

Kansas Education Commissioner: Kids Need More Time in School

By Suzanne Perez

WICHITA, Kansas — Kansas students are spending fewer days in school than they did decades ago, and the state’s top education leader wants that to change.

Education Commissioner Randy Watson is urging districts to cancel breaks or extend the school year to make up for days that were canceled because of inclement weather.

Most districts lost about eight days of school this winter because of snow or bitterly cold conditions.

Watson recently told the Kansas State Board of education that districts should also consider half-day summer school in June and July, at least for kindergarten through third grade students who are below grade level in reading or math.

He said the boost is needed to make up for learning losses that began before the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Recovery is incrementally very slow,” Watson said. “While I think we should start thinking about our schedule for next year, I’m thinking, ‘How do we even jumpstart the learning ... right

now?’”

Kansas law requires public schools to have a minimum of 186 days, or at least 1,116 total hours each academic year. Over the past decade, most districts have opted to have longer but fewer school days — adding minutes to the daily schedule but shortening the school year.

In 2008, the average school year in Kansas was 174 days. This year, it’s 166. Some districts — particularly those with four-day weeks — have school only 141 days a year.

No district meets the minimum daily requirement of 186 days. The longest academic calendar is 183.4 days. Watson said districts have added about 21 minutes to the school day, which equates to three minutes per class period in most high schools.

“Go ask a music teacher: ‘Would you rather have three minutes, or would you rather go to school eight more days?’” Watson said. “A music teacher’s going to say, ‘I want the eight days.’”

State law allows the Kansas State Board of Education to waive the minimum requirement for dis-

tricts because of inclement weather or other factors.

But Watson discouraged board members from granting waivers, saying districts could make up the time by canceling scheduled breaks or adding days to the calendar.

“The state board will look at that at the end of the year when we see if you’ve exhausted all your avenues,” Watson said. “And right now, you have a lot of time left that you could ... make up that time.”

Watson also urged half-day summer school for some young students. He proposed classes from 9 a.m. to noon Monday to Thursday through June and July, with extended weekends for Memorial Day and July Fourth.

He said that schedule would amount to at least 48 hours of additional learning time.

“If we could get 90% of the kids 48 to 49 hours of instruction, what progress we could make in a short period of time,” Watson said.

He said districts could use special education or state at-risk funds to help pay for summer classes.

The proposal stops short

of year-round schooling — an idea some educators and lawmakers have floated in the past that is unpopular with most Kansas districts and families.

Two years ago, Republican Rep. Bill Rhiley introduced a bill that would have mandated a minimum of 195 eight-hour school days or 156 10-hour days, but it never made it out of committee.

Advocates of year-round school say frequent, shorter breaks are better for students because they mitigate learning loss that can happen over long summer vacations. Opponents say year-round schedules cost more and leave less time for extracurricular activities like summer-league sports.

Watson said he’s not opposed to year-round school. But a half-day summer school plan for students who need it most would be an incremental improvement that could have huge benefits, he said.

“Engaging parents in that conversation is going to be easier for them to agree to than changing the entire schedule that we’ve run for 100 years,” Watson said.

Several Kansas districts

spent a portion of their federal COVID-19 funding to pay for expanded summer school programs. But only a small fraction of students attended.

Wichita, the state’s largest school district, sent about 21,500 invitations to its summer programs for students in kindergarten through eighth grade in 2021. Despite incentives such as free breakfast, lunch and transportation, only 4,600 — about one in five — enrolled.

Watson said Kansas needs a social and cultural shift toward academics the way many districts and families emphasize sports and other activities.

“If you have a high school kid who’s involved (in sports or band), it’s hard to take a vacation because they’re required to be there for weight training or for marching,” he said. “We need that intensity around academics.”

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Legal Notice

First published in the Elkhart Tri-State News, Thursday, March 27, 2025.

BEFORE THE STATE CORPORATION
COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF KANSAS
NOTICE OF FILING APPLICATION

RE: BEREXCO LLC -- Application for an exception to the 10 year time limitation of K.A.R. 82-3-111 for the Beauchamp SW unit 3-5, located in Morton County, Kansas.

TO: All Oil & Gas Producers, Unleased Mineral Interest Owners, Landowners, and all persons whomsoever concerned.

You, and each of you, are hereby notified that Berexco LLC has filed an application for an exception to the 10 year time limitation of K.A.R. 82-3-111 for the Beauchamp SW unit 3-5, located in the NE SE of Section 5-31S-41W, Morton County, Kansas.

Any persons who object to or protest this application shall be required to file their objections or protest with the Conservation Division of the State Corporation Commission of the State of Kansas within fifteen (15) days from the date of this publication. These protests shall be filed pursuant to Commission regulations and must state specific reasons why the grant of the application may cause waste, violate correlative rights or pollute the natural resources of the State of Kansas.

All persons interested or concerned shall take notice of the foregoing and shall govern themselves accordingly.

BEREXCO LLC
2020 N. Bramblewood
Wichita, Kansas 67206
316-265-3311

Legal Notice

First published in the Elkhart Tri-State News, Thursday, March 20, 2025, Thursday, March 27, 2025, Thursday, April 3, 2025.

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF MORTON COUNTY, KANSAS

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF
DON DAVID DUNN, also known as
DAVID DUNN, DECEASED

Case No. MT-2025-PR-000006

NOTICE OF HEARING

STATE OF KANSAS, TO ALL PERSONS CONCERNED:

You are hereby notified that a Petition has been filed in this court by Don Ray Dunn, as and as heir of Don David Dunn also known as David Dunn, deceased, praying for the determination of the descent of all of the property described in the Petition and all other property, both real and personal, owned by decedent in Kansas at the time of death; and you are hereby required to file your written defenses thereto on or before, April 16, 2025 at 9:30 a.m., of said day, in said court, in the City of Elkhart, in Morton County, Kansas, at which time and place said cause will be heard. Should you fail therein, judgment and decree will be entered in due course upon said Petition.

Don Ray Dunn
Petitioner

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