

SB

239

# Four-day School Week?

Policymakers have been eyeing the four-day school week as a way to cut education costs.

There have been mixed results where the schedule has been adopted.

By Greta Durr

With promises of a 20 percent reduction in overhead and transportation costs, the four-day school week is growing more attractive to legislators seeking to cut education costs—especially in energy, transportation and classified personnel salaries. But while some states are looking at the four-day school week as a way to save money or as a creative option for rural areas, others have found it impractical.

The four-day week offers the same amount of class time in fewer days. Mostly these plans have been used by rural school districts and the savings are not always dramatic. There are other factors, however, that influence whether they are successful.

Custer School District in rural South Dakota adopted the four-day-a-week calendar in 1995 to reduce its annual budget by approximately \$70,000. The savings weren't as much as estimated, but a school survey found that the switch boosted morale, reduced absenteeism, decreased the need for substitute teachers, and led to a boom in participation in extracurricular activities. The survey also indicated that teachers were covering more academic content than they had under the traditional five-day calendar.

But the idea didn't work in Utah where a modified school week pilot program ended a year early because the schools involved reported only moderate or no actual savings, as well as scheduling complications. Some districts in the pilot went to four-and-a-half-day weeks after two years, which cut into savings on transportation and heat.

The legislation allowing the program required that extracurricular activities like school sports, dances, plays and speech meets be scheduled on Thursday nights, Fridays or Saturdays so students would not have to travel on a regular school day.

"Most schools opted out," says Steve Laing, state school superintendent. "There are still a couple of schools that would like to do it, but not because they're planning on any savings." Laing explained that, for these schools, the benefits of the modified week (better morale, decreased absenteeism, reduced need for substitutes) meant more to the communities than the money they saved.

Oregon has two laws that deal with shortened school schedules and both have come into play as districts struggle to survive the worst budget deficit in 20 years. After Oregonians defeated a measure in January that would have increased income taxes for three years to prevent \$310 million in cuts to schools and other programs, schools are looking at the four-day school week, as well as cutting five to 24 days from the school year.

"At least 16 districts are on the four-day week to cut costs," says Margaret Peterson of the state Board of Education, "and they would

still meet compulsory education requirements. But other districts are looking at cutting days from the school year, which is allowed in Oregon during severe budget difficulties. Some of them will be allowed to drop below the number of hours required by state law."

Oregon's rural Morrow County School District 1 adopted the four-day school week offered through a state policy option to lower expenses 10 years ago. The district currently is saving an estimated \$250,000 in a \$14 million budget, mostly from salaries of classified employees, such as cooks, bus drivers and teacher's aides.

In some states, laws have to change in order to change school calendars. When a small Michigan district considered a four-day week, officials found they couldn't do it because teacher labor contracts and retirement requirements are set by the state in terms of days, not hours.

Representative Stephen Adamini penned a bill to make the changes from specifications in days to required hours. Approximately nine districts have contacted him about making the switch.

Student transportation costs really take a toll on sparsely populated districts in vast, rural areas, Adamini says. "Small districts are hanging by their fingernails looking for savings," he says. "Local schools should have this as an option."

Montana was still debating a four-day week when this issue of the magazine went to press. The bill's sponsor, Senator Sam Kitzenberg, a high school English teacher, wants to give districts more flexibility with scheduling and funding, despite the potential impact on local jobs. "We're looking for a lifeboat for Montana schools in case of cutbacks," he says. "We don't want it forced, we want it as an option."

Yet Representative Carol Juneau is worried about classified employees. "If we go to the four-day week, many cooks, bus drivers and custodians would lose wages. In our community, many of our local people work those jobs," she says.

Ten states have some school districts operating on a four-day week: Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, Wisconsin and Wyoming. States with legislation allowing the four-day school week include Arkansas, California, Minnesota and Illinois. Bills are pending in Michigan, Montana, Ohio and Virginia.



Representative  
Stephen Adamini  
Michigan



Senator  
Sam Kitzenberg  
Montana



Representative  
Carol Juneau  
Montana

Greta Durr tracks education policy at NCSL.

