

Student Attendance and Average Daily Membership Changes

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The pandemic changed the world and that is no different for school districts. It forced districts to adapt to what seemed like daily updates on the coronavirus that changed the way children learned substantially throughout the year. How many times did your district alternate between in-person learning, to remote learning, to providing hybrid opportunities? How does the state adjust to unknown changes? What effect will it have on how districts are funded? How will districts remain in compliance? These changes are not complete. As the coronavirus is making a presence again, school districts will likely be revisiting the challenges from the past 18 months for the upcoming months.

Instructional Time Models (ITM)

ADE recently issued guidance on House Bill 2862 that included some very important information regarding Instructional Time Models (ITM). The House bill allows for flexibility for tracking and maintaining instructional time requirements. It also, provides for some significant changes to the way students are counted for funding purposes and to ensure compliance.

While instructional hour and subject requirements for each grade level and AOI requirements stayed relatively the same, it's what counts as instructional time and how it's delivered that changed. These key changes will need to be documented and documented well in a district's ITM. Below are some key insights provided by ADE:

- Instructional hours can be delivered any day, week and course length increments.
- Instruction can be delivered in-person, remotely, project based, mastery based, or independent learning.
- Hours may be defined to include in-person and remote.
- Schools may re-allocate any minimum instructional time or hours required per course on a per-student basis to allow students to spend more or less time as needed in an individual course.
- Times and schedules for students and courses can be staggered, or courses or other instructional time options may be offered during non-scheduled days and/or times.
- Attendance policies must be aligned to reflect instructional time and hour policies prescribed in the adopted ITM.
- Districts must document how attendance will be tracked and taken for each type of instructional time.

With the uncertainty of the FY22 impacts of the coronavirus, districts should consider the many Instructional Time Models that may be necessary to provide a continuation of instruction to our Arizona students.

Effects on Funding

Remote learning (essentially anything other than in-person learning) as noted above, can now count as instruction for full funding purposes. As long as these remote learning opportunities are clearly defined in a district's ITM and all instructional time is tracked in accordance with the ITM, a district should be able to obtain full funding for a student as long as remote learning does not account for:

- more than 50% of the instructional hours received by each school in fiscal year 2021-22
- more than 40% of the instructional hours received by each school beginning in fiscal year 2022-23

Any instructional time that exceeds these thresholds will result in 95% funding of the Base Support Level for the time that exceeded the threshold.

Four Day Instructional Model

As part of HB2862, ARS §15-801(A) which allowed for a four day school week was repealed. While this portion of statute was repealed, school districts still have the option to offer this alternative learning module under the provisions outlined in §15-901.08.

ITM Public Hearings

Districts are responsible for adopting an "Instructional Time Model" (ITM) and the District must hold **AT LEAST TWO** public hearings. On top of this, the District is required to submit the ITM to ADE by the school calendar submission date which is August 31 of each year.

Document, Document, Document

The ITM is going to be a very important document for all districts as it will dictate much of the districts' state funding and compliance with the USFR. After developing the ITM, it is going to be pertinent to maintain the appropriate supporting documentation to show that the District followed its ITM. If you haven't heard it enough already, districts should document, document, and document everything in accordance with your ITM.

Instructional Time Model Submission – ADE

On Friday, August 6, Arizona Department of Education released specific requirements for school districts to submit their Instructional Time Model for each individual school. Any school within a district offering a model alternative to the traditional five day in-person brick and mortar model, must submit this plan after holding two public hearings. It is recommended that districts retain a PDF copy of each plan submitted.

<https://www.azed.gov/finance/instructional-time-model-template-school-districts-and-charter-schools>

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