



Research Brief

Center for Policy Studies, Education Research, and Community Development

A Consortium Serving Idaho, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming

The Rationale for the Four-Day School Week.

Introduction

The four-day week initially started in New Mexico in 1972 as a way of saving money in transportation and electricity costs that had been triggered by the energy/oil crisis. Since then it has sparked continued interest, especially among rural school districts. The experiment was later picked up by Colorado's East Grand Schools in 1982. The rationale for the four-day week can be approached from different angles that range from financial, instructional, co-curricular activities, discipline issues, parents schedules, community support, and employee contracts (Bear lake School District, Challis School District). The trend in many American rural schools of moving to a four-day week has primarily been to save money (Alan, 2002; Carter, 1993; Dyrli, 1998; Hedberg & Nordin, 2004; Johnston, 1997; Parker, 1998; Toppo; 2002). Under a four-day-week, students actually gain instructional time as sport competitions are held the fifth day (Bear Lake, Bounty County & Challis Districts experiences). Despite the growing popularity, critics argue that the four-day week is strictly for financial reasons rather than educational. According to Hunter (2003), the big questions to be asked are (a) will students really learn as much in four days -- even with an extra hour per day -- as they do in five?, and (b) do we really think the authors of the No Child Left Behind Act intended less classroom time for students? Utah legally scrapped the legal provision of a four day week after resistance from the public. Other examples such as Orofino, Idaho, and Saratoga, Arkansas confirmed that there are actually little financial gains made, with academics heavily affected (Hedberg & Nordin, 2004).

How it operates

The four-day week implies eliminating Fridays or Mondays from the academic schedule. This means all academic activities have to be scheduled into the remaining four days of the week. Schools can either use the semester model or the trimester model as shown in Tables 1 and 2. The model seems to be gaining popularity, particularly in rural areas, but there is no research about whether the demands of the mandated No Child Left Behind (NCLB) are, or could be implemented in this model. There seems to be perceived advantages and disadvantages for using this model.

Table 1: Challis Elementary School in Idaho has the following time table

Time	Activity
8:00	Playground supervision begins
8:20	Bell rings to start the school day
8:23	Tardy Bell

10:10	Morning Recess
10:30	End Recess
11:40 – 12:35	1 st , 2 nd , & 3 rd Grade Lunch Grade 1 – 11:40 A.M Grade 2 – 11:44 A.M Grade 3 – 11:48 A.M
11:55 – 12:45	4 th , 5 th , & 6 th Grade Lunch Grade 4 – 11:55 A.M Grade 5 – 11:59 A.M Grade 6 – 12:03 P.M
2:10	Afternoon Recess
2:30	End Recess Bell
4:10	Dismissal

Table 2: Challis Junior High school

First Hour	8:15 – 9:12
Reading	9:12 – 9:37
Second Floor	9:41 – 10:38
Third Hour	10:42 – 11:39
Lunch	11:39 – 12:13
Fourth Hour	12:17 – 1:07
Fifth Hour	1:11 – 2:05
Nutrition Break	2:05 – 2:19 2:23 – 3:19
Sixth Hour	3:21 – 4:15
Seventh Hour	

Source: Challis School District

- Teacher Day is 7:30 am to 4:30 pm
- There are 9 additional teacher days
- Students have 145 student days
- There are five holidays in the calendar

Under this Model, the superintendent of Challis School District, Bruce Bradberry (Bradberry, 2004) stated that the four day week has worked very well. In addition several benefits have been accrued. These are: (a) there has been a great deal of public support for the four –day-week, (b) some money is saved through utilities, custodial and lunchroom hours and transportation, (c) student absences were greatly reduced, and (d) student instructional time has increased ISAT results

Table 3: Four day week schedule for Cokeville High School in Wyoming on a trimester model

Time	Activity
8:00 – 9:35	Ist period
9:40 – 11:15	2 nd period
11:20 – 11:50	Ist lunch Study hall
11:55 – 12:25	2 nd lunch Study hall
12:30 – 2:50	3 rd period
2:10 – 3:45	4 th period

Source: Cokeville High School

Under this model students would have four classes a day

Student Time

This would be a student calendar of 153 days. Class periods run for a 95 minute block.

