



New Hampshire

Department of Education *Technical Advisory*

Serving New Hampshire's Education Community

Subject: School Year for Public Schools

School Approval Standard:

Ed 306.18, 306.19, 306.20

This is the third in a series of Technical Advisories issued by the Department to clarify the School Approval Standards

I. Actual Text

Ed 306.18 School Year.

(a) Pursuant to RSA 189:1 and 189:24 each school district shall maintain a school year as provided below:

(1) The school district shall maintain in each elementary school, a school year of at least 945 hours of instructional time and in each kindergarten at least 450 hours of instructional time;

(2) The school district shall maintain in each middle and high school, a school year of at least 990 hours of instructional time. Districts shall provide at least 990 hours of instructional time for grades 7 and 8 in elementary schools that include grades 7, 8 or both;

(3) The school day of an individual student shall not exceed 5.75 hours of instructional time in elementary schools and 6 hours of instructional time in middle and high schools;

(4) The school shall have in its school year an additional 60 hours in duration to provide for instructional time lost due to inclement weather or unexpected circumstances, staff development, and parent-teacher conferences. At least 30 of the 60 additional hours shall be available for rescheduling hours lost due to inclement weather or other emergencies. Schools shall use these additional hours to reschedule lost instructional time before requesting a waiver of the amount of instructional time under RSA 189:2, unless extraordinary circumstances exist that would place an unreasonable burden on the school or students;

(5) A school may have a shortened day when an emergency condition exists which might adversely affect the health and safety of students, provided that the number of hours of instructional time originally planned for the day shall be credited to the number of hours of instructional time in the school year, if:

a. On that day, the school would normally have had at least 5.25 hours of instructional time; and

b. The school remained open for at least 3.5 hours of instructional time;

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(6) There shall be no requirement to reschedule instructional time for kindergarten if morning or afternoon kindergarten sessions are cancelled due to delayed opening or early release for students in grade 1 or higher; and

(7) A school district may submit a plan to the commissioner that will allow schools to conduct instruction remotely for up to 5 days per year when the school has been closed due to inclement weather or other emergency. The plan shall include procedures for participation by all students. Academic work shall be equivalent in effort and rigor to typical classroom work. There shall be an assessment of all student work for the day. At least 80 percent of students shall participate for the day to count as a school day.

(b) Lunch time, home room periods, passing time, and breaks shall not be counted toward the required amount of instructional time. Elementary schools may count up to 30 minutes of recess per day as instructional time for pupils in kindergarten through grade 6. Advisory periods in middle and high schools shall be counted as instructional time.

(c) The school year for high school seniors may be reduced by no more than 5 days or 30 hours of instruction, whichever is less, from the number of days or hours of instruction for other high school students.

Ed 306.19 School Calendar. Each school shall maintain a school calendar.

Ed 306.20 Alternative School-Year Scheduling Pattern. Repealed

II. Department Comment:

School districts now have flexibility to establish calendars which best meet the educational needs of students. Staff schedules, budget implications, family vacation plans, and other matters not directly related to student learning should be secondary concerns. It is no longer necessary to request approval from the Commissioner for a calendar with fewer than 180 days.

The school calendar must schedule at least the minimum number of instructional hours which is 945 hours for elementary schools and 990 hours for middle and high schools. The calendar must include an additional 60 hours, at least 30 of which must be available to reschedule instructional time lost due to inclement weather or other emergencies. Ed 306.02(d) defines instructional time as the period of time during which students are actively working toward achieving educational

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objectives under the supervision of a teacher or other staff member. Ed 306.18(c) explains the activities that are not considered instructional time.

Most schools in the state provide more than the minimum required amount of instructional time. The driving force behind establishment of the school calendar and the daily schedule must be what is best for the education of children. Adding five minutes to each period of a seven period day may mathematically result in 990 hours of instruction in 165 days but, in all likelihood, children would be shortchanged by such an arrangement.

No student can be required to exceed the maximum number of instructional hours per day, 5.75 hours in elementary schools and 6.0 hours in middle and high schools. Districts may submit a request for alternative compliance in accordance with Ed 306.29 to exceed the maximum hours with sufficient justification.

If weather or other emergencies result in an unusually high number of lost time during the year, the school board may submit a written request for a waiver of the hourly requirement from the Commissioner as authorized by RSA 189:2. Technical Assistance Advisory #19 addresses the process for approval of a plan to conduct classes remotely during an emergency as described in section (a)(7) of the rule above.

High school seniors are required to be scheduled for at least 960 hours of instruction if they are taking a full course load. The number of hours of instruction can be reduced for seniors who have completed enough credits that will allow them to meet the graduation requirements by taking less than a full course load. The intent of this allowance is to provide time for teachers to complete final grades and to allow for senior week recreational activities. Districts should not schedule graduation on the 175th day after the start of the school year and expect a waiver of the instructional time requirement if weather or other emergencies cause school to be closed for one or more days during the year.

Schools may develop unique schedules and calendars for individual students participating in extended learning opportunities and other alternative forms of instruction. The amount of time spent by each student in participation in these individual programs must be sufficient to meet the competency assessment to earn the established credit.

III. For more information on this technical advisory, contact:

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