

Potential Questions and Answers about the Current School Calendar Law

- Q. *What's the impact of the school calendar law on academic performance?*
- A. The opponents of the current law have never been able to show that student performance has gone down because of it. The evidence is simply not there. In fact, SAT scores in North Carolina have actually improved since the law was passed in 2004, compared to other states.¹
- Q. *Doesn't the mandated start date have a negative effect on dual enrollment?*
- A. Only a tiny fraction (about 2 percent) of public high school students take classes at community colleges.² Eric McKeithan, the highly respected and longtime President of Cape Fear Community College in Wilmington, says he doesn't see a problem with the dual enrollment calendar issue and he supports maintaining the current calendar law. [McKeithan's 3/26/07 letter to legislators]
- Q. *What about local control? Shouldn't local school boards decide their own calendars?*
- A. On the local level parents are big advocates of the statewide calendar law. 80% of respondents in the Public Policy Polling survey say they want school to start in late August and 71% say they are pleased with the current calendar law. Also, it was state legislators, elected by citizens on the local level, who stepped up to pass the law in 2004. School board members were not listening to the families they are supposed to represent, so parents asked the General Assembly to set calendar scheduling.
- Q. *Isn't it bad that the current law forces high schoolers to take end of course exams after winter break?*
- A. Schools can schedule tests before or after the winter break. Some students on block schedule do take exams after winter break, but if students are really learning the material, shouldn't they be able to remember it over the break? We should be educating students so they'll remember material later on, not just so they'll regurgitate it on a test before break and then forget it afterwards.
- Q. *If the law was changed, would schools necessarily begin much earlier than they do right now?*
- A. The answer is yes. Many school districts would revert back to early start dates if they were allowed. Before 2005, many schools started in early August. The survey data and anecdotal evidence says parents are happy with the late August start date.
- Q. *What about nontraditional school and districts in the mountains that experience a lot of snow days?*
- A. The current law exempts from the August 25th start date schools that have nontraditional calendars (i.e. year-round.) Provisions are in place which provide waivers to districts that experience a large number of inclement weather days.
- Q. *Did the calendar law passed in 2004 change the number of instructional days?*
- A. No, the number of instructional days, 180, is dictated by state law and was not changed. The calendar law ensured an adequate summer break while maintaining the 180 days of instruction.

If reporters or anyone else in the media has questions about how parents or teachers feel about the school calendar law, please feel free to refer them to Louise Lee, President of Save Our Summers NC at saveoursummers@gmail.com or on the web at www.saveoursummers.com.

¹ The NC 2008 SAT Report, DPI, <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/accountability/reporting/sat/2008/satreport2008.pdf>

² There are approx. 9,300 dual enrolled students out of 425,000 high schoolers. "Facts and Figures," Dept of Public Instruction <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/fbs/resources/data/factsfigures/2007-08figures.pdf>