

NARRAGANSETT SCHOOL SYSTEM

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OFFICE OF THE
COMMISSIONER

CHRISTOPHER MALLETT
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

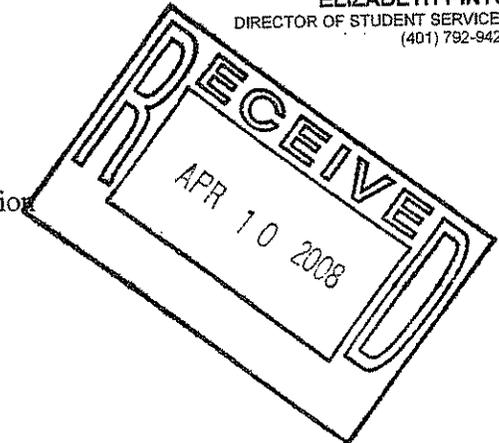
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KATHERINE E. SIPALA
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

JUDITH A. PAOLUCCI, Ph.D.
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

April 2, 2008

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



Dear Commissioner McWalters,

Attached is a letter from our High School Principal, Daniel Warner, requesting your consideration of a revised school dismissal time at the high school on three Wednesdays in May. The letter comes with my endorsement because this very passionate principal is doing everything he can do to support the reform that is transforming RI high schools and Superintendents need to also support those efforts in very tangible ways.

When Mr. Warner initially suggested this schedule, I warned him of the challenges to such a request given our School Calendar Regulations and our commitment to the exact reforms we are discussing. As I reviewed your letter of February 12, 2008, however, I appreciated your candor and willingness to use "flexibility in...application ...when a district can show good reason for a more open interpretation."

Narragansett High School can manage the work of Senior Projects, Senior Graduation portfolios and Senior English Research papers without these 3 afternoons because the staff will do everything in their power to fulfill their responsibility to the best of their ability. The additional time, however, will create an incredible good will and higher quality evaluation process which will result in a superior transition for the students and their families who are the first to take part in this historic initiative. On behalf of the Narragansett Community, I greatly appreciate your consideration of Mr. Warner's request.

Sincerely,

Katherine E. Sipala
Katherine E. Sipala

cc: Narragansett School Committee



Narragansett High School

245 South Pier Road
Narragansett, RI 02882
Telephone: (401) 792-9400
FAX: (401) 792-9410

DANIEL F. WARNER, *Principal*
JEFFREY W. SMITH, *Assistant Principal*
RICHARD M. ADHAM, *Athletic Director*

March 28, 2008

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

Dear Commissioner McWalters:

As I am sure you are well aware, Narragansett High School, along with all Rhode Island public high schools, is undergoing huge transitional changes with regard to how we approach graduation and the foundations of proficiency. An impediment to these new initiatives is trying to fit a new model into an old structure. The reason for this letter is to request early release on three consecutive Wednesdays in May 2008: May 7, 14 and 21. We currently operate in a block schedule, and our students would be missing one academic period. Students begin their school day at 7:30 a.m. and would be dismissed at approximately 12:00 noon. Based on your guidance document dated February 12, 2008, "School Calendar Regulations," you state, and I quote "*We also recognize that the scheduling of examinations and portfolio assessments may give rise to a need for additional flexibility in scheduling the school day for seniors who are about to graduate.*" This is precisely why I make this request. It will help both teachers and students prepare for an end of year review and showcase of the graduation requirements for students at Narragansett High School. We have scheduled May 21st as our Senior Project Presentation day. Coinciding with that day is a review of Senior Graduation portfolios and a final review of Senior English research papers that were deemed proficient.

Our current schedule offers students three hundred and thirty seven minutes of daily instruction, no study halls, and after school academic support programs that ensure all students have an opportunity to complete a rigorous program of studies. We do not engage in early release days due to exams as our students take exams in class during regular school days. Our date of graduation from Narragansett High School is June 20, 2008, which is late compared to other schools. Narragansett High School requires all graduating seniors to complete a graduation portfolio outlining the work and assignments that demonstrate proficiency during their tenure, a senior project highlighting the individual passions of students and offering a venue to present that to a group of outside evaluators, as well as the accumulation of 26 Carnegie units or credits, recognized by colleges and universities as comprehensive and ensuring the proper preparation for advance study at the post graduate level. This multiple measure approach to graduation mirrors the values we hold dear with regard to our mission and expectations for student learning. Granting this request would allow our teachers to work in preparation for what is expected to be a very busy, yet very rewarding, end of the 2008 school year. Thank you for your consideration in this most important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel F. Warner".

Daniel F. Warner
Principal



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

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

April 29, 2008

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

Dear Ms. Sipala:

Thank you for your letter of April 2, 2008 in which you request my assent to three early release days at Narragansett High School on May 7th, May 14th, and May 21st of this year. You have requested these release days to, "help both teachers and students prepare for an end of the year review and showcase of the graduation requirements for students at the Narragansett High School." You indicate that the current High School schedule, "offers students three hundred and thirty seven minutes of daily instruction, no study halls, and after school support programs that ensure all students have an opportunity to complete a rigorous program of studies."

After considering the supporting information in your letter, I have decided that the early release days you have requested are supportable within the frame work of the Board of Regents School Calendar Regulations and that these three early release days will further the success of the instructional program at Narragansett High School. The request for three early release days is therefore granted.

The principle of the Narragansett High School is requested to file a report with my office before the start of the 2008-2009 school year outlining what effects the granting of these three early release days had on instructional outcomes.

Sincerely,

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

cc: Daniel F. Werner, Principal, Narragansett High School.

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