



NARRAGANSETT SCHOOL SYSTEM

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

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JAN 23 2008

KATHERINE E. SIPALA
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

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ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

OFFICE OF ~~THE~~ **PEN DIFABIO**
COMMISSIONER
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS

ELIZABETH PINTO
DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES
(401) 792-9426

January 23, 2008

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

Dear Commissioner McWalters,

On January 2, 2008 a gas leak required the evacuation and early dismissal of all students at Narragansett High School. That decision was made after careful consideration of any and all options to keep the students in district that day, but ultimately, we did have to send them home. Any lengthy stay outside while the problem was diagnosed was not prudent given the cold weather. Construction at all of our schools has limited available space for the transfer of students in such situations. As it turned out, the diagnosis and repair took several hours and the fire department did not deem our school safe until well after 1:00 that day.

Our student instructional day begins at 7:30. Dismissal that day began around 9:40 and was completed by approximately 10:00. While we are fully aware of the 3 hour requirement for consideration as a day of instruction, I am respectfully requesting a waiver of this rule and asking for the day to be considered a school day. Our elementary and middle schools were in full operating status. Our high school has a very strong commitment to the principles inherent in school reform policies, in that we have a June 20 graduation date, and no early dismissals during exam weeks. Adding a day to the high school schedule would create a hardship for the district in terms of transportation costs and additional teacher pay as well as the additional problem of extending the school year to June 25 for one group in our school system. In a small town, that difference can be a larger and more problematic difference than most would assume.

On behalf of the Narragansett School Committee and High School Administration, I thank you in advance for your consideration. Should you have any further questions, please contact this office. I await your response and appreciate your thoughtful analysis of our request.

Sincerely,

Katherine E. Sipala
Katherine E. Sipala



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

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

January 31, 2008

Ms. Katherine E. Sipala
Superintendent of Schools
Narragansett School System
25 Fifth Avenue
Narragansett, Rhode Island
02882-3612

Subject: One Day Closure of Narragansett High School

Dear Superintendent Sipala,

Thank you for your letter of January 23, 2008 in which you note that Narragansett High School closed at 9:40 am on January 2, 2003 because of a gas leak, thereby failing to operate for a sufficient number of hours to earn credit for a school day. Your letter also informs us that the rest of the Narragansett school system continued in regular operation. Your request is that I recommend to the Board of Regents under R.I.G.L.16-2-3 [Emergency Reduction of School Year] that the Narragansett High School not be required to make up the loss of this instructional day. In this connection you report that:

Our high school has a very strong commitment to the principles inherent in school reform policies in that we have a June 20 graduation date, and no early dismissals during exam weeks. Adding a day to the high school schedule would create a hardship for the district in terms of transportation costs and additional teacher pay as well as the additional problem of extending the school year to June 25 for one group in our school system.

Based upon the information you have provided me I have concluded that it would be appropriate for me to recommend to the Board of Regents that the Narragansett High School not be required to make up instructional day which was lost on January 2, 2003 as the result of a gas leak.

Sincerely,

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

PM(FLA):scp

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