# FISCAL NOTE

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**2004 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

Fiscal Note Number: 1  
 Bill Version: SB 239  
 () Publish Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): \_\_\_\_\_ Dept. Affected: EED  
 Title An Act relating to the required RDU ESS  
number of days in a school year Component Executive Administration  
 Sponsor Senator Dyson  
 Requester Senate HESS Component No. 2736

**Expenditures/Revenues** (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

<b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b>						
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<b>CHANGE IN REVENUES ( )</b>						
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**FUND SOURCE** (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type--Do not abbreviate)						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Estimate of any current year (FY2004) cost: 0.0

Mark this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2005 budget proposal:

**POSITIONS**

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)

This is a zero fiscal note.

Prepared by: Eddy Jeans, School Finance Manager Phone 907-465-8679  
 Division ESS/School Finance Date/Time 2/2/04 3:10 PM  
 Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date 2/2/2004  
 Agency Education & Early Development



## SENATOR FRED DYSON

### ***SB 239***

#### ***Sponsor Statement***

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

*Updated: January 23, 2004*

*Contact: Senator Fred Dyson's office at (907) 465-2199*

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 relaxes the letter of the law to allow innovation and flexibility for local school districts. 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 concept, and the Anchorage School Board subsequently passed supporting resolution # 2002/2003-8.

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.

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #188 (2002-2003)

March 3, 2003

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF RESTRUCTURING THE  
SCHOOL DAY AND/OR SCHOOL YEAR TO ALLOW  
FLEXIBILITY FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board support a resolution to lobby the Alaska State Legislature to approve structural change in the daily schedule for schools, which would allow schools within the State to "bank time" or establish other forms of flexibility in a school day and/or school year.

PERTINENT FACTS:

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in January 2002, titled, No Child Left Behind, requires that school districts comply with a myriad of new regulations. These regulations include requirements for professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals in Title 1 schools. Also, schools are being asked to demonstrate adequate yearly progress for the identified groups stipulated by NCLB. The State of Alaska's requirements embedded in the Quality Schools Initiative and the requirement that all students pass the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination in order to receive a diploma also pose challenges for school districts throughout the state. Staff training and professional development are essential components of implementing NCLB, the Quality Schools Initiative, and the HSGQE. School districts need additional time for professional development and collaboration among their staff members that is not adequately provided in the current school calendar.

As the six comprehensive high schools in the Anchorage School District recreate themselves both physically and instructionally into Smaller Learning Communities, there is demonstrated need for additional professional development time. Some monies are available from various grants to provide substitutes for teachers, or for addenda for teachers to work beyond the school day. The majority of teachers hesitate to miss time with their students and often decline having substitutes as an option for receiving training time. Additionally, there is a limit to the amount of time teachers and staff are willing to work beyond the school day or school week. Many teachers and staff serve as coaches and/or tutors after the school day and cannot attend professional development at that time.

A restructured schedule, such as "banking time", would allow schools to offer professional development time and collaboration time for teachers and staff within a scheduled workday. Students could begin their day ten to fifteen minutes earlier or extend their day later to accumulate additional banked time. When sufficient time is banked, students would attend school a shortened day once or twice a month. During the time students are on a shortened schedule, teachers and other staff would have time for professional development and/or collaboration.

Such a system of banked time would provide, for the first time, a sufficient amount of professional development and collaboration time for all teachers. While secondary teachers have a planning period and middle school teachers additionally have a team planning time, most elementary teachers have little actual planning time.

Mentoring of new teachers has become a priority in the Anchorage School District and a restructured school schedule would allow for more substantive mentoring of new teachers by experienced teachers within their own building. This would significantly reduce a teacher's sense of isolation, often reported as one of the main contributors to stress in the first years of teaching.

Aligning curriculum across the District is a priority as expressed through the curriculum audit and at the recent six-year planning session. Shared collaboration time would allow teachers in the field to participate fully in this most important process. This would not only provide a superior product, but it would increase support among teachers.

Restructuring the school day and/or school year allows flexibility to provide for professional development and collaboration time for all staff less expensively than adding days to the current school calendar.

