

V.D.

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

TO BE PROPOSED:

June 6, 2018

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-15 of the Connecticut General Statutes, authorizes the Ridgefield Board of Education, given the unusual circumstances presented, to shorten the 2017-18 school year for Ridgefield High School to 179 days, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action. Such authorization is contingent upon Ridgefield High School having at least 181 school days for the 2018-19 school year.

Approved by a vote of _____ this sixth day of June, Two Thousand Eighteen.

Signed: _____
Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Secretary
State Board of Education

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education

DATE: June 6, 2018

SUBJECT: 180-Day School Year Waiver Request – Ridgefield High School

Introduction

Pursuant to Section 10-16 of the Connecticut General Statutes, each school district must have 180 days of school per year. In addition, the same law says that in the course of the 180-day school year, districts have to provide at least 900 hours of actual instruction. Section 10-15 of the Connecticut General Statutes allows the State Board of Education (CSBE) to authorize boards of education to modify the school calendar to have fewer than 180 days of school due to “unavoidable emergency.” In the past, the CSBE has rarely granted such waivers unless the school district can show that it has made every possible attempt to schedule the lost days before the end of the school year on June 30th.

The Ridgefield Superintendent has requested that the State Board of Education (CSBE) grant the Ridgefield Board of Education (Ridgefield) a waiver of the 180-day requirement set forth in Section 10-16 of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) for its high school.

Rationale

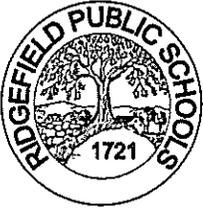
On May 15, 2018, a series of tornadoes set down in the state of Connecticut. Due to the significant storm damage in Southern Connecticut, Ridgefield’s public schools were closed on May 16th and May 17th. The last day of school scheduled for Ridgefield’s high school is June 29th. If there are no further unanticipated closings, grades kindergarten through 9 will attend 180 days of school this year. However, the high school students in grades 10 through 12 will only have attended school for 179 days. The Superintendent of Schools requested permission to hold school just for the high school on Memorial Day from the town. However, town officials expressed serious concerns about having school buses transporting students on a parade day when many of the main thoroughfares in town would be closed. Therefore, Memorial Day did not present a viable option as a makeup day for the high school.

Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends approval of Ridgefield’s request due to the weather emergency on May 15, 2018, that caused the schools to be inaccessible to students from May 16th through May 17th. The Commissioner further recommends that the CSBE require the district to make up the lost day during the 2018-19 school year, which would require a minimum of 181 days for Ridgefield High School.

Prepared by:
Laura L. Anastasio, Attorney
Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs

Approved by:
Peter Haberlandt, Director
Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs



RIDGEFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

70 Prospect Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut 06877
Phone: 203-894-5550 Fax: 203- 431-2810

May 22, 2018

CT State Board of Education
450 Columbus Boulevard
Hartford, CT 06103

**Re: Follow-up Communication-
Exemption from CT General Statute 10-15 for 180 Days of School**

Dear Members of the CT Board of Education,

I am following up last week's communication to you with new information to consider regarding our request for an exemption for 180 school days, pursuant to CT General Statute 10-15. That original request, dated May 17, 2018 is attached to this letter.

Working in partnership with my administrative team, we began determining the logistics and started preparing for a school day on Memorial Day, May 25. During this planning process, we surveyed all school personnel to determine availability to work. At this time, we know *67.2% of our staff 'will not' be at work* and *18.4% 'possibly' may not be able to work*. Only *14.6% of our employees 'can definitely' be at school on Memorial Day*. This presents a substantial challenge and an unsafe environment supervising our students for a day of school. With over 5,000 students, it becomes logistically impossible to hold school if only 15-20% of our staff is able to work.

We are currently negotiating with our bargaining groups to make Memorial Day a workday. However, that arrangement is not guaranteed and will require additional overtime pay for a subset of staff for all hours worked on Memorial Day. There are no other days in this school year to substitute for Memorial Day, as all other weekdays through June 29 will be school days. The three bargaining groups that have Memorial Day listed as a holiday within their contract are Custodians and Maintenance Staff, Administrators, and Secretaries. All three groups are essential to hold school.

