



September 1, 2021

Dear Interim Director Towns,

Thank you for your waiver submission on September 1, 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 Hamilton County Schools for Soddy Daisy Middle School is **approved** at this time.

The rationale for this approval is:

- The data provided to support the disruption of learning
- The explanation of how the district plans to maximize student achievement
- The clear tracking and informed way in which the district is approaching the issue
- The use and maximization of as many mitigation strategies as possible
- The explanation related to capacity for hybrid modeling and coverage using district and substitute pools (especially comparative fill rates)

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,

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.

Hamilton County Schools

Local Education Agency

3074 Hickory Valley Road

Chattanooga

37421

Street

City

Zip

P. Nakia Young

09/01/2021

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
Soddy Daisy Middle School	N/A	N/A	8	16%	157	31.3%

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

Please see the attached documents.

**Soddy Daisy Middle School
TDEO Local Education Agency Waiver Request Application: COVID-19 Relief**

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

- *Continuity of Learning* – We are continuously monitoring the impact on students in terms of quarantines and active cases. As you know, we do not have resources for dedicated teachers to provide synchronous instruction for students in quarantine above and beyond the teachers we staff for in person schooling. Therefore, based upon our experience implementing synchronous virtual instruction last year, when a school approaches 30% of students quarantined or isolated, **we are not able to ensure continuity of learning for a sizable portion of the student body of Soddy Daisy Middle School with more than 31% of enrolled students currently in quarantine or isolation.** Teachers cannot effectively manage in person and remote students, and the quality of pedagogy erodes for both groups. Therefore, we believe that the most optimal learning model available is for teachers to support all SDMS students through virtual learning for a limited number of days.
- *Risk of School-based COVID Spread* – We are also monitoring trends for linked cases and number of cases within schools. Our data tracking is very sophisticated as we have been deputized by our public health department to manage our own contact tracing since last school year. As such, we are able to track individual cases and document close contacts that report positive cases as epidemically linked cases. **Currently, there are 21 total active cases (students and staff), and multiple (2) linked cases within the student body at SDMS. The school has seen 6 new cases over the last 5 days.** We believe that based on the August 18th joint memo from the departments of Health and Education, it is our duty to help prevent community spread by disrupting student to student spread in our schools.
 - In our experience of keeping schools open 90% of the 2020-2021 school year, shifting schools to remote instruction for a limited number of days is an effective strategy for slowing or stopping the spread of COVID-19 in our facilities.
- *Staffing Shortages* – We are fortunate in Hamilton County that nearly 73% of our teaching staff has been vaccinated. So, we have not seen as many situations where our teaching staff is having to quarantine or testing positive for COVID-19. However, our board has established COVID-19 leave for employees that allows for them to use seven days of leave for themselves or minor children who are in quarantine or experiencing COVID-like symptoms. **Currently, 16% (n=8) of SDMS staff are out of the building for COVID-related reasons. During the week of August 16, 2021 SDMS had a substitute fill rate of 75%; this week (August 30, 2021) the fill rate at SDMS is 14%.**
 - Like all districts, we are not able to find enough substitutes to cover classes when we have significant numbers of teachers on leave. Our first option is to try to cover classes with other school-based staff or district-wide staff. When this is not possible, the need to pivot to remote instruction may be necessary – as teachers can then facilitate classes remotely while in quarantine.

