

2019 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 108

BY REPRESENTATIVE SIMON

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to study the advantages and disadvantages of school calendar options for public schools and to submit a written report of its findings and any recommendations to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education not later than March 1, 2020.

WHEREAS, school calendars and schedules for public school students in Louisiana are determined by each public school governing authority; and

WHEREAS, current law, R.S. 17:154.1, requires that a school day consist of at least three hundred sixty minutes of instructional time and a school year consist of at least one hundred seventy-seven days of instruction; and

WHEREAS, the law authorizes a public school governing authority to modify the total number of instructional minutes per day and instructional days per year provided the number of instructional minutes per year is not less than the total instructional time achieved by one hundred seventy-seven three hundred sixty-minute days; and

WHEREAS, policies adopted by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education relative to instructional time provide that each public school governing authority shall adopt a calendar that includes a school year that is in accordance with current law; and

WHEREAS, in addition, Louisiana law has authorized the operation of year-round schools for many decades; and

WHEREAS, with the flexibility given to public school governing authorities to set school calendars best suited for their students, employees, and families, the governing

authorities have various options available such as shortening the school week, lengthening the school day, and conducting school year-round; and

WHEREAS, over the years, some schools and school systems in Louisiana have implemented a four-day schedule and Avoyelles Parish recently announced its plans to move to this type of schedule beginning in the next school year; and

WHEREAS, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), over five hundred school districts in twenty-five states have one or more schools using a four-day schedule and this option has become more common over the last decade; and

WHEREAS, NCSL found that the reasons for implementing the shorter school week vary but most school districts implement it to cut costs due to budget constraints; and

WHEREAS, the research further found that the majority of schools using a four-day week are in rural districts but that in recent years some larger, urban districts have begun to consider the option; and

WHEREAS, other research shows that in the past few years schools in several states including Florida, Texas, Iowa, Missouri, South Dakota, Montana, and New Mexico have converted to four-day school weeks to save transportation and utility costs, and currently, more than half of Colorado's school districts are using a four-day school week; and

WHEREAS, in addition to cost savings, other advantages reported by some that have shortened the school week include improvements in student attendance, academic achievement, and teacher recruitment, more time for professional development and lesson planning for teachers, and parents and teachers can schedule doctor's appointments and other weekday commitments on the day that school is not in session; and

WHEREAS, some disadvantages that have been found include difficulty for some parents who are unable to find child care for the one day school is closed each week and students do not have access to school meals on the day off; and

WHEREAS, like four-day school weeks, a disadvantage of operating schools on a year-round basis is the difficulty for parents to arrange for child care; other drawbacks include interference with students extracurricular activities, sports schedules, and family vacations; and

WHEREAS, some benefits of year-round schooling, as well as lengthening the school day, are more time for student learning, higher academic achievement, maximum utilization of school facilities, and increased teacher pay; and

WHEREAS, there is a need to consider research on these and other positive and negative effects of school calendar options for Louisiana's public schools in order to assist public school governing authorities in determining schedules that best meet the needs of their students, employees, and families.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to study the advantages and disadvantages of school calendar options for public schools and to submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education not later than March 1, 2020.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the state superintendent of education.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE