

National data show that four-day school weeks are increasingly common among U.S. school districts and often emerge during fiscal crises and in rural districts.¹ Notably, over 90 percent of school districts following a four-day school week operate in rural areas, and recurring reasons for the transition are cost-saving and staffing needs.² This summary provides an overview of three four-day school week models, impacts on stakeholders, and best practices in implementation.

FOUR-DAY WEEK MODELS

Districts may vary in how they implement four-day school weeks, though models must adhere to state requirements dictating yearly instructional time requirements.³ Potential models and associated factors include:

FOUR DAYS (NO FIFTH DAY)⁴

- May provide **fifth day programming** (e.g., recreation, intervention)
- May establish **community partnerships** to expand supports and services
- May require **extending the other four** school days

FOUR DAYS (WITH FIFTH DAY REMOTE)⁵

- May implement **key elements of blended learning** (i.e., leadership, professional development, teaching, operations, content, technology)
- May **support teacher capacity** and retention

FOUR DAYS (WITH FIFTH DAY EARLY RELEASE)⁶

- May involve **additional transportation, childcare, and community considerations**
- May expand opportunities for **professional development**
- May require **extending the other four** school days

IMPACTS ON STAKEHOLDERS

The impacts of four-day school weeks on stakeholders vary and often depend on implementation, flexibility, and needs.

STUDENTS⁷

- Districts often implement four-day weeks differently, and differences in hours of instructional time may explain variation in academic performance.
- The impact on social, emotional, and physical health varies (e.g., increased/decreased bullying, less tiredness/less sleep, increased physical activity/decreased physical education).

PARENTS⁸

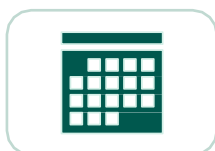
- Many parents respond negatively to the transition to a four-day week because it may require them to invest in childcare services, reduce work hours, or leave a job entirely.
- Districts that have operated under a four-day school week model for longer may experience greater parent satisfaction (e.g., Lathrop R-II School District).

DISTRICTS⁹

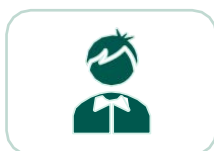
- Teachers and staff who enjoy three-day weekends and less commuting often favor four-day school weeks, potentially attracting staff in small or remote locations. Teachers also benefit from four-day school weeks due to opportunities for planning, collaboration, and training.
- Savings from switching to four-day weeks averages 0.4 to 2.5 percent, and typically come from changes in transportation, operations, and support staff salaries.

IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICES

Implementing a four-day school week requires careful planning and intentional use of instructional time, as shown by the following best practices:¹⁰



Make a plan



Address student needs



Focus on instruction



Work with the community



Use the fifth day effectively

ENDNOTES

¹ Heyward, G. "What Do We Actually Know about the Four-Day School Week?" Center on Reinventing Public Education, June 2018. pp. 1–2, 5. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED584166.pdf>

² Anglum, J.C. "When Five Shrinks to Four: Assessing the Four-Day School Week in Rural Locales." *Phi Delta Kappan*, 103:4, December 2021. pp. 21–22. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

³ "Four-Day School Week Overview." National Conference of State Legislatures, April 2020. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/education/school-calendar-four-day-school-week-overview.aspx>

⁴ [1] Fine, C. "Lathrop R-II School District, Four Day Information Updated August 2018." Lathrop R-II School District, August 2018. https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/456331/Four_Day_Information_1_.pdf [2] Murray, J. "Even Better than the Real Thing: Four-Day School Weeks Make Adults Very Happy." The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, November 1, 2021. <https://fordhaminstitute.org/ohio/commentary/even-better-real-thing-four-day-school-weeks-make-adults-very-happy> [3] Klinginsmith, G. "Moving to a Four-Day School Week: Leading a Transition to Improve Student Achievement." *School Business Affairs*, 86:5, May 2020. p. 17. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

