



SCHOOL BOARD ACTION REPORT

DATE: March 21, 2017
FROM: Dr. Larry Nyland, Superintendent
LEAD STAFF: Brenda Ball-Cuthbertson/ Principal, John Muir Elementary School/ (206) 252-7405;
Ronald Boy/ Senior Assistant General Counsel/ (206) 252-0114

For Introduction: April 19, 2017
For Action: May 3, 2017

1. TITLE

Wavier of two (2) school days at John Muir Elementary School due to an emergency school closure for an unforeseen natural event

2. PURPOSE

State regulation WAC 392-129-140 requires that the Superintendent submit a signed statement to the Superintendent of Public Instruction indicating that “the school district board of directors have reviewed the application and supports its submittal” to request a waiver for an emergency school closure. This Board Action Report and the attached letter are the District’s application.

3. RECOMMENDED MOTION

I move that the School Board approve the Superintendent’s application to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, which requests permission for John Muir Elementary School to not make up two (2) days of missed school for March 9 & 10, 2017 when it was closed due to an unforeseen natural event.

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Background

John Muir Elementary, a school of 398 students, began to see signs of the norovirus illness on Tuesday, March 7 when eight (8) students were absent and eight (8) students came to the nurse during the school day complaining of stomachaches and nausea.

Then, on Wednesday, March 8, 2017, there was a dramatic increase in student absence and staff calling in sick. Sixty-seven (67) students were absent and sixty-two (62) were confirmed to be ill. Four (4) teachers called in sick and two (2) additional teachers went home sick mid-day. In addition, as parents and staff called in, the symptoms reported were all consistent with norovirus. Because of the highly contagious nature of the norovirus, the decision was made to close the school for cleaning to prevent the spread of the illness.

The school was closed for extensive cleaning on Thursday, March 9, 2017. The six (6) teachers who were ill on Wednesday would still be contagious on Friday (need to be

symptom free for 48 hours before returning). An additional three (3) teachers reported they had norovirus symptoms late in the afternoon.

The decision was made to keep the school closed on Friday, March 10, 2017. This was based on: the school being short nine (9) certificated staff and one (1) instructional assistant; the fact that students who had been exposed, but were not exhibiting symptoms would have come to school and spread the virus further; bringing in substitutes would have risked spreading the norovirus to other schools in the district if the substitutes were exposed at JME; and the two days combined with the cleaning and the weekend was determined to be the best way to stop the spread of the virus. In the following week, the numbers of students absent for illness dramatically decreased showing that the closure successfully stopped the spread of the illness.

According to RCW 28A.150.290, an epidemic is an unforeseen natural event that qualifies for a waiver.

a. **Alternatives**

Not approve the waiver request and have John Muir Elementary School open two days during the school year when school is not scheduled or after the regular school year ends. This would require the District to bargain with the Seattle Education Association to extend the work year and determine compensation.

b. **Research**

The District has previously requested waivers for similar situations where one school had to close and others did not. Principal Ball-Cuthbertson and the staff of John Muir Elementary support this waiver request.

5. **FISCAL IMPACT/REVENUE SOURCE**

Granting the requested waiver does not increase expenditures. Denying the request would create some additional costs as most of the school's staff, with the exception of staff who were ill, worked on the days the school was closed and the District would need to compensate school year employees with an additional days. Also, if only John Muir Elementary School were to be open on a certain days additional transportation costs would be incurred by the District.

If not approved by the Board and OSPI, the estimated costs of operating JME for an additional two (2) days would be \$21,757.54 for all school staff, not including transportation costs.

Fiscal impact to this action will be neutral if both the Board and OSPI approve this waiver request.

The revenue source for this motion is N/A.

Expenditure: One-time Annual Multi-Year N/A

Revenue: One-time Annual Multi-Year N/A

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

With guidance from the District’s Community Engagement tool, this action was determined to merit the following tier of community engagement:

- Not applicable
- Tier 1: Inform
- Tier 2: Consult/Involve
- Tier 3: Collaborate

This is primarily an administrative decision because of the financial and compliance implications.

7. EQUITY ANALYSIS

NA

8. STUDENT BENEFIT

This action will allow students to receive the necessary instructional hours and remain on schedule for breaks with other District schools/students.

9. WHY BOARD ACTION IS NECESSARY

- Amount of contract initial value or contract amendment exceeds \$250,000 (Policy No. 6220)
- Amount of grant exceeds \$250,000 in a single fiscal year (Policy No. 6114)
- Adopting, amending, or repealing a Board policy
- Formally accepting the completion of a public works project and closing out the contract
- Legal requirement for the School Board to take action on this matter
- Board Policy No. _____, [TITLE], provides the Board shall approve this item
- Other: _____

10. POLICY IMPLICATION

This motion implicates no policy. RCW 28A.150.220 & WAC 392-129-140 mandates this course of action.

11. BOARD COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

This motion was discussed at the Curriculum & Instruction Committee meeting on April 3, 2017. The Committee reviewed the motion and moved the item forward with a recommendation for approval by the full Board.

12. TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Upon approval of this motion, the District will submit the waiver request to OSPI for review. If approved by OSPI, John Muir Elementary School will follow the school calendar utilized by all District schools.

13. ATTACHMENTS

- Draft Letter from Superintendent Nyland:
SCHOOL CLOSURE WAIVER REQUEST