



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

Guidance Related to Instructional Day

June 7, 2021

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 to a student over the course of the school year.

Scope

This guidance applies to a public educational institution, which includes 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).

Date Issued

This guidance was issued on June 7, 2021, and will remain in effect until further notice.

Guidance

5-A DCMR 2100.3 requires that educational institutions¹ have a school year comprised of at least 180 regular instructional days of at least six hours in length for students. The six hours may include time allotted for lunch periods, recess and class breaks. However, the six-hour minimum instructional day requirement is not applicable to an evening school program, pre-kindergarten program, or a kindergarten program. The Superintendent has the authority to approve a waiver from this requirement.

School Calendar Submission

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

School Calendar Approval

After submission of the calendar, OSSE will review the submission for approval and conformance with the 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 unique instructional days for all students enrolled in the school.
2. Each instructional day contains at least six hours which may include lunch periods, recess, and class breaks.

Calendars for schools with an evening school program, pre-kindergarten program, or a kindergarten program:

1. Comprise at least 180 unique instructional days for all students enrolled in the school.

If it chooses to make this request, an LEA, on behalf of a school in its control, shall submit a waiver at the time of calendar submission to the Superintendent for one half day of instruction in accordance with the parameters outlined in the section on LEA Request for Waivers.

Calendar Modifications

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

Yet, OSSE must make sure that schools offer the instructional days for which students are entitled. If the modification results in the calendar having fewer than 180 instructional days **AND fewer than 1,080** instructional hours over the course of the school year with no intention of making up the days/hours, the school must then also submit a mid-year waiver for approval.

LEA Request for Waivers

An LEA may request waivers on behalf of their school(s) when the school's calendar falls short of the regulatory requirements.

OSSE will grant waivers to calendars on two occasions:

Weekly Half Day Waivers

At the beginning of the school year, when the school's calendar is submitted to OSSE for approval, an LEA on behalf of the school may submit a waiver to have one half instructional day of at least three hours, one time per week using the form prescribed by OSSE. The unused part of the instructional day must be used for the purposes of advancing student achievement. The unused 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 half day, the school must build the other three hours into the schedule into the other four instructional days in the week. 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 and improve instructional quality and ensure that the half day does not cause a barrier to education. The Superintendent will review and decide on the approval of the request.

Extraordinary Operational Conditions:

During the school year, a school will need to submit a waiver using the form prescribed by OSSE when it modifies its calendar from its approved calendar and the calendar fails to meet the following two conditions:

Condition 1: The school's calendar does not have 180 unique instructional days of at least six hours in length for students; **AND**

Condition 2: The school's total instructional time falls below 1,080 total hours of instruction for the school year.

If a modification results in the school not meeting those two conditions, no waiver is required. Yet, if a school's calendar falls under that threshold for any reason and the LEA and/or school has no intention of making up the lost instructional day or time, the LEA on behalf of the school must submit a waiver request to the Superintendent using the appropriate form for approval. LEAs are advised to make no communication to the public about the end of the school year or any other modifications until it has been approved by the Superintendent. Waivers will only be granted for extraordinary operational conditions, 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. LEAs and schools are encouraged to build in surplus instructional days and/or hours to respond to closures that are not extraordinary in nature, for example, a snow day.

Questions

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to Justin Tooley, Deputy Chief of Staff, at justin.tooley@dc.gov. Questions regarding the submission of calendars in eSchoolPLUS should be directed to Shenee Akinmolayan at Shenee.Akinmolayan@dc.gov.