

Series: 2000-2001

Circular Letter: C-21

TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Theodore S. Sergi, Commissioner of Education

DATE: March 23, 2001

SUBJECT: Graduation Dates and Length of School Year

Due to the inclement weather this winter, most school districts have had to cancel school more often than had been anticipated. As a result, we have had several inquiries concerning graduation dates and the length of the school year.

Our law requires each school to be in session for at least one hundred eighty days, and graduation may not be held until this requirement has been completed. There are two exceptions to this rule. The first allows a board of education to adopt a school calendar at the beginning of the school year which contains one hundred eighty-five days. If more than five snow days are needed, graduation can still be held on the specified date, although seniors would have to be brought back after graduation to complete one hundred eighty days. The second exception allows a school district to establish a graduation date on or after April 1 which provides for one hundred eighty days. Thereafter, if school has to be closed due to the weather or other emergency, graduation may be held on the established day, and, again, seniors would have to be brought back after graduation to complete one hundred eighty days of school.

The State Board of Education has not waived the 180-day requirement in the recent past and I do not anticipate they will want to consider it this year. As you can understand, the waiver of 180 days—for whatever reasons—sends a wrong message to our students. Our expectation is that all schools will complete this requirement since it is early enough in the school year to make up any days which are necessary. Please remember that schools may be in session on legal holidays, except for those legal holidays falling in the months of January or December.

If you have any questions concerning the above, please contact Attorney Karen Flanagan, Office of Legal and Governmental Affairs, at (860) 566-3825.

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