
WISCONSIN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

Affiliated with the National Education Association

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TO: Members of the Wisconsin State Assembly
FR: Wisconsin Education Association Council
DA: January 27, 2010
RE: AB 116 (School Conference and Activities Leave)

The Wisconsin Education Association Council supports Assembly Bill 116 allowing parents to take up to 16 hours of leave time from work to participate in their children's school activities and conferences that cannot be scheduled during nonworking hours.

Parental involvement helps children to be successful in school. Parents are an important part of an education team which includes student, educators and communities working together for a brighter future. When parents are involved, their children achieve higher grades and test scores, develop better attitudes and behavior, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, graduate from high school and enroll in postsecondary education.

Great schools benefit everyone and making it easier for parents to get time off of work to attend teacher conferences and student activities will increase parental involvement and enhance children's chances for success in school.

According to the Education Commission of the States, at least 15 states encourage, urge, expect or direct employers to enable parents to attend school activities such as parent/teacher conferences: Alabama, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and West Virginia.¹

State	Enacted	Summary
Alabama	1994	Encourages the business community and governmental agencies to give administrative leave to parents for the purpose of parent-teacher conferences and involvement in other educational experiences of the child (ALA. ACTS 159).
California	1990	Prohibits employers with at least 25 employees from firing or in any way discriminating against an employee for taking off up to 40 hours each year to participate in school-related activities, subject to a limitation of eight hours in any calendar month. Employees must give reasonable notice to their employers and may be required to provide proof of attendance. Employees must utilize existing vacation, personal leave or compensatory time off, unless otherwise provided for by a collective bargaining agreement. An employee also may utilize time off without pay for this purpose. Employees discharged, threatened with discharge, demoted, suspended or in any other manner discriminated against for taking time off to participate in school

¹ <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/59/11/5911.pdf>

Mary Bell, President
Dan Burkhalter, Executive Director

		activities is entitled to reinstatement and reimbursement for lost wages and work benefits (CAL. LAB. CODE § 230.8).
Colorado	1996	Supports parental involvement in the public schools and encourages parents to visit their children's classrooms at least once a semester. Encourages businesses with more than 10 employees to allow each employee at least two hours per school semester to attend parent-teacher conferences, special presentations and school-related committees. Also encourages the recognition of businesses that show their commitments to children and education through their understanding of the importance of parental involvement (COLO. S.J.R. 15).
Hawaii	2003	Public employees are eligible for at least two hours of paid leave during normal business hours to attend parent-teacher conferences for K-12 students or parent-caregiver conferences for preschool-aged children. The leave will not be credited against vacation or sick time. The provision of paid leave must not adversely interfere with the operations of the workplace nor require the applicable agency to incur additional human resources or overtime costs. The employee may take no more than two conferences per child in a single calendar year and travel time is included as part of the two hours (HAW. REV. STAT. § 78-31).
Illinois	1993	An employer must grant up to eight hours leave during any school year for employees to attend school conferences or classroom activities related to their children if the conference or classroom activities cannot be scheduled during non-work hours. No leave may be taken unless the employee has exhausted all leave that may be granted, except sick and disability leave. The employee must provide the employer with a written request for leave at least seven days in advance. In emergency situations, no more than 24 hours notice is required. The employee must consult with the employer to schedule the leave so as not to disrupt unduly the operations of the employer. The employer is not required to issue paid leave (ILL. REV. STAT. CH 820 § 147/15).
Louisiana	1993	An employer may grant an employee leave from work of up to a total of 16 hours during any 12-month period to attend, observe or participate in conferences or classroom activities related to the employee's children that are conducted at the child's school or day care center, if the conferences or classroom activities cannot be scheduled during non-work hours. Employees must provide reasonable notice and make a reasonable effort to schedule the leave so as not to unduly disrupt the operations of the employer. An employer is not required to pay an employee for any time taken as leave. An employee is permitted to substitute any accrued vacation time or other appropriate paid leave (LA. REV. STAT. ANN. § 1015.2).
Minnesota	1990 (last amended 2003)	An employer must grant an employee leave of up to a total of 16 hours during any 12-month period to attend school conferences or school-

