CHAPTER 118

GENERAL SCHOOL OPERATIONS

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(1) PURPOSE. Public education is a fundamental responsibility of the state. The constitution vests in the state superintendent the supervision of public instruction and directs the legislature to provide for the establishment of district schools. The effective operation of the public schools is dependent upon a common understanding of what public schools should be and do. Establishing such goals and expectations is a necessary and proper complement to the state’s financial contribution to education. Each school board shall provide curriculum, course requirements and instruction consistent with the goals and expectations established under sub. (2). Parents and guardians of pupils enrolled in the school district share with the state and school board the responsibility for pupils meeting the goals and expectations under sub. (2).

(2) EDUCATIONAL GOALS. (a) Academic skills and knowledge. Since the development of academic skills and knowledge is the most important goal for schools, each school board shall provide an instructional program designed to give pupils:

1. Basic skills, including the ability to read, write, spell, perform basic arithmetical calculations, learn by reading and listening and communicate by writing and speaking.

2. Analytical skills, including the ability to think rationally, solve problems, use various learning methods, gather and analyze information, make critical and independent judgments and argue persuasively.

3. A basic body of knowledge that includes information and concepts in literature, fine arts, mathematics, natural sciences, including knowledge of the elements of agriculture and the conservation of natural resources, and social sciences, including knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of the family as a consumer, cooperative marketing and consumers’ cooperatives.

4. The skills and attitudes that will further lifelong intellectual activity and learning.

5. Knowledge in computer science, including problem solving, computer applications and the social impact of computers.

(b) Vocational skills. Each school board shall provide an instructional program designed to give pupils:

1. An understanding of the range and nature of available occupations and the required skills and abilities.

2. Preparation to compete for entry level jobs not requiring postsecondary school education.
3. Preparation to enter job-specific vocational training programs.
4. Positive work attitudes and habits.

(c) Citizenship. Each school board shall provide an instructional program designed to give pupils:
1. An understanding of the basic workings of all levels of government, including the duties and responsibilities of citizenship.
2. A commitment to the basic values of our government, including by appropriate instruction and ceremony the proper reverence and respect for and the history and meaning of the American flag, the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. constitution and the constitution and laws of this state.
3. The skills to participate in political life.
4. An understanding of the function of organizations in society.
5. Knowledge of the role and importance of biological and physical resources.
6. Knowledge of state, national and world history.
7. An appreciation and understanding of different value systems and cultures.
8. At all grade levels, an understanding of human relations, particularly with regard to American Indians, Black Americans and Hispanics.

(d) Personal development. Each school board shall provide an instructional program designed to give pupils:
1. The skills needed to cope with social change.
2. Knowledge of the human body and the means to maintain lifelong health, including:
   a. Knowledge of the theory and practice of physical education, including the development and maintenance of physical fitness;
   b. Knowledge of the true and comparative vitamin content of food and food and health values of dairy products and their importance for the human diet; and
   c. Knowledge of physiology and hygiene, sanitation, the effects of controlled substances under ch. 961 and alcohol upon the human system, symptoms of disease and the proper care of the body.
   If a pupil may be required to take instruction in these subjects if his or her parent files with the teacher a written objection thereto. If a pupil does not take instruction in these subjects as a result of parental objection, the pupil may not be required to be examined in the subjects and may not be penalized in any way for not taking such instruction, but if the subjects receive credit toward graduation, the school board may require the pupil to complete an alternative assignment that is similar to the subjects in the length of time necessary to complete. Instruction in physiology and hygiene shall include instruction on sexually transmitted diseases and shall be offered in every high school.
3. An appreciation of artistic and creative expression and the capacity for self-expression.
4. The ability to construct personal ethics and goals.
5. Knowledge of morality and the individual's responsibility as a social being, including the responsibility and morality of family living and the value of frugality and other basic qualities and principles referred to in article I, section 22, of the constitution insofar as such qualities and principles affect family and consumer education.
6. Knowledge of the prevention of accidents and promotion of safety on the public highways, including instruction on the relationship between highway safety and the use of alcohol and controlled substances under ch. 961.
7. The skills needed to make sound decisions, knowledge of the conditions which may cause and the signs of suicidal tendencies, knowledge of the relationship between youth suicide and the use of alcohol and controlled substances under ch. 961 and knowledge of the available community youth suicide prevention and intervention services. Instruction shall be designed to help prevent suicides by pupils by promoting the positive emotional development of pupils.
8. Knowledge of effective means by which pupils may recognize, avoid, prevent and halt physically or psychologically intrusive or abusive situations which may be harmful to pupils, including child abuse, sexual abuse and child enticement. Instruction shall be designed to help pupils develop positive psychological, emotional and problem-solving responses to such situations and avoid relying on negative, fearful or solely reactive methods of dealing with such situations. Instruction shall include information on available school and community prevention and intervention assistance or services and shall be provided to pupils in elementary schools.


