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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
57th Legislature, 1st Session, 2025

Bill Number	<u>HB238</u>	Sponsor	<u>Cullen/Hernandez/Martinez</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.229804.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>HEC/HGEIC;SEC/SFC</u>
Short Title	<u>Middle & High School Professional Work Hours</u>		
Analyst	<u>Bedeaux</u>	Original Date	<u>2/10/2025</u>
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BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 238 (HB238) would amend school calendar requirements in Section 22-2-8.1 NMSA 1978 to increase the allowance of professional work hours counted toward instructional hours in secondary schools from 30 hours to 60 hours.

FISCAL IMPACT

HB238 does not contain an appropriation.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Instructional Time. HB238 may decrease the number of instructional hours for secondary students statewide, though the exact impact would heavily depend on local calendar decisions. [Laws 2023, Chapter 19 \(House Bill 130\)](#) increased the minimum number of instructional hours schools were required to provide from 990 hours in elementary schools and 1,080 hours in secondary schools to 1,140 hours in all schools. In New Mexico, local school boards and charter school governing bodies have broad authority to establish calendars that meet the minimum requirement of 1,140 instructional hours. In practice, this results in 89 school districts and 99 charter schools with varying start dates, end dates, and day lengths designed to meet local communities' needs. In January 2025, a [ruling from the 9th Judicial District Court](#) reaffirmed school boards' authority to set local school calendars, emphasizing "the Legislature's clear intention to allow local flexibility while still requiring 1,140 instructional hours with no requirement for a specific number of days."

New Mexico's learning time reforms have focused on improving both the quantity and quality of instructional hours, simultaneously increasing the minimum hour requirements as well as creating allowances for professional work time. Recognizing secondary schools were required to provide more instructional hours than elementary schools under the previous calendar law, the Legislature established the current professional work hour allowances at 60 hours for elementary school and 30 hours for secondary schools, ensuring secondary students did not lose instructional time.

[An LESC analysis of 2022 assessment results](#) suggested increasing instructional hours has a modest but statistically significant impact on student achievement in both reading and math, even when controlling for students' economic disadvantages. [A Legislative Finance Committee \(LFC\) program evaluation of time-on-task in 2016](#) had similar findings but noted substantially better results for schools that added additional school days. The LFC evaluation noted that, while the quantity of hours matter, the quality of those hours tends to matter more. LFC explains that students in classrooms with high-quality, focused teachers with strong classroom management skills tended to perform better on standardized assessments.

Professional Work Time. HB238 would place a larger emphasis on professional work time for secondary educators. The National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL's) [No Time To Lose](#) report explains how the world's top-performing education systems found success by placing the teaching profession at the center of their instructional systems. According to NCSL, teachers in high performing countries:

“are given a lighter teaching load and more time for their own—and their colleagues’—development. In some of these countries, 30 percent to 35 percent of a teacher’s time is spent teaching students, while the rest is spent on activities such as working in teams with other teachers to develop and improve lessons, observing and critiquing classes, and working with struggling students.”

[Research from the Learning Policy Institute](#), a national organization that conducts independent, high-quality educational research to improve policy and practice, notes the most effective forms of professional development for teachers are embedded in the course of a normal school day, including collaboration, modeling lessons, and one-on-one coaching. Similarly, John Hattie's [Visible Learning](#), a meta-analysis of more than 800 peer-reviewed educational studies, estimates professional development has a strong, statistically significant effect on student achievement, but reiterates the importance of particular professional development methods, including direct observation of classroom methods, continuous feedback, and opportunities for practice.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

HB238 would simplify school calendar requirements, potentially reducing the administrative burden associated with validating school calendars. PED staff have reported that currently, the school calendar validation process is extremely labor intensive, requiring PED staff to determine whether schools are actually providing the instructional hours they claim to provide in their department-approved calendar. Simpler calendar requirements may make validation easier for PED staff, though HB238 will likely still require a labor-intensive validation process.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Since the enactment of Laws 2023, Chapter 19, LESC and LFC staff have not evaluated the relative value of instructional hours versus professional work hours. As schools become adjusted to the law, the state is likely due for an evaluation of the return-on-investment for different types of school calendars.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files