

Date of Hearing: March 12, 2008

Committee: Senate Committee on
Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent

Title: S.C.R No. 73, Requesting that the Department of Education conduct a study on increasing the number of days in the school year.

Purpose: To examine the benefits and detriments associated with increasing the total amount of instructional time within the school year be it through additional days of instruction or any other plausible schedules that increase the total number of hours of learning.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) does not support S.C.R. No. 73. Instead, we would recommend that this S.C.R. be incorporated into S.C.R. 72.

A change in scheduling intensiveness, in itself, is not sufficient to bring about desired changes in the educational and societal outcomes elaborated in the resolution's introduction. To achieve the results enumerated, scheduling concerns need to be part of a larger, coordinated, and educationally sound effort to improve the quality of education altogether. Simply

adding more days is not the solution, but it can be part of a more comprehensive educational reformation. In our standards-based educational system, outputs—or student outcomes or expectations—are the same for all students, while the learning time or methodology may vary according to the students' needs.

All students do not learn at the same rate or with the same methodology. A longer school year would allow students who have not learned sufficiently during the given (or current) school year to be provided with additional time to learn, perhaps using different approaches to learning. The additional time could also provide enrichment or acceleration for students who are ready to move ahead. A longer school year would also enable schools to devote more time to the extended core areas such as the fine arts, world languages, career and technical education, health education, and physical education.

As a word of caution, in itself, extending the school year may produce strong sentiments within the community and even prove divisive in its debut. Without appropriate preparation to build community

support, including sharing the long-term benefits to our economy and productivity, it would not be surprising if the community's initial response became quite negative. However, if packaged as part of a larger, educationally grounded effort, it could profoundly contribute toward advancing our standard of living, and over time, the wisdom of such a decision may grow to be widely accepted, and the prolonging of the school year may be acceptable by most.

To assure the findings from such a study are construed as credible, it would need to be carefully developed and conducted by an independent and well-respected research organization, and it would incur costs that have not been budgeted nor appropriated.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.