



CITY OF CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

845 Park Avenue
Cranston, Rhode Island 02910-2790

Michael A. Traficante, Chairman
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School Committee
Michael A. Traficante, Chairman
Andrea M. Iannazzi, Clerk
Paul H. Archetto
Deborah C. Greifer
Frank S. Lombardi
Steven A. Stycos
Donna Tocco-Greenaway

SENT VIA CERTIFIED MAIL AND REGULAR MAIL

May 11, 2007

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Sharon Osborne
Rhode Island Board of Regents for
Elementary and Secondary Education
Rhode Island Department of Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

OFFICE OF THE
COMMISSIONER

Re: Cranston School Department/Waiver of Two (2) School Days

Dear Ms. Osborne:

Pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws 16-2-3, the Cranston School Committee respectfully requests the Board of Regents reduce the number of school days to One Hundred Seventy-Eight (178) for Cranston East High School. This request is made as a result of an emergency brought about by a chemical contamination discovered at the High School which threatened to endanger the health of our students as well as our employees present at the building. Attached is a copy of a correspondence previously forwarded to the Commissioner of Education outlining the incident in further detail. In addition, I am enclosing a copy of Resolution No. 07-5-1 that was adopted by the Cranston School Committee at a special meeting held on May 11, 2007.

The Cranston School Committee respectfully requests that the Board of Regents consider this matter on an expedited basis.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Traficante
Chairman

MAT:cmm

Enc.

Copy: Cranston School Committee
M. Richard Scherza, Superintendent of Schools

TEL: (School Committee Office) 270-8143 • FAX: (401) 270-8703 • TDD: (401) 270-8115

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CRANSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

845 PARK AVENUE
CRANSTON, RHODE ISLAND 02910-2790

M. RICHARD SCHERZA
SUPERINTENDENT

Sent regular mail and certified mail #70060810000271486406

May 7, 2007

Peter McWalters, Commissioner
Rhode Island Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903-3400

Re: Cranston School Department/Waiver of Two (2) School Days

Dear Commissioner McWalters:

I am writing to formerly inform you of the closure of the Cranston East High School on May 3rd and May 4th of 2007, pursuant to Board of Regents Regulations G-4.1.1.

As I informed you previously on Wednesday, May 2, 2007, Cranston officials found a small amount of elemental mercury in a storage area at the Cranston East High School. The incident was immediately reported to the Cranston Fire and Police Departments, who responded to the scene. The Cranston Fire Department immediately assessed the situation and contacted the Department of Health, the Department of Environmental Management, and the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency. The Department of Health then advised that the areas of suspected contamination should be tested and further that the students be removed from the immediate area in which the spill occurred. Additionally, after consultation with the Department of Health, it was determined that the High School Building should be closed.

The Director of Transportation for the School District then began contacting our transportation company to bring in buses to Cranston East. A statement of release was reviewed by public health officials and at that time we were given direction to release the students.

The spill in question concerns a small volume of mercury (an amount that would fill the space of one-half dollar in diameter and one (1) inch high). The Department of Health and the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency advised that we immediately contact a contractor for clean-up. As a result, the District hired Clean Harbors. These types of spills and contamination are within their expertise and they are licensed to engage in clean-up of elemental metals such as mercury.

As soon as students were dismissed from the School, the building was secured and on Wednesday night and Thursday, Clean Harbors brought in their apparatus to test the school to determine if the clean-up had been successful. The Cranston School District also hired an independent chemical hygienist who was commissioned to draft a report to the Department of Health. Based on this report, the Department of Health would then give us permission to reopen the school.

The closing of the school, as mandated by the Department of Health and other state agencies, was done for the health and safety of students and employees of the School District. In fact, three (3) students who were in close proximity of the spill, were transported to Hasbro Hospital for medical evaluations. As a result of the swift action of state agencies, the Cranston Fire and Police Departments, and the Cranston School District, I am happy to report that there have been no medical findings of mercury contamination to any individual.

As a result of the cleaning efforts of Clean Harbors, and the above-mentioned state agencies, the School District was given clearance and we opened the Cranston East High School as of today.

In conformance with Rhode Island General Laws 16-2-3, we hereby request a reduction in the school year for the students at the Cranston East High School by two (2) days. As I have indicated previously, students were dismissed early on May 2, 2007, however, they were in attendance at the school in excess of three (3) hours. It is my understanding, given the reasons for early dismissal, that May 2nd still qualifies as one of the one-hundred eighty (180) day mandatory school days. However, given the emergency nature of the mercury spill which could potentially endanger the health of the children at the school and the physical well-being of the school community (including the many employees in the High School), we formerly request a reduction in the number of school days for the Cranston East High School by two (2) this year.

Please be advised that this request has not yet been submitted to the School Committee and as such, we have not forwarded this request to the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education, but will do so after the School Committee's consideration at its next meeting. In the interim, we ask for your urgent consideration and support for this request by making a recommendation to the Regents that they approve this request.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mr. Richard Scherza". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" being particularly prominent.

M. Richard Scherza
Superintendent

**SPECIAL MEETING
CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WILLIAM A. BRIGGS BUILDING (REED CONFERENCE ROOM)
845 PARK AVENUE
FRIDAY, MAY 11, 2007
PUBLIC SESSION: 5:00 P.M.**

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call / Quorum
- III. Public Hearing
 - a. Students (Agenda Item)
 - b. Members of the Public (Agenda Matters Only)
- IV. Consent Calendar / Consent Agenda

NO. 07-5-1 – **RESOLVED**, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, pursuant to R.I. Gen Laws 16-2-3, the Cranston School Committee petition the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education and the Rhode Island Commissioner of Education to allow the School Committee to reduce the number of school days for the students at Cranston High School East from 180 to 178 as a result of the school closure on May 3, 2007 and May 4, 2007 (and additionally for May 2, 2007 if the partial day of attendance does not qualify for a full school day under the regulations of the Department of Education). Said request for reduction in school days is brought as a result of the school closure concerning a chemical contamination discovered at the school. The chemical contamination was a potential health threat which could have endangered the health of children and the physical well being of the community.

- V. Adjournment

***School Committee members who are unable to attend this meeting
are asked to notify the Chairman in advance.***

Notice Posted: May 9, 2007



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

May 31, 2007

Mr. M. Richard Scherza
Superintendent
Cranston Public Schools
845 Park Avenue
Cranston, RI 02910-2790

Re: Cranston School District Waiver of Two School Days

Dear Superintendent Scherza :

Thank you for your letter in which you request that the statutory 2006-2007 school year at the Cranston East High School be reduced by two days as a result of a mercury spill at the school. You indicate that safety concerns resulting from this spill forced a closure of the school for two days. I take your letter to indicate that your district would be put to excessive expense if the district had to open the Cranston East High school for two days, while all the other schools in the district would be closed.

I concur in your conclusion that the situation you describe meets the criteria for a reduction in the school year established by R.I.G.L.16-2-3 (Emergency Reduction of the School Year. I will therefore recommend to the Board of Regents that the 2006-2007 school year at the Cranston East High School be reduced by two days.

Sincerely,

Peter McWalters
Superintendent

PM(FLA)scp

Telephone (401)222-4600 Fax (401)222-6178 TTY 800-745-5555 Voice 800-745-6575

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