

HF1607: Defining Instructional Time

Sponsors: Rep. Mary Frances Clardy

Minnesota school districts want to create new learning opportunities for their students to keep them engaged in school and make sure they graduate ready for what comes next. However, lack of clarity around definitions in state law can prevent districts from implementing these opportunities. School leaders consistently cite the state's concept of instructional hours as a roadblock to districts' efforts to innovate. These new learning opportunities can also combat challenges such as decreased student engagement, which has led to a significant increase in chronic absenteeism. In fact, 1 in 4 Minnesota students miss at least 10 percent of school days last year. This legislative session, Minnesota lawmakers can address a key roadblock to education innovation and help support districts that want to create student-centered learning structures. By addressing this challenge, lawmakers can help districts personalize learning and strengthen Minnesota's public education system."

HF 1607 would:

- **Define Secondary School Hours of Instruction.** Minnesota statute does not currently contain a definition of the term "hours of instruction", even though the state's Education Code, Chapters 120 through 129C, uses the term in no less than eight separate chapters and places requirements around the term in several places. This bill defines "hours of instruction" specific to secondary school as educational experiences that a) allow students to earn academic credit, b) are available to all students, and c) are supervised, coordinated, and verified by a qualified teacher.
- **Define Educational Experiences.** The definition of "hours of instruction" includes a new term, "educational experiences." This bill defines this term as inclusive of any secondary school course of study created by a local school board and may take place outside of the regular school day or week. The bill would prohibit the inclusion of educational experiences that take place outside of the school year.
- **Maintain Student Protections.** As districts think more expansively about creating new opportunities for when, where and how students learn, they must continue to provide supports and services as required under state and federal law. This bill includes language clarifying this reality to make sure that all students must continue to receive the supports to which they are entitled.
- **Regular Education Department Policy Updates.** As schools and districts expand their educational practices, the Minnesota Department of Education must regularly assess and update its policies to support innovation." across the state. This bill includes language requiring the Department to regularly update its policies and structures to make sure they are not inadvertently constraining districts from providing a broad range of educational opportunities.
- **Funding Limits.** While the bill expands the definition of what can count for hours of instruction, it is not intended to allow districts to receive additional funding on top of what

they would normally receive for each student. This bill includes language clarifying that the term “pupil units”, used to determine funding, is not modified under this language.

Call to Action. By passing HF 1607, Minnesota can modernize outdated policies, empower school districts to innovate, and better engage students in their education. We urge lawmakers to support this legislation to strengthen our schools and improve student outcomes.

Bill Supporters. The following organizations support this bill:

