



North Carolina Association of Educators

Real School Calendar Reform Includes Local Input and Options



Recent amendments to the calendar law legislation, (passed July 1, 2012, with implementation effective July 1, 2013), mandates the instructional year for students increase by five days but at the expense of professional workdays for teachers. Waivers will not be allowed when the new law is implemented next school year. This will require teachers to teach 185 days or 1,025 hours. School districts can opt to have fewer student days and opt to complete 1,025 hours by increasing the length of the current school day. There is no comprehensive research to support longer days have positively impacted student learning and achievement. Teachers and parents in one North Carolina school district have reported serious concerns regarding longer school days and the negative impact on students. Reports include longer bus rides, student exhaustion, lack of attentiveness, and an unwillingness to complete homework after an extended school day.

NCAE supports *real* school calendar reform, including a return of local control to school boards, along with educator and parent input. Local school districts, along with input from staff and parents, can best determine the educational priorities and objectives in their communities. Many school systems want to align their calendars with local community colleges or universities in their area, adjust exam schedules to benefit students who may be in advanced placement or International baccalaureate programs or have flexibility with block scheduling utilized by a large number of high schools across the state. Districts also adding five days are commendable; however, if significant measurable gains are to be made in student learning and achievement, the school year for students must increase at least by one additional month, according to research studies on this issue. Simply adding additional time to the current school day is not the answer. Teachers will once again this year have five fewer non-protected workday to do all the additional work needed outside of class time (student conferences, parent conferences, preparing lessons, grading papers, etc.) for student success. Therefore, the Association is committed to working with lawmakers to restore the five protected teacher professional workdays that not only enhance instruction but increase student learning and achievement.

NCAE will also work with school districts in calendar development for 2013-14 to ensure that student achievement does not suffer, along with providing adequate quality preparation time for teachers in addition to time for doing all the work required outside the classroom (preparing lesson plans, grading papers and exams, student conferences, tutoring, exam makeup, etc.). Last school year (2011-12), when the five protected workdays were eliminated from the school calendar, many teachers were forced to use more personal time (late evenings, early morning,

weekends and even holidays) in order to adequately prepare for classroom instruction. Teachers will again this year have fewer workdays to use for annual leave (only two are mandated). Teachers cannot take annual leave on student days. So how will they handle personal business such as (mortgage closings, attending graduations of relatives, to name a few)? Veteran teachers with 20 or more years of service earn 21.7 annual leave days per year. The first 10 annual leave days must be built into the school calendar by law. Veteran educators will have 11.5 annual leave days, but will be unable to use them since annual leave can **only** be used on workdays when students are not in attendance. Beginning with the 2013-14 school year, teachers will have only 10 professional workdays scheduled in the school calendar (195 teacher contract days —185 student days = 10 teacher workdays). The law mandates that only two of the 10 days must be protected for annual leave purposes, leaving the remaining workdays for staff development and training. This is a serious problem that NCAE will work to rectify.

Our biggest concern is the limit in flexibility in the opening and closing of schools, especially counties with hardship waivers for “good weather” causes (mountain counties that miss at least eight days per year during any four of the last 10 years for severe weather conditions). The new law mandates that even for those counties, opening of schools cannot start prior to the Monday closest to August 19. This clearly will create an issue for these counties and negatively impact students and staff. NCAE will work to amend the calendar law to ensure efforts to enhance classroom instruction and increase student learning and achievement. Calendar reform must include local input and options. School districts with input from educators and parents should be allowed flexibility in deciding the timeframe that best works for students, educators and parents in their individual communities.

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