

## School Start Date

---

### Action Requested:

Modify Texas Education Code §25.0811 to allow local school districts to set their own school start and end dates.

### Background:

For more than two decades, the Legislature and school districts have been wrestling over the authority to set the school year calendar. School districts desire to start earlier in August in order to maximize the number of instructional days available before the state assessments are administered in December, April, and May. The tourism industry wants to postpone the start of school until after Labor Day in order to maximize summer tourism and the availability of a high school labor force during the summer months.

Passed in 2006, current law prohibits school districts from starting school before the *fourth Monday in August*, unless they operate on a year-round basis. In 2011, the Legislature created a narrow exception, allowing certain campuses in Houston ISD which are undergoing comprehensive reform and serve a majority of economically disadvantaged students to start on or after the *first Monday in August*.

### Rationale:

An instructional calendar should reflect the values in the school community it serves. Local school districts should determine the instructional calendar, start date and calendar to best meet the needs of their learners and school community. Whether school boards or the tourism industry should control when school starts is a perennial debate. However, the new state assessment and accountability laws will make it necessary once again for the Legislature to consider the positive and negative effects of the late August uniform school start date.

The public school start date and the resulting calendar impact:

- Balanced number of instructional days per semesters (see Exhibit A)
- Maximizing instruction before standardized testing (see Exhibit B)
- Maximizing professional development
- College summer school start dates (see Exhibit C)

### Fiscal implications:

- There is no material variance in utilities cost because the schools are already in use for band, drill team, teacher preparation, and other purposes.
- Reduces summer school remediation cost associated with EOC and STAAR failures.
- Reduces number of retest requirements since original tests would have higher success rate.