

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill No: SB 134

49th Legislature, 1st Session, 2009

Short Title: Limit School Calendar Adjustments

Sponsor(s): Senator Mark L. Boitano

Analyst: Eilani Gerstner

Date: January 30, 2009

Bill Summary:

SB 134 amends the *Public School Code* to provide that, after a school year begins, a local school board may not make school calendar adjustments that would lengthen a school day in increments of less than one-half hour per day.

Fiscal Impact:

SB 134 makes no appropriation.

Issues:

According to the Public Education Department (PED) analysis of SB 134,

- school calendars have extra days built in for emergency closures;
- in recent years, these extra days were not always sufficient to meet the required instructional days lost to inclement weather or other emergency closures;
- therefore, to satisfy the minimum number of required instructional hours without extending the school year beyond the scheduled closing date, some school districts added a few minutes to each school day;
- however, PED notes that it is questionable whether students receive the benefit of instructional hours with such incremental increases.

During the 2007 interim, one of the larger school districts responded to a query from the Legislative Education Study Committee staff that, in addition to compensating for emergency closures, individual schools are also allowed to add minutes to the school day for teacher professional development and planning time:

- by adding two minutes per day for approximately 180 days, a school gains the 360 minutes needed for one six-hour day for teacher professional development;
- by adding 12 minutes per day for approximately 180 days, a school aggregates enough minutes for six professional development days; and
- to provide teachers with two hours of planning time per week, some elementary schools may allow early dismissal one day of the week by adding minutes to the other weekdays.

The school district also indicated that each school must submit its plan to the school district for approval, and that the district submits its plan to PED for approval.

Background:

Currently, the *Public School Code* provides for the following minimum time in school-directed programs for students:

- for full-day kindergarten and grades 1 through 6, five and one-half hours per day or 990 hours per year; and
- for grades 7 through 12, six hours per day or 1,080 hours per year.

The *Public School Finance Act* requires that school districts budget for a school year consisting of at least 180 full instructional days or the equivalent, exclusive of any release time for in-service training, except in the case of a variable school calendar approved by PED.

The law also allows local school boards to set the length of school days in excess of the minimum requirements, but it does not place restrictions on the increments by which the board may lengthen the school day.

Similar legislation was introduced during the 2008 legislative session; however, it did not pass.

Related Bills:

None as of 01-30-09.