118.015 Reading instruction. (1) PURPOSE AND INTENT. It is the purpose and intent of this section to provide for a developmental reading program for pupils at all grade levels.

(2) EMPLOYMENT OF READING SPECIALISTS. Each school district shall employ a reading specialist certified by the department to develop and coordinate a comprehensive reading curriculum in grades kindergarten to 12. At the discretion of the state superintendent, a school district may contract with other school districts or cooperative educational service agencies to employ a certified reading specialist on a cooperative basis.

(3) DUTIES OF READING SPECIALIST. The reading specialist shall:

(a) Develop and implement a reading curriculum in grades kindergarten to 12.
(b) Act as a resource person to classroom teachers to implement the reading curriculum.
(c) Work with administrators to support and implement the reading curriculum.
(d) Conduct an annual evaluation of the reading curriculum.
(e) Coordinate the reading curriculum with other reading programs and other support services within the school district.

(4) SCHOOL BOARD DUTIES. The school board shall:

(a) Develop a program of reading goals for the district for grades kindergarten to 12.
(b) Make an assessment of existing reading needs in grades kindergarten to 12 in the district based on the reading goals established under par. (a).
(c) Make an annual evaluation of the reading curriculum of the school district.

History: 1977 c. 29; 1995 a. 27 s. 9145 (1); 1997 a. 27.

118.017 Foreign language instruction. (1) All instruction shall be in the English language, except:

(a) Those programs established under subch. VII of ch. 115 where instruction shall be in the English language and in the non-English language of the bilingual-bicultural education program.
(b) The school board may require any foreign language to be taught to pupils who desire it.
(c) The school board may require any foreign language to be taught to pupils who desire it.

(2) A school board may grant foreign language credit to a pupil who has satisfactorily completed a high school course in American sign language.

History: 1983 a. 412 ss. 4, 5; Stats. 1983 s. 118.017; 1989 a. 280.

118.019 Human growth and development instruction. (1) PURPOSE. The purpose of this section is to encourage all school boards to make available to pupils instruction in topics related to human growth and development in order to promote accurate and comprehensive knowledge in this area and responsible decision making and to support and enhance the efforts of parents to provide moral guidance to their children.

