

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING LOCAL CONTROL OF SCHOOL CALENDARS

WHEREAS, the Johnston County Board of Education is a governmental entity having the constitutional and statutory authority to supervise, manage, and operate its local school system; and

WHEREAS, control by the local board of education establishing school calendars is an important and integral part of school system supervision and administrative powers which local boards of education, including the Johnston County Board of Education, have vested; and

WHEREAS, in 2004 the NC General Assembly enacted statutory provisions and laws controlling the setting of school calendars in an arbitrary manner and enacted a “one-size-fits-all” mandate on how school calendars are to be set; and

WHEREAS, the current “one-size-fits-all” school calendar start date is no earlier than the Monday closest to August 26th and the end date is no later than the Friday closest to June 11th; and

WHEREAS, the State mandated late August start date poses numerous challenges in allowing high schools to complete the first semester prior to the winter break; and

WHEREAS, in order for high school students to take first-semester exams prior to the winter break, the first semester must have significantly fewer student days than the second semester. To ensure an equal number of student days each semester, under the current law, students must take first-semester exams after the winter break which negatively impacts test scores, according to students and educators; and

WHEREAS, the second semester for high schools starts two to three weeks later than community colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS; superintendents report that the calendar misalignment makes it nearly impossible for high school students or recent winter graduates to take courses at a nearby community college or university during the second semester; and

WHEREAS, exams for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes are given on the same day nationwide, and the current calendar law shortens the amount of time North Carolina’s students have to learn the material before test day; and

WHEREAS; it is well-documented through multiple research studies that children often experience a phenomenon known as summer learning loss, which has a disproportionate impact on low-income children; and

WHEREAS, long summer breaks can also negatively impact child nutrition, as low-income children who have access to regular meals at school through the free and reduced priced meal program may not have access to regular meals at home; and

WHEREAS, the state of the law as it now exists gives little flexibility to build into the school calendar and schedule makeup days for inclement weather and natural disasters. Furthermore, it is extremely challenging for the school systems to comply with the statutory provisions as now written; and

WHEREAS, major hurricanes, flooding, and severe winter storms have caused the Johnston County Public Schools to miss numerous school days over the past 3 years; and

WHEREAS, The Johnston County Public Schools was able to comply with the statutory calendar provisions of the law only by imposing great hardships on students, teachers, parents, and other employees of the school system during that time period; and

WHEREAS, fall sports and band begin August 1, schedules for extracurricular programs have not changed to coincide with the state-mandated school calendar; and

WHEREAS, local boards of education are best equipped to understand the problems associated with balancing the community's needs and maximizing student success; and

WHEREAS, restoring local control of school calendars will allow local boards of education to best meet the calendar preferences of the families, educators, and businesses in our community while allowing for innovative and research-based approaches to improve student achievement.

THEREFORE, be it resolved Johnston County Board of Education requests the North Carolina General Assembly restore local control of school calendars to best meet the calendar preferences of the families, educators, and businesses in our community while allowing for innovative and research-based approaches to improve student achievement.

Adopted by the Johnston County Board of Education this ____ day of _____, 2019.

Mike Wooten, Chairman
Johnston County Board of Education