

IX.C.

Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

To Be Proposed:

April 6, 2022

Resolved: That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-15 of the Connecticut General Statutes, the State Board of Education denies the Norwich Board of Education's request to shorten the 2021-2022 school year by two days from the statutorily mandated 180 school days to 178 days, and hereby directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Approved by a vote of _____ this sixth day of April, Two Thousand Twenty-Two.

Signed: _____
Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Secretary
State Board of Education

**Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford**

To: State Board of Education

From: Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner of Education

Date: April 6, 2022

Subject: 180-Day School Year Waiver Request – Norwich Public Schools

INTRODUCTION

Both Sections 10-15 and 10-16 of the Connecticut General Statutes require that Connecticut's public-school districts provide a minimum of 180 school days during each school year. This mandate applies to all grades, Kindergarten through twelve. In addition, Section 10-16 requires that districts provide in each school year "nine hundred hours of actual schoolwork for full-day kindergarten and grades one to twelve, inclusive, and four hundred and fifty hours of half-day kindergarten." Notwithstanding the foregoing, Section 10-15 empowers the State Board of Education ["SBE"] to "authorize the shortening of any school year for a school district, a school or a portion of a school on account of an unavoidable emergency."

Given that both Section 10-15 and 10-16 expressly mandate that local and regional districts provide at least 180 school days in any school year, and given the exacting "unavoidable emergency" standard set forth in Section 10-15, the State Board of Education ["SBE"] has rarely granted such waivers unless a district can show that it has exhausted every other alternative, including but not limited to rescheduling the lost days prior to or on June 30, which is the final day of the school year.

The Norwich Superintendent of Schools has requested that the SBE grant the Norwich Board of Education a waiver of the 180-school-day mandate, thereby reducing the 2021-2022 school year by two days, for a total of 178 school days.

RATIONALE

On March 7, 2022, Dr. Kristen Stringfellow, Norwich Superintendent, submitted two letters, requesting that the Norwich Public Schools be excused from making up December 17, 2021, and January 14, 2022, on which dates the district's schools were closed. Dr. Stringfellow reports that she cancelled school on December 17 due to a police investigation of what was characterized as "a threat to student and staff safety, which involved locating a gun." With respect to January 14, Dr. Stringfellow explains that she cancelled school due to a substantial number of COVID-related staff absences.

RECOMMENDATION

As noted, the Norwich Public Schools is requesting that the SBE authorize a two-day reduction of the 180-school-day mandate. Dr. Stringfellow concludes both of her March 7 letters by writing: "I am concerned that our ability to make up days at the end of the school year will not be possible."

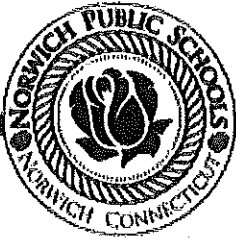
The enclosed copy of the Norwich Public School's 2021-2022 Calendar -- which was updated on February 25, 2022 -- indicates that in June, the Norwich Public Schools are closed on Monday, June 20, 2022, in recognition of Juneteenth, and their currently scheduled final day of school is two days later, on June 22, 2022, which is listed as an "early release" for students and staff. There are six additional weekdays in June, beginning June 23 and concluding June 30, before the school year concludes. It should also be noted that the school district will be closed for six days in April for spring recess.

Between the spring recess (one day of which is Good Friday) and the post-June 22 weekdays, there are eleven business days that the district can consider using as make up days for the two days (December 17, 2021 and January 14, 2022) that were cancelled. While permissive, the CSDE is not suggesting that the district utilize any previously scheduled holidays for this purpose.

Norwich Public Schools, like most other districts in the state, saw a substantial decline in the achievement and growth of its students through the pandemic. The vast majority of students (over 90%) learned in a hybrid or remote format during 2020-21. Their achievement on the Smarter Balanced assessment declined by around 9 percentage points in ELA and around 16 percentage points in Mathematics. In a district where nearly 4 out of 5 students are identified as high needs (i.e., they are English learners, students with disabilities, and/or from low-income families), it is imperative that we collectively strive to accelerate learning recovery by providing more instruction, not less.

For these reasons, and for the educational benefit of the district's students, it is recommended that the SBE deny the Norwich Board of Education's request to reduce the 2021-2022 school year from the statutorily mandated 180 school days to 178 school days.

Prepared by: Michael P. McKeon
Director of Legal and Governmental Affairs



Administrative Offices

Dr. Kristen E. Stringfellow, Ed.D. Superintendent of Schools
Tamara Gloster Assistant Superintendent of Schools

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Telephone 860-823-6284 Fax 860-823-1890

Janle H. Bender Director of Student Services & Special Education
Robert Slrpenski Business Administrator

March 7, 2022

Connecticut State Board of Education
Dr. Karen Dubois-Walton, Board Chair
450 Columbus Boulevard
Hartford, CT 06103

Dear Dr. Dubois-Walton,

I am respectfully requesting a waiver of the minimum 180 school day requirement set forth in the Connecticut General Statutes 10-15 and 10-16 due to an unavoidable emergency that the Norwich Public Schools experienced in December of 2021.

