

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

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

Prepared By: Education Appropriations Committee

BILL: CS/SB 306

INTRODUCER: Education Committee and Senator Margolis

SUBJECT: School Year/Opening Date

DATE: March 7, 2006

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Carrouth	Matthews	ED	Fav/CS
2.	Armstrong	Newman	EA	Fav/1 amendment
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

Please see last section for Summary of Amendments

☐

Technical amendments were recommended

☐

Amendments were recommended

☒

Significant amendments were recommended

I. Summary:

This bill prohibits district school boards from adopting opening dates for the school year earlier than seven days before Labor Day each year. This provision is effective beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, unless a district school board votes to apply the provisions of the bill beginning with the 2006-2007 school year.

The bill makes adherence by school districts to the school year opening date a requirement for participation in the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP).

The bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 1001.42 and 1011.60.

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2006.

II. Present Situation:

Section 1001.42, F.S., requires district school boards to adopt plans for the opening and closing dates of schools and the observance of school holidays and vacation periods.

The Florida Senate's Committee on Commerce and Economic Opportunities¹ studied the potential impact of a uniform school year in Florida.² Based on the results of a questionnaire distributed to district superintendents for the report, two factors most widely cited for earlier start dates were the need to increase instructional time prior to the administration of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and the desire to complete the fall semester prior to the winter holidays.

School Start Date and Academic Achievement

Existing data show no apparent correlation between earlier school start dates and increased achievement on the FCAT. However, the Department of Education (DOE) has indicated the need for long-term data collection and analysis in order to determine whether a correlation exists. Other variables, such as intermittent district holidays, teacher planning days, and the more recent hurricane and tropical storm days impact instructional time and prevent a statistically reliable analysis to be made at this time.

Proponents of a later school start date have cited a correlate between top performing academic states and their later opening dates in late August or early September.³ Those statistics however, are disputable for reasons similar to those stated above, but perhaps more importantly, for reasons associated with differences in student demographics in high achieving states. These factors have not been addressed in the claimed correlation.⁴

Length of the School Year and Other Holidays

The following DOE chart documents a shift in school start dates from 1998-99 through 2005-06.

School Year	Districts Starting in Week 1 (Aug. 1-7)	Districts Starting in Week 2 (Aug. 8-14)	Districts Starting in Week 3 (Aug. 15-21)	Districts Starting in Week 4 (Aug. 22-28)	Districts Starting in Week 5 (Aug. 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

According to the DOE, 31 of Florida's 67 school districts started school the week of August 4 during the 2003-2004 school year. Interestingly, that figure dropped to only 26 school districts two years later for the 2005-2006 school year. Also of note, Florida's two largest school

¹ The committee is currently known as the Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Services.

² Interim Report 2003-112, the Florida Senate, Committee on Commerce and Economic Opportunities.

³ <http://www.saveoursummers.org>

⁴ Ibid.

districts, Miami-Dade and Broward, have both voted in recent weeks to start the 2006-2007 school year one week later, based in large part on input and protest from parents.⁵

School districts have started school earlier almost every year since 1991. As a result of earlier start dates, however, districts have also ended the academic year earlier.⁶ The chart below reflects national trends and changes in the school calendar year from 1949-50 to 2005-2006.⁷

Factor	1949-50	2005-2006
Instructional Days	180	180
Holidays other than staff development days ⁸	15	19-24
Staff development days ⁹	0	3-5
Average School Year	39 weeks	41 weeks
Average Summer Break	13 weeks	11 weeks

Other States

According to the DOE, several states have enacted legislation to require later school start dates including Texas, North Carolina, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, Michigan, Virginia, South Dakota, and Minnesota.¹⁰

The 2001 Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 108, which requires school districts to begin during the week in which August 21 falls.¹¹ Many Texas school districts, however, have taken advantage of a waiver provision and begun the school year earlier. The Office of the Texas Comptroller conducted a study and released a special report, “Saving Summer: Lessons Learned,” in September 2004, following enactment of the later start date. Many of the findings contained in the report mirror the findings of Interim Report 2003-112, primarily the need for sufficient instructional time prior to high stakes testing and completing the fall semester prior to the winter holidays. The report emphasized the importance of the trend toward an increase in holidays and the number of teacher planning days scheduled throughout the school year rather than the opening and closing dates for schools.

