

## SF 4188 Empowering Student-Centered Learning

Reengaging our learners by Reimagining the traditional school instructional day

I am writing in support of SF 4188

Extended learning opportunities are not new to Minnesota. Several programming options and statutes (ex: 123B.04) address the need for flex time that students may need to reach their academic potential. These may include academic programming through an ALC/ALP, independent study, Targeted Services, summer school and so on. There are current statutes in place that allow for districts to plan for extended learning time, but they continue to be restrictive in nature, exclusive of all students (124D.68 subd 2) and or complex in definition between the intent and the spirit of the statute in question (126C.05 subd 15). There may also be contradictions where a statute may state there are no seat-based requirements whereas another statute such as the one I previously referred to lists the instructional hours needed for each grade level (120A.41) to meet ADM definitions for revenue collection.

SF 4188 would further define and clarify “instruction” and credits awarded to occur outside of the traditional school day.

Often, we assume students that may have a career pathway passion to go into the trades, focus on Career Technical Education (CTE) classes or the military for some reason fall into one of the definitions alluded to in a current extended learning program. These definitions also make it difficult for those wanting to pursue technical college or a two- or four-year school to gain authentic learning experience prior to graduation.

As schools pivot to meet the needs of our emerging learners, there is a need to allow districts the flexibility to expand the instructional opportunities beyond the traditional school day for students that may not fall under the graduation incentives program currently in statute and or other defined risk factors.

As districts work to be innovative and responsive to our students, we are excited to provide extended learning opportunities which may fall outside of the school day. These may include practicum hours for students that are in a CNA or EMT program, they may be involved in internship and apprenticeship hours that happen in the evening, on the weekend, or during breaks. As such, schools often find it difficult to support our students without the backing of additional teacher time, allow for the awarding of credit and the funding needed to ensure that the integrity and fidelity of our academic standards stay intact. Many of our students that are or want to participate in industry certifications and trades programming also go to school for the full day to fulfill other academic requirements for graduation. Allowing for this flexibility would provide options for students that otherwise may not be able to take advantage of these experiences.

I believe that with this bill, we can avoid the default of *it has to be an either or*, but rather a *yes and* for our students.

Incorporating the flexibility needed for multiple learning options outside of the traditional school day provides an opportunity for students to practice and improve their job-readiness skills, take courses they may not otherwise have time for during the school day, expand their professional networks, and strengthen their ability to navigate the world as they explore future career pathways. Importantly, programs like apprenticeships and internships which typically may be outside of school hours are a critical component of equitable strategies because they enable participants to build skills and gain experience in their desired career fields.

I also believe that allowing for this innovative approach to instructional time and credits will have the following benefits:

**Tailored Learning Experiences:** Empowering Student-Centered Learning allows students to progress at their own pace, focusing on mastering specific skills and competencies. Through this, where practical skills are paramount, this approach ensures that students can demonstrate proficiency before advancing.

**Flexible Pathways:** Empowering Student-Centered Learning enables flexible pathways for students to achieve competency. They can demonstrate their skills through various means such as assessments, projects, or real-world applications through internships and apprenticeships, which align well with authentic learning experiences.

**Relevance to Industry Standards:** Empowering Student-Centered Learning ensures that students are equipped with the precise skills and knowledge required by industry standards. By aligning competencies with industry needs, extended learning options can produce graduates who are job-ready and can seamlessly integrate into the workforce.

**Increased Engagement:** Empowering Student-Centered Learning fosters engagement by allowing students to see their progress clearly and understand what they need to achieve next. This transparency motivates students to actively participate in their learning process, which is crucial in where practical skills development is key.

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