



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

**EDUCATION**

## Guidance Related to Instructional Day

May 31, 2023

### Background

Establishing an instructional calendar is a foundational part of planning for the start of a school year. The instructional calendar contains the days and times in which a school is providing educational services over the course of the school year.

### Scope

This guidance applies to any elementary or secondary educational program operating in the District of Columbia that is subject to the control or oversight of a local educational agency (LEA) (defined herein as the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) or a District of Columbia public charter school operating under a single charter).

### Date Issued

This guidance was issued on May 31, 2023, and will remain in effect until further notice.

### Guidance

District of Columbia public and public charter elementary and secondary schools are required to have a school year comprised of at least 180 regular instructional days of at least six hours in length for students. (Title 5, Subtitle A, District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR), Section 2100.3.). The six hours may include time allotted for lunch periods, recess and class breaks.

### School Calendar Submission

An LEA, for each school under its authority, is required to submit its full school year instructional and non-instructional days in eSchoolPLUS, 45 business days prior to the LEA's start of the school year. LEAs should refer to [Calendar Creation in eSchoolPLUS](#) regarding the procedure to submit calendars.

### School Calendar Approval

After submission of the calendar, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) will review the submission for approval and conformance with regulatory requirements. OSSE will notify and escalate to LEA leaders if submitted calendars do not meet the following conditions:

### Calendars for schools serving grades 1-12

1. Comprise at least 180 instructional days for all students enrolled in the school. (Note that distance learning days count as "instructional days" for schools approved by their authorizer – DCPS or DC Public Charter School Board [PCSB] – to provide regular or otherwise routine distance or hybrid learning instructional days.)
2. Each instructional day contains at least six hours which may include lunch periods, recess and class breaks.

### Calendars for evening school programs, adult education programs, pre-kindergarten programs and kindergarten programs

Must have at least 180 unique instructional days for all students enrolled in the school, but the six-hour minimum instructional day requirement is not applicable.

### **Waivers**

The Superintendent has the authority to waive the instructional day requirements; the sections that follow outline the waivers available to LEAs for school calendars.

### **Weekly Half Day Waivers**

When the school's calendar is submitted to OSSE for approval, an LEA on behalf of the school may request to have a half instructional day of at least three hours one time per week by submitting the prescribed [waiver form](#) to OSSE for approval. The waived part of the instructional day must be used for the purposes of advancing student achievement. The waived part of the instructional day must be distributed across the remainder of the days in the week.

For example, if the school has a three-hour instructional day on Friday, the school must build the waived three hours of Friday instruction into the Monday-Thursday schedule. The waiver request, submitted by the LEA, on behalf of the school(s), will be required to explain how the instructional half-day will better serve students, improve instructional quality and ensure that the half-day does not cause a barrier to education. OSSE will review the request for approval.

### **Flexibilities for Managing Unforeseen Circumstances**

Over the course of a school year, circumstances may arise where a school leader must make decisions about modifying the calendar or instructional day to ensure safe and effective operations of a school. School leaders will have multiple flexibilities to make those decisions as they see fit. These situations may include but are not limited to: inclement weather, operational deficiencies, or other situations to protect the health, safety and well-being of the school community. School leaders may choose from the following flexibilities:

- 1. Close the School (and Do Not Make Up the Day)** – If a school calendar has more than 180 instructional days and more than 1,080 instructional hours built into its calendar, the LEA may close school without needing to modify its calendar (essentially pulling from the extra instructional time) or provide substitute instruction. For example, if the school calendar has 181 days and 1,267 instructional hours built into the school calendar, the school may close school for one day to reduce to 180 days and 1,260 instructional hours. However, if the school calendar has 180 instructional days and 1,267 instructional hours, this option would not be possible, and the LEA would need to seek one of the below three flexibilities.
- 2. Close the School and Modify the Calendar** – If a school does not have adequate excess instructional time built into its calendar and does not convert to situational distance learning, the LEA will need to modify its instructional school calendar to add an additional makeup day or request a mid-year waiver from the 180-day/1,080-hour requirement. The addition of a makeup day during the school year can be disruptive, so LEAs are encouraged to build in surplus instructional days/hours to anticipate school closures (e.g., snow days).
- 3. Convert to Situational Distance Learning** – Every school that routinely provides in-person learning will have a “bank” of five distance learning days that can be used at its discretion. These days **cannot** be built into the school calendar at the beginning of the school year, as they are strictly intended for managing unforeseen circumstances. School leaders do not need advance approval from OSSE to use one of their five banked days but are to note these

modifications as they occur in eSchoolPlus. Banked days do not apply to instances where a school may close portions of the school, for example a classroom or a grade level in order to respond to some operational need.

4. **Request a Waiver** – If an LEA has exhausted its flexibilities above yet seeks additional calendar modifications, the LEA must seek a waiver from OSSE. Waivers are available to drop below the 180-day and/or 1080-instructional hour threshold. Waivers are also available in an instance where an in-person school needs to convert more than five days to situational distance learning. Waivers will only be granted for exigent circumstances. For example, a significant disruption to school operations for an extended period of time or a natural or man-made disaster or disruption that is significant and takes place over an extended period of time.

Please note that OSSE maintains the ability to require, or permit, situational distance learning for all schools in an LEA or the city under circumstances where an expansion to situational distance learning would be warranted.

Calendars must reflect those modifications as they occur by making modifications in eSchoolPLUS. LEAs and schools should refer to [Calendar Creation in eSchoolPLUS](#) regarding the procedure to modify calendars.

Should a waiver be pending with the Superintendent that impacts the end of the school year, LEAs are strongly advised to make no communication to the public until the waiver request has been approved or denied. OSSE will respond to waiver requests within five business days of submission.

### **Questions**

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to Andrew Gall, Deputy Chief of Staff, at [Andrew.Gall@dc.gov](mailto:Andrew.Gall@dc.gov).

Questions regarding the submission of calendars in eSchoolPLUS should be directed to Shenee Akinmolayan at [Shenee.Akinmolayan@dc.gov](mailto:Shenee.Akinmolayan@dc.gov).