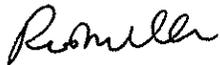
- The contract for Custodians and Maintenance Staff states, "...shall receive a full day's pay at their straight time hourly rate for fifteen holidays (which lists Memorial Day in the contract) and if school is held on the holiday, another day shall be substituted therefore at a time when schools are not in session or pay in lieu thereof as determined by the Business Manager and the Unit President."
- The contract for Administrators states, "If school is in session or administrators are otherwise required to report on a listed holiday other than Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur (Memorial Day is listed as a holiday in the contract) a compensatory holiday shall be designated by mutual agreement of the Board or its designee and the Association."
- The contract for Secretaries states, "If school is in session on the day of celebration (which lists Memorial Day in the contract) other than Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur, another day shall be granted at a time established by the Business Manager."

In addition to the challenges addressed above, we have a Memorial Day Parade run by the Town of Ridgefield that will shut down the majority of the roads used by buses, students and staff. Several school parking lots are designated staging areas for the parade, which then would require Town Officials to determine alternative locations at this late juncture. The Police Department is also stretched with their staffing during the parade, which limits access to emergency services and the assigned School Resource Officers during the parade.

I thank you for your consideration and respectfully request an expedited ruling on this request. As of now, I am extremely concerned of the outcome if we attempt to hold school on Memorial Day and no longer consider it an option that we would be able to implement.

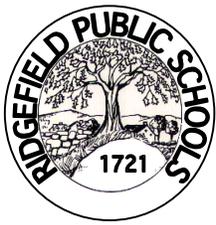
If I can be of assistance to answer specific questions about this request, I am available to do so. You can reach me anytime on my cell at 203-917-9385. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Robert Miller, Ed. D.
Acting Superintendent of Schools

Enclosure



RIDGEFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

70 Prospect Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut 06877
Phone: 203-894-5550 Fax: 203- 431-2810

May 17, 2018

CT State Board of Education
450 Columbus Boulevard
Hartford, CT 06103

Re: Exemption from State Statute 10-15 for 180 Days of School

Dear Members of the CT Board of Education,

Pursuant to General Statute 10-15 regarding a state minimum of 180 school days, I am requesting an exemption for the Ridgefield Public School district for the 2017-18 school year. These are the reasons why:

- As of May 17, 2018, our school district has now lost 14 days of school. The storm this week knocked out power, made many roads impassable and created hazardous conditions throughout town. In collaboration with our Emergency Operations Center personnel, it was determined we would be unable to safely transport students and staff to and from our schools. As a result of the May 15 storm, we have now cancelled two days of school (May 16 and May 17) and there is a potential for additional days beyond today.
- Prior to this storm, we were already at June 28 for a final day of school. With the closure on May 16, the last day of school is now scheduled for Friday, June 29.
- If there are no further unanticipated closings, **our students in grades 10-12 will attend 179 school days** and students in grades K-9 will attend 180 school days by June 29. If an additional day were lost, we would be below 180 school days for all students in K-12.
- The only option by state statute for a make-up day remains Memorial Day; however, there are local factors that prevent this being a viable option.
 - The Town of Ridgefield is currently scheduled to host a Memorial Day parade, which will take roads offline. This will prevent access for school buses to transport students to school.
 - High concern for large numbers of families and staff with prior plans that will be unable to be at school on Memorial Day. Students scheduled to be in the Memorial Day parade would not be available to attend school.
 - Informing families and staff to attend school and report to work within a week and a half of Memorial Day is less than ideal and may not result in a successful day of school.
 - The contract with the Secretarial and Custodial Associations list Memorial Day as a holiday. Bringing these staff members in on that day will require opening up negotiations with the bargaining associations and require paying time and a half, which is an extra burden on the current operating budget.

I thank you in advance for your consideration and respectfully request an expedited ruling on this request. I must notify staff, parents, the town, and plan for a number of contingencies with all stakeholders if we are required to hold school on Memorial Day. This work and communication will need to start as soon as possible.

If I can be of assistance to answer specific questions about this request, I am available to do so. You can reach me anytime on my cell at 203-917-9385. Thank you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Robert Miller'.

Robert Miller, Ed. D.
Acting Superintendent of Schools