Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about the four-day school week. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the ten regional educational laboratories (REL) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. It provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research based education questions.

The information below represents the most rigorous research available. Researchers consider the type of methodology and give priority to research reports that employ well described and thorough methods. The resources were also selected based on the date of the publication with a preference for research from the last ten years. Additional criteria for inclusion include the source and funder of the resource.

**Question:** What does research tell us about the four-day school week?

**Search Process**

**Key words and search strings used in the search:** four-day school week

**Search databases and websites:**
2. JSTOR, [http://www.jstor.org/action/showAdvancedSearch](http://www.jstor.org/action/showAdvancedSearch)
3. Google Scholar, [www.google.com/scholar](http://www.google.com/scholar)

**Sample Citations Retrieved:**


**Abstract/Summary:** This comprehensive overview discusses the issues regarding the four-day school week, based on a limited number of studies and anecdotal reports from teachers and students. The authors provide a useful table of pros and cons. Some of the key pros listed are increased attendance, increased planning time for teachers, and some reported savings on utility, transportation, and food costs (although other districts did not report any savings). The authors also provide recommendations for districts who are considering implementing the four-day school week.

Abstract/Summary: This research brief provides a history of the reform and presents a synthesis of the research base, albeit limited, focused on the implementation and impact of moving to a four-day school week schedule. Also included is a discussion of the most commonly voiced concerns.


Abstract/Summary: Although the four-day school week originated in 1936, it was not widely implemented until 1973 when there was a need to conserve energy and reduce operating costs. This study investigated how achievement tests scores of schools with a four-day school week compared with schools with a traditional five-day school week. The study focused on student performance in Colorado where 62 school districts operated a four-day school week. The results of the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) were utilized to examine student performance in reading, writing, and mathematics in grades 3 through 10. While the mean test scores for five-day week schools exceeded those of four-day week schools in 11 of the 12 test comparisons, the differences were slight, with only one area revealing a statistically significant difference. This study concludes that decisions to change to the four-day week should be for reasons other than student academic performance. (Contains 1 table.)


Abstract/Summary: Traces development and implementation of a 4-day school week at an Alberta junior high school that extended the school day 40 minutes, resulted in more classes taught in a shorter time period, and decreased student discipline problems. Describes parent and community reactions. Includes recommendations for planning educational change. (LP)

Abstract/Summary: Facing financial difficulties, the Webster County Public School System in rural Kentucky implemented a four-day school week to save money on transportation and staffing. The district's research in the experience of other rural districts had indicated that such a calendar change could increase efficiency and also yield some unexpected benefits. Webster County's experience in the last two years under the new calendar has confirmed the viability of the four-day week. Student achievement has risen, and teachers feel that they are using planning and staff development time more profitably. Anticipated problems—such as student fatigue from the longer school day and parent problems with child-care issues—have not proven to be serious obstacles. (Contains 1 figure.)

Referrals

Organizations:
- Center for Education Policy, Applied Research, and Evaluation: http://www.usm.maine.edu/cepare/

Federally Funded Resources:
- Institute of Education Sciences Resources (IES), http://ies.ed.gov
- Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory: http://educationnorthwest.org/

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