⁵ <http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald> - 02-16-06

⁶ Interim Report 2003-112, the Florida Senate, Committee on Commerce and Economic Opportunities.

⁷ Combined compilation of Interim Project Report 2003-112, FLDOE Statistical Briefs, and *Leaving Summer: Lessons Learned* – <http://www.window.state.tx.us/specialrpt/schoolstart2004>

⁸ Data available at <http://www.window.state.tx.us/specialrpt/schoolstart2004>. Historical data on holidays and teacher planning days was not available for Florida.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ DOE Office of Governmental Relations, 2006 Legislative Bill Analysis

¹¹ *Saving Summer: Lessons Learned*, September 2004 Special Report – Office of the Texas Comptroller

According to the DOE, there are an average number of 2.9 planning days and 19 holidays during the 2005-2006 school year for Florida's school districts. While the winter and spring break periods appear to be consistent throughout the state, substantial differences exist between districts for other holidays. For example, several districts provide a full week Thanksgiving holiday and many provide up to five teacher-planning days throughout the school year in addition to the standard August pre-planning week. Eleven school districts also provide a fall break in addition to the Thanksgiving holidays.¹²

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill prohibits district school boards from adopting opening dates for the school year earlier than seven days before Labor Day each year, beginning with the 2007-2008 school year unless a district school board votes to apply these provisions beginning with the 2006-2007 school year. The bill also makes adherence to the opening date a requirement for purposes of participating in the FEFP. If a school district fails to implement the later start date, the district would be ineligible for FEFP funding.

In the event that a school board votes to apply the new start date provisions with the 2006-2007 school year, this may reduce the number of instructional days available prior to the administration of the 2007 FCAT, scheduled for February 26 – March 9.

According to the DOE, school districts presently average 124.7 instructional days prior to the administration of the FCAT. The table below reflects the impact of various start dates on available instructional days prior to the FCAT.¹³

	# Week Days	# Holidays	# Planning Days (2.9 day avg. for 2005-06)	# Instructional Days	# Instructional Days, FCAT 5 days later	# Instructional Days, FCAT 10 days later
Week 3 (Aug. 15-21)	139	19	3	117	122	127
Week 4 (Aug. 22-28)	134	19	3	112	117	122
Week 5 (Aug. 29-31)	129	19	3	107	112	117
After Labor Day	125	18	3	104	109	114

The bill may impact a school district's ability to complete the first semester prior to the winter break. Proponents, however, suggest that other first semester holidays could be eliminated or the semester days shortened. Currently, there is no requirement that the first and second semesters be equal in length.

The bill may have an impact on schools currently operating under a year-round calendar. For the 2005-2006 school year, 16 schools in six districts are using a non-traditional, year round calendar

¹² FLDOE Statistical Brief, Series 2006-02B

¹³ FLDOE 2006 Bill Analysis for SB 306

with a scheduled break between two sessions.¹⁴ Most schools operating under this non-traditional schedule, however, provide the session break during the same time as the district-wide summer break; therefore, necessary adjustments would be required similarly to those made for all other schools.¹⁵

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2006. The effective date of the required school start dates, however, does not apply until the 2007-2008 school year, unless a district school board decides to implement the start date provisions for the 2006-2007 school year. For 2006-2007, the actual start date would be no earlier than Monday, August 28 which is seven days prior to September 4, Labor Day.

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

IV. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Proponents of a later school start date have suggested 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 and/or significantly reduce labor costs. Interim Report 2003-112, 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.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Local school boards may have some additional cost associated with a more than typical restructuring of their calendars and renegotiated teacher contracts in order to maintain the requisite instructional days with a later school start date.

¹⁴ FLDOE Statistical Brief, Series 2006-02B

¹⁵ Conversation with staff of Boyette Springs Elementary School, Hillsborough County

V. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VI. Related Issues:

None.

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

VII. Summary of Amendments:

Barcode 862220 by Education Appropriations:

The amendment deletes 7 days and inserts 14 days, thereby providing that the opening date of the school term shall be no earlier than 14 days (instead of 7 days) before Labor Day each year.

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