

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2011**

H

1

HOUSE BILL 765

Short Title: Study Length of School Year. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative Lewis (Primary Sponsor).
For a complete list of Sponsors, see Bill Information on the NCGA Web Site.

Referred to: Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House.

April 7, 2011

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1
2 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION TO STUDY THE CURRENT
3 LENGTH OF THE SCHOOL YEAR IN NORTH CAROLINA AND TO DETERMINE
4 HOW LONG THE SCHOOL YEAR SHOULD BE.

5 Whereas, the Constitution of North Carolina reads as follows: "The people have a
6 right to the privilege of education, and it is the duty of the State to guard and maintain that
7 right"; and

8 Whereas, the length of the school year in North Carolina, like the rest of the United
9 States, is currently a minimum of 180 teaching days, or 1000 hours, and funds for public
10 education in the State are based on the length of the school term; and

11 Whereas, North Carolina law does not prohibit school districts from providing more
12 than 180 days of instruction time; and

13 Whereas, the seminal education report "A Nation at Risk" noted in 1984 that the
14 180-day school calendar had become outdated and could not sufficiently supply the kind of
15 instructional time that American students needed in a world of increasing complexity; and

16 Whereas, 180 instructional days consistently puts the United States at or near the
17 bottom of other industrialized nations, according to rankings of instructional time done by the
18 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); and

19 Whereas, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) studies
20 show that the average time spent in the classroom by students in participating nations is 193,
21 translating into a 156-day instructional day gap for American students over a 12-year academic
22 career, or nearly one full school year.

23 Whereas, North Carolina's graduation rate ranks in the bottom third of all states; and

24 Whereas, some experts contend that the current school year does not afford ample
25 time to equip young North Carolinians with the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in
26 an increasingly competitive and global workplace; and

27 Whereas, studies document that approximately two-thirds of the grade 9
28 achievement gap between lower and higher income youth can be explained by unequal access
29 to summer learning opportunities during the elementary school years; and

30 Whereas, studies have documented that most students lose about two months of
31 grade level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer break; and

32 Whereas, low-income students also lose more than two months in reading
33 achievement, despite the fact that their middle-class peers make slight gains; and



1 Whereas, children lose more than academic knowledge over the summer. Most
2 children, particularly children at high risk of obesity, gain weight more rapidly when they are
3 out of school during summer break; and

4 Whereas, students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer
5 vacation than they do on the same tests at the beginning of the summer; and

6 Whereas, North Carolina continues to spend precious resources on the remediation
7 of its students; and

8 Whereas, the State of North Carolina should explore the feasibility of extending its
9 school year and potentially being a model for the nation; Now, therefore,

10 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

11 **SECTION 1.** The General Assembly reaffirms its intent that every child in
12 North Carolina deserves an opportunity to a sound basic education.

13 **SECTION 2.(a)** Commission Established. – There is established in the
14 General Assembly a Blue Ribbon Commission to study the length of our current school
15 year.

16 **SECTION 2.(b)** Membership. – The Commission shall be composed of 19
17 members as follows:

- 18 (1) Five members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of
19 the House of Representatives.
- 20 (2) Five members of the Senate appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the
21 Senate.
- 22 (3) The chair of the North Carolina State Board of Education.
- 23 (4) The executive director of the North Carolina School Boards Association.
- 24 (5) The Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- 25 (6) The president of North Carolina Association of Educators, Inc.
- 26 (7) The executive director of the North Carolina Association of School
27 Administrators.
- 28 (8) The executive director of the Public School Forum of North Carolina.
- 29 (9) The executive director of the Professional Educators of North Carolina, Inc.
- 30 (10) The executive director of the N.C. Principals/Assistant Principals
31 Association, Inc.
- 32 (11) The executive director of the North Carolina Congress of Parents and
33 Teachers, Incorporated.

34 **SECTION 2.(c)** Duties of Commission. – The Commission shall study the
35 following matters related to North Carolina's educational needs:

- 36 (1) Strategies for making North Carolina's children ready to compete in the 21st
37 century.
- 38 (2) The cost of implementing a longer school year.
- 39 (3) A plan for implementing a longer school year.
- 40 (4) The impact of summer learning loss.
- 41 (5) The cost of remediation in the public schools, the community colleges, and
42 the constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina.
- 43 (6) The impact of the current calendar on low-income and at-risk students.
- 44 (7) The impact of the current calendar on math and science scores.
- 45 (8) The achievement gap.

46 **SECTION 2.(d)** Vacancies. – Any vacancy on the Commission shall be filled
47 by the appointing authority.

48 **SECTION 2.(e)** Cochairs. – Cochairs of the Commission shall be designated
49 by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the
50 Senate from among their respective appointees. The Commission shall meet upon the
51 call of the chairs. A quorum of the Commission shall be 10 members.

1 **SECTION 2.(f)** Expenses of Members. – Members of the Commission shall
2 receive per diem, subsistence, and travel allowances in accordance with G.S. 120-3.1,
3 138-5, or 138-6, as appropriate.

4 **SECTION 2.(g)** Staff. – Adequate staff shall be provided to the Commission
5 by the Legislative Services Office.

6 **SECTION 2.(h)** Consultants. – The Commission may hire consultants to
7 assist with the study. Before expending any funds for a consultant, the Commission shall
8 report to the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations on the
9 consultant selected, the work products to be provided by the consultant, and the cost of
10 the contract, including an itemization of the cost components.

11 **SECTION 2.(i)** Cooperation. – The Commission may call upon any
12 department, agency, institution, or officer of the State or any political subdivision thereof
13 for facilities, data, or other assistance.

14 **SECTION 2.(j)** Meetings During Legislative Session. – The Commission
15 may meet during a regular or extra session of the General Assembly, subject to approval
16 of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the
17 Senate.

18 **SECTION 2.(k)** Meeting Location. – The Commission shall meet at various
19 locations around the State in order to promote greater public participation in its
20 deliberations. The Legislative Services Commission shall grant adequate meeting space
21 to the Commission in the State Legislative Building or the Legislative Office Building.

22 **SECTION 2.(l)** Report. – The Commission shall make an interim report of its
23 findings and recommendations to the 2012 Regular Session of the 2011 General
24 Assembly and shall make a final report of its findings and recommendations to the 2013
25 General Assembly. The Committee shall submit copies of the reports to the Governor
26 and the Secretary of Transportation. Upon the filing of its final report, the Commission
27 shall terminate.

28 **SECTION 2.(m)** Funding. – The Commission may apply for, receive, and
29 accept grants of non-State funds or other contributions as appropriate to assist in the
30 performance of its duties.

31 **SECTION 2.(n)** Appropriation. – Of the funds appropriated to the General
32 Assembly, the Legislative Services Commission shall allocate sufficient funds for the
33 expenses of the Commission.

34 **SECTION 3.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2011.