



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906

Telephone: (781) 338-3000
TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

To: Superintendents and Charter School Leaders
From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner
Date: November 15, 2011
Subject: Guidance on School Day and Structured Student Learning Time Requirements

This year's early winter weather storm, on top of Tropical Storm Irene in August, has created difficulties for communities around the Commonwealth, and many districts have had to cancel school for several days due to power outages and downed tree limbs. The situation has prompted inquiries about waivers from the 180-day minimum school year requirement. The attached Policy Statement provides guidance regarding the 180-day requirement and requirements for structured student learning time. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted the 185-day regulation in anticipation that at least 5 days might be lost each year to weather emergencies.

At this point in the school year there is time for districts that have had to close for one or more days to adjust their calendars to ensure that our students do not lose out on valuable learning time. Making up missed days can be done in several ways. School districts may decide to take one or more of these actions: cancel or shorten the February or April vacation periods, convert scheduled professional development days into school days for students, hold school days on Saturday, keep school open on Good Friday, or add days later in June beyond the originally scheduled last day of school. Where practicable, adjustments to the school schedule should be implemented prior to the spring testing period in order to maximize student learning time.

I remain committed to meeting the need for all students to be engaged in structured learning time in school for a minimum of 180 days. To that end, I urge you to prepare parents and others in your school communities to anticipate that days lost during the course of the year prior to March 31, including time lost to weather this fall, must be made up, and that changes to the school year schedule may be necessary.

If you have any questions about the information in the Policy Statement, please contact Teri Williams Valentine at tvalentine@doe.mass.edu or 781-338-6202.