



OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

Guidance Related to Instructional Day

Issued May 23, 2024

Updated July 11, 2024

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 the instructional calendar and instructional day of 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 23, 2024, will apply to calendars for the 2024-25 school year, and will remain in effect until further notice. This guidance was updated on July 11, 2024 to reflect a change in the waiver submission process.

Guidance

I. Definition of an Instructional Day

District of Columbia public and public charter elementary and secondary schools are required to have a school year comprised of at least 180 instructional days. An instructional day is a school day that is 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. The Superintendent of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) has the authority to waive instructional day requirements. More information on waivers that OSSE will consider, and how an LEA may apply for a waiver, can be found in the “Waivers” section below.

II. 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.

III. School Calendar Approval

After submission of the calendar and any applicable waivers, 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:

For Schools Serving Grades 1-12

- School calendars must include at least 180 instructional days for all students enrolled in the school.
 - Note that routine distance learning days count as “instructional days” for schools approved by their authorizer – DCPS or DC Public Charter School Board – to provide regular or otherwise routine distance or hybrid learning instructional days.
 - Situational distance learning days also count as “instructional days” but *cannot* be built into a school calendar.
 - More information on distance learning can be found in “SY24-25 OSSE Distance Learning Guidance” at: <https://osse.dc.gov/page/policy-and-guidance-resources/attendance>.
- Each instructional day must contain at least six hours, which may include lunch periods, recess, and class breaks.

For Evening School, Adult Education, Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Programs

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

IV. 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. LEAs are strongly advised to make no communication to the public regarding changes to the school calendar until the waiver request has been approved or denied. OSSE will respond to waiver requests within five business days of submission.

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 remaining 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.

Weekly half-day waivers should be submitted on the same date that a school’s calendar is submitted to eSchoolPlus for OSSE approval, and the proposed weekly half-day should be reflected in the submitted calendar. This means that weekly half-day waivers should be submitted at least 45 business days prior to the LEA’s start of the school year.

The waiver form for an LEA to request a weekly half-day can be submitted by the LEA data manager in the OSSE Support Tool QuickBase Application. More information can be found at: <https://octo.quickbase.com/db/bh9ehz85s>.

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, effective operations of a school. LEAs are encouraged to build in surplus instructional days and hours in anticipation of such circumstances that could necessitate school closures (e.g., snow days). In addition to building in surplus instructional days and hours, school leaders have multiple flexibilities to make needed modifications to their calendar.

Situations that could require an LEA to exercise flexibilities for unforeseen circumstances may include but are not limited to: a significant disruption to school operations; a natural or man-made disaster; or other situations that threaten the health, safety and well-being of the school community.

In the event of such unforeseen circumstances, school leaders have four options depending on the number of regular instructional days and instructional hours in their school calendar. The four options are outlined in tables one and two. Calendars must reflect 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.

Table One

School leaders have three options if their school calendar has 180 or fewer regular instructional days, 1,080 or fewer instructional day hours, or both:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Close the School and Modify the Calendar by Adding Additional School Day(s) – If a school does not have adequate excess instructional time built into its calendar and does not convert to situational distance learning, the LEA may modify its instructional school calendar by adding an additional makeup day(s) to meet the 180 instructional days requirement.
<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. 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.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ More information on situational distance learning can be found at: https://osse.dc.gov/page/policy-and-guidance-resources/attendance.○ 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.

3. **Request a Waiver** – If an LEA has exhausted the flexibilities outlined in this guidance and seeks additional calendar modifications to drop below 180 days, drop below 1,080 instructional hours, or convert to more than five days of situational distance learning, the LEA must seek a waiver from OSSE. 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.
- The waiver to drop below 180-days, 1,080-instructional hours, or both can be submitted by the LEA data manager in the OSSE Support Tool QuickBase application. More information can be found at: <https://octo.quickbase.com/db/bh9ehz85s>.
 - The waiver for instances where an in-person school needs to convert more than five days to situational distance learning can be submitted by the LEA data manager in the OSSE Support Tool QuickBase application. More information can be found at: <https://octo.quickbase.com/db/bh9ehz85s>.

Table Two

In addition to the three options in table one, school leaders whose school calendar has more than 180 regular instructional days and more than 1,080 instructional hours can also:

4. **Close the School and Not Make Up the Day** – The LEA may close the school and not make up the day(s) that the school is closed without needing to modify its calendar, as long as the total number of regular instructional days remaining stays at or above 180 regular instructional days and 1,080 instructional hours.
- Example: A school calendar that has 181 regular instructional days and 1,267 instructional hours may close school for one day, as this would result in 180 instructional days and 1,260 instructional hours in its calendar. However, a school whose calendar has 180 regular instructional days and 1,267 instructional hours in its calendar could not exercise this option because closing the school for one day would result in only have 179 regular instructional days.

Questions

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to Joseph Hood, at OSSE.calendarwaivers@dc.gov.

Questions regarding the submission of calendars in eSchoolPLUS should be directed to Naveen Kusula, at Naveen.Kusula@dc.gov.