Hamilton Co Schools COVID Internal Dashbord - Live Data

School Name	Active Student Cases	Active Student Close Contacts	Active Employee Cases	Active Employee Close Contacts	Total Active Cases	Total Active Close Contacts	Total Students Out	Total Employees Out	10 day enroll	% Students out	# Active Linked Cases	# of new cases over past 5 days	% Students with Active Cases
Allen Elementary School	2	38	0	0	2	38	40	0	397	10.1%	0	2	0.5%
Alpine Crest Elementary School	6	104	3	3	9	107	110	6	298	36.9%	4	1	2.0%
Apison Elementary School	4	31	0	1	4	32	35	1	604	5.8%	1	1	0.7%
Barger Academy	0	7	0	0	0	7	7	0	358	2.0%	0	0	0.0%
Battle Academy for Teach/Learning	4	109	4	1	8	110	113	5	456	24.8%	2	2	0.9%
Bess T. Shepherd Elementary School	5	24	1	0	6	24	29	1	510	5.7%	0	1	1.0%
Big Ridge Elementary School	13	104	3	1	16	105	117	4	480	24.4%	2	2	2.7%
Brainerd High School	19	64	2	0	21	64	83	2	698	11.9%	0	10	2.7%
Brown Middle School	13	30	1	1	14	31	43	2	372	11.6%	1	2	3.5%
Calvin Donaldson Environmental Science Academy	5	5	1	0	6	5	10	1	351	2.8%	1	4	1.4%
Central High School	13	45	0	0	13	45	58	0	793	7.3%	3	3	1.6%
Chattanooga High Center for Creative Arts	16	60	0	0	16	60	76	0	621	12.2%	1	8	2.6%
Chattanooga School for Liberal Arts	21	75	1	0	22	75	96	1	679	14.1%	8	13	3.1%
Chattanooga School For The Arts and Sciences Lower	3	40	1	1	4	41	43	2	363	11.8%	1	2	0.8%
Chattanooga School For The Arts and Sciences Upper	3	29	3	1	6	30	32	4	664	4.8%	0	3	0.5%
Clifton Hills Elementary School	3	5	1	0	4	5	8	1	569	1.4%	0	0	0.5%
Daisy Elementary School	20	74	1	1	21	75	94	2	340	27.6%	10	5	5.9%
Dalewood Middle School	14	46	0	0	14	46	60	0	286	21.0%	2	3	4.9%
DuPont Elementary School	1	45	2	0	3	45	46	2	231	19.9%	0	1	0.4%
East Brainerd Elementary School	10	87	2	0	12	87	97	2	1,097	8.8%	1	3	0.9%
East Hamilton High School	6	18	0	0	6	18	24	0	1,202	2.0%	0	4	0.5%
East Hamilton Middle School	17	100	0	0	17	100	117	0	939	12.5%	5	3	1.8%
East Lake Academy of Fine Arts	7	5	2	1	9	6	12	3	505	2.4%	0	5	1.4%
East Lake Elementary School	2	16	0	0	2	16	18	0	570	3.2%	0	2	0.4%
East Ridge Elementary School	12	129	0	1	12	130	141	1	857	16.5%	2	4	1.4%
East Ridge High School	11	89	2	1	13	90	100	3	962	10.4%	3	8	1.1%
East Ridge Middle School	5	29	1	1	6	30	34	2	687	4.9%	0	2	0.7%
East Side Elementary School	7	62	2	3	9	65	69	5	584	11.8%	0	3	1.2%
Hamilton County Collegiate High at Chatt State	1	3	0	0	1	3	4	0	162	2.5%	0	0	0.6%
Hamilton County Virtual School	4	7	0	1	4	8	11	1	494	2.2%	1	1	0.8%
Hardy Elementary School	2	21	0	2	2	23	23	2	379	6.1%	1	1	0.5%
Harrison Elementary School	27	127	0	3	27	130	154	3	833	18.5%	4	9	3.2%
Hixson Elementary School	5	24	1	0	6	24	29	1	425	6.8%	0	3	1.2%
Hixson High School	12	81	2	4	14	85	93	6	935	9.9%	6	9	1.3%
