

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2017

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HOUSE BILL 389
Second Edition Engrossed 4/6/17

Short Title: School Calendar Flexibility Pilot Program. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Warren, Horn, Johnson, and McGrady (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Education - K-12, if favorable, Commerce and Job Development

March 20, 2017

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE SCHOOL CALENDAR FLEXIBILITY PILOT PROGRAM.

Whereas, North Carolina is a State blessed with great diversity of climate, culture, geography, and environmental offerings from mountains to beaches; and

Whereas, North Carolina communities are individually blessed with demographics unique to their localities that may support or supplement their local economies; and

Whereas, some communities are economically dependent on seasonal business offerings or tourism, and some communities are not affected as much, or at all; and

Whereas, the State-mandated, late-August start date puts high school calendars out of alignment with community colleges and four-year universities, which typically begin the first semester in early August and the second semester weeks before high school students complete the fall semester; and

Whereas, superintendents have reported that the calendar misalignment creates barriers for high school students who want to take community college courses and creates challenges for high school students who graduate early; and

Whereas, practices and tryouts for interscholastic sports can start as early as August 1 and many student athletes are required to be available, while some sports such as football have already played games before the school year has started, negatively impacting ticket and booster club revenues; and

Whereas, the State invests more than fifty-six percent (56%) of its annual budget revenue on education, research must be done to determine the impact of local school calendar flexibility on student achievement, graduation rates, school grade improvement, and all other education evaluation metrics to weigh against any potential local economic impacts; and

Whereas, such research would provide irrefutable evidence of individual communities that would not be economically harmed by school calendar flexibility and those communities where educational advantages outweigh negative economic impacts; and

Whereas, such research would identify those communities that would be negatively affected by calendar flexibility; and

Whereas, the State's generous annual investment in education requires the best absolute return on investment to provide for an educated and globally competitive citizenry; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Purpose. – The State Board of Education (State Board) shall establish a School Calendar Flexibility Pilot Program (Program). The purpose of the Program is to determine the impact of school calendar flexibility for opening and closing dates on student



1 achievement and summer internships and to identify and quantify the communities that can
2 support local school calendar control and those that cannot.

3 **SECTION 2.** Participation. – All local school administrative units in the following
4 counties, which collectively represent the geographic, economic, and social diversity of the
5 State, are authorized to participate in the Program: Anson County, Bladen County, Cabarrus
6 County, Caldwell County, Cherokee County, Cleveland County, Davidson County, Duplin
7 County, Graham County, Greene County, Guilford County, Martin County, McDowell County,
8 Mitchell County, Northampton County, Robeson County, Rowan County, Warren County,
9 Washington County, and Wilson County.

10 Any local board of education of a local school administrative unit authorized to
11 participate in the Program may elect not to participate. For each local school administrative unit
12 that elects not to participate in the Program, the State Board may authorize one replacement
13 local school administrative unit to participate in the program. Together, the local school
14 administrative units participating in the Program shall represent the geographic, economic, and
15 social diversity of the State.

16 **SECTION 3.** Implementation. – Each local school administrative unit participating
17 in the Program shall do so for three school years, beginning in either the 2018-2019 school year
18 or the 2019-2020 school year. The State Board shall provide the Department of Commerce with
19 a list of the participating local school administrative units no later than February 1, 2018.

20 Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-84.2(d), local boards of education of participating local
21 school administrative units shall determine, for the duration of the Program, the dates of
22 opening and closing the public schools under subdivision (a)(1) of G.S. 115C-84.2. Except for
23 year-round schools, the opening date for students shall be no earlier than the Monday closest to
24 August 10 and the closing date for students shall be no later than the Friday closest to June 11.
25 A local board may revise the scheduled closing date if necessary in order to comply with the
26 minimum requirements for instructional days or instructional time.

27 The required opening and closing dates under this section shall not apply to any
28 school that a local board designated as having a modified calendar for the 2003-2004 school
29 year or to any school that was part of a planned program in the 2003-2004 school year for a
30 system of modified calendar schools, so long as the school operates under a modified calendar.

31 **SECTION 4.** Data Collection by Department of Public Instruction. – For the
32 duration of the Program, the Department of Public Instruction shall contact each participating
33 local school administrative unit annually to determine (i) the actual dates for opening and
34 closing the public schools, (ii) the impact of the Program on student achievement and summer
35 internships, and (iii) any other information the Department deems necessary for purposes of the
36 study. The Department of Public Instruction shall provide the Department of Commerce with
37 the actual dates for opening and closing the public schools in each participating local school
38 administrative unit.

39 **SECTION 5.** Department of Commerce Evaluation. – The Department of
40 Commerce shall study the effect of the Program on the travel and tourism industry for all 100
41 counties of the State.

42 **SECTION 6.** Reports. – By November 15 of each year following the operation of
43 the Program, the State Board and the Department of Commerce shall separately report to the
44 School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on the effects of the
45 Program. The State Board shall report on (i) implementation and administration of the
46 Program; (ii) any impact of the Program on student achievement; (iii) any effect of the Program
47 on summer internships; and (iv) any recommendations on the modification, continuation, and
48 potential expansion of the Program statewide. The State Board shall also recommend any local
49 school administrative units that should be assigned calendar flexibility on an ongoing basis.
50 The Department of Commerce shall report on any economic impact of the Program on the
51 tourism industry in the State. The School of Government shall evaluate this information and

1 provide an aggregated report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by
2 December 15 of the same year.

3 **SECTION 7.** This act is effective when it becomes law.