



Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD

TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D. *Lillian M. Lowery*
DATE: February 25, 2014
SUBJECT: Request from Local School Systems for a Calendar Modification

PURPOSE:

- 1) To ratify the two votes of the State Board of Education taken by e-mail:
 - The first approving a request from Dr. Kimberly Hill, Superintendent, Charles County Public Schools, to hold classes on Presidents' Day, February 17, 2014.
 - The second granting authority to Dr. Lowery to approve similar written requests from other school systems requesting to hold classes on Presidents' Day.
- 2) To request that the State Board grant authorization to the State Superintendent of Schools to approve additional requests from local school superintendents that may be made for the remainder of the school year to open schools on holidays.

BACKGROUND:

State law requires that schools be open for student attendance 180 actual days and 1,080 hours in a 10-month period. (The high school is defined as 1,170 hours.) In 1995, Section 7-103 of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, was amended to include that "if normal school attendance is prevented because of conditions described in subsection (b) of this section (natural disaster, civil disaster or severe weather conditions), schools shall be open for at least 1,080 school hours during a ten-month period in each school year." Schools are not normally allowed to be open on holidays to meet these requirements. Section 7-103 however, specifies the procedure and conditions under which the State Board may grant waivers to the 180-day requirement. Subsection (b)(iv) provides the State Board with the authority to grant permission to local boards of education to open schools on holidays because of closures related to severe weather conditions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

By letter dated January 30, 2014, Dr. Hill requested permission to open schools on Monday, February 17, 2014 (Presidents' Day). With the consent of President Dukes, the Board members were polled by email on January 31, 2014, as to their support or opposition of this request.

Dr. Hill indicated in her letter that Charles County has experienced severe winter weather this year resulting in five school closures. Schools were closed on December 10, 2013, January 10, 2014, January 21, 2014, January 22, 2014 and January 29, 2014. Charles County has exceeded the four emergency closing days in their calendar. February 17, 2014 was one of the days identified in their school calendar as a potential make up day.

At the direction of President Dukes, a second polling of the Board was undertaken on February 6, 2014. This poll sought Board approval for granting to the State Superintendent the authority to approve written requests from other local school systems requesting permission to hold classes on Presidents' Day.

These actions were taken because Presidents' Day falls before the February board meeting.

ACTION:

I am recommending:

1. Ratification of the votes taken earlier this month by email approving the request made by the Superintendent of Charles County Public Schools to open schools on Presidents' Day, Monday, February 17, 2014, and granting to the State Superintendent the authority to approve similar written requests from other local school systems.
2. That the State Board of Education grant to the State Superintendent of Schools the authority to approve additional requests this school year from local school superintendents to open schools on holidays if needed due to school closures that were the result of severe weather conditions.

LML:BC

Attachment



Charles County Public Schools

5980 Radio Station Road
P.O. Box 2770
La Plata, MD 20646
Main line: 301-932-6610
www.coboc.com

Kimberly A. Hill, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

January 30, 2014

Lillian Lowery, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools
Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Dear Dr. Lowery:

Due to severe weather conditions, Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) is requesting an adjustment to its school calendar allowing schools to be open on Presidents' Day, February 17, 2014. Charles County Public Schools has demonstrated efforts to comply with the requirements of Section 7-103 of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, by building four emergency days into its calendar. On January 29, CCPS closed schools for a fifth day due to inclement weather.

We are asking for permission to open schools on Monday, February 17, 2014, to make up for school closures due to severe weather conditions. Charles County schools have been closed due to inclement weather on December 10 and January 10, 21, 22 and 29.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Hill, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

It's all about teaching and learning.

24-hour information line: 301-934-7410