- $153 \times 95 \times 4 = 58\ 140/60 = 969$ Class time
- $153 \times 30 = 4590/60 = 76.5$ Study Hall
- $153 \times 25 = 3825/60 = 63.75$ Passing Time
- Total 1109.25 hours/year

Teacher Time

- Teachers would work: 156 day contract @ 9 hours/day, (7:30 – 4:15/30 study hall and 30 minute lunch)
- Two parent teacher days held Fridays.

In addition, there would be 9 Friday morning teachers would need to attend school without students. Time could be used for professional development, prep, student make up etc.

- 156 days @ 9 hours/ day = 1404
- 2 parent teacher Friday = 16
- 9 Fridays @ 4 Hours/day = 36
- Total Hours 1456 Total Teacher Hours
- 182 Day teacher contract @ 8 hours/day = 1456

Benefits.

The benefits are financial and instructional according to (Toppo, 2002).

Economic Benefits

1. There are savings made particularly in small schools on transportation, heating and substitute teachers. For instance, Orofino School District in Idaho made the following savings. The district saved \$143,700
 - Non-certified staff \$ 72,500
 - Substitute pay \$ 25,054
 - Benefits \$ 21,101
 - Custodial/utilities \$ 9,032
 - Maintenance \$ 181
 - Transportation \$ 11,448

- Food service \$ 4,350
 - TOTAL \$143,666
2. Transportation and food services can be cut as much as 20%. According to Bear Lake School District in Idaho, savings will be made in a four-day week because
 - Heat will be reduced to a minimum on the day they do not have school, i.e., Friday.
 - Twenty percent less fuel is used in buses
 - Buses will not be purchased and repaired as often
 - Bus drivers will be needed and paid 20% less
 - Custodians will be needed and paid 20% less
 - Classroom aides will be cut between .5 and 1 hour weekly
 - Cafeteria worker time will be cut 20% but no savings will be realized by the district, because cafeterias are self funding.

Instructional Time

1. There are longer instructional time blocks for students. Students spend an average of 7.5 hours a day on instructional time. If Monday is a holiday then classes will be held on Friday or vice versa. Students do not lose instructional time.
2. Teachers have more time to collaborate.
3. There is a marked decrease in the frequency of teacher and student absenteeism.
4. The fifth day can be used to attend to personal appointments, quality staff development, and sports schedules such as football games, and for special events such as field trips and homecoming and therefore there is no loss on instructional time due to conflicting schedules.
5. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is no difference in academic performance between students in a four-day week and a five-day week.
6. In rural schools, the model allows schools to keep art, music and other classes that would normally be eliminated where budget cuts are experienced.
7. Four day-weeks generally improve student morale as students are left with time to pursue their own interests outside the school.
8. Decrease in disciplinary infractions.
9. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is no difference in academic performance between students in a four-day week and a five-day week.

Disadvantages

1. The three day weekend is viewed by critics as disruptive to the continuity of the learning process.
2. Younger kids will get up early and spend a greater time in school and this may be inappropriate for their developmental age.
3. Longer class periods can affect the concentration span of students.
4. Academic rigor may be difficult to sustain and therefore threatened when there are longer school hours.
5. Parents are forced to look for alternative arrangements for child supervision.
6. There is no basis for sustained student achievement.
7. There could be challenges in designing classified contract adjustments.
8. This may be a new paradigm that may be resisted by parents.

Several states have actually started enacting bills that promote four week days. Nine states currently have school districts (with schools) operating on a four-day week. These states include: Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Idaho Trends

A number of school districts Orofino, Mackay, Challis, Boundary County, and Bear Lake. Information received from Bear Lake and Challis revealed that there was a great deal of community support for the four-day week from parents, teachers and students. The most common reasons identified for moving to a four-day week were

1. More time in class
2. Higher test scores
3. Improved attendance
4. Opportunity for extra help
5. Fewer distractions
6. Reduction in substitute pay
7. More time for staff development

There are a number of states that have enacted legislation basically for financial gain to cater for the growing demand of four-day weeks according to the National Assembly of State Legislatures.

