

**NARRAGANSETT SCHOOL SYSTEM**

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May 7, 2009

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR  
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Commissioner Peter McWalters  
RI Department of Education  
Shepard Building  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence RI 02903-3400

MAY 11 2009

OFFICE OF THE  
COMMISSIONER

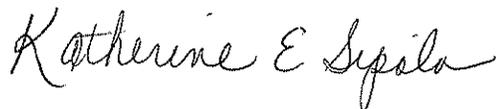
Dear Commissioner McWalters:

As you know, the Narragansett Pier Middle School was closed May 4, 5 and 6 by recommendation of the Department of Health due to one probable case of swine flu. We were very pleased that the revised CDC guidelines allowed us to reopen on Thursday, May 7. I am respectfully requesting that the three days be waived or forgiven and that we not be required to make up those days.

The Narragansett School Department considers our mission and responsibility to educate our students very seriously. This temporary suspension of classes did not affect our whole district. Students at the Narragansett Elementary School and the Narragansett High School had no interruptions in their programming. This school year we only had two snow days, and our revised school calendar calls for those days to be made up on June 25 and June 26. The requirement for Pier School students to come back on June 29-July 1 would indeed be a hardship to families. In addition, the environment in seaside Narragansett that week as our whole state begins the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration would challenge even the most dedicated students and teachers in their quest to learn!

We anxiously await your consideration of this request. Thank you for your support and the involvement of the Department of Education liaison Midge Sabatini all through this week. She was accessible, helpful and very patient with us as we charted this unfamiliar territory.

Sincerely,



Katherine E. Sipala  
Superintendent of Schools

cc: Dr. Marie Ahern  
School Committee members



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

Peter McWalters  
Commissioner

May 22, 2009

Katherine E. Sipala  
Superintendent of Schools  
Narragansett School system  
25 Fifth Avenue  
Narragansett, Rhode Island 02882

Dear Superintendent Sipala:

Thank you for your letter of May 7, 2009, in which you request a reduction in the number of required school days for the Narragansett Pier Middle School. This request was made based on the closing of the school for three days (May 4, May 5, and May 6) on the recommendation of the Department of Health because of the H1N1 flu.

The authority to grant waivers to the mandatory school year of 180 days is found in Rhode Island General Law § 16-2-3. This statute provides a mechanism by which "the school committee or any city or town with the approval of the board of regents for elementary and secondary education may reduce the number of school days" in the event of an "emergency which may endanger the health of children or the physical well being of the community."

The authority to grant a waiver requested through R.I.G.L. § 16-2-3 (emergency reduction of school year) was delegated to me during the May 13, 2009 Board of Regents meeting:

"The Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with its authority to assign to the Commissioner any other additional duties that may be determined by the Board and in accordance with the Board's general supervisory authority over elementary and secondary education, hereby delegates to the Commissioner the authority to grant or to deny approval to reductions in the school year in accordance with R.I.G.L. 16-2-3. The Commissioner's grant or denial of a reduction may be reviewed by the Board."

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

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You have requested a reduction of the school year for the Narragansett Pier Middle School from 180 days to 177 days. As previously stated, this request for a three day waiver is based on the May 4 through May 6 closings in line with the recommendations of the Department of Health.

I find this request to be within the parameters of §16-2-3. This decision is based on your action of closing schools to protect the health of children and the physical well being of the community from the spread of the H1N1 flu.

For the foregoing reasons, please be advised that I am granting your requested waiver to the 180 day school year. Please provide me with written verification of the adjusted school year for students to 177 instructional days.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions that you may have in regard to the issues raised herein.

Very truly yours,



Peter McWalters  
Commissioner of Education

cc: Robert G. Flanders, Chairman, Board of Regents  
David V. Abbott, Deputy Commissioner/General Counsel

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