

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Education Pre-K - 12 Committee

BILL: SB 2816
 INTRODUCER: Senator Posey
 SUBJECT: Opening of Public K-12 Schools
 DATE: March 22, 2008 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	deMarsh-Mathues	Matthews	ED	Unfavorable
2.	_____	_____	CM	_____
3.	_____	_____	EA	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The bill allows a district school board to adopt opening dates for the school year earlier than 14 days before Labor Day if it meets the following requirements:

- Holds public hearings throughout the school district;
- Surveys the parents of all enrolled public school students in the district; and
- Approves the earlier opening date by a unanimous vote.

The bill also provides an exception to these requirements for schools that operate under a year-round school year or an extended calendar. These schools must open and close according to school board policy and may also establish an earlier opening date.

This bill substantially amends section 1001.42 of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Current law requires district school boards to adopt plans for the opening and closing dates of schools and the observance of school holidays and vacation periods.¹ The law prohibits district school boards from adopting opening dates for the school year earlier than 14 days before Labor Day each year.² This provision was effective beginning with the 2007-2008 school year. For 2007-2008, the actual start date was no earlier than Monday, August 20, which was 14 days prior to September 3, Labor Day.

¹ s. 1001.42(4)(f) and (g), F.S.

² s. 1001.42(4)(f), F.S., as amended by s. 11 of ch. 2006-74, L.O.F.

School Calendar, Length of the School Year, and Other Holidays

Prior to the beginning of each fiscal year, school boards must adopt an annual calendar for use by all schools operated by the board.³ Districts must also provide for elementary and secondary schools to operate for a term of at least 180 days or the equivalent on an hourly basis as specified by rules of the State Board of Education.⁴ Currently, there is no requirement that the first and second semesters be equal in length. However, the law defines the minimum number of hours that comprise a full credit for high school graduation purposes.⁵ A credit is a minimum of 135 hours of bona fide instruction in a designated course of study that contains student performance standards. For schools that use block scheduling, a full credit is a minimum of 120 hours.

The following chart documents a shift in school start dates from 1998-1999 through 2006-2007.⁶

School Year	Districts Starting in Week 1 (August 1-7)	Districts Starting in Week 2 (August 8-14)	Districts Starting in Week 3 (August 15-21)	Districts Starting in Week 4 (August 22-28)	Districts Starting in Week 5 (August 29-31)
1998-99	6	25	23	16	3
1999-00	4	28	25	14	2
2000-01	13	38	16	6	0
2001-02	15	47	8	3	0
2002-03	18	46	6	3	0
2003-04	31	33	7	2	0
2004-05	25	38	10	0	0
2005-06	26	38	8	0	0
2006-07	33	33	5	0	0

Students in 62 of 67 school districts were to begin the traditional 2007-2008 school year on August 20.⁷ Students were to begin the school year on August 21 in Pinellas County, on August 22 in Palm Beach and Putnam counties, on August 23 in Union County, and on August 24 in St. Johns County. The regular school year ends as early as May 28, 2008, for students in Bay and Collier counties and as late as June 11, 2008, for students in Monroe and St. Johns counties. Of the remaining districts, the school year ends for students in 3 districts on May 29; in 13 districts on May 30; 2 districts on June 2; in 6 districts on June 3; in 9 districts on June 4; in 18 districts on June 5; in 11 districts on June 6; and 1 district on June 9.⁸

According to the DOE, the winter and spring break periods for districts appear to be consistent throughout the state during the 2007-2008 school year. Substantial differences exist between

³ Rule 6A-10.019, F.A.C.

⁴ s. 1001.42(10)(a), F.S.

⁵ s. 1003.436(1)(a), F.S.

⁶ Florida Department of Education, January 2007. The chart includes the 67 school districts, the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind, Eckerd schools, the Florida Virtual School, and the four developmental research (lab) schools.

⁷ Florida Department of Education, *Statistical Brief*, Series 2008-03B, August 2007. See <http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/pdf/calendar.pdf>. In Miami-Dade County, 39 schools operate on an extended school year schedule where the school year is extended by seven days. Charlotte County has one school that will operate on the extended school year schedule.

⁸ *Id.*

districts for other holidays. For example, several districts provide almost a full week of holidays. Fourteen school districts also provide a fall break in addition to the Thanksgiving holidays.⁹

Year-Round Schools, Advanced Placement, and Dual Enrollment

Modified or year-round schools operate on a nontraditional school calendar.¹⁰ During 2007-2008, there will be 12 schools (nine elementary schools, two middle schools, and one school center) in four districts using the nontraditional calendar. Most schools operating on track systems have a break between sessions. A track includes a group of students and/or teachers assigned to the same schedule.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill allows a district school board to adopt opening dates for the school year earlier than 14 days before Labor Day if it meets the following requirements:

- Holds at least three public hearings;
- Surveys the parents of all enrolled public school students in the district; and
- Approves the earlier opening date by a unanimous vote.

Schools that operate under a year-round school year or an extended calendar must open and close according to school board policy and may establish an earlier opening date.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Proponents of a later school start date suggest that state tourism may benefit, as families with school-aged children would continue with vacation activities during late summer and therefore increase tourism related revenues or significantly reduce labor costs. An

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Florida Department of Education, *Statistical Brief*, Series 2008-03B, August 2007.

interim project report in 2003 by the Senate Committee on Commerce and Economic Opportunities did not find any increase in state tourism dollars with the imposition of a later start date; however, the report did indicate that there were data limitations and that the effect of later school start dates on Florida's economy needed further review.¹¹

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

¹¹ *Interim Report 2003-112*, the Florida Senate Committee on Commerce and Economic Opportunities.