Attachment

CC/!C

Prepared by: Jan Christensen, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction

Approved by: Carol Comeau, Superintendent

**ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD  
ASDR 2002/2003-8**

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF RESTRUCTURING THE SCHOOL DAY AND/OR SCHOOL YEAR TO ALLOW FLEXIBILITY FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**WHEREAS**, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in January 2002, No Child Left Behind, requires that school districts comply with a myriad of new regulations; and

**WHEREAS**, these regulations include requirements for professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals in Title I schools, and

**WHEREAS**, the State of Alaska's requirements embedded in the Quality Schools Initiative and the requirement that all students pass the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination in order to receive a diploma poses challenges for school districts around the state; and

**WHEREAS**, staff training and professional development are essential components of implementing No Child Left Behind, the Quality Schools Initiative, and the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination; and

**WHEREAS**, many teachers hesitate to miss time with their students and tend to decline substitutes as an option for receiving professional training time; and

**WHEREAS**, the Anchorage School District needs additional time for professional development and collaboration among staff members that is not adequately provided in the current school calendar; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Anchorage School Board supports the idea of restructuring the school day and/or school year to allow for flexibility to provide professional development and collaboration time for staff.

**PASSED AND APPROVED** by the Anchorage School Board this 3rd day of March 2003.

**ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD**

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Jeff Metcalfe, President

Debbie Ossiander  
Tim Steele  
Rita J. Holthouse

John Steiner  
Harriet A. Drummond  
Mary Marks

Carol Comeau, Superintendent

23-LS1269\N  
Mischel  
2/11/04

**CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 239(HES)**

**IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA**

**TWENTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION**

**BY THE SENATE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**Offered:  
Referred:**

**Sponsor(s): SENATOR DYSON**

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

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

2 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

3 **\* Section 1.** AS 14.03.030 is amended to read:

4 **Sec. 14.03.030. School term.** A school term begins and ends on the dates  
5 fixed by the governing body of a school district. A school term shall include not less  
6 than 180 days in session [,] unless, with the approval of the commissioner,

7 (1) a day used for in-service training of teachers is substituted for a day  
8 in session, up to a maximum of 10 days;

9 (2) an "emergency closure day" is substituted for a day in session  
10 because of conditions posing a threat to the health or safety of students; or

11 (3) [A SCHOOL BOARD ADOPTS A SCHOOL TERM OF NOT  
12 LESS THAN 150 DAYS FOR A SCHOOL IF THE COMMISSIONER FINDS  
13 THAT

14 (A) THE SHORTER TERM IS NECESSARY FOR  
15 ABATING HEALTH HAZARDS IN THE SCHOOL; AND

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
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8

(B) THE SCHOOL BOARD HAS SUBMITTED AN ACCEPTABLE PLAN UNDER WHICH STUDENTS WILL RECEIVE THE APPROXIMATE EDUCATIONAL EQUIVALENT OF A 180-DAY TERM;  
OR

(4)] the school board adopts a different school term of not less than 144 [170] days for a school if the commissioner finds that the school board has submitted an acceptable plan under which students will receive the approximate educational equivalent of a 180-day term.

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Part-time						
Temporary						

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)

This is a zero fiscal note.

Prepared by: Eddy Jeans, School Finance Manager  
 Division: ESS/School Finance  
 Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Agency: Education & Early Development

Phone 907-465-8679  
 Date/Time 2/13/04 1:21 PM  
 Date 2/13/2004

## SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT First Committee of Referral

DATE: 1/12/04

FURTHER:

Date of 5-Day Notice: \_\_\_\_\_  
(in accordance with Uniform Rule 23)

DATE TURNED IN TO OFFICE: 2.25.04

Health, Education and Social Services Committee considered

SENATE BILL NO. 239

### SB 239 LENGTH OF SCHOOL TERM

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

and recommends:

be replaced with \_\_\_\_\_ CS SB 239 (HES)

adopt previous \_\_\_\_\_ CS \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)

attached amendment(s)

adopt Letter of Intent by \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

further referral to \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

**Senate Bill:**

- Same Title  
 New Title

**House Bill:**

- Same Title  
 Technical Title Change  
 New Title w/ SCR # \_\_\_\_\_

**NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):**

Department	Date	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN#
EED	2/2			✓	

**PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTE(S):**

Department	Date	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN#

APPROPRIATION - no fiscal note

SIGNATURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:	Do PASS	Do NOT PASS	No REC	AMEND
<i>[Signature]</i>			✓	
<i>[Signature]</i>			✓	
<i>[Signature]</i>				X
CHAIR: <i>[Signature]</i>	✓			