

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2022 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1306
Ways and Means

(Howard County Delegation)

**Howard County - Public Schools - Alternative Instruction Model Policy Ho. Co.
09-22**

This bill authorizes the Howard County Board of Education to adopt a policy to allow a public school in the county to use an alternative instruction model to provide student instruction when students cannot receive instruction in the school building due to a disease epidemic, hazardous weather conditions, a civil disaster, damage to the school building, a law enforcement emergency, a power outage or the failure of school utilities or other necessary equipment, or other circumstances as determined by the county superintendent and provided for in the policy. The county board may only adopt the policy if it negotiates the terms of the implementation and use of the alternative instruction model with the exclusive bargaining units for the local school system. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2022.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: Minimal. The bill authorizes, but does not require, alternative instruction model days under certain circumstances. Any additional local school system expenditures, including for expanding students' access to the Internet, are at the discretion of the Howard County Board of Education and the local bargaining unit and are expected to be minimal.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: “Alternative instruction model” means synchronous or asynchronous instruction delivered outside of a school classroom through learning experiences that do not provide in-person instruction. The local board policy, if adopted, must require a public school that uses an alternative instruction model that requires Internet access for certain components to include alternative methods that provide comparable instruction for students and school staff who lack access to the Internet. The policy must also require a limitation on the use of an alternative instruction model for individual schools to the shortest time period possible until in-person instruction can resume.

Current Law: Public schools must be open for at least 180 days and 1,080 school hours at elementary and middle schools or 1,170 hours at high schools during a 10-month period. However, a local board of education may apply to the State Board of Education (SBE) for a waiver from these provisions of State law; the application must describe a demonstrated effort by the local board to comply with State law and that the school system calendar included from 3 to 10 days to be used to make up days lost. In response, the State board may permit:

- increases or decreases in the length of the school year;
- exceptions from the 10-month period requirement;
- adjustments in the length of the school day; and
- schools to be open on holidays.

These adjustments may be granted only if normal school attendance is prevented because of natural disaster, civil disaster, or severe weather conditions. After any school system closure, the local school system must notify the State board, within 10 days of reopening, of its plan to make up the missed school days, including the dates of the make-up days. Education funding from the State or local sources may not be reduced if there are fewer than 180 school days in any year because of an approved application to SBE for a decrease in the length of the school year.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Howard County; Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Legislative Services

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