



September 2, 2021

Dear Director Villaflor,

Thank you for your waiver submission on September 2, 2021.

The commissioner of education may consider waivers related to of the provisions of Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. Chapters 0520-01-03 and 0520-01-13 related to remote instruction to the extent necessary to allow students affected at the classroom or school level by COVID-19 isolation or quarantine to participate in remote instruction. As stated, your district still has the authority to quarantine students and staff on an individual case-by-case basis (not in the aggregate). Waivers will only be considered when a LEA can document and demonstrate a significant impact of COVID-19 quarantine or isolation on school operations, impacting students, teachers, and/or staff. Please note, if a waiver request is granted to a school, all extracurricular activities for that school must also be cancelled for the duration of the waiver period.

The waiver submitted by Decatur County Schools for 1 school is **approved** at this time.

The rationale for this approval is:

- There are unknown close contacts, which might indicate wider spread in the school
- There is strong rationale on ways to utilize the long weekend to mitigate spread and allow for a sufficient quarantine period
- There are additional personnel absent, outside of the COVID quarantine and isolation staff, which would lead to over 1/3 of students and staff absent.
- The size of the system would suggest there is limited additional capacity to support day to day operations

If not already in place, the department also continues to encourage all districts to implement as many mitigation strategies as possible to contain the spread of COVID-19, limit quarantines, and remain in-person, such as utilizing:

- The same or enhanced mitigation strategies used last school year such as temperature checks, physical distancing, frequent handwashing, etc.
- Seating charts in all settings, including classrooms, cafeteria/meals, bus routes, etc.
- Proactively stocking non-perishable items for breakfasts/lunches to account for meal staff absences
- Cohorting students to limit close contacts
- The consideration of masking

I continue to be incredibly grateful for the work of your district, educators, students and families as we collectively address and respond to COVID-19.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Penny Schwinn".

Penny Schwinn, PhD, MAT

Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Education

Local Education Agency Waiver Request Application: COVID-19 Relief

Upon application by the local education agency (LEA) for one (1) or more of its classrooms or schools, pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-1-209 (d), the commissioner of education will consider waivers of the provisions of Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. Chapters 0520-01-03 and 0520-01-13 related to remote instruction to the extent necessary to allow students affected at the classroom or school level by COVID-19 isolation or quarantine to participate in remote instruction. This waiver process is not required for individual students on quarantine.

Waivers will only be considered when a LEA can document and demonstrate a significant impact of COVID-19 quarantine or isolation on school operations, impacting students, teachers, and/or staff. Please note, if a waiver request is granted to a school, all extracurricular activities for that school must also be cancelled.

Please submit completed applications to Commissioner.Schwinn@tn.gov. Following review by the commissioner or designee, the local education agency will be notified in writing if the waiver request application is approved or denied. If approved, the waiver will only be valid for seven (7) calendar days. If conditions warranting a waiver persist, then the LEA may submit additional waivers.

Decatur County
Local Education Agency

59 West Main Street Decaturville 38329
Street City Zip

[Signature] 9/2/21
Director of Schools (Signature) Date

1. Number of classrooms for which you are requesting a waiver: _____

Grade of Classroom	Name of School	In Quarantine or Isolation					
		# of Teachers	% of Teachers	# of Staff	% of Staff	# of Students	% of Students

Please explain why this waiver is necessary and in-person instruction is not feasible at this time:

2. Number of schools for which you are requesting a waiver: 1

Name of School	In Quarantine or Isolation					
	# of Teachers	% of Teachers	# of Staff	% of Staff	# of Students	% of Students
<u>Parsons Elementary</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>16%</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>33.4</u>

Please explain why this waiver is necessary and in-person instruction is not feasible at this time:

In-person learning is not feasible at this time because a total of 121 students and 5 teachers are currently excluded. Continuous new learning is being hindered by the number of absences in classrooms. Over the past two days, we have had 5 students who were previously excluded for contact exposure to test positive. While this has not forced us to exclude any other students, we anticipate we will see other students tests positive due to exposure. Contact exposures developing into positive cases is a trend we are seeing with the Delta variant. We would like to request Parsons Elementary be allowed to move away from in-person instruction on Sep 7th and 8th. This along with the Labor Day holiday and previously scheduled in-service/staff development days will allow a total of 9 consecutive days of separation. The separation is needed to allow currently exposed students more time to ensure their exposures do not turn into positives, which is a trend we are seeing. Students could continue their education as well giving staff the opportunity to deep clean and plan for lost learning due to the number of absent students.