

2021 -- S 0151

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION - SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND SUPERINTENDENTS

Introduced By: Senator Roger Picard

Date Introduced: February 05, 2021

Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 16-2-2 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-2 entitled "School
2 Committees and Superintendents [See Title 16 Chapter 97 - The Rhode Island Board of Education
3 Act]" is hereby amended to read as follows:

4 **16-2-2. City and town schools required -- School year -- Location -- Kindergartens.**

5 (a)(1) Except as specifically provided in this section, every city or town shall establish and
6 maintain for at least one hundred eighty (180) days annually or the equivalent thereof, exclusive of
7 holidays, a sufficient number of schools in convenient places under the control and management of
8 the school committee and under the supervision of the Rhode Island Board of Education. In lieu of
9 a convenient location, the school committee may provide transportation for pupils to and from
10 school in accordance with the provisions of chapter 21 of this title. Provided, that a school district
11 may establish a school year that is the equivalent of one hundred eighty (180) days through the use
12 of longer school days in terms of hours or pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, and that may
13 total less than one hundred eighty (180) separate days, so long as through the use of the longer
14 school day, the school district annually provides a minimum of one thousand eighty (1,080) school
15 hours in a single school year. This figure is based on a minimum of six (6) hours per school day.
16 For purposes of clarification, the intent herein is to permit school districts to amend their school
17 year to provide for longer school days while reducing the actual number of days in which the school
18 facilities must be fully staffed and maintained, but to insure that in doing so, school districts shall
19 still provide the minimum amount of instruction time contemplated by this section. Nothing herein

1 shall be deemed to limit a school district from exceeding the minimum amounts of days and hours
2 set forth herein.

3 (2) School districts intending to make use of the option provided herein to lengthen school
4 days and shorten the school year shall submit a detailed school day plan and a proposed school
5 calendar to the commissioner of elementary and secondary education for approval. The
6 commissioner shall review the submitted school day plan and the submitted calendar to determine
7 whether the plan and calendar are academically sound and fiscally efficient. The commissioner
8 may grant or deny approval of the plan and/or the calendar.

9 (b) School facilities shall include a sufficient number of kindergartens.

10 (c) ~~On or before December 1, 2017, the department of elementary and secondary education~~
11 ~~shall establish a policy that allows a school district to submit a detailed plan, at any time, to the~~
12 ~~commissioner of elementary and secondary education that would allow the schools to conduct~~
13 ~~instruction through virtual education when the schools have been closed due to inclement weather~~
14 ~~or other emergency. The plan for virtual education would be subject to, and require approval by,~~
15 ~~the council on elementary and secondary education in order to count as a school day.~~

16 Upon approval by the local school committee, school districts may conduct instruction
17 through virtual education for up to five (5) days when schools have been closed due to inclement
18 weather, emergency or any nonscheduled school closing. The instruction through virtual education
19 may occur on or after the school closure day. A plan shall be submitted to the school committee for
20 approval that includes the following:

21 (1) Updated school attendance policy that states failure to complete work required for
22 virtual instruction days will result in a student being recorded as absent;

23 (2) The plan to provide instruction for students without computers or Internet access;

24 (3) The approval of teachers to participate and have availability at set times in virtual
25 education days;

26 (4) An affirmation that the academic work shall be the equivalent in effort and rigor to
27 typical classroom work; and

28 (5) A statement and plan for notification of staff, students and parents, not less than two
29 (2) days, regarding the intent to use virtual instruction days and about whether the virtual instruction
30 will occur on the school closure day or at a day in the future, including, but not limited to, school
31 vacation weeks or long weekends.

32 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

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1 This act would repeal the requirement that the department of elementary and secondary
2 education establish a policy allowing a school district to submit a detailed plan to conduct
3 instruction through virtual education when schools have been closed due to inclement weather or
4 other emergency, and amend the statutory law to allow, upon approval by the local school
5 committee, a school district to conduct instruction through virtual education for up to five (5) days
6 when schools have been closed due to inclement weather, emergency or any nonscheduled school
7 closing. The plan submitted to the school committee for approval shall meet specified criteria as
8 set forth in the statute.

9 This act would take effect upon passage.

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