



Brookfield Public Schools

"Create Your Tomorrow"



May 23, 2018

SENT VIA EMAIL AND U.S. MAIL

Allan B. Taylor, Chairperson
State Board of Education
Connecticut State Department of Education
450 Columbus Boulevard- Suite 606
Hartford, CT 06103-1841

Dianna Wentzel
Commissioner of Education
Connecticut State Department of Education
450 Columbus Boulevard
Hartford, CT 06103-1841

Re: Request for Waiver of 180 Day School Year

Dear Mr. Taylor and Commissioner Wentzel:

I am writing to request that you grant the Brookfield Public Schools a waiver from the general requirement that school districts be in session for 180 days. Pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-15, "The State Board of Education (1) may authorize the shortening of any school year for a school district, a school or a portion of a school on account of an unavoidable emergency." The Brookfield Public Schools is currently experiencing an unavoidable emergency due to the storm damage that began on Tuesday, May 15, 2018. The devastation caused by this storm is requiring an almost complete rebuild of the electrical and communications infrastructure in Brookfield. Many of the homes in Brookfield have been destroyed beyond repair and families have been displaced. Some families have left the state to live with relatives. As the storm occurred so late in the school year, and in consideration of scheduled graduation, activities and employee schedules, there is insufficient time to make up the days.

I am aware of the Circular Letters pertaining to the 180 school day requirement. In Circular Letter C-9, Acting Commissioner Coleman advises that school closures due to weather generally will not constitute unavoidable emergencies. The rationale for this position was that, "[w]hen closures due to inclement weather occur early enough in the school year (such as in the winter months), local boards will have sufficient time throughout the remainder of the school year, through June 30, to make up lost days."

The current circumstances affecting the Brookfield Public Schools are unique in several ways. At this point in the year, there is insufficient time to make up the days. Nine days have been added to the original last day of school due to winter snowstorms and a fall power outage.

The sole reason for the existence of our profession is the student

All scheduled school vacation and professional development days have already occurred and the last day of school is pushed out to late June. This storm, now officially classified as significantly more devastating than Hurricane Sandy, has crippled the community and will continue to do so for months to come. Our First Selectman, Mr. Steve Dunn, declared Brookfield a Municipal Disaster and Governor Malloy formally proclaimed Connecticut in a state of civil emergency preparedness. This storm is in no way akin to a blizzard in that it cannot be plowed away. In fact, the National Guard is assigned to Brookfield to support the utility crews that have been brought in from across the country.

Adding additional days further into the summer beyond the current last day of school is extremely problematic as many of the schools are not air conditioned, nor intended for summer use. The buildings that do have air-conditioning and that are typically used for our Special Education summer program have had their rooftop units significantly damaged by the macro-burst. Faculty typically are preparing for the Special Education summer program during the final weeks of June. Noteworthy, is Brookfield's major capital improvement plan scheduled for this summer. Several projects scheduled to begin at the close of school on June 22nd must be completed over the summer as students will not be in the majority of buildings. Furthermore, these Capital projects must be completed by November in order to comply strict bond-funding regulations.

In summary, the storm that occurred on May 15, 2018 caused significant and historic damage in the Town of Brookfield. There was substantial loss of power, property damage, road closures, breakdown in communications and personal trauma. Prior to the storm, the last day of school was set for June 22, 2018. Due to the storm, school closed on Wednesday, May 16, 2018 and reopened today, May 23, 2018. I respectfully request a waiver of the 180 day requirement in order to permit school to close on June 22, 2018. We appreciate your sensitivity and respect for a community that is struggling to recover some semblance of normalcy.

If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Dr. John W. Barile
Superintendent of Schools

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