State	Name of Bill	Provision
California	SB 1138	Authorizes specified school districts to operate one or more schools in their districts on a 4-day school week, so long as the school district complies with specified requirements; revokes the authority of a school added by the bill to operate a 4-day school week if a school fails to meet its growth target on the Academic Performance Index.
	AB 1820	Authorizes the Death Valley Unified School District to operate one or more schools in the district on a 4-day school week; provides that if a school of that district that is operating on a 4-day school week

		fails to meet its Academic Performance Index growth target, the authority of that school to operate on a 4-day school week would be revoked commencing with the beginning of the following school year.
Massachusetts	<u>SB2010</u>	Provides that any city, town, or school district by vote of its school committee may operate the schools on a 4-day school week, providing that the committee submit to the board of education its plan to fulfill the required hours of instruction.
Michigan	<u>SB364</u>	Allows school districts to operate on a four-day school week. Amends the State School Aid Act to remove the requirement that schools provide a minimum of 180 days of pupil instruction, or forfeit a percentage of their state aid allocation
Utah		Repeals the Modified School Week Pilot Program.

Conclusion

Research indicates that the four-day week is gaining popularity. However, there are mixed feelings based on anecdotal evidence about the success or failures in student achievement and the perceived financial gains. There is need for longitudinal research to make conclusive evidence on the benefits or non-benefits of a four-day week.

As with most educational issues, there is no one easy answer, no one size fits all. Each school district must consider the benefits and negatives associated with implementing a four day school week, weight them carefully, and consult all stakeholders

before implementation. In the final analysis a school district's decision may come down to simply keeping the lights on, and a four day week may be just one measure taken to cut expenses.

References

- Alan, R. (2002). Rural schools see dividends in four day-week. Retrieved October 5, 2005 from http://web14.epnet.com/citation.asp?tb=1&_ug=sid+FAC5B842%2D08D0%2D4D8D%2DAA48%2D682DAF91DF1D%40sessionmgr5+dbs+aph+cp+1+BAA4&_us=hd+False+hs+True+cst+0%3B2+or+Date+fh+False+ss+SO+sm+ES+sl+0+ri+KAAACBWB00084088+dstb+ES+mh+1+frn+1+4C49&_uso=hd+False+tg%5B0+%2D+st%5B0+%2Drural+++schools+++see+++dividends+++in+++four+++%2Dday+++week+db%5B0+%2Daph+op%5B0+%2D+mdb%5B0+%2Dimh+AC34&cf=1&fn=1&rn=1&
- Bounty County School District (2005). Four day school week. Retrieved October 5, 2005 from <http://www.bcsd101.com/4day.htm>
- Bear Lake School District (2005). Four Day Week. Documents faxed to the Center for Professional development
- Bradberry, B. M. (2004). The four-day week works for Challis! *Rural Matters*, 16-18.
- Carter, T. O. (1993). A shorter, smarter, cheaper week. Retrieved October 5, 2005 from http://web14.epnet.com/citation.asp?tb=1&_ug=sid+FAC5B842%2D08D0%2D4D8D%2DAA48%2D682DAF91DF1D%40sessionmgr5+dbs+aph+cp+1+BAA4&_us=frn+1+hd+False+hs+True+cst+0%3B2+or+Date+fh+False+ss+SO+sm+ES+sl+0+dstb+ES+mh+1+ri+KAAACBWB00083763+104E&_uso=hd+False+tg%5B0+%2D+st%5B0+%2DA+++matter+++of+++time%3A+++Schools+++try+++four%2Dday+++weeks+db%5B0+%2Daph+op%5B0+%2D+mdb%5B0+%2Dimh+9C4A&fn=1&rn=1
- Dyrli, O. E (1998). Arkansas schools choose four-day week. Retrieved October 10, 2005 from http://web14.epnet.com/citation.asp?tb=1&_ug=sid+FAC5B842%2D08D0%2D4D8D%2DAA48%2D682DAF91DF1D%40sessionmgr5+dbs+aph+cp+1+BAA4&_us=frn+1+hd+False+hs+True+cst+0%3B2+or+Date+fh+False+ss+SO+sm+ES+sl+0+dstb+ES+mh+1+ri+KAAACBWB00083609+6500&_uso=hd+False+tg%5B0+%2D+st%5B0+%2Darkansas+++schools+++choose+++four%2Dday+++week+db%5B0+%2Daph+op%5B0+%2D+mdb%5B0+%2Dimh+EA07&cf=1&fn=1&rn=1
- Hedberg, K., & Nordin, K. (2004). Rural schools try longer days, four-day weeks. *Christian Science Monitor*, 96(81), Retrieved October 10, 2005 from http://web14.epnet.com/citation.asp?tb=1&_ug=sid+FAC5B842%2D08D0%2D4D8D%2DAA48%2D682DAF91DF1D%40sessionmgr5+dbs+aph+cp+1+BAA4&_us=frn+1+hd+False+hs+True+cst+0%3B3+or+Date+fh+False+ss+SO+sm+ES+sl+0+dstb+ES+mh+1+ri+KAAACBWB00083499+E04F&_uso=hd+False+tg%5B0+%2D+st%5B0+%2Drural+++schools+++try+++longer+++days%2C+++four%2Dda