Hixson Middle School	6	106	2	0	8	106	112	2	622	18.0%	2	4	1.0%
Howard Connect Academy	1	17	0	1	1	18	18	1	328	5.5%	0	1	0.3%
Hunter Middle School	12	78	1	0	13	78	90	1	743	12.1%	5	9	1.6%
Lofts Middle School	11	113	1	0	12	113	124	1	592	20.9%	2	4	1.9%
Lookout Mountain Elementary School	2	11	1	0	3	11	13	1	196	6.6%	0	2	1.0%
Lookout Valley Elementary School	8	30	2	0	10	30	38	2	281	13.5%	1	4	2.8%
Lookout Valley Middle/High School	10	55	0	1	10	56	65	1	353	18.4%	3	7	2.8%
McConnell Elementary School	8	76	1	0	9	76	84	1	471	17.8%	0	7	1.7%
Middle Valley Elementary School	18	108	2	1	20	109	126	3	772	16.3%	3	10	2.3%
Nolan Elementary School	14	75	1	0	15	75	89	1	736	12.1%	3	13	1.9%
Normal Park Museum Magnet	3	19	0	0	3	19	22	0	828	2.7%	0	1	0.4%
North Hamilton County Elementary School	7	41	0	1	7	42	48	1	383	12.5%	0	3	1.8%
Ooltewah Elementary School	13	78	0	3	13	81	91	3	779	11.7%	1	6	1.7%
Ooltewah High School	42	171	1	0	43	171	213	1	1,246	17.1%	9	11	3.4%
Ooltewah Middle School	10	65	3	0	13	65	75	3	520	14.4%	0	6	1.9%
Orchard Knob Elementary School	3	27	0	0	3	27	30	0	361	8.3%	0	2	0.8%
Orchard Knob Middle School	5	44	1	0	6	44	49	1	348	14.1%	0	2	1.4%
Red Bank Elementary School	10	15	0	0	10	15	25	0	519	4.8%	0	8	1.9%
Red Bank High School	10	63	0	0	10	63	73	0	814	9.0%	1	7	1.2%
Red Bank Middle School	6	42	1	0	7	42	48	1	608	7.9%	1	3	1.0%
Rivermont Elementary School	9	60	3	1	12	61	69	4	317	21.8%	4	6	2.8%
Sale Creek Middle/ High School	37	96	2	1	39	97	133	3	576	23.1%	4	7	6.4%
Sequoyah High School	2	26	0	0	2	26	28	0	224	12.5%	1	1	0.9%
Signal Mountain Middle/High School	9	43	1	0	10	43	52	1	1,343	3.9%	1	3	0.7%
Snow Hill Elementary School	8	79	2	1	10	80	87	3	591	14.7%	0	2	1.4%
Soddy Daisy High School	35	171	6	2	41	173	206	8	1,101	18.7%	6	23	3.2%
Soddy Daisy Middle School	20	137	1	0	21	137	157	1	502	31.3%	2	6	4.0%
Soddy Elementary School	9	36	0	1	9	37	45	1	465	9.7%	5	7	1.9%
Spring Creek Elementary School	11	53	4	1	15	54	64	5	597	10.7%	1	4	1.8%
STEM School Chattanooga	2	10	0	0	2	10	12	0	279	4.3%	1	0	0.7%
The Howard School	8	23	4	0	12	23	31	4	1,367	2.3%	5	2	0.6%
Thrasher Elementary School	4	9	1	0	5	9	13	1	563	2.3%	1	0	0.7%
Tommie F. Brown International Academy	3	2	0	0	3	2	5	0	322	1.6%	0	0	0.9%
Tyner Academy	13	15	2	2	15	17	28	4	527	5.3%	1	10	2.5%
Tyner Middle Academy	7	91	0	1	7	92	98	1	423	23.2%	2	1	1.7%
Wallace A. Smith Elementary School	15	48	0	0	15	48	63	0	625	10.1%	1	12	2.4%
Westview Elementary School	7	27	3	0	10	27	34	3	574	5.9%	1	6	1.2%
Wolftever Creek Elementary School	12	185	2	0	14	185	197	2	560	35.2%	0	2	2.1%
Woodmore Elementary School	4	16	0	0	4	16	20	0	248	8.1%	0	4	1.6%
TOTAL	707	4094	84	44	791	4138	4801	128	42,405	11.3%	126	326	1.7%