



H.3465 – Unencumbered Time

High Quality Planning for High Quality Education

The South Carolina Education Association (The SCEA) strongly supports **H.3465**. Section 2 is of particular interest to The SCEA because it requires that districts ensure all schools within their jurisdiction develop plans for unencumbered daily planning time for all classroom teachers. The SCEA supports this step towards unencumbered daily planning time as a measure to allow South Carolina's educators to plan the highest quality instruction and intervention.

Long gone are the days when curricula and lessons were driven by textbooks and cookie cutter units. South Carolina students need to develop the academic, practical, and problem-solving skills for the jobs and problems of tomorrow. The high quality instruction necessary for this deep learning demands rigorous, thoughtful planning. This planning results in personalized learning, as well as research and data-driven analysis to reach each student at their level and to help them grow to their fullest potential.

Classroom-focused planning time improves and increases teachers' knowledge of the academic subjects they teach, how students learn, and the ability to analyze student work from multiple sources and adjust instructional strategies based on such analysis. All educators, especially those new to the profession, need adequate time to reflect so they can grow professionally and improve their practice.

Further, unencumbered daily planning time is necessary to address the teacher shortage. An absence of planning time not only affects the planning of instruction; days without any breaks have profound impact on teachers' wellbeing and factor into their decision to leave the profession or to teach in another state.

You may recall from the listening tours during the 123rd Session that teachers told stories of being unable to even use the restroom and mothers unable to breastfeed because there is no time for them to pump breastmilk during the day. Teachers also shared how they are forced to sacrifice time— including special moments and events with their families—to grade, contact parents, and complete paperwork because they had no planning time. This burden is especially heavy on the teachers of students with special needs.

Ultimately, daily unencumbered planning time boils down to competition and retention: Many states have daily unencumbered planning time. These states include North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Louisiana, Virginia, Arkansas, and more (table follows on page 2). To retain teachers in South Carolina, it is essential to empower them to do what is best for their students and to allow for some work-life balance by providing the valuable resource of time.

<i>Sample of States with Daily Unencumbered Time</i>			
State	Duty-Free Lunch?	Unencumbered Planning Time?	Planning Time Length
AR	Yes	Yes	>40 minutes/day or >200 minutes/week
FL	Yes	No	N/A
GA	Yes	No	N/A
KY	Yes	Yes	Unspecified
LA	Yes	Yes	45 minutes /day or weekly equivalent
MN	Yes	Yes	5 minutes per every 25 minutes of instruction daily
MO	No	Yes	250 minutes/week
NC	Yes	Yes	150 minutes/week
OH	Yes	Yes	200 minutes/week
OK	No	Yes	225 minutes/week
TN	Yes	Yes	150 minutes/week
TX	Yes	Yes	225 minutes/week
VA	No	Yes	150 minutes/week for elementary; one class period/day for middle/high school
WV	Yes	Yes	40 minutes/day
<i>Note: Prepared by NEA OGC February 2020. Updated to include WV and WY March 2021</i>			

The South Carolina Education Association (The SCEA) represents members employed in public schools throughout South Carolina and is an affiliate of the largest professional association of educators in the country. As the leading advocate for the schools South Carolina students deserve, The SCEA works to promote quality public education and to support public school employees.