

## **ORGANIZATION, PHILOSOPHY, AND GOALS**

### **Local School Organization and Administration**

#### **Guidelines for Restricting Interruptions to Instructional Time—Middle and High Schools**

This regulation supersedes Regulation 1320.

#### **I. PURPOSE**

To establish guidelines for restricting interruptions to instructional time in the middle and high schools.

#### **II. IMPLEMENTATION**

##### **A. Minimum Time Requirements**

Schools are required to be in session 180 days (990 hours) per school year. Middle and high school credit courses are required to meet for a minimum of 140 hours. Schools must ensure that early-closing or late-start schedule adjustments or any other alterations to the school day do not result in below 140 course hours. In addition, no early closing or late start may shorten or delay the day more than three hours from its original length.

##### **B. School Day Adjustments for Staff Development or Schoolwide Parent Conferences**

Middle and high schools may request approval, through the appropriate cluster director, to close early or start late for staff development or schoolwide parent conferences. The maximum number of days per school year that may be requested is three, with no more than two of the three days used for either staff development or schoolwide parent conferences.

##### **C. Guidelines for Restricting Interruptions to Instructional Time**

Attached are guidelines to help middle and high school principals ensure that students receive the required amount of instructional time as mandated by the state of Virginia and to keep interruptions and intrusions at a minimum.

Legal Reference: Virginia Department of Education Regulations, Sections 20-131-150, Standard School Year and School Day and 20-131-110, Standard and Verified Units of Credit

Attachment

FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## **GUIDELINES FOR RESTRICTING INTERRUPTIONS TO INSTRUCTIONAL TIMES**

### **School Public Address System**

Schoolwide public address and closed-circuit TV announcements are disruptive to the school program because they interrupt all persons in the building for several minutes each time an announcement is made. To reduce interruptions without impeding necessary communication within the school, principals should adopt the following procedures:

- Make all announcements at a standard time daily, such as in the morning, just before the end of the school day, or during a constant period to accommodate block scheduling. Staff members and students will be able to anticipate these announcement periods and will be able to avoid interrupting instruction.
- In emergencies, use only the intercom between the office and an individual class to communicate messages, or develop an alternative notice system such as student messengers. Announcements affecting individual students should not be broadcast to the entire student body.

### **Assemblies**

Assemblies offer educational opportunities by permitting students to learn appropriate behaviors while participating in events of general interest. For example, special programs in areas such as the fine and performing arts may be presented to groups of students who would not have those opportunities in other ways. However, the value of assemblies must be weighed against the value of instructional opportunities available through the students' regular classes. Assembly topics should relate to the general goals of the instructional program and address areas of special significance. Assemblies that promote a particular enterprise or whose main purpose is entertainment should not be scheduled during the school day. Time for assemblies should be made available through schedule modifications that cause the least disruption to the instructional program.

### **Pep Rallies (High School)**

Although pep rallies may contribute to school spirit, they should not be allowed to interfere with the instructional program. Pep rallies should be scheduled before or after school, with the period after school being the preferred time. On special occasions such as homecoming, pep rallies may be held near the end of the day by shortening each class period by a few minutes.

### **Athletic Events (High School)**

Athletic events, including time required for travel to and from those events, should not be regularly scheduled to interfere with the instructional program. Exceptions to this guideline may be necessary when bus transportation is not available or when teams are participating in district, regional, or state level competition.

### **Field Trips**

The current version of Regulation 3810 provides guidelines for the types, requirements, and plans for field trips. Although field trips should be educational experiences and extensions of classroom instruction, they do cause disruption to the students' other classes. For that reason, the number of field trips taken by students during a school year should be monitored to ensure that the time lost from class does not become excessive. Overnight field trips should be scheduled over weekends or other nonschool days to minimize student absences.

### **Testing**

Because several different tests are administered to many students each year, the high school testing calendar should not require students to take more than two test batteries within a two-week period (with the exception of teacher-made tests). For example, the testing calendar should avoid having students take end-of-course Standards of Learning tests (EOCSOL) and Advanced Placement (AP) exams during the same two-week period. Regularly scheduled school activities should not conflict with the testing schedule.

### **In-Service Education**

In-service education is necessary for professional growth, and opportunities for participation should be made available to instructional staff members. However, in-service sessions and meetings, for instructional staff members, that needlessly interrupt instruction should be avoided. Alternatives to scheduling in-service training sessions during student instructional time include designed contract hours and days when students are not present, summer workshops, and Saturday sessions. When necessary during the school day, in-service sessions should be coordinated so that only a small percentage of an individual school's staff is away from classes at any one time.