

2020 -- S 2039

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION - SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND SUPERINTENDENTS

Introduced By: Senator Roger Picard

Date Introduced: January 21, 2020

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  
3 Education 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  
6 and maintain for at least one hundred eighty (180) days annually or the equivalent thereof,  
7 exclusive of holidays, a sufficient number of schools in convenient places under the control and  
8 management of the school committee and under the supervision of the Rhode Island Board of  
9 Education. In lieu of a convenient location, the school committee may provide transportation for  
10 pupils to and from school in accordance with the provisions of chapter 21 of this title. Provided,  
11 that a school district may establish a school year that is the equivalent of one hundred eighty  
12 (180) days through the use of longer school days in terms of hours or pursuant to subsection (c) of  
13 this section, and that may total less than one hundred eighty (180) separate days, so long as  
14 through the use of the longer school day, the school district annually provides a minimum of one  
15 thousand eighty (1,080) school hours in a single school year. This figure is based on a minimum  
16 of six (6) hours per school day. For purposes of clarification, the intent herein is to permit school  
17 districts to amend their school year to provide for longer school days while reducing the actual  
18 number of days in which the school facilities must be fully staffed and maintained, but to insure  
19 that in doing so, school districts shall still provide the minimum amount of instruction time

1 contemplated by this section. Nothing herein shall be deemed to limit a school district from  
2 exceeding the minimum amounts of days and hours set forth herein.

3 (2) School districts intending to make use of the option provided herein to lengthen  
4 school days and shorten the school year shall submit a detailed school day plan and a proposed  
5 school 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~~  
11 ~~education shall establish a policy that allows a school district to submit a detailed plan, at any~~  
12 ~~time, to the commissioner of elementary and secondary education that would allow the schools to~~  
13 ~~conduct instruction through virtual education when the schools have been closed due to inclement~~  
14 ~~weather or other emergency. The plan for virtual education would be subject to, and require~~  
15 ~~approval by, 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  
19 education may occur on or after the school closure day. A plan shall be submitted to the school  
20 committee for 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  
30 instruction will occur on the school closure day or at a day in the future, including, but not limited  
31 to, school 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

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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)  
6 days when schools have been closed due to inclement weather, emergency or any nonscheduled  
7 school closing. The plan submitted to the school committee for approval shall meet specified  
8 criteria as set forth in the statute.

9           This act would take effect upon passage.

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