Text from the 2005–06 Wis. Stats. database updated by the Revisor of Statutes. Only printed statutes are certified under s. 35.18 (2), stats. Statutory changes effective prior to 1–2–08 are printed as if currently in effect. Statutory changes effective on or after 1–2–08 are designated by NOTES. Report errors at (608) 266–2011, FAX 264–6978, http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/
(2) SUBJECTS. A school board may provide an instructional program in human growth and development in grades kindergarten to 12. If provided, the program shall offer information and instruction appropriate to each grade level and the age and level of maturity of the pupils. Except as provided in sub. (2m), the program may include instruction in any of the following areas:
(a) Self–esteem, responsible decision making and personal responsibility.
(b) Interpersonal relationships.
(c) Discouragement of adolescent sexual activity.
(d) Family life and skills required of a parent.
(e) Human sexuality; reproduction; family planning, as defined in s. 253.07 (1) (a), including natural family planning; human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome; prenatal development; childbirth; adoption; available prenatal and postnatal support; and male and female responsibility.
(f) Sex stereotypes and protective behavior.
(2m) REQUIRED SUBJECTS. (a) If a school board provides instruction in any of the areas under sub. (2) (e), the school board shall ensure that instruction in marriage and parental responsibility is provided in the same course, during the same school year, as the area under sub. (2) (e).
(b) The school board shall ensure that instruction related to the areas under sub. (2) (e) does all of the following:
1. Presents abstinence from sexual activity as the preferred choice of behavior in relationship to all sexual activity for unmarried pupils.
2. Emphasizes that abstinence from sexual activity before marriage is the most effective way to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.
(3) DISTRIBUTION OF CURRICULUM TO PARENTS. Each school board that provides an instructional program in human growth and development shall annually provide the parents of each pupil enrolled in the school district with an outline of the human growth and development curriculum used in the pupil’s grade level and information regarding how the parent may inspect the complete curriculum and instructional materials. The school board shall make the complete human growth and development curriculum and all instructional materials available upon request for inspection at any time, including prior to their use in the classroom.
(4) EXEMPTION FOR INDIVIDUAL PUPILS. No pupil may be required to take instruction in human growth and development or in the specific subjects under sub. (2) if the pupil’s parent files with the teacher or school principal a written request that the pupil be exempted.
(5) ADVISORY COMMITTEE. In any school district that offers a human growth and development curriculum, the school board shall appoint an advisory committee composed of parents, teachers, school administrators, pupils, health care professionals, members of the clergy and other residents of the school district. The advisory committee shall develop the human growth and development curriculum and advise the school board on the design, review and implementation of the advisory committee’s human growth and development curriculum. The advisory committee shall review the curriculum at least every 3 years.
118.025 Arbor day observance. A school principal may request one free tree provided from state forest nurseries by the department of natural resources under s. 28.06 for each 4th grade pupil in the school for planting in conjunction with an annual observance and celebration of arbor day.
118.03 Textbooks. (1) The school board shall adopt all the textbooks necessary for use in the schools under its charge. The list of the adopted books shall be filed with the school district clerk.
(2) The school board may purchase textbooks and sell them to the pupils at cost or it may designate agents of the school district to sell the textbooks to the pupils. The agents, at stated times, shall make settlement with the school district for books sold. The agents may add a selling commission which shall not exceed 10% of the net price.
(3) No dealer in textbooks may sell any books at a price to exceed 15% above the net list prices, transportation added thereto.
(4) Any person violating this section may be fined not less than $25 nor more than $100.
118.035 School uniforms. (1) In this section, “school” means a public school and includes a charter school other than a charter school under s. 118.40 (2r).
(2) A school board may adopt a policy that requires all pupils enrolled in school in the school district, or all pupils enrolled in one or more schools in the school district, to wear a uniform while in school or while under the supervision of a school authority.
(3) If a school board adopts a policy under sub. (2), it shall do all of the following:
(a) Establish a method whereby the parent or guardian of a pupil enrolled in a school in which the policy is in effect may exempt his or her child from complying with the policy.
(b) Ensure that no pupil is penalized academically or otherwise discriminated against because the pupil’s parent or guardian has chosen to exempt the pupil from complying with the policy.
(c) Notify each parent or guardian of a pupil enrolled in a school in which the policy will be implemented of the policy at least 3 months before the school board implements the policy.
(d) Assist economically disadvantaged pupils to obtain the uniforms.
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(4) The requirements under sub. (3) do not apply to any school board that has in effect on September 1, 2001, a school uniform policy for pupils enrolled in a school in the school district and has had such a policy in effect continuously since that date.

(5) By July 1, 2005, the department shall submit a report to the appropriate standing committees of the legislature under s. 13.172 (3). The report shall address all of the following issues relating to the imposition of school uniforms by school boards:

(a) Methods of encouraging the involvement of the parents or guardians of pupils enrolled in a school district in a school board’s decision to require school uniforms.

(b) The ability of pupils to obtain the uniforms.

(c) The effect of the imposition of the requirement on crime in the school, including weapons possession, assault, battery, and vandalism, and on pupil suspensions and expulsions.

(6) Nothing in this section affects the authority of a school board to require pupils to wear uniforms for extracurricular activities, and the provisions of sub. (3) do not apply to such a requirement.

History: 2001 a. 16.

118.04 Summer classes. Any school board may elect to operate summer classes or to permit pupils to attend summer classes operated by another school district on a tuition basis if the school district of operation will accept them. Sections 118.15 and 118.16 shall not apply to summer classes. Every school board electing to operate summer classes:

(1) Shall make rules governing attendance and cause them to be spread on the school board minutes.

(2) May accord to children living in the school district during the summer session the status of residents of the school district for the purpose of attendance at summer classes, even though the children were not regular residents of the school district during the preceding regular school session, but any such children who are not legal residents of the state shall not be counted in computing the state aid to which the school district is entitled.

(3) May permit children from another school district to attend summer classes upon payment of nonresident tuition.

(4) Shall not charge tuition for attendance at summer classes of pupils who are residents of the school district if the school board receives aid for such classes under s. 121.14. The school board may establish and collect reasonable fees for social, recreational or extracurricular summer classes and programs which are neither credited toward graduation nor aided under s. 121.14.

History: 1983 a. 27.

118.045 Commencement of school term. (1) Except as provided in subs. (2) and (3), beginning in the year 2000, no public school may commence the school term until September 1.

(2) Subsection (1) does not prohibit a school board from doing any of the following:

(a) Holding athletic contests or practices before September 1.

(b) Scheduling in-service days or work days before September 1.

(c) Holding school year-round.

(3) A school board may commence the school term before September 1 if the school board requests the department to allow it to commence the school term before September 1 and the school board includes reasons with its request. The department may grant a request only if it determines that there are extraordinary reasons for granting it. The department shall promulgate rules to implement and administer this subsection.

