

4-Day School Week in Idaho



What is a 4-Day School Week?

- First started in New Mexico in the early 1970s in response to an energy crisis, which sharply increased transportation and utility costs.
 - Current estimates claim that about 560 districts in as many as 25 states are operating on a 4-Day school week, and continues to gain popularity.

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/school-calendar-four-day-school-week-overview.aspx>



Current Status of 4-Day Schools in Idaho

- Idaho currently has 115 school districts and 51 Charter Schools.
 - Of those, 45 school districts and Charter Schools are currently operating on a 4-Day School Week.
 - The largest school district in Idaho functioning on a 4-day School week is Preston School District #201 with 2,528 students.
 - The smallest school district in Idaho functioning on a 4-day School week is Three Creek Joint Elementary School District with 4 students in grades K-8.
 - Schools functioning in Idaho on a 4-Day School week operate Monday through Thursday.
 - Research of other states shows that many districts choose to operate Tuesday through Friday.



What is a 4-Day School Week?

- Most schools that have adopted a 4-Day School Week take either Friday or Monday off.
 - Supporters of Friday claim that it is best because so many students already miss Fridays due to athletic events and other activities on this day.
 - Supporters of Monday claim that gymnasiums and schools often have to be lit and heated for Friday athletic events and activities, whereas few such events occur on Mondays.



The Laws Around a 4-day Schools in Idaho

- Idaho law requires school districts to adopt a school calendar that provides its students at each grade level with the following number of instructional hours:
 - Grades 9-12: 990 hours
 - Grades 4-8: 900 hours
 - Grades 1-3: 810 hours
 - Kindergarten: 450 hours



The Laws Around a 4-day Schools in Idaho

- School districts operating on a traditional five-day school week may schedule six-hour days for 165 school days to reach the total instructional hours of 990.
- A school district operating on a 4-Day School Week may achieve those hours by scheduling seven-hour days for 142 school days, decreasing the total number of school days by 23 days.



Financial Impact of 4-Day School Weeks

- Districts typically report a cost savings after transferring to a 4-Day School Week but also report that the savings are not substantial.
 - Most cost savings come as a result of decreased Transportation Costs and work schedules for Classified Staff who work on an hourly basis.



Financial Impact of 4-Day School Weeks

- Transportation:
 - It has been reported that transportation costs can be reduced by about 20%.
 - To realize these savings, a district must severely restrict or eliminate transportation for activities or programs on non-school days.
 - Savings come from fuel, oil, salaries, and school bus drivers.
 - Capital, insurance, maintenance and administrative costs remain consistent.
 - In Idaho, these savings would not result in total net savings in the overall budget due to Idaho law which reimburses districts up to 85% of their transportation costs.
- Food Service Programs:
 - If districts are subsidizing the food service program from the general fund, a 20% savings has been reported.
 - Certain fixed costs are not reduced.
- A full 20% reduction in these areas for many districts that have made the transition results in roughly a 2% savings in the districts overall budget.



Financial Impact of 4-Day School Weeks

- **Utilities:**
 - If buildings are actually closed and placed on weekend cycle, a savings can be realized.
 - However, common practice is for buildings to be open for extra activities and for staff use.
- **Staff:**
 - Teachers and administrators typically receive the same annual salary.
 - Savings reported usually can be attributed to reduction in hours worked for hourly employees tied directly to the school day, such as aids, paraprofessionals and bus drivers.
 - Districts often see significant savings from a decrease in the need for substitute teachers due to better staff attendance.



Financial Impact of 4-Day School Weeks

- **Fall Enrollment vs. ADA:**
 - While many districts make the transition to a 4-Day Week due to declining enrollment, many districts have reported that the gap between Fall Enrollment numbers and Average Daily Attendance has shrunk, resulting in more funding from the state than in previous years.
 - This is a result of improved student attendance.
 - A review of Idaho's 4-Day school week districts and charters does show this to be the case in many instances.



Child Care

- Child care is often cited as a concern for parents who work outside of the home.
 - However, many parents say that it is easier to find a babysitter for one day per week rather than a few hours every day.
 - A 4-Day school week has actually been cited as a solution to the “latchkey” issue.



Instruction and Student Achievement

- There is little research available on the practice of a 4-Day school week and its affects on student achievement.
 - Many districts report an increase in actual instructional time due to less interference from athletics, doctor and dentist appointments.
 - Teachers must make adjustments to instructional practices and timelines to make this happen.
 - Concerns have been expressed by some that certain students in need of more frequent reinforcement have trouble with continuity of learning with the three-day weekend.
 - There is a lack of evidence that the 4-Day school week helps or hurts student achievement.



Instruction and Student Achievement

- In reviewing Idaho's ISAT and IRI test results, it appears that students who attend a 4-Day school do not do any worse or any better than their peers in most instances.
 - Definitive results are nearly impossible due to the number of variables involved.



Reported Benefits of a 4-Day School Week?

- Most districts make the transition to a 4-Day School Week for financial reasons but soon recognize other advantages and benefits that they did not anticipate:
 - Student dropout 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.



Reported Benefits of a 4-Day School Week?

- 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.
- The school has significant savings on utility bills, substitute teacher pay, school buses, and building wear and tear.
- Schools 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.
- Schools experience fewer distractions; learning is broken up less by athletic events or other school activities.



Reported Concerns of a 4-Day School Week?

- Some of the concerns associated with the 4-Day school week include:
 - Child care issues: While some parents like the 4-day week because they prefer having to find good child care one day a week, others dislike it for the 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
 - 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”.
 - School reform movement: Some educators are concerned that the 4-day school week may appear to be inconsistent with the new emphasis for more time in school.
 - The 4-Day school week will take more of the local community commitment than other schedule options as it can affect daily community routines.



If You Are Considering a 4-Day School Week

- One size does not fit all!
 - While a 4-Day School Week may appear to be effective in one district, it does not guarantee that it will be effective in your district.
 - From districts that have made the switch, it is important to spend extensive time studying the issue and seeking community feedback before making the decision.



If You Are Considering a 4-Day School Week

- Visit an existing 4-Day School Week District as part of your research.
- Communicate with staff. If they do not have a full understanding, it will be difficult to implement.
- Communicate with parents and take public comment.
- Analyze possible financial gains as well as the possible negative financial impact it may have on your community.
- Make sure scheduling changes keep you in compliance with accreditation guidelines and teacher contract requirements.
- Consider that the change may cause your district to restructure and or replace curriculum.



If You Are Considering a 4-Day School Week

- The following questions should be considered:
 - Is a 4-Day week educationally sound for all students and for all groups of students, including young children, those with special needs and at-risk students?
 - Do the benefits of implementing a new calendar offset the disadvantages? How will you know?
 - How can a calendar change be used to continue progress in raising student achievement and closing gaps? Can the reallocation of savings support new or reorganized activities to better address student educational needs?



Resources

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