

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2011

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HOUSE BILL 765
PROPOSED SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE H765-PCS70247-RQ-23

Short Title: Study Length of School Year.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

April 7, 2011

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION TO STUDY THE CURRENT
LENGTH OF THE SCHOOL YEAR IN NORTH CAROLINA AND TO DETERMINE
HOW LONG THE SCHOOL YEAR SHOULD BE.

Whereas, the Constitution of North Carolina reads as follows: "The people have a right to the privilege of education, and it is the duty of the State to guard and maintain that right"; and

Whereas, the length of the school year in North Carolina, like many other states in the United States, is currently a minimum of 180 teaching days, and 1,000 hours, and funds for public education in the State are based on the length of the school term; and

Whereas, North Carolina law does not prohibit school districts from providing more than 180 days of instruction time; and

Whereas, the seminal education report "A Nation at Risk" noted in 1984 that the 180-day school calendar had become outdated and could not sufficiently supply the kind of instructional time that American students needed in a world of increasing complexity; and

Whereas, 180 instructional days consistently puts the United States at or near the bottom of other industrialized nations, according to rankings of instructional time done by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); and

Whereas, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) studies show that the average time spent in the classroom by students in participating nations is 193, translating into a 156-day instructional day gap for American students over a 12-year academic career, or nearly one full school year.

Whereas, North Carolina's graduation rate continues to need to improve; and

Whereas, some experts contend that the current length of the school year does not afford ample time to equip young North Carolinians with the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in an increasingly competitive and global workplace; and

Whereas, studies document that approximately two-thirds of the grade 9 achievement gap between lower and higher income youth can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities during the elementary school years; and

Whereas, studies have documented that most students lose about two months of grade level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer break; and

Whereas, low-income students also lose more than two months in reading achievement, despite the fact that their middle-class peers make slight gains; and



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1 Whereas, children lose more than academic knowledge over the summer. Most
2 children, particularly children at high risk of obesity, gain weight more rapidly when they are
3 out of school during summer break; and

4 Whereas, students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer
5 vacation than they do on the same tests at the beginning of the summer; and

6 Whereas, North Carolina continues to spend precious resources on the remediation
7 of its students; and

8 Whereas, the State of North Carolina should explore the feasibility of extending its
9 school year and potentially being a model for the nation; Now, therefore,

10 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

11 **SECTION 1.** The General Assembly reaffirms its intent that every child in North
12 Carolina deserves an opportunity to a sound basic education.

13 **SECTION 2.** There is established a Blue Ribbon Commission to Study the Current
14 Length of the School Year (Commission).

15 **SECTION 3.** The Commission shall be composed of 19 members as follows:

- 16 (1) Five members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of
17 the House of Representatives.
- 18 (2) Five members of the Senate appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the
19 Senate.
- 20 (3) The chair of the North Carolina State Board of Education.
- 21 (4) The executive director of the North Carolina School Boards Association.
- 22 (5) The Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- 23 (6) The president of North Carolina Association of Educators, Inc.
- 24 (7) The executive director of the North Carolina Association of School
25 Administrators.
- 26 (8) The executive director of the Public School Forum of North Carolina.
- 27 (9) The executive director of the Professional Educators of North Carolina, Inc.
- 28 (10) The executive director of the N.C. Principals/Assistant Principals
29 Association, Inc.
- 30 (11) The executive director of the North Carolina Congress of Parents and
31 Teachers, Incorporated.

32 **SECTION 4.** The Commission shall study the following matters related to North
33 Carolina's educational needs:

- 34 (1) Strategies for making North Carolina's children ready to compete in the 21st
35 century.
- 36 (2) The cost of implementing a longer school year.
- 37 (3) A plan for implementing a longer school year.
- 38 (4) The impact of summer learning loss.
- 39 (5) The cost of remediation in the public schools, the community colleges, and
40 the constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina.
- 41 (6) The impact of the current calendar on low-income and at-risk students.
- 42 (7) The impact of the current calendar on math and science scores.
- 43 (8) The achievement gap.

44 **SECTION 5.** The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall designate one
45 Representative as Cochair, and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall designate one
46 Senator as Cochair. The Commission shall meet upon the call of the chairs. A quorum of the
47 Commission shall be 10 members. Any vacancy on the Commission shall be filled by the
48 appointing authority.

49 **SECTION 6.** Members of the Commission shall receive per diem, subsistence, and
50 travel allowances in accordance with G.S. 120-3.1, 138-5, or 138-6, as appropriate. The
51 Commission, while in the discharge of its official duties, may exercise all powers provided for

1 under G.S. 120-19 and G.S. 120-19.4. The Commission may meet upon the call of the
2 Cochairs. The Commission may meet in the Legislative Building or the Legislative Office
3 Building. With approval of the Legislative Services Commission, the Legislative Services
4 Officer shall assign professional staff to assist the Commission in its work. The House of
5 Representatives' and the Senate's Directors of Legislative Assistants shall assign clerical staff to
6 the Commission, and the expenses relating to the clerical employees shall be borne by the
7 Commission. The Commission may contract for professional, clerical, or consultant services as
8 provided by G.S. 120-32.02. If the Commission hires a consultant, the consultant shall not be a
9 State employee or a person currently under contract with the State to provide services.

10 All State departments and agencies and local governments and their subdivisions
11 shall furnish the Commission with any information in their possession or available to them.

12 The Commission may apply for, receive, and accept grants of non-State funds or
13 other contribution as appropriate to assist in the performance of its duties.

14 **SECTION 7.** The Commission may make an interim report of its findings and
15 recommendations to the 2012 Regular Session of the 2011 General Assembly and shall make a
16 final report of its findings and recommendations to the 2013 General Assembly. The
17 Commission shall terminate on December 31, 2012, or the filing of its final report, whichever
18 occurs first.

19 **SECTION 8.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2011.