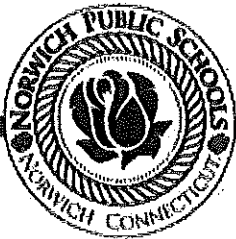
On December 16, 2021, I was informed that the Norwich Police Department was investigating a threat to student and staff safety, which involved locating a gun. As of 3:00 am on the morning of December 17th, the police had not completed their investigation and were still visiting homes, interrogating witnesses and trying to locate the weapon. Due to this ongoing emergency and to avoid the threat of an active shooter, I was forced to cancel school on December 17, 2021.

I am requesting that the Norwich Public Schools be allowed to modify our current calendar by one school day (for December 17, 2021) due to these unforeseen circumstances. I am concerned that our ability to make up days at the end of the school year will not be possible.

Sincerely,

Kristen E. Stringfellow

Kristen E. Stringfellow, Ed.D.
Superintendent, Norwich Public Schools



Administrative Offices

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Robert Skypenski Business Administrator

March 7, 2022

Connecticut State Board of Education
Dr. Karen Dubois-Walton, Board Chair
450 Columbus Boulevard
Hartford, CT 06103

Dear Dr. Dubois-Walton,

I am respectfully requesting a waiver of the minimum 180 school day requirement set forth in the Connecticut General Statutes 10-15 and 10-16 due to a school closure on January 14, 2022 caused by staff shortages related to the COVID-19 pandemic. We had 133 anticipated staff absences (due to COVID positive staff, quarantined staff or staff that had to care for family members that were either COVID positive or quarantined) for January 14th with only 40 staff members who were well enough to cover them. The number of absences was likely to significantly increase by the start of school on the morning of January 14th. It would not have been safe to hold school due to these mass staff absences.

As a school district, we have done our due diligence providing staff and students opportunities to receive COVID vaccines, by hosting several clinics. I have also met personally with each individual who is unvaccinated to discuss options and support.

I am requesting that the Norwich Public Schools be allowed to modify our current calendar by one school day (for January 14, 2022) due to these unforeseen circumstances that constituted an unavoidable emergency. I am concerned that our ability to make up this day at the end of the school year will not be possible.

Sincerely,

Kristen E. Stringfellow

Kristen E. Stringfellow, Ed.D.
Superintendent, Norwich Public Schools



NORWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2021-2022 CALENDAR (BOE REVISED 10/12/21)

- 26-27 Staff PD
- 27 Convocation
- 30 First Day of School

AUGUST '21						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

FEBRUARY '22						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					

- 8 BOE Meeting - 5:30 pm
- 21-22 No School: Winter Recess
- 23 No School/Staff PD
- 25 No School: Weather Closure

- 2 No School: Weather Closure
- 6 No School: Labor Day
- 14 No School: PD Day (Primary Election Day)
- 14 BOE Meeting-5:30 pm

SEPTEMBER '21						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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26	27	28	29	30		

MARCH '22						
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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

- 8 BOE Meeting - 5:30 pm
- 8-10 Early Release: Family Conferences
- 11 No School/Staff PD (Regional)

- 11 No School: Indigenous Peoples' Day
- 12 BOE Meeting - 5:30 pm
- 21 Early Release/Staff PD

OCTOBER '21						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

APRIL '22						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

- 12 BOE Meeting
- 15-22 No School: Spring Recess

- 2 No School / Staff PD (Regional)
- 3-5 Early Release: Family Conferences
- 9 BOE Meeting - 5:30 pm
- 11 No School: Veterans Day
- 24-26 No School: Thanksgiving Recess

NOVEMBER '21						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

MAY '22						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

- 5 Early Release/Staff PD
- 10 BOE Meeting - 5:30 pm
- 30 No School: Memorial Day

- 14 BOE Meeting - 5:30 pm
- 17 School Closed (by Supt)
- 23 Early Release
- 24-31 No School: Holiday Recess

DECEMBER '21						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
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5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

JUNE '22						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

- 14 BOE Meeting - 5:30 pm
- 20 No School: Juneteenth
- 22 Last Day School: 180 days (Early Release for Students & Staff)

*Additional days may be added due to weather related closures

- 7 School Closed: Snow Day
- 11 BOE Meeting - 5:30 pm
- 14 School Closed
- 17 No School: Martin Luther King Day
- 31 School Closed: Snow Day

JANUARY '22						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
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Key:
BOE: Board of Education, ER: Early Release, PD: Professional Development
www.norwichpublicschools.org

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如果您需要翻译服务，请拨打 860.823.4211 x7795 或者 ts@norwichpublicschools.org 可翻译的语言有西班牙语、海地/海地克里奥尔语、和中文。Pou aisyen ki pale kreol se man, si ou gen on dokiman ou bezwen tradwi, kontakte nou nan nùmero sa 860.823.4211 x7795 ou byen sou entenet nan ts@norwichpublicschools.org Nou tradwi tou an panyal ak chinwa.