

The State Board of Education (SBOE) proposes an amendment to §129.21, concerning requirements for student attendance accounting for state funding purposes. The proposed amendment would update the rule to allow districts and charter schools flexibility for selecting an official attendance-taking time during the campus's instructional day.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND JUSTIFICATION:** Section 129.21 provides the student attendance accounting requirements school districts and open-enrollment charter schools must follow and describes the manner in which student attendance is earned. The rule also provides a list of conditions under which a student who is not actually on campus at the time attendance is taken may be considered in attendance for Foundation School Program funding purposes.

The proposed amendment to 19 TAC §129.21 is as a result of the review of the rules in 19 TAC Chapter 129, Subchapters A and B, adopted by the SBOE in April 2019. The proposed amendment to §129.21 would change the requirement for the official attendance-taking time from the second or fifth instructional hour to any time selected during the campus's instructional day. This change would provide more flexibility for campuses.

The SBOE approved the proposed amendment for first reading and filing authorization at its September 13, 2019 meeting.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Leo Lopez, associate commissioner for school finance, has determined that for the first five-year period the proposal is in effect there are no additional costs to state or local government required to comply with the proposal.

**LOCAL EMPLOYMENT IMPACT:** The proposal has no effect on local economy; therefore, no local employment impact statement is required under Texas Government Code, §2001.022.

**SMALL BUSINESS, MICROBUSINESS, AND RURAL COMMUNITY IMPACT:** The proposal has no direct adverse economic impact for small businesses, microbusinesses, or rural communities; therefore, no regulatory flexibility analysis specified in Texas Government Code, §2006.002, is required.

**COST INCREASE TO REGULATED PERSONS:** The proposal does not impose a cost on regulated persons, another state agency, a special district, or a local government and, therefore, is not subject to Texas Government Code, §2001.0045.

**TAKINGS IMPACT ASSESSMENT:** The proposal does not impose a burden on private real property and, therefore, does not constitute a taking under Texas Government Code, §2007.043.

**GOVERNMENT GROWTH IMPACT:** TEA staff prepared a Government Growth Impact Statement assessment for this proposed rulemaking. The proposed rulemaking would expand an existing regulation by providing clarification of the timeframe during which attendance must be determined.

The proposed rulemaking would not create or eliminate a government program; would not require the creation of new employee positions or elimination of existing employee positions; would not require an increase or decrease in future legislative appropriations to the agency; would not require an increase or decrease in fees paid to the agency; would not create a new regulation; would not limit or repeal an existing regulation; would not increase or decrease the number of individuals subject to its applicability; and would not positively or adversely affect the state's economy.

**PUBLIC BENEFIT AND COST TO PERSONS:** Mr. Lopez has determined that for each year of the first five years the proposal is in effect, the public benefit anticipated as a result of enforcing the proposal would be to provide clarity regarding student attendance accounting procedures. There is no anticipated economic cost to persons who are required to comply with the proposal.

**DATA AND REPORTING IMPACT:** The proposal would have no new data and reporting impact.

PRINCIPAL AND CLASSROOM TEACHER PAPERWORK REQUIREMENTS: TEA has determined that the proposal would not require a written report or other paperwork to be completed by a principal or classroom teacher.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: The public comment period on the proposal begins October 4, 2019, and ends November 8, 2019. A form for submitting public comments is available on the TEA website at [https://tea.texas.gov/About\\_TEA/Laws\\_and\\_Rules/SBOE\\_Rules\\_\(TAC\)/Proposed\\_State\\_Board\\_of\\_Education\\_Rules/](https://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/Laws_and_Rules/SBOE_Rules_(TAC)/Proposed_State_Board_of_Education_Rules/). Comments on the proposal may also be submitted to Cristina De La Fuente-Valadez, Rulemaking, Texas Education Agency, 1701 North Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas 78701. The SBOE will take registered oral and written comments on the proposal at the appropriate committee meeting in November 2019 in accordance with the SBOE board operating policies and procedures. A request for a public hearing on the proposal submitted under the Administrative Procedure Act must be received by the commissioner of education not more than 14 calendar days after notice of the proposal has been published in the *Texas Register* on October 4, 2019.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY. The amendment is proposed under Texas Education Code, §48.004, which requires the commissioner, in accordance with rules adopted by the State Board of Education, to require reports necessary to implement and administer the Foundation School Program; and TEC, §12.106, which provides for charter schools to receive funding under certain conditions through TEC, Chapter 48.