History: 1999 a. 9; 2001 a. 16.

Cross Reference: See also ch. PI 27, Wis. adm. code.

118.05 School conservation camps. (1) To promote an understanding of geology, geography, conservation, nature study and other aspects of general knowledge which are learned best by actual contact with nature itself, any school district may establish, operate and maintain and levy taxes to support individually or in cooperation with other school districts or municipalities a school conservation camp. The camp need not be within the school district.

(2) The school board of any such district may operate, contribute to the operation of, participate in the joint operation of, pay or charge fees for the operation of the school conservation camp. The school board may admit nonresident pupils as well as resident pupils of the school district. The school board shall determine age and other entrance requirements and the program to be offered. The camp may be operated in summer or at any other time that the school board determines.

(3) The school board may acquire, rent or accept the free use of facilities and equipment to operate the camp and may accept private contributions of any kind.

(4) The school board may conduct the camp on property under the custody of other municipal, state or federal agencies when permission is granted or on private property with consent of the owner.

(5) Every state agency shall cooperate in making their staff and facilities available to further the objectives of this program.

118.06 Flag, pledge of allegiance, and national anthem. (1) Every school board and the governing body of every private school shall cause the U.S. flag to be displayed in the schoolroom or from a flagstaff on each school ground during the school hours of each school day.

(2) Every public school shall offer the pledge of allegiance or the national anthem in grades one to 12 each school day. Every private school shall offer the pledge of allegiance or the national anthem in grades one to 12 each school day unless the governing body of the private school determines that the requirement conflicts with the school’s religious doctrines. No pupil may be compelled, against the pupil’s objections or those of the pupil’s parents or guardian, to recite the pledge or to sing the anthem.

History: 1993 a. 492; 2001 a. 16.

118.07 Health and safety requirements. (1) Every school board and the governing body of every private school shall provide a standard first aid kit for use in cases of emergency.

(2) Once each month, without previous warning, the person having direct charge of any public or private school shall drill all pupils in the proper method of departure from the building as if in case of fire, except when the person having direct charge deems that the health of the pupils may be endangered by inclement weather conditions. The school board or governing body of the private school shall maintain for at least 7 years a record of each fire drill conducted.

(3) The department shall make available to school districts, private schools, and charter schools information about meningococcal disease, including the causes and symptoms of the disease, how it is spread, and how to obtain additional information about the disease and the availability, effectiveness, and risks of vaccinations against the disease. The department may so do by posting the information on its Internet site. At the beginning of the 2006−07 to 2011−12 school years, each school board and the governing body of each private school and each charter school shall provide the parents and guardians of pupils enrolled in grades 6 to 12 in the school district with the information. At the beginning of the 2012 school year and each school year thereafter, each school board and the governing body of each private school and each charter school shall provide the parents and guardians of pupils enrolled in grade 6 in the school district or school with the information.

NOTE: Sub. (3) is repealed off the day after the revisor of statutes publishes in the Wisconsin Administrative Register a statement that the secretary of health services has promulgated a rule under section 252.04 (2) of the statutes that requires vaccinations against meningitis.

History: 1971 c. 164 s. 85; 1975 c. 39; 1981 c. 373; 1987 a. 27; 1995 a. 27 ss. 3938, 9116 (5); 2005 a. 220, 221.

118.08 School zones; crossings. (1) On any street or highway which borders the grounds of any public or private
school in which school is held for a term of not less than 6 months, the authority in charge of the maintenance of the street or highway shall erect black and yellow “school” warning signs. The authority may also designate school crossings across any street or highway, whether or not the street or highway borders on the grounds of a school.

(2) All signs required by this section and their installation shall comply with standards adopted by the department of transportation.

History: 1973 c. 90; 1975 c. 48; 1977 c. 29 s. 1654 (8) (g).

118.09 Safety zones. (1) Every school district maintaining a school outside the corporate limits of a city or village shall provide at the school site a zone which will provide safety for pupils from vehicular traffic during loading and unloading of pupils at the school. The zone may consist of a widening toward or into the schoolyard of the traveled portion of the adjacent highway so as to permit a vehicle to stop in the extended area completely clear of such traveled portion or may be constructed wholly within the schoolyard with connecting roads to the adjacent highway. The zone and approaches from the highway for use of vehicles shall be graveled or hard-surfaced.

(2) The school district shall cooperate with the agency of the town, county or state having jurisdiction of the highway to the end that matters pertaining to the highway will be properly protected. Contracts for the necessary materials and construction and maintenance, including snow removal, of zones may be entered into with the county or town or with private persons. If the contracting party does not have jurisdiction over the highway, the contract shall be approved by the agency of the state, county or town having jurisdiction over the highway before any work is commenced thereunder.

