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Lucy Payne, Mahtomedi School Board Chair

HF 1644 and the redefining instructional hours in section 2 is a small change that has the potential to make a big difference in student learning. Minnesota's current definition of instructional hours puts time as the focus rather than student engagement and student learning.

Instructional hours or "seat time" is an antiquated methodology that actually inhibits efforts to create equitable and meaningful learning experiences for students. Students learn at different rates and in different formats and environments. The current definition of "instructional hours" limits opportunities for students in areas such as internships and service learning. These are opportunities where students are deeply engaged in learning and application of knowledge.

Education professionals have the knowledge and experience and school boards know their communities; together they can create learning opportunities that are best for their students. Providing more flexibility will allow districts to make the best decisions for their learners. A redefinition of instructional hours would allow districts to have the flexibility and local control to create learning experiences, environments, and timelines that will be more engaging for students and not when and how long they are physically present in a school building or course.

In the past, this type of education reform met with resistance from those who claim the minimum number of hours is an accountability measure. Remember there are multiple accountability systems in place, such as:

- state academic standards,
- state academic tests,
- the federal ESSA plan and
- state accountability measures (report cards, World's Best Workforce)

This small change allows for flexibility. It doesn't mandate change.