CROSS REFERENCE TO STATUTE. The amendment implements Texas Education Code, §48.004 and §12.106.

<rule>

#### **§129.21. Requirements for Student Attendance Accounting for State Funding Purposes.**

- (a) All public schools in Texas must maintain records to reflect the average daily attendance (ADA) for the allocation of Foundation School Program (FSP) funds and other funds allocated by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Superintendents, principals, and teachers are responsible to their school boards and to the state to maintain accurate, current attendance records.
- (b) The commissioner of education is responsible for providing guidelines and procedures for attendance accounting in accordance with state law.
- (c) The commissioner must provide for special circumstances regarding attendance accounting in accordance with the provisions of law.
- (d) The superintendent of schools is responsible for the safekeeping of all attendance records and reports. The superintendent of schools may determine whether the properly certified attendance records or reports for the school year are to be stored in the central office, on the respective school campuses of the district, or at another secure location. Regardless of where such records are stored, they must be readily available for audit by the TEA division responsible for performing school financial audits.
- (e) Districts must maintain records and make reports concerning student attendance and participation in special programs as required by the commissioner.
- (f) If a school district chooses to use a locally developed record or automated system, the record or automated system must contain the minimum information required by the commissioner.
- (g) A student must be enrolled for at least two hours of instruction to be considered in membership for one half day, and for at least four hours of instruction to be considered in membership for one full day.
- (h) Attendance for all grades must be determined by the absences recorded at the official attendance-taking time during the campus's instructional ~~[in the second or fifth instructional hour of the]~~ day, unless the local school board adopts a district policy, or delegates to the superintendent the authority to establish procedures, for recording absences in an alternative hour, or unless the students for which attendance is being taken are enrolled in and participating in an alternative attendance accounting program approved by the commissioner.
  - (1) Students enrolled on a half-day basis may earn only one half day of attendance each school day. Attendance is determined for these pupils by recording absences in a period during the half day

that they are scheduled to be present. Students enrolled on a full-day basis may earn one full day of attendance each school day.

- (2) Students who are enrolled in and participating in an alternative attendance accounting program approved by the commissioner will earn attendance according to the statutory and rule provisions applicable to that program.
  - (3) The established period in which absences are recorded may not be changed during the school year.
  - (4) Students absent at the time the attendance roll is taken, during the daily period selected, are counted absent for the entire day, unless the students are enrolled in and participating in an alternative attendance accounting program approved by the commissioner. Students present at the time the attendance roll is taken, during the daily period selected, are counted present for the entire day, unless the students are enrolled in and participating in an alternative attendance accounting program approved by the commissioner.
- (i) A student who is not actually in school at the time attendance is taken must not be counted in attendance for FSP funding purposes, unless the student is participating in an activity that meets the conditions set out in subsection (j) of this section, or unless the student is enrolled in and participating in an alternative attendance accounting program approved by the commissioner.
- (j) A student not actually on campus at the time attendance is taken may be considered in attendance for FSP funding purposes under the following conditions.
- (1) The student is participating in an activity that is approved by the local board of school trustees and is under the direction of a member of the professional or paraprofessional staff of the school district, or an adjunct staff member who:
    - (A) has a minimum of a bachelor's degree; and
    - (B) is eligible for participation in the Teacher Retirement System of Texas.
  - (2) The student is participating in a mentorship approved by district personnel to serve as one or more of the advanced measures needed to complete the Distinguished Achievement Program outlined in Chapter 74 of this title (relating to Curriculum Requirements).
  - (3) The student is absent for one of the purposes specified in the Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.087(b), (b-1), (b-2), (b-4), (b-5), or (c). Excused days for travel under the TEC, §25.087(b)(1), are limited to not more than one day for travel to and one day for travel from the applicable site. A temporary absence excused under the TEC, §25.087(b)(2), must be supported by a document such as a note from the health care professional.
- (k) A student not actually on campus at the time attendance is taken also may be considered in attendance for FSP funding purposes under other conditions described in the handbook adopted under §129.1025 of this title (relating to Adoption by Reference: Student Attendance Accounting Handbook) related to off-campus instruction.
- (l) Before a district or charter school may count a student in attendance under this section or in attendance when the student was allowed to leave campus during any part of the school day, the local school board or governing body must adopt a policy, or delegate to the superintendent the authority to establish procedures, addressing parental consent for a student to leave campus, and the district or charter school must distribute the policy or procedures to staff and to all parents of students in the district or charter school.