⁵ [1] Darrow, R., B. Friend, and A. Powell. "A Roadmap for Implementation of Blended Learning at the School Level: A Case Study of the ILearnNYC Lab Schools." International Association for K-12 Online Learning, October 2013. p. 15. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED561320.pdf> [2] Heyward, G. "Schools Are Closing Classrooms on Fridays. Parents Are Furious." The New York Times, December 9, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/08/us/schools-closed-fridays-remote-learning.html>

⁶ [1] "Implement Student Late Start or Early Dismissal One Day a Week for PD or Staff Meetings." Unlocking Time. <https://www.unlockingtime.org/strategies/implement-late-start-or-early-dismissal> [2] Kaplan, C. et al. "Time for Teachers: Leveraging Expanded Learning Time To Strengthen Instruction and Empower Teachers." National Center on Time & Learning. pp. 22, 24. <https://www.timeandlearning.org/sites/default/files/resources/timeforteachers.pdf>

⁷ [1] Heyward, "What Do We Actually Know about the Four-Day School Week?," Op. cit., p. 4. [2] Morton, E. and P. Thompson. "4-Day School Weeks: Educational Innovation or Detriment?" Brookings Institution, July 12, 2021. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2021/07/12/4-day-school-weeks-educational-innovation-or-detriment/> [3] Morton, E. "Effects of Four-Day School Weeks on Adolescents: Examining Impacts of the Schedule on Academic Achievement, Attendance, and Behavior in High School." *Annenberg Institute at Brown University*, EdWorkingPaper No. 21-416, January 2022. p. 1. <https://www.edworkingpapers.com/ai21-416> [4] Heyward, G. "A User's Guide to the Four-Day School Week: How to Assess District Readiness and Evaluate the Results." Center on Reinventing Public Education, October 2017. p. 3. <https://crpe.org/wp-content/uploads/crpe-users-guide-to-four-day-school-week.pdf> [5] Sawchuk, S. "4-Day School Weeks: New Research Examines the Benefits and Drawbacks." *Education Week*, October 7, 2021. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/4-day-school-weeks-new-research-examines-the-benefits-and-drawbacks/2021/10> [6] Tomayko, E.J. et al. "Impact of Reduced School Exposure on Adolescent Health Behaviors and Food Security: Evidence From 4-Day School Weeks." *Journal of School Health*, 91:12, 2021. p. 1055. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/josh.13095>

⁸ [1] Moss, A. "Four-Day School Week." MOST Policy Initiative, February 25, 2022. p. 3. <https://mostpolicyinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Four-Day-School-Week.pdf> [2] Plake, S. "Lathrop School District Starts 10th Year of Four-Day Week, Says It Saved \$1.2M." KSHB, August 26, 2019. <https://www.kshb.com/news/local-news/lathrop-school-district-starts-10th-year-of-four-day-week-says-it-saved-1-2m> [3] "Schedule Change Survey Results Are In." 27J Schools. <https://www.sd27j.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=4&ModuleInstanceID=17416&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=30717&PageID=1>

⁹ [1] Heyward, "A User's Guide to the Four-Day School Week: How to Assess District Readiness and Evaluate the Results," Op. cit., p. 3. [2] Moss, Op. cit., pp. 3–4. [3] Kaplan et al., Op. cit., p. 22. [4] "The Four-Day School Week Information Manual." Colorado Department of Education, Division of Field Services, June 2021. p. 5. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeedserv/fourdayschoolweekmanual> [5] Sawchuk, Op. cit. [6] Morton, E. "Effects of Four-Day School Weeks on School Finance and Achievement: Evidence from Oklahoma." *Educational Researcher*, Working Paper No. 20-02. pp. 20–21. <https://cepa.stanford.edu/content/effects-four-day-school-weeks-school-finance-and-achievement-evidence-oklahoma>

¹⁰ Figure text reproduced verbatim from: Heyward, "A User's Guide to the Four-Day School Week: How to Assess District Readiness and Evaluate the Results," Op. cit., pp. 15–16.