

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 2017

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HOUSE BILL 389

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 achievement and



1 summer internships and to identify and quantify the communities that can support local school  
2 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 State,  
5 are authorized to participate in the Program: Anson County, Bladen County, Cabarrus County,  
6 Caldwell County, Cherokee County, Cleveland County, Davidson County, Duplin County,  
7 Graham County, Greene County, Guilford County, Martin County, McDowell County, Mitchell  
8 County, Northampton County, Robeson County, Rowan County, Warren County, Washington  
9 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 local  
13 school administrative unit to participate in the program. Together, the local school administrative  
14 units participating in the Program shall represent the geographic, economic, and social diversity of  
15 the State.

16 **SECTION 3.** Implementation. – Each local school administrative unit participating in  
17 the Program shall do so for three school years, beginning in either the 2018-2019 school year or  
18 the 2019-2020 school year. The State Board shall provide the Department of Commerce with a list  
19 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 opening  
22 and closing the public schools under subdivision (a)(1) of G.S. 115C-84.2. Except for year-round  
23 schools, the opening date for students shall be no earlier than the Monday closest to August 10 and  
24 the closing date for students shall be no later than the Friday closest to June 11. A local board may  
25 revise the scheduled closing date if necessary in order to comply with the minimum requirements  
26 for instructional days or instructional time.

27 The required opening and closing dates under this section shall not apply to any school  
28 that a local board designated as having a modified calendar for the 2003-2004 school year or to  
29 any school that was part of a planned program in the 2003-2004 school year for a system of  
30 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 duration  
32 of the Program, the Department of Public Instruction shall contact each participating local school  
33 administrative unit annually to determine (i) the actual dates for opening and closing the public  
34 schools, (ii) the impact of the Program on student achievement and summer internships, and (iii)  
35 any other information the Department deems necessary for purposes of the study. The Department  
36 of Public Instruction shall provide the Department of Commerce with the actual dates for opening  
37 and closing the public schools in each participating local school administrative unit.

38 **SECTION 5.** Department of Commerce Evaluation. – The Department of Commerce  
39 shall study the effect of the Program on the tourist industry.

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

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