

Instructional Hours vs Days

Introduction

Relating to the choice by school districts and accredited nonpublic schools to choose between 180 days or 1,080 hours of instruction.

Required and Recommended Actions

Requires school districts and accredited nonpublic schools to choose between 180 days or 1,080 hours of instruction according to Iowa Code section [256.7\(19\)](#) and [281-IAC 12.1](#). School boards and authorities in charge of an accredited nonpublic school are authorized to determine the days or hours of their school calendars; however, public schools must hold a public hearing prior to adoption. References to accredited nonpublic schools include independently accredited schools.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who must meet the 1,080 hours or 180 days of instruction?

Districts and accredited nonpublic schools must meet the 1,080 hours or 180 days requirement. Specially accredited schools are not required to meet this requirement. Iowa Code 256.7(19)

2. When are districts and accredited nonpublic schools required to submit calendar information to the Department of Education?

The district/school's decision on 1,080 hours or 180 days will be reported in Spring BEDS. Iowa Code section 256.11(10)

3. Must a calendar based on 1,080 hours include a minimum of 6 hours in a day?

No. For districts and accredited nonpublic schools using the 1,080 hours of instruction, the district does not need to meet the 6-hour minimum day. For districts/schools using the 1,080 hours of instruction there is no minimum or maximum day length. Day length is a local district/school decision and may vary. The number to be reported is the annual sum of hours districts and accredited nonpublic schools have documented to meet 1,080 hours. Iowa Code section 256.7(19)

4. Is a public hearing required before a school district establishes a calendar?

Yes. School districts are required to hold a public hearing for the calendar. This hearing may include start date and hours vs. days. Accredited nonpublic schools are not required to hold a public meeting. The public hearing must be conducted prior to certifying Spring BEDS. 281—IAC 12.1(7)

5. If parent-teacher conferences are held will the time count as instructional time?

Yes. The law states, "Time spent on parent-teacher conferences shall be considered instructional time." If the district/school is using hours, the time may apply to the hours. If a district/school is using days, a 6-hour parent-teacher conference day will count as one day toward the 180 days. 281—IAC 12.1(7)

6. What happens if a district/school encounters inclement weather?

School districts and accredited nonpublic schools that are using days, may record a day of school with less than the minimum instructional hours (6) as a minimum school day if emergency health or safety factors require the late arrival or early dismissal of students on a specific day for districts or schools that designated 180 days per year. Districts or schools using hours may not count the time missed due to health or safety factors. Iowa Code 256.7(19)

7. May a district or accredited nonpublic school use online learning to meet the 1080 hours or 180 days of instruction?

Yes. Up to 30 hours or 5 days to meet the minimum 1080 hours or 180 days of instruction. Iowa Code 279.10(1)

8. May a district or accredited nonpublic school count professional development toward the 1,080 hours of instruction or 6 hours toward 180 days?

No. Iowa Code 256.7(19)

9. May a district or accredited nonpublic school count lunch toward the 1,080 hours of instruction or 6 hours toward 180 days?

No. Iowa Code 256.7(19)

10. May a district/school count passing time toward the 1,080 hours of instruction or 6 hours toward 180 days?

Yes. Iowa Code 256.7(19)

11. If a district/school has multiple attendance centers, which center is used to determine minutes of instruction per day to meet the 1,080 hours of instruction or 6 hours toward 180 days?

The center (grades 1-12) that meets the least amount of time per day will be the one that will be used to count toward the 1,080 hours or 6-hour minimum per day for districts/schools looking at 180 days. Iowa Code section 256.7(19)

12. Can a district with multiple buildings put some buildings on hours and some on days?

No. Iowa Code 256.7(19)

13. May a district or accredited nonpublic school using the 180-day calendar that exceeds the 6-hour minimum count the extra hours toward one of the 180-day count?

No. A district or accredited nonpublic school using the 180-day calendar must meet 180 days for at least 6 hours. Iowa Code 256.7(19)

14. Is there a requirement that lunch must be served if the school district is in session for a certain amount of time?

A school district shall provide a lunch program for all students if the school district is in session for 4 or more hours. Iowa Code 283A.2(2)

15. Would time for students transported to a different building for class and back during the school day count toward instructional time?

No. 281—IAC 12.1(7)

16. Our first bell rings at 8:00. However, the shuttle buses do not arrive until 8:15. Attendance and instruction does not begin until the shuttles arrive. May we start to count the minutes at 8:00?

No. Instructional time starts when all students are under the guidance and instruction of the professional staff. 281—IAC 12.1(7)

17. Students riding a bus leave 10 minutes before other students every day. Can we count the ten minutes at the end of each day as instructional time even though “bus students” have departed?

No. Instructional time should be based on time available to all students. 281—IAC 12.1(7)

18. If a school holds parent-teacher conferences for 6 hours without student instruction occurring during that day, does this count as a day toward 180 days?

Yes. The time of 6 hours or more counts as a day toward the 180 days. 281—IAC 12.1(7)

19. Can we still let seniors out a week early?

Yes. A school or school district may, by board policy, excuse graduating seniors up to 30 hours toward the 1,080 hours or 5 days toward the 180 days school calendar minimum requirement. If additional days are added to the regular school calendar because of inclement weather, a graduating senior who has met the school district’s requirements for graduation may be excused from attendance during the extended school calendar. 281—IAC 12.1(7)

20. Can we still count recess as instructional time?

Yes. As long as students are under the supervision of instructional professional staff, this time counts as instructional time. 281—IAC 12.1(7)

21. Can school districts or schools using 180 days have a school day that is less than 6 hours of instruction?

A school or school district may record a day of school with less than the minimum instructional hours as a minimum school day if any of the following apply:

- If emergency health or safety factors require the late arrival or early dismissal of students on a specific day.
- If the total hours of instructional time for grades 1-12 for any five consecutive school days equal a minimum of 30 hours, even though any one day of school is less than the minimum instructional hours because of a staff development opportunity provided for the professional instructional staff or because parent-teacher conferences have been scheduled beyond the regular school day. Furthermore, if the total hours of instructional time for the first four consecutive days equal at least 30 hours because parent-teacher conferences are scheduled beyond the regular school day, a school or school district may record zero hours of instructional time on the fifth consecutive school day as a minimum school day. Iowa Code section 256.7(19)

Additional Guidance

For additional guidance, contact the district’s or school’s assigned [School Improvement Consultant](#).