

Guidance on Schedule Change from Days to Hours

Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, traditional school districts, joint vocational school districts and chartered nonpublic schools will be required to comply with minimum hours of instruction instead of a minimum number of school days each year.

- No schedule can be in effect that does not comply with all parts of the new minimum hours law (ORC 3313.48).
- If a school district does not believe it can make the necessary changes and comply with the law beginning on July 1, 2014 (the effective date of the law), the Ohio Department of Education recommends that the school district begin the process before July 1, 2014.

Collective Bargaining Agreements

The change from days to hours does not apply to a collective bargaining agreements executed prior to July 1, 2014. If the district continues a collective bargaining agreement past this date, the district would remain subject to current requirements on the number of days in a school year, including calamity days. Any collective bargaining agreement or renewal executed after July 1, 2014 must comply with the days to hour change.

Minimum Hours and What Hours Count

School districts, joint vocational school districts, and chartered nonpublic schools will be required to be open for instruction for a minimum of:

- 455 hours for students in half-day kindergarten;
- 910 hours for students in full-day kindergarten through Grade 6; and
- 1,001 hours for students in Grades 7-12.

Community schools must be open for instruction for at least 920 hours per year. This does not represent a change.

Hours eligible to count as “open for instruction” include time when the district or building is open and all students are:

- Attending regularly scheduled classes;
- Participating in supervised activities such as assemblies;
- Participating in approved education options; and
- Participating in co-curricular activities during the scheduled school day.

As part of the minimum hours, districts and schools may use:

- Up to two equivalent days for the purpose of individualized parent-teacher conferences and reporting periods;
- Up to two equivalent days for the purpose of professional meetings of teachers; and

- Morning and afternoon recess periods of no more than fifteen minutes each for students in Grades kindergarten through 6.

Time spent during lunch periods, breakfast periods and extracurricular activities cannot count as open for instruction. A schedule must include five days in each week.

Calamity Days

Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, districts that change to an hour based schedule will no longer have calamity days. Instead, schools may schedule “excess” hours above the minimum number. Hours missed above the minimum do not have to be made up. However, if a school closes enough that it will fall below the minimum number of hours, the school must extend its scheduled year. For example:

- High School A is scheduled to be open for instruction for 1,001 hours, the minimum required with no excess hours.
 - During the winter, bad weather forces the school to close for 32 hours.
 - High School A would be required to make up the 32 hours of instruction.
- High School B is scheduled to be open for instruction for 1,040 hours, giving the school 39 excess hours, or hours above the minimum.
 - During the winter, bad weather forces the school to close for 32 hours.
 - High School B is not required to make up the 32 hours of instruction that were missed. It still has 7 excess hours remaining for the year.

One way to make up the hours missed below the minimum required is to use blizzard bags. Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, schools will submit plans explaining how they will make up the missed hours, instead of days, up to the equivalent of three scheduled days. There are no other changes to blizzard bags. Blizzard bags may only be used when it is necessary to close the school because of:

- Disease epidemic;
- Hazardous weather conditions;
- Law enforcement emergencies;
- Inoperability of school buses or other equipment necessary to the school's operation;
- Damage to a school building; or
- Other temporary circumstances due to utility failure rendering the school building unfit for school use.

Changing the Schedule

A traditional school district board of education (not applicable to joint vocational school districts) must hold a public hearing at least thirty days prior to adopting its school schedule. While not required prior to July 1, 2014, the Ohio Department of Education recommends that a public hearing be held if the traditional district is proposing a change in its schedule in hours or days.

If a traditional district board or joint vocational school district intends to *reduce* the total number of hours it is scheduled to be open for instruction compared to the previous year, it must approve a separate resolution.

The district board may not schedule a number of hours below the minimum hours outlined in this document. The total number of hours from last school year is the total number of *scheduled* hours, not the actual hours the school was open for instruction.

Prior to traditional districts (not applicable to joint vocational school districts) making any changes in the hours or days in which a school is scheduled to be open for instruction, traditional school districts must consider the compatibility of the proposed schedule with the scheduling needs of other educational entities in the area. The traditional district must give advanced notice to the entities and enter into a written agreement with each prior to implementing the new schedule. The educational entities that the traditional district must consider are:

- Joint Vocational School Districts
 - Provide advanced notice of a change in hours or days of the traditional high school(s) to the joint vocational school district board; and
 - Enter into an agreement with the joint vocational school district board with regard to student access to the instructional programs offered by the joint vocational school district, incentives for students to participate in career-technical education, transportation and the timing of graduation.

- Community Schools
 - Provide advanced notice of a change in the days to hours of any of the traditional district's schools to the community school's sponsor, governing authority and its operator if applicable; and
 - Enter into an agreement with the community school's governing board or operator, if such authority is delegated to the operator, with regard to student access to the instructional programs offered by the community school, transportation and the timing of graduation.

Prior to making any change in the hours or days in which a school is scheduled to be open, traditional districts also must consult with the chartered nonpublic schools to which the district is required to transport and must consider the effect of the proposed change on the schedule for transportation of those students to the nonpublic schools. Traditional districts, however, do not have to enter into agreements with each chartered nonpublic school.

The governing authority of a chartered nonpublic school must consult with each school district board of education that transports students to the nonpublic school prior to making any change in the hours or days in which the nonpublic school is open for instruction. The chartered nonpublic school does not have to enter into any written agreements regarding the schedule.