- y++weeks+db%5B0+%2Daph+op%5B0+%2D+mdb%5B0+%2Dimh+DB04&cf=1&fn=1&rn=1
- Hunter, J. M. (2003). Four day school week is first step in descent. Retrieved October 5, 2005 from http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=8025522&BRD=1302&PAG=461&dept_id=181987&rfi=8
- Johnston, R. C. (1997). A matter of time: Schools try four-day weeks. Retrieved October 10, 2005 from http://web14.epnet.com/citation.asp?tb=1&_ug=sid+FAC5B842%2D08D0%2D4D8D%2DAA48%2D682DAF91DF1D%40sessionmgr5+pbs+aph+cp+1+BAA4&_us=frn+1+hd+False+hs+True+cst+0%3B2+or+Date+fh+False+ss+SO+sm+ES+sl+0+dstb+ES+mh+1+ri+KAAACBWB00083763+104E&_uso=hd+False+tg%5B0+%2D+st%5B0+%2DA++matter++of++time%3A++Schools++try++four%2Dday++weeks+db%5B0+%2Daph+op%5B0+%2D+mdb%5B0+%2Dimh+9C4A&fn=1&rn=1
- Kenworth, T. (2004). Colorado schools give high score to four –day weeks. Retrieved from <http://www.matr.net/print-11221.html>
- National Conference for State Legislatures (2005). Four day-school week. Retrieved October 10, 2005 from <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/educ/4DaySchWeek.htm>
- Parker, S. (1998). School gives high marks to a four-day week. Retrieved October 12, 2005 at http://web14.epnet.com/citation.asp?tb=1&_ug=sid+FAC5B842%2D08D0%2D4D8D%2DAA48%2D682DAF91DF1D%40sessionmgr5+pbs+aph+cp+1+BAA4&_us=frn+1+hd+False+hs+True+cst+0%3B3+or+Date+fh+False+ss+SO+sm+ES+sl+0+dstb+ES+mh+1+ri+KAAACBWB00084255+F9E8&_uso=hd+False+tg%5B0+%2D+st%5B0+%2Dschool++gives++high++marks++to++a++four%2Dday++week+db%5B0+%2Daph+op%5B0+%2D+mdb%5B0+%2Dimh+DBDE&cf=1&fn=1&rn=1
- Toppo, G. (2002). In rural areas, the four-day school week is growing in popularity. Retrieved October 10, 2005 at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0820/p14s02-lecs.htm>
- Webster County Schools Model (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.webster.k12.ky.us/4dayweekinfo/4%20day%20week.htm>