

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1842

As Passed House

March 18, 1997

Title: An act relating to the minimum length of school years.

Brief Description: Changing the minimum length of the school year if disaster circumstances exist.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Honeyford, Clements, Boldt, Lisk, McMorris, Koster, Skinner, Johnson, L. Thomas and Mulliken).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/18/97, 3/4/97 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/18/97, 85-13.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Linville; Smith; Sterk; Sump; Talcott and Veloria.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Hickel, Vice Chairman; and Quall.

Staff: Joe Hauth (786-7111).

Background: The Legislature must provide basic education for all kindergarten through grade-12 students, and fund it through a stable revenue source. School districts must teach specified courses of instruction, and must instruct students for a specified amount of time in each of these subject areas. The minimum school year must be 180 days in grades one through 12, and 180 half-days of instruction, or its equivalent, for kindergarten. A school district may schedule the last five school days for noninstructional purposes for graduating high school students. The 180-day school year requirement applies to educational programs for juveniles in detention facilities, and to private schools.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) may excuse a school district from the 180-day minimum school year requirement due to natural events, mechanical failures, or other unforeseen emergencies. The SPI may excuse the school district for up to two scheduled school days per incident and not more than three school days per school year. In cases where the emergency is substantiated, SPI must provide the school district with its full annual allocation of state moneys. If the emergency is not substantiated, then SPI must prorate the reduction of state moneys that are allocated.

The State Board of Education (SBE) may allow school districts to waive program hour requirements in order to improve educational programs. School districts may request waivers under the student learning improvement grant process, which provided funding for site-based planning activities and staff development and training in support of education reform efforts. As of January 1997, the SBE had granted waivers for the 180-day school year to five school districts. The waivers ranged from three to nine days, with an average of six days waived.

Summary of Bill: A school program may consist of less than 180 days if the school is closed as a result of the county being declared a disaster area by the Governor. In such an event, the school year must be 180 days minus the number of days in excess of five days that the school is closed due to the disaster. Students may still be claimed as full-time equivalent students for basic education allocation funding purposes.

The 180-day school year disaster area exemption also applies to juvenile detention facility educational programs, and to private school students. For purposes of calculating teacher certification requirements or teaching experience, a school year is 180 days minus the number of days in excess of five days that the school is closed due to the disaster.

The school district must apply any certificated and classified employees' time or salary that would otherwise be reduced due to school closure resulting from a disaster toward in-service training and planning to improve student and residential school resident learning.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed except for Section 2 which shall take effect September 1, 2000. However, Section 2 shall not take effect if, by September 1, 2000, a law is enacted stating that a school accountability and academic assessment system is not in place.

Testimony For: This bill is meant to address the considerable number of days that a school may be closed due to a natural disaster, such as flooding. The bill should be amended to include teacher inservice training for days that are lost due to a natural disaster.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Honeyford, prime sponsor.