

S.F. No. 1441 – Flexible Learning Year Program; Education Innovation Zone Program

Author: Senator Roger C. Chamberlain

Prepared by: Betsy Hjelseth, Legislative Analyst (651/296-7983)

Date: March 8, 2021

Section 1. School Calendar. (a) Clarifies that a flexible learning year program established before January 1, 2020 may start the school year before Labor Day.

Sec. 2. Length of School Year; Hours of Instruction. Paragraph (a) removes the commissioner of education’s authority to approve a district’s four-day week schedule. Authorizes school boards to approve a district’s four-day week schedule.

Paragraph (b) allows for an unlimited number of days of instruction provided through distance learning for a weather, health, or natural disaster emergency.

Paragraph (c) clarifies that hours of instruction include, but are not limited to: blended learning, distance learning, project-based learning, work-based learning, service learning, supervised internships, and in-person learning in a school building.

Effective Date. Makes this section effective for the 2021-2022 school year and later.

Sec. 3. Distance Learning Days. Changes “e-learning day” to “distance learning day.” Allows for an unlimited number of days of instruction provided through distance learning for a weather, health, or natural disaster emergency as determined by the school board or superintendent. Allows a school board to use its 2020-2021 school year distance learning plan.

Effective Date. Makes the section effective for the 2021- 2022 school year and later.

Sec. 4. [124D.097] Distance Learning Option. Allows a school district to offer a full-time distance learning option to its enrolled resident students as part of its curriculum offerings. Allows a student to meet all of their graduation requirements through distance learning. States that a school district that offers distance learning is not an online provider. Allows a school district to assign a student who is participating in full-time distance learning to a building for compensatory revenue pupil units and free and reduced-price meal eligibility.

Effective Date. Makes this section effective for the 2021-2022 school year and later.

Sec. 5. Purpose of Flexible Learning Year Programs. Removes obsolete language. Eliminates language stating future four-day week plans are contingent upon meeting the school district's performance goals under **section 120B.11**. Eliminates language requiring the commissioner to give a school district one school year's notice before revoking approval of a flexible learning year program.

Effective Date. Makes this section effective for the 2021-2022 school year and later.

Sections 6 to 9. Flexible Learning Year Modifications. For the 2021-2022 school year and later, removes the commissioner of education's authority to approve or disapprove school district flexible learning year programs. Authorizes school boards to adopt flexible learning year programs. Makes other conforming and technical changes.

Effective Date. Makes this section effective for the 2021-2022 school year and later.

Sec. 10. Average daily membership. Includes distance learning and distance learning days in the definition of average daily membership.

Effective Date. Makes this section effective for the 2021-2022 school year and later.

Sec. 11. Education Innovation Zone Program.

Subd. 1. Establishment; requirements for participation; innovation zone plans.
Paragraph (a) updates the innovation research zone pilot program to the education innovation zone program.

Paragraph (c) removes language requiring an innovation zone partnership to research and implement innovative programs and models that are based on proposed hypotheses. Adds examples of innovative programs and models that may include:

10. new models of evaluation, assessment, and accountability using multiple indicators including models that demonstrate alternative ways to validate students' academic attainment that have predictive validity to the state tests;

11. improving teacher and principal mentoring and evaluation;

12. granting a high school diploma to a student who meets the graduation requirements who demonstrates preparation for postsecondary education or a career consistent with the world's best workforce goals and who meet the following requirements:

- i. completes four years of high school; and
- ii. completes at least one year of postsecondary education at a two- or four-year college or university through concurrent enrollment, advanced placement, or international baccalaureate courses; or

- iii. completes the requirements for a career certification up to the apprenticeship program level, if one is required for that certification:
- 13. use of the provisions governing standard adult high school diploma requirements, experiential and applied learning opportunities, and the use of independent study;
- 14. use of the provisions of the learning year statute for a student in grade 10, 11, or 12 to participate in career and technical programs after school, on weekends, and during school breaks, and be included in the general education revenue computation;
- 15. methods to initiate prevention models to reduce student needs for special education and to reduce teacher time devoted to required special education documentation; or
- 16. other innovations as determined by the local boards.

Paragraph (e) removes the commissioner of education’s authority to approve an innovation zone partnership to extend membership to other partners.

Paragraph (g) removes the commissioner of education’s authority to approve or reject the innovation zone partnership plan.

Paragraph (h) states that an innovation zone plan must not cause an increase in state aid or levies for partners.

Subd. 2. **Exemptions from laws and rules.** States that an innovation zone partner with a plan filed with the commissioner must not cause an increase in state aid or levies.

Subd. 3. **Innovation Research Zone Advisory Panel.** Strikes the requirement for the commissioner to establish and convene an Innovation Research Zone Advisory Panel to review all plans submitted for approval.

Subd. 4. **Commissioner duties.** Removes language referring to the Innovation Research Zone Advisory Panel.

Subd. 5. **Project evaluation, dissemination, and report to legislature.** Requires that each innovation zone partnership must submit project data to the commissioner in the form and manner specified by the commissioner. States that every two years, the commissioner may analyze each innovation zone’s progress in meeting the objectives of the innovation zone partnership’s plan. States that, to the extent practicable, the commissioner may summarize and categorize innovation zone plans and submit a report to the legislature.

Sec. 12. **Revisor Instructions.** Instructs the revisor of statutes to codify **section 11** as **Minnesota statutes, section 124D.901.**

Section 13. Repealer. Repeals **Minnesota Rules, part 3500.1000** (commissioner’s authority to approve or disapprove school district flexible learning year programs.)