

DAVID N. CICILLINE
Mayor

THOMAS M. BRADY
Superintendent

Providence Schools

Providence Public School District
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February 25, 2009

Rhode Island Department of Elementary & Secondary Education
Commissioner Peter McWalters
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner McWalters,

I am writing to request a variance to the Basic Education Plan (BEP) for the Providence School District. This variance request will allow the Providence School District to make more efficient and effective use of our teaching staff without comprising instructional opportunities for students.

Variance Request: Modification of the Current Requirements for Media Specialist Staffing

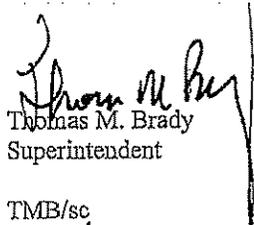
The current BEP requires that all media specialists be provided 50% of their daily schedule in unassigned, "open library" time. This requirement has little basis in contemporary educational research and severely limits school and district ability to maximize the use of media specialists as instructional staff. Within Providence, "open library" periods are typically underutilized by students and are an inefficient use of staff time.

This variance requests a modification of the 50% open library provision, replacing it with opportunities for building and district administrators to assign classes to the media specialist during a portion of the open library period. This request is not intended to eliminate "open library" but rather, to increase student utilization of library resources and access the instructional support provided by trained media specialists.

Should this variance be approved, Providence commits to fully supporting both the quality of media specialist professional growth and the instructionally sound use of libraries across the content areas. This support will come in the form of two professional development initiatives: (1) Over a two year period, all media specialists will be provided with additional training on effective classroom management and instruction using library resources; and (2) over a two year period, all classroom teachers will receive professional development on the effective use of the library to support academic instruction.

Providence is committed to ensuring that all students are educated in a full and rigorous instructional environment and compliance with the BEP. I am confident that you will find this variance request both reasonable.

Sincerely,



Thomas M. Brady
Superintendent

TMB/sc

Cc: ✓ Sharon Contreras
David Abbott
Marybeth Fafard



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

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

June 12, 2009

Thomas M. Brady
Superintendent of Schools
Providence Public School District
797 Westminister Street
Providence, RI 02903-4045

Dear Superintendent Brady:

Thank you for your letter of February 25, 2009 in which you requested a variance to the *Board of Regents Basic Education Program (BEP)* regulations. We had some hesitation in replying to your request immediately since we thought, at the time, that some regulatory changes pending before the Board of Regents might have a dispositive effect on at least some aspects of this matter. The potential changes we were concerned about did not take immediate effect, so a response to your letter is now in order.

Upon the June 4, 2009 vote of the Board of Regents to promulgate new BEP regulations, effective July 1, 2010, we have reviewed your request more carefully. We can find no reference to an "open library" requirement in the BEP, 50% or otherwise. Given that there is no legal requirement referencing "open library" time, there is no need to act on your request for a variance. However, the proposed instructional strategy outlined in your letter is clearly in line with the applicable requirements of the revised BEP. Please feel free to contact me with any further questions you may have in regard to the issues raised herein.

Very truly yours,

Peter McWalters
Commissioner of Education

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