

California considers shortening school year

By Kevin Yamamura, Sacramento Bee

Children in frigid areas have “snow day” school closures. Could students across sunny California face “budget days” in bad fiscal times?

Gov. Jerry Brown and school officials warn that shutting down school one month early – 20 instructional days – is a real possibility for the next school year without an extension of higher taxes. Some see Hawaii, which slashed 17 days in 2009-10, as an example that drastic measures are possible.

But there remain significant hurdles to imposing a monthlong closure in California, particularly getting approval from teachers unions and lawmakers. Republicans suggest that Democrats are raising the possibility as a scare tactic.

In the past two years, most California school districts have reduced their schedules below the 180-day calendar that was standard here in the previous decade and remains the norm nationwide.

No legislative proposal exists, but Orange County Superintendent of Schools William Habermehl said his 27 districts are talking about the option, whether it means a shorter school year or four-day weeks.

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