

Graduation of Seniors

24 P.S. § 15-1501

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PURPOSE

Section 1501 of the School Code, as amended, requires the Secretary to determine whether a school district made a "bona fide" effort to provide 180 days for seniors following severe weather conditions that caused school closings. This Basic Education Circular (BEC) explains how the Secretary will determine whether such a "bona fide" effort was made and discusses counting students in the average daily membership before and after graduation.

Graduation of Seniors, Exception to 180 Days

The following apply to the graduating senior provision of Section 1501.

1. The Secretary will authorize the bona fide effort exception only when the loss of days is caused by severe weather conditions and when all legally remaining instructional days have been scheduled.
2. The Secretary will approve only those requests for a bona fide effort exception where the district can show the weather closings could not have been anticipated. This means that bona fide effort exceptions will be granted only if you build "snow days" into your calendar based upon the average per year closings over the past three years.
3. The Secretary may grant bona fide effort exceptions to the 180-day requirement when weather emergencies create a scheduling conflict for graduating seniors attending AVTSs or other out-of-district programs.
4. Following each severe weather closing, school districts must adopt a revised school calendar which reschedules all available time to make up for the weather closing.

Procedures for Exceptions

Requests for a bona fide effort exception to the 180 day requirement for graduating seniors as per Section 1501 shall be sent to the Department and shall include:

1. A written verification of the severe weather conditions which caused the loss of instructional days.
2. An accounting of the number of severe weather day closings per year for the three years previous to the current year.
3. A copy of the original school calendar and a copy of each revised school calendar including the final revision, which shows no available instructional days left prior to graduation. Days identified as official local school district holidays shall be rescheduled as instructional days. In the case of AVTS or other out-of-district program conflicts, a brief explanation of the special circumstances creating the conflict should be included.

Graduation of Seniors after 180 Days

Seniors shall not be counted in average daily membership after graduation.

In effect, this requires graduation after 180 days of instruction. If graduation occurs before the 180th day, the district's average daily membership, and consequently the district's basic instructional subsidy, will be decreased unless the district receives a bona fide effort exception to the 180-day requirement for graduating seniors pursuant to 24 P.S. § 15-1501. This rule does not affect graduation preparation. The State Board of Education Regulations on Pupil Attendance ([22 Pa. Code Section 11.27](#)) allows not more than three days for graduation preparation. The preparation days must, of course, take place prior to graduation.

The department and the Auditor General will strictly enforce the 180 day rule.

Districts should note that students who have graduated may not be reported in attendance unless they actually attend. Average daily membership is based on membership and not attendance. You should continue to accurately report attendance and absence.

REFERENCES:

Purdon's Statutes

24 P.S. § 15-1501
24 P.S. § 25-2501

State Board of Education Regulations

[22 Pa. Code § 11.27](#)

CONTACT BUREAU/OFFICES:

Pennsylvania Department of Education
School Services Office
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
Telephone: 717.787.4860
TDD: 717.783.8445

Graduation of Seniors after 180 Days:

Pennsylvania Department of Education
Bureau of Basic Education/Fiscal Administration
Division of Child Accounting and Subsidy Research
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
Telephone: 717.787.5423