

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 1842

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: *Representatives Honeyford, Clements, Boldt, Lisk, McMorris, Koster, Skinner, Johnson, L. Thomas and Mulliken.*

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Meeting Date: *February 18, 1997.*

Bill Analysis Prepared by: *Joe Hauth (786-7111).*

Background: The Legislature must provide basic education for all kindergarten through 12 grade 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 may excuse a school district from the 180 day minimum school year requirement due to natural events, mechanical failures, or other unforeseen emergencies. The Superintendent of Public Instruction 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, the Superintendent of Public Instruction must provide the school district with its full annual allocation of state moneys. If the emergency is not substantiated, then the Superintendent of Public Instruction must pro-rate the reduction of state moneys that are allocated. WAC 392-129-150.

The State Board of Education 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 State Board of Education 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. RCW 28A.305.140; RCW 28A.300.138.

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.

Fiscal Note: *Not requested.*

Effective Date: *Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.*