

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

The flexible learning year provisions in statute authorize districts to evaluate, plan and use flexible learning year programs to meet the educational needs of their students. Flexible learning year alternatives may include various 45-15 plans, four-quarter plans, quinmester plans, extended learning year plans, flexible all-year plans, and four-day week plans. This bill proposes to encourage districts to further expand the flexible learning year concept to improve students' educational outcomes and opportunities and the cost-effectiveness of educational programs.

Section

1 **Alternative models for deliver education; expanding the flexible learning year program.**

Subd. 1. Establishment; goal. Establishes a three-year pilot project to permit participating school districts and school sites approved by the commissioner of children, families and learning to use alternative models for delivering education by expanding the flexible learning year program. Indicates that the project is intended to explore effective alternatives for delivering education, with the goal of improving instruction and students' educational outcomes and opportunities and increasing the cost-effectiveness of educational programs.

Subd. 2. Eligibility; applications. Directs the commissioner to make application forms available to school districts and school sites interested in exploring effective alternative models for delivering instruction during a redefined flexible learning year. Requires interested school districts and school sites to have their application to participate in this program first approved by the local school board and a majority of teachers employed in the district or at the site, respectively, after a public hearing on the matter. Requires applications to be submitted to the commissioner by January 1, 2002. Requires the application to describe how the applicant proposes to realize the goal of this project, including what activities and procedures the applicant proposes to develop and implement and the specific changes in the learning year the applicant requires to accomplish those activities and procedures. Directs the commissioner to

approve an unspecified number of applications before March 1, 2002.

Subd. 3. Exemptions. (a) Makes a participant in the pilot project exempt through the 2004-2005 school year from statutes governing the length of the school year and the school calendar. Makes statutory flexible learning provisions applicable except to the extent that the provisions of this program or the participant's learning year changes conflict with those statutory provisions.

(b) Allows a participant to adopt an alternative learning year calendar that suitably fulfills the educational needs of the participant's students. Requires the commissioner to provide participants with a formula for computing average daily membership so that all formulas based upon average daily membership are not affected as a result of participating in this pilot project.

Subd. 4. Technical assistance. Directs the commissioner, at the request of a participant, to provide technical assistance to the participant. Also requires the commissioner to assist participants in developing and implementing a valid and uniform procedure to evaluate the efficacy of their alternative learning year calendar.

Subd. 5. Evaluation; report. (a) Requires participants to complete a formative and summative evaluation of their experiences in delivering education under an alternative learning year calendar. Directs participants to focus the evaluation on the overall efficacy of the pilot project, including the cost-effectiveness of educational programs and the extent to which students' educational outcomes and opportunities improved. Directs participants to use their interim evaluations, with the commissioner's approval, to modify their project where appropriate.

(b) Requires participants to submit to the commissioner a progress report by September 1, 2004 and a final report by January 1, 2006, evaluating the cost-effectiveness of educational programs and the extent to which students' educational outcomes and opportunities improved. Directs the commissioner to compile the reports to present to the education committees by March 1, 2006. Directs the commissioner to recommend whether or not to continue or expand this pilot project.

Makes this section effective immediately.