(3) All loading and unloading of pupils at the school, whether transported by a public or private vehicle, shall take place in the safety zone. The operator of a vehicle under contract to transport pupils to the school shall have necessary police powers so that pupils will be properly safeguarded in loading and unloading at the zone and while the operator’s vehicle is approaching and leaving the zone. The operator shall first alight before loading or unloading pupils at the zone, and while at stops on the operator’s highway route to load and unload pupils, the operator shall exhibit the vehicle’s stop sign.

(4) Private schools shall comply with this section to the same extent as school districts.

History: 1993 a. 492.

118.10 School safety patrols. Any school board may organize school safety patrols and, with the permission of the parents, appoint pupils as members thereof for the purpose of influencing and encouraging the other pupils to refrain from crossing public highways at points other than at regular crossings and for the purpose of directing pupils not to cross highways at times when the presence of traffic would render such crossing unsafe. Nothing in this section authorizes or permits the use of any safety patrol member for the purpose of directing vehicular traffic, nor may any safety patrol member be stationed in that portion of the highway intended for the use of vehicular traffic. No liability shall attach to the school district or any individual, school board member, school district administrator, teacher or other school authority by virtue of the organization, maintenance or operation of a school safety patrol organized, maintained and operated under this section.


118.105 Control of traffic on school premises. (1) Any school board may request local authorities to control motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic on off-highway school premises located within the jurisdiction of such local authorities.

(2) If the governing body of any town, city or village by ordinance regulates the operation and parking of motor vehicles on off-highway public school premises, school drives or parking lots or pedestrian traffic on any such drives or parking lots, the school board may enter into written agreements with such governing body for reimbursement of the cost of enforcing such ordinance.

(3) Nothing in this section shall preclude the governing body of any town, city or village from repealing ordinances regulating the operation or parking of motor vehicles on off-highway public school premises, drives or parking lots or regulating pedestrian traffic on such drives or parking lots without prior consent of a school board which requested enactment of such ordinance.

History: 1975 c. 251.

118.11 School fences. The school district shall erect and maintain all the fence necessary to enclose the school site or grounds without any financial burden on the holders of adjoining properties.

118.12 Sale of goods and services at schools. (1) As excepted as provided under par. (b), any person may sell or promote the sale of goods or services on school district or cooperative educational service agency property.

(b) A school board may adopt written resolutions governing the sale and promotion of goods and services on school district property. The board of control of a cooperative educational service agency may adopt written resolutions governing the sale and promotion of goods and services on agency property. The resolutions may prohibit, restrict or provide guidelines for such sales and promotions.

(2) (a) No school district employee may receive for his or her personal benefit anything of value from any person other than his or her employing school district to sell, promote the sale of or act as an agent or solicitor for the sale of any goods or services to any public school pupil while on the property of his or her employing school district or at an activity of his or her employing school district.

(b) No cooperative educational service agency employee may receive for his or her personal benefit anything of value from any person other than his or her employing agency to sell, promote the sale of or act as an agent or solicitor for the sale of any goods or services to any public school pupil while on the property or at an activity of his or her employing agency or while on the property or at an activity of a school district in the agency.

(3) Any person violating sub. (2) is subject to a forfeiture of not more than $200 for each offense.

(4) If a school board enters into a contract that grants to one vendor the exclusive right to sell soft drinks in one or more schools of the school district, the contract may not prohibit the sale of milk in any school and, to the maximum extent possible, the school board shall ensure that milk is available to pupils in each school covered by the contract.

(5) If a school board contracts with a person to provide photographs of 12th grade pupils for a school yearbook, the contract may not prohibit a pupil from supplying his or her own photograph for the yearbook, subject to the school board’s reasonable specifications.


118.123 Reports and records; forfeitures. (1) Any officer or teacher who fails or neglects to make the reports or who fails to keep the records required by chs. 115 to 121 shall forfeit not less than $5 nor more than $25 for each such failure or neglect.

(2) If any person designated in chs. 115 to 121 to prosecute an action for a forfeiture or neglect of duty fails to prosecute the action within 10 days after being requested in writing by an elector of the school district to do so, any elector of the school district may prosecute the action.

History: 1979 c. 89, 301; 1985 a. 214 s. 1; Stats. 1985 s. 118.123.

118.125 Pupil records. (1) Definitions. In this section:

(a) “Behavioral records” means those pupil records that include psychological tests, personality evaluations, records of conversations, any written statement relating specifically to an