

Research Brief

The Four Day School Week

Question:

1. Can four-day school weeks help districts save money?
2. How do districts overcome the barriers of moving to a four-day week?
3. What is the effect of a four-day week on students, staff and the community?

Summary of Findings:

Major Findings:

(Adapted from *Scheduling Alternatives: Options for Student Success*, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. See original article for research citations.

<http://www.nwrel.org/request/feb97/article4.html>)

Benefits for Students and Teachers:

- Student drop-out rates decline.
- Student disciplinary referrals decrease.
- Student achievement is generally not affected either positively or negatively.
- Student and teacher attendance improves
- Students and teachers benefit from less interrupted class time as a result of longer class periods and fewer transitions at all grade levels. This increases the efficiency of instruction.
- Students and teachers share more positive attitudes about school. Consequently, there is a marked improvement in school morale .
- School faculty has more time for quality staff development (often the day off is used for this purpose).
- There is more time for participation in extracurricular activities and for personal business, such as doctor appointments.
- Students report they are better able to manage part-time employment.

Benefits for the School in General:

- Has significant savings on utility bills, substitute teacher pay, school buses, and building wear and tear.
- Can make up school days missed due to inclement weather on what would have been the fifth school day instead of at the end of the school year.

- Experiences fewer distractions; learning is less broken up by athletic events or other school activities.

Concerns and Issues:

- Child care issues: While some parents like the four-day week because they prefer having to find good child care one day a week, others dislike it for the very same reason and prefer to arrange for child care in smaller increments of time. Some schools have alleviated this concern by using high school students as baby-sitters for those in need, either for pay or for service credit.
- Primary-aged students: There is often concern as to how young students will respond to such a long school day. As a result, many schools structure the day so the afternoon is composed of less academic work than the morning, thus allowing students to have some "down time".
- At-risk students: Some teachers feel that at-risk and special-needs students may have retention difficulties with an extra day off each week.
- School reform movement: Some educators are concerned that the four-day week may appear to be inconsistent with the new emphasis for more time in school.
- The four-day week will take more of a local community commitment than other schedule options as it can affect daily community routines as well as the childrens'.

Recommendations for Implementation:

1. Become as familiar with the concepts and implications of a four-day week as possible. Read research and case studies. Talk to other administrators and teachers using this schedule.
2. Survey the staff; they must be involved in the decision making process. If they aren't in favor of a four-day schedule, it will be difficult to proceed.
3. Get the endorsement of the students, parents, and community in addition to approval from teachers and administration, since this change will affect all of them as well.
4. Design the schedule to accommodate the needs of teachers and students. Make sure all changes stay within accreditation guidelines and teachers' contract requirements.
5. Some restructuring and repacing of the curriculum will be necessary. Involve school staff; this will give them ownership of the process and also help them to feel more ready for the change. Provide ample time for staff development.
6. Once the schedule is in place, monitor its effects frequently. Keep communication open between administrators, teachers, students, and parents.

7. Allow a sufficient trial period before making any final recommendations on the schedule.
8. If possible, use the day off as an opportunity to provide students in need with enrichment activities or additional instruction.

Provide staff development for teachers on teaching in longer blocks of time and for longer school days (up to 7.5 hours).

Online Resources:

1. Seven States Adopt Four-Day School Weeks; Practice Helps Districts Save Money

Washington Post article on this practice, its benefits and its liabilities.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A37906-2002Dec25¬Found=true>

2. Rural Schools See Dividends in Four Day Weeks.

This Education Week outlines the positive outcomes and challenges of four day week schedules in schools in rural South Dakota.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=04week.h22>

3. Could Four Day Weeks Work for You?

Some school districts looking to save time and money have switched to four-day school weeks, either leaving the fifth day free or available for tutoring and parent conferences.

http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin279.shtml

4. Schools Ponder Four Day Weeks.

At least one central Iowa school district considers a four day week as a way to save money in the face of declining revenue.

<http://www.dmregister.com/news/stories/c4780927/20310155.html>

5. Four Day School Weeks by Kimberly Reeves.

AASA Article on the topic explores rationale, implementation, challenges and outcomes.

http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/1999_03/reeves.htm

6. Four Day School Week

This compendium of articles and websites from the British Columbia Teachers' Federation was selected for comprehensiveness and credibility. It represents both Canadian and US materials.

<http://www.bctf.bc.ca/info/research/FourdaySchoolWeek.html>

7. Four Day Week in Hot Springs, South Dakota

This is the story of one district's transition to a 4 day week, told by the district itself. Very helpful.

<http://www.hssd.k12.sd.us/4day.htm>

By: Mike Muir, Maine Center for Meaningful Engaged Learning

This brief is provided as a service to educators by Education Partnerships, Inc, which does not assume any responsibility for the content of the brief or the positions taken by the authors or the Web sites or other authors whose works are included. This research brief reflects information currently available and is not the official position of Education Partnerships, Inc.

Disclaimer: All URLs listed in this site have been tested for accuracy, and contents of Web sites examined for quality, at the time of addition. Content accuracy and appropriateness, however, cannot be guaranteed over time as Web sites and their contents change constantly. The author takes no responsibility for difficulties that may result from the use of any Web site listed herein. Please notify the [Webmaster](#) if you find any dead links or inappropriate material.

Permission: You may use or download content for research or educational purposes, or for your personal, noncommercial purposes, provided you keep unchanged all copyright and other notices with them. No other use of any content is permitted. You agree that you will make only lawful use of this research brief, and will only use these briefs in compliance with all federal, state and local laws and regulations. You agree that you will make no use of the research that violates anyone else's rights, including copyright, trademark, trade secret, right of privacy, right of publicity or other rights