

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: SJM 12

49th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2010

Tracking Number: .180397.1

Short Title: Study Various School Calendars

Sponsor(s): Senator Gay G. Kernan and Others

Analyst: James Ball

Date: January 28, 2010

FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

Bill Summary:

SJM 12 requests the Office of Education Accountability (OEA), in collaboration with the Public Education Department, school districts, charter schools, school boards and governing bodies, teacher and employee representatives, and parent representatives to study the impact of various school calendar options and scheduling practices on teachers, learning time, achievement of students, school operations, and district budgetary needs. The study should also examine the need, if any, to amend the *Variable School Calendar Act*. Finally, SJM 12 requests that OEA report its findings and recommendations to the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) by October 31, 2010.

Substantive Issues:

Legislation enacted in 2009 requires that, effective school year 2010-2011, school calendars consist of 180 full instructional days for a regular school year calendar and 150 full instructional days for a variable school year, excluding release time for in-service training. As presented in testimony several times during the 2009 interim, these imminent requirements raised a number of issues.

For one, there was concern that, during the budget approval process for school year 2009-2010, a number of school districts and charter schools felt compelled to change their school calendars in the current school year, a year earlier than the effective date of the 2009 legislation. For another, staff testimony indicated that more than half of the school districts and charter schools would be required to add instructional days in school year 2010-2011 to satisfy the requirements of the 2009 legislation. Staff testimony also indicated a wide range of per-day costs at the districts and charter schools surveyed. Finally, testimony and discussion during the interim revealed that the amended provisions to the *Public School Code* relating to the minimum hours required by grade level considered only students on a regular school-year calendar, not those on a variable school-year calendar. For these reasons, the LESC has also endorsed SB 92, which delays the implementation of the 2009 legislation until school year 2011-2012.

The OEA analysis identifies some of the benefits of ensuring sufficient time devoted exclusively to instruction, among them: Katy Haycock, of Education Trust, has frequently argued that high performing schools organize their calendars to reduce interruptions to instructional time, while lower performing schools do not. In fact, in a calendar analysis of one school, Education Trust staff found that after accounting for holidays, professional development days, early dismissal,

state and district testing, parent conferences, trips, holiday parties, assemblies, and concerts that there were only approximately 13-15 eight hour days per subject per year. Education Trust's argument, therefore, is that schools need to minimize instructional interruptions in order to maximize instruction.

Related Bill(s):

SB 87 *Delay School Year & Day Length Changes*

SB 92 *Delay School Year and Day Length Changes*

SB 97 *School District Budget Flexibility*