



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 01/31/2018
Time: 02:45 PM
Location: 229
Committee: Senate Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 2385 RELATING TO SCHOOL RECESS.

Purpose of Bill: Requires all schools where students are required to eat meals at school to establish a recess period of not less than fifteen minutes prior to the lunch period for all grade levels.

Department's Position:

The Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide the following comments on SB 2385, which requires all Department schools that require students to eat meals at school to establish a recess period of at least fifteen minutes prior to the lunch meal period for all grade levels.

Every year, Principals, their leadership teams, and teachers are required, through a contractually-governed collaborative process, to develop a bell schedule that effectively meets the needs of their students and staff. Bell schedules are subject to multiple requirements, including those that are negotiated in the collective bargaining agreement with the Hawaii State Teachers Association (HSTA) and a minimum number of student hours as required by section 302A-251, Hawaii Revised Statutes. Schools must also consider additional factors, including staffing requirements for unstructured time and facility capacity when making determinations about the structure of the school day. Schools must submit proposed bell schedules to Complex Area Superintendents on an annual basis for review and approval.

As a matter of principle, the Department believes that schools and school staff are the most qualified to make decisions that will directly impact the students under their care, including the structure of the school day. As Principals and their staff develop bell schedules for their schools, they are considering not only statutory and contractual requirements, but also the size of their schools, the capacity of their facilities, and the ages and temperaments of their students.

Principals have expressed concern that the lack of flexibility may potentially impact instructional time, supervision requirements, and logistics during transition periods. The Department

believes that the flexibility to address the individual needs of a school and its students is imperative. As an example, personal hygiene is an important factor in elementary schools and students are supervised prior to lunch to ensure that they wash their hands before eating. Requiring a recess period prior to lunch could potentially complicate and increase the transition period between recess and lunch as staff would have to ensure that students washed their hands before going into the lunch room. Many schools currently address this issue by scheduling their recess period after the lunch meal period, so that hygiene can be addressed as part of the initial transition to lunch.

While the Department appreciates the intent of this measure, we believe that decisions concerning the structure of the school day are best left to the professionals who are closest to the students and respectfully request that the Committee not move this measure forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

The Hawaii State Department of Education seeks to advance the goals of the Strategic Plan which is focused on student success, staff success, and successful systems of support. This is achieved through targeted work around three impact strategies: school design, student voice, and teacher collaboration. Detailed information is available at www.hawaiipublicschools.org.