

SB

239

Referral



## SENATOR FRED DYSON

# **SB 239**

### ***Sponsor Statement***

#### **"An Act relating to the required number of days in a school year."**

*Updated: May 4, 2004*

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SB 239 allows a school district to use a school term different than the traditional 180 days in current law, if approved by the Commissioner of EED. The Commissioner may approve an alternative school term if he certifies that it provides an approximate educational equivalent and comparable wage rates as a 180-day school term.

SB 239 allows innovation and flexibility for local school districts in the context of school board oversight, recommendation, and Department of Education approval. Recently an Anchorage charter school proposed a plan to the Anchorage School Board for something less than 180 days. The plan was approved in concept and but is now on hold pending passage of this bill. This relaxation allows a stronger focus on academic performance in preference over an implied emphasis on mere " seat time" .

While allowing for a four-day week is not the specific intent of SB 239, passage would allow meaningful dialogue on whether a four-day week would be beneficial in some cases. For boarding/ residential schools, a flexible schedule may make a big difference by allowing students to return home more often. Potentially, some funds now directed at transportation and other school support services could be redirected to academic programs.

Anchorage School District Superintendent, Carol Comeau recommended to the Anchorage School Board to support this bill, and the Anchorage School Board subsequently passed supporting resolution # 2002/2003-8 supporting the concept.

Alaska K-12 education faces unique challenges in attempting to meet the needs of diverse students with very different needs scattered throughout widely varying geographical, cultural, and economic conditions. SB 239 broadens the field in which educators can design programs to meet these challenges.