

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 1468

INTRODUCER: Senator Montford

SUBJECT: Opening and Closing Dates for Public Schools

DATE: February 18, 2012 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Carrouth	deMarsh-Mathues	ED	Pre-meeting
2.	_____	_____	BC	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The bill would allow district school boards to begin the school year earlier than the timeframe prescribed in law in order for students to complete necessary coursework and assessments for the fall term five days prior to Christmas Day.

This bill substantially amends section 1001.42 of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Current law requires district school boards to adopt calendars 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

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.

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.

³ Rule 6A-10.019, F.A.C.

⁴ s. 1001.42(12)(a), F.S.

According to the Department of Education (DOE), students in 52 of the state's 67 school districts began the traditional 2011-12 school year on August 22, 2011. Twelve districts started between August 8 and 18 and three other districts began August 23 through 25. Opening and closing dates for public schools are subject to change if the state is affected by a hurricane.⁵

Based on the *Data Report of School District Calendars for 2011-2012*, 24 of the state's 67 school districts began their Christmas breaks less than five days before Christmas Day, December 25, 2011. Of these 24 school districts, seven provided a full week for the Thanksgiving break which would have resulted in less instructional time prior to the Christmas break.⁶

Section 1003.621, F.S., establishes provisions for high performing school districts. School district's designated as high performing are exempt from a large number of statutory requirements, including an exemption from prescribed school calendar dates.⁷ Of the thirteen school districts that are currently designated as high performing, all but one of these districts chose to exercise their exemption from law for the 2011-2012 school start date.⁸

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill would allow district school boards to adopt policies to begin the school year earlier than the timeframe prescribed in law to enable students to complete necessary coursework and assessments for the fall term five days prior to Christmas Day. According to the DOE, for the 2011-12 school year, districts could choose to administer the fall-term statewide end-of-course Algebra 1 assessment in either December or January.⁹ Beginning in 2012-13, for fall-term there will be a December testing window only, which would support districts in completing the fall term prior to the Christmas break.¹⁰

Under the bill, all school districts would be afforded the flexibility to adopt school start dates, irrespective of their status as a high performing school district.¹¹ As the bill is currently written, school districts would be eligible to adopt any school year start date. Furthermore, the bill makes no reference to a requirement that school districts shorten or eliminate other fall term holidays, such as the Thanksgiving break, to offset the earlier start date or the earlier release date for the Christmas break.

⁵ See <http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/>.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ See s. 1003.621(1)(b) and (2)(a) – (k), F.S.

⁸ See www.fldoe.org/board/meetings/2011_05_17/acad.pdf and www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/word/calendar.doc.

⁹ DOE Bill Analysis, February 17, 2012. On file with the Senate Committee on Education Pre-K – 12.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Section 1003.621, F.S., allows for school districts designated as high performing to be exempt from statutory requirements that prescribe school calendar dates. A school district is an academically high-performing school district if it meets the following criteria: earns a grade of "A" for 2 consecutive years; has no district-operated school that earns a grade of "F"; complies with all constitutional and statutory class size requirements; and has no material weaknesses or instances of material noncompliance noted in the annual financial audit conducted pursuant to s. 218.39, F.S.

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 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.¹²

C. Government Sector Impact:

The costs, if any, associated with a district's restructuring of its school calendar is unknown.

A 2008 study conducted by researchers at the University of Tennessee concluded that a school start date after the Labor Day holiday would generate an estimated \$189.89 million in new statewide tourist spending by residents in Tennessee. In turn, this additional spending would generate \$9.72 million in new state tax revenues for that state.¹³

¹² *Interim Report 2003-112, Impact of a Uniform School Year on Florida's Economy*, the Florida Senate Committee on Commerce and Economic Opportunities, January 2003. See http://archive.flsenate.gov/data/Publications/2003/Senate/reports/interim_reports/pdf/2003-112cm.pdf.

¹³ The research study included a survey of Tennessee residents and of the survey respondents, 37 percent of Tennessee residents 18 years and older (1,713,751) took summer vacations in Tennessee; 27 percent of Tennessee residents taking Tennessee summer vacations (462,712) indicated they would take one additional vacation in Tennessee if schools started after Labor Day; and 13 percent of Tennessee residents taking summer vacations (222,787) indicated they would have extended a summer Tennessee vacation by an average of 1.5 days if Tennessee schools started after Labor Day. University of Tennessee, Tourism Institute, Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management, *Post Labor Day School Start*

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.