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		related activities related to the employee's child, provided they cannot be scheduled during non-work hours. When the need for the leave is foreseeable, the employee must provide reasonable prior notice and make a reasonable effort to schedule the leave so as not to unduly disrupt the operations of the employer. An employer is not required to grant paid leave, although an employee may substitute any accrued appropriate paid leave (MINN. STAT. ANN. § 181.9412).
North Carolina	1993	Allows four hours unpaid leave per year to any employee who is a parent or guardian of a school-aged child so that the employee may attend or otherwise be involved at that child's school. The leave must be at a mutually agreed upon time between the employer and the employee and the employer may require an employee to provide a written request for the leave at least 48 hours before the time desired for the leave. The employer may also require that the employee furnish written verification from the child's school that the employee attended or was otherwise involved at that school during the time of the leave (N.C. GEN. STAT. § 95-28.3).
Oklahoma	1989	Directs the state board to establish a program encouraging private employers to give employees leave to attend parent-teacher conferences at least once each semester. Also directs the state board to require school boards to develop initiatives promoting schools as congenial places for parents to visit. Establishes state board policy to encourage public schools to explore outreach opportunities (OKLA. STAT. TIT. 70 § 10-105.2).
Oregon	1995	The state legislature recommends that (1) school districts provide opportunities for parents or guardians to be involved in establishing and implementing educational goals and to participate in decision-making at the school site, (2) employers recognize the need for parents or guardians and members of the community to participate in the education process not only for their own children but for the educational system, (3) <i>employers be encouraged to extend appropriate leave to parents or guardians to allow greater participation in that process during school hours</i> , (4) school districts enter into partnerships with business, labor and other groups to provide workplace-based professional development opportunities for their educational staff and (5) school districts enter into partnerships with recreation groups, faith-based organizations, social service and health care agencies, businesses, child care providers and other groups that support children and families to create community learning centers for students, parents and members of the surrounding community (OR. REV. STAT. § 329.125).
South Carolina	2000	The education oversight committee, in cooperation with representatives of the department of commerce, the department of revenue, and the South Carolina chamber of commerce, will develop recommendations for employer tax credits as incentives to: (1) <i>provide parent-employee release time for parent-teacher conferences or attendance at their children's academic-related events without loss of</i>

		pay and (2) develop workplace policies which enable parents to improve their literacy, assist their children with academics, and become more involved in their child's education as a result of employers working with local school officials (S.C. CODE ANN. § 59-28-220).
Tennessee	2000	Urges employers to excuse employees from work to attend parent-teacher conferences when given 24-hour notice (TENN. H.J.R. 56)
Texas	1997 (renumbered 1999, amended 2003)	Employees may use up to eight hours of sick leave each fiscal year to attend parent-teacher conferences for their children in grades K-12. An employee must give reasonable advance notice to their employer (TEX. EDUC. CODE ANN. § 661.206).
Utah	1996 (amended 2000)	Recognizing the importance of parental participation in the educational process, it is state policy to encourage parents to provide a home environment that values education and send their children to school prepared to learn, rely upon school districts and schools to provide opportunities for parents of students to be involved in establishing and implementing educational goals and <i>expect employers to recognize the need for parents and members of the community to participate in the public education system in order to help students achieve and maintain excellence.</i> Local school boards must adopt policies on parental involvement. Policies must provide parents with the opportunity to be actively involved in their child's education and inform them of the importance of their involvement in directly affecting the educational success of their child (UTAH CODE ANN. § 53A-1A-105).
West Virginia	1990 (last amended 2003)	Establishes local school improvement councils at every school. School improvement councils may receive school of excellence awards and competitive grant awards and expend such grants. In order to promote innovations and improvements at the school, a school improvement council will receive cooperation from the school in implementing policies and programs it may adopt for a number of purposes, including to encourage the involvement of parents or guardians in their child's educational process and in the school <i>or to encourage businesses to provide time for their employees to meet with teachers concerning their child's education</i> (W. VA. CODE § 18-5A-2).

Please support Assembly Bill 116.

If you have any questions, contact Deb Sybell, WEAC Legislative Program Coordinator, at (608) 298-2327.