

SAIS Accreditation

Required Number of School Days

The number one question we field most often is how many days do I have to have in my calendar? This comes up with inclement weather days or planning the school calendar for the next year.

From the SAIS Standards for Accreditation:

3.6 Plans a mission appropriate academic calendar with a minimum of 170 days, or more if required by state law, during which students and teachers engage in teaching/learning activities (Note: for half-day kindergarten programs, one-half day is equivalent to one full day in meeting the 170-day standard). See DOE website: U.S. Department of Education (DOE)

Evidence of compliance with state law is adequate, along with a copy of the school's calendar. Note that although state law differs, generally the requirement is a minimum of the equivalent of 180 days of instruction at 4-6.5 hours per day (720-1170 total hours).

Do you have a calendar that was planned for at least 170 days? Most schools will actually plan closer to the norm of 175 and 180 days. Have you planned more days “if required by state law?” What exactly is the law in your state?

The law that fixes the length of the school year in your state is probably part of the compulsory attendance law. Today, most states require attendance of all school age students to be 180 days or its equivalent. The equivalency is defined either in state statute or in administrative code as somewhere between 4 hours on the short end to about 6.5 hours on the long end – the difference is usually that one includes only direct instruction time and the other includes the entire school day. There are a few of states in which independent schools are required to have calendars “roughly equivalent” to the local public school calendar or in which state statute is completely silent on any requirement at all.

When looking at equivalency, the numbers of days will translate somewhere between 720 – 1170 total hours. In a typical independent school, the days are a little longer and there tends to be more direct instruction. Realistically, you could plan a calendar of about 145 days and meet the requirements of the laws in your state. This is where the SAIS accreditation indicator

comes in, requiring a minimum of 170 days. If you have fewer than 170 days, you should explore ways to capture additional instructional days (e.g., by shortening upcoming holidays, providing an online instructional model for emergencies).

Feel free to contact us if you have questions at accreditation@sais.org.

Below is a list of the pertinent part of state statute or administrative code related to compulsory attendance or exemption statements for independent schools.

Alabama	§16--28--3
Arkansas	6--18--201(a)
California	C 48222
Florida	Rule 6A--1.09512, F.A.C.
Georgia	§20.2.690
Illinois	§425
Kentucky	§159.030(1)(b)
Louisiana	§17:236
Mississippi	§37--13--91(2)(e)
North Carolina	§115C--554 and 562; §115C--548 and 556
South Carolina	none referenced in state law
Tennessee	none referenced in state law for Category III schools (SAIS accredited schools are Category III); "stockpiling" concept for other categories: T.C.A. 49--6--3004(e)(1)
Texas	§2.E.25.086
Virginia	§22.1--254