

12-month school gaining support

By WILLIAM J. WAUGH

WASHINGTON (AP) — School bells might be ringing 12 months of the year instead of the traditional nine if a movement to establish year-round schools finds support.

School districts in at least 25 states and a number of state legislatures are considering a variety of plans that would keep school doors open from January to December.

None requires students to attend class 12 months but several extend the school year for longer than the usual 180 days and provide shorter but more frequent vacations. Teachers also have several options.

The usual reason to consider a 12-month plan is economic: fuller utilization of facilities and savings on debt service, fuel, light, power and maintenance.

But economies are not the only reason. Some advocates maintain 12-month plans could result in quicker pupil movement through school and enable educators to improve the education of all children.

A 12-month plan is not a new idea. Before 1840, city schools were conducted nearly year around. Rural schools had shorter sessions to permit pupils to help with the farming. Later, cities shortened the school year, rural schools lengthened theirs and by 1915 most of the nation's schools were operating nine months with a three-month summer vacation.

The current resurgence of support for 12-month schools stems from economics and the feeling of many admin-

istrators that something must be done to restore public confidence in the public school system.

Public support, in terms of the success of school bond issues in the first six months of 1971, was not encouraging. The National Education Association said that 277 bond elections were successful but that 314 failed. More fearsome for school officials was the fact that \$1.302 billion was turned down and only \$605 million approved.

Glen Robinson, NEA director of research, noted in an interview that many schools remain locked during the summer; students face three months without much to do and teachers must find summer jobs.

"Many observers view this situation as a great waste, a waste of costly facilities and equipment, a waste of valuable professional skills and a waste of precious learning time," he said.

In a recent survey, the National School Public Relations Association said about 25 school districts are either operating full year-round schools or pilot programs.

The programs vary in structure and objectives but in each case are generally well received by parents, teachers and students. Most are voluntary.

Probably the most popular 12-month plan is the staggered quarter system where three-fourths of the student population is in school at the same time.