. Borchers:

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 Oak Ridge City Schools. Pursuant to my above referenced authority, I hereby grant a waiver to Oak Ridge City Schools 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



OAK RIDGE SCHOOLS
304 NEW YORK AVE.
P.O. BOX 6588
OAK RIDGE, TN 37831-6588

Telephone: 865.425.9001
Fax: 865.425.9070

Dr. Bruce T. Borchers
Superintendent
Email: btborchers@ortn.edu

March 10, 2015

Commissioner Candice McQueen
701 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Commissioner McQueen,

Oak Ridge Schools respectfully requests a waiver of one of our nine snow days which occurred during the Governor's declared State of Emergency this year. We have 183 student days built into our calendar, giving us three days which can be counted towards snow days. Additionally, Mr. Paul Rainwater verified on March 9 that we can count three stockpiled snow days. However, this winter we have required nine snow days, leaving us a gap of three days to make up. We are willing and able to make up two of the three days in the manner suggested below, but we would greatly appreciate a waiver of one of the three remaining days.

Historically, Oak Ridge's allotment of snow days has been in excess of what is needed; our relatively small geographic area allows our city's Public Works department to clear the streets fairly quickly in most instances. We cannot recall a time in which six days of possible snow day make-up would not have been sufficient.

If a snow day waiver is granted, we propose that students attend classes during the Wednesday afternoons of March 25, April 1, April 8, and April 15 in order to make-up two snow days. During those weeks, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday all have 7-hour instructional days. These proposed dates of full-length Wednesdays would allow us to recuperate important instructional time before the TCAP/EOC assessments.

We would, however, appreciate one snow day waiver as we count on our Wednesday afternoons for student activities through the 21st Century Grant, teacher professional development, and teacher meetings, such as preparation for TCAP administration. Continuing to use our Wednesday afternoons for snow day make-ups beyond April 15 would be detrimental to our district.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Bruce Borchers
Superintendent

We understand that since some of you have been out of school, many of you have not received your ACT materials. In communications with some of you individually, we have discussed a plan to cancel the test on March 3rd and schedule testing on the make-up day of March 17th. While ACTE would prefer that you not make this choice, it is a viable option if you are in school on March 17th. Attached to this message in EdTools is an FAQ provided by ACT. The following is the information they have provided us as guidance for you during this winter wonderland. If you have any questions or need any additional assistance, please don't hesitate to contact us through a support ticket on EdTools or by email to tnedassessment@tn.gov.

Finally, I want to address possible requests related to a waiver of instructional days due to our unusual weather. On February 21, Gov. Haslam declared a Level 2 State of Emergency – Major Disaster – due to the extreme weather conditions throughout the state. This State of Emergency is expected to extend through February 27, which represents five school days.

Many school districts have reached out to inquire about relief from the statutory requirement of 180 days of student instruction. Pursuant to Tennessee law, the commissioner of education may waive the 180-day instructional requirement in very limited cases, including “natural disasters”. 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, we will be accepting requests to waive a maximum number of three instructional days.

We will make decisions on requests on a case-by-case basis and ask that each request include documentation of the following:

1. The specific circumstances leading to the request;
2. The number of stockpiled days designated in the district calendar and the use of these stockpiled days; and
3. The inability of the district to make up the instructional days.

The deadline for the waiver requests relative to the Level 2 State of Emergency declaration is March 31st.

On a related note, it is supposed to be 60 degrees on Tuesday! Thanks for your patience during this season of the year.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Candice

Candice McQueen, Ph.D.
Commissioner
Tennessee Department of Education
9th Floor, Andrew Johnson Tower
710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37243



Paul Rainwater

From: BRUCE BORCHERS <btborchers@ortn.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2015 9:21 AM
To: Commissioner McQueen
Cc: Paul Rainwater
Subject: RE: Weather related information on testing and waivers for instructional days
Attachments: Waiver request 2015.pdf

***** 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,

Oak Ridge Schools respectfully requests a waiver of one of our nine snow days which occurred during the Governor's declared State of Emergency this year. Please find our waiver request attached to this email.

Sincerely,
Bruce Borchers

Dr. Bruce Borchers
Superintendent
Oak Ridge Schools
btborchers@ortn.edu
865-425-9001

From: suptonly-bounces@lists.k12tn.net [mailto:suptonly-bounces@lists.k12tn.net] **On Behalf Of** Candice McQueen
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2015 10:49 PM
To: suptonly@lists.k12tn.net
Cc: TDOELeadership@lists.k12tn.net
Subject: Weather related information on testing and waivers for instructional days

Directors:

In an effort to update you on several items related to the weather, please take a moment to read this email in its entirety.

First, due to the inclement weather and pending spring break schedules, the Office of Assessment Logistics will extend the writing assessment testing window through Friday, March 27, 2015. District testing coordinators must submit a support ticket on EdTools with the grades for which you need an extension and the dates needed for testing. If you need changes for individual schools or grades, please include all details in one contact support ticket. If you have emailed asking about issues with spring break, please submit a support ticket to confirm your testing needs. This weather related extension will cause a delay in reporting on the writing assessment. Once we have finalized all testing, we will be better able to estimate when the student and summary reports will be available to districts. Should you have additional questions or concerns, please contact our team at tned.assessment@tn.gov.

Second, many of you have contacted us regarding the impact of the weather on your school schedules, particularly as it relates to the ACT assessment to be given next week. We have reached out to ACT for options to extend, however, we have been told that their policy will not allow for such an extension this year.