



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

Steve Starnes, Director of Schools
Hawkins County Schools
200 N Depot Street
Rogersville, TN 37857-2699

steve.starnes@hck12.net

Dear Mr. Starnes:

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 Hawkins County Schools. Pursuant to my above referenced authority, I hereby grant a waiver to Hawkins 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 cursive script that reads "Candice McQueen".

Dr. Candice McQueen

HAWKINS COUNTY SCHOOLS

200 North Depot Street
Rogersville, TN 37857
423.272.7629 Fax 423.272.2207

Director of Schools
Steve Starnes

School Board Members

Randy Collier, Chairman
Holly Helton, Vice Chairman
Chris Christian
Kathy Cradic
Bob Larkins
Debbie Shedden
Michael Williams

Executive Administrative Assistant
Jennifer Winegar



TO: Commissioner of Education, Dr. Candice McQueen

SUBJECT: Waiver of Instructional Days

From: Director of Schools, Steve Starnes

DATE: March 12, 2015

Dear Commissioner McQueen,

I would like to request a waiver of three instructional days due to the unusually high number of inclement weather days missed this winter and the State of TN being declared a Level 2 State of Emergency – Major Disaster. Our system typically extends the school day 30 minutes extra each year to stockpile thirteen days. We originally allotted three of those days for staff development (November 11, 2014, December 19, 2014, and March 3, 2015). A letter was submitted asking to change the staff development day from stockpile to an inclement weather day to be used for Thursday, February 26, 2015. We attended school on March 3, 2015, as a regular instructional day. With the conversion of the staff development day to an inclement weather day, this allowed a total of eleven days to be used for inclement weather. This request was approved. Thank you.

To date, we have missed the following dates district-wide for inclement weather: November 18, 2014, January 16, 2015, January 27, 2015, February 17, 2015, February 18, 2015, February 19, 2015, February 20, 2015, February 23, 2015, February 24, 2015, February 25, 2015, February 26, 2015, February 27, 2015, March 2, 2015, March 5, 2015, and March 6, 2015. Clinch School which is located in a remote part of the county missed an additional day on March 3, 2015. This is a total of fifteen days (10 consecutive) district-wide and sixteen days (11 consecutive) for Clinch School.

Our Board voted at its March 10, 2015 meeting to convert May 21, 2015 to a regular school day instead of an in-service day as originally scheduled and hold the in-service in two half day increments on May 20 and 21, 2015 after school. If the waiver is granted and with making May 21 a regular instructional day, this would make up all inclement weather days for the district and Clinch School could extend the school day for thirty minutes from March 30, 2015, until April 16, 2015 (13 days) to make up the additional inclement weather day they missed. Since Clinch is a K-12 school, this would not affect the busing at any of the other schools. Additionally, Clinch School does not offer spring sports so the 3:30 pm dismissal would not interfere with sports team's travel.

Please strongly consider granting Hawkins County Schools this waiver of three instructional days. Without the waiver it would be impossible for our system to make up all missed days prior to our high school graduation scheduled on Saturday, May 22, 2015. Making up days after graduation would force us to mark all seniors absent per attendance regulations for those days scheduled after graduation which would be a detriment to the attendance rate for our 3 high schools. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Steve Starnes
Director of Schools

Paul Rainwater

From: Starnes, Steve <steve.starnes@hck12.net>
Sent: Thursday, March 12, 2015 2:53 PM
To: Candice McQueen
Cc: Paul Rainwater; Winegar, Jennifer
Subject: Request for Waiver of 3 Instructional Days
Attachments: Waiver Request 2015.doc

Importance: High

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

Please find attached a request for the waiver of three instructional days per instructions contained in an email sent from Commissioner McQueen on 2-26-15. See below. If you have any questions or need additional information, please let me know. Thanks.

Steve Starnes
Director of Schools
Hawkins County Schools
200 N. Depot St.
Rogersville, TN 37857
423-272-7629 ext. 123
Fax – 423-272-2207

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.

We understand that since some 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.