

Should the School Week Be Shorter? (Argument)

Students at Hull-Daisetta High School in Texas are smiling more this year—especially on Thursday afternoons. This past fall, the Hull-Daisetta school district switched to a four-day schedule. That means students don't have classes on most Fridays. Instead, the other school days are about 45 minutes longer. So far, the change to the new schedule has been positive, says Superintendent Tim Bartram. "Our students are happier with the new schedule," he says. "The mood is better."

Having a three-day weekend every week may sound like a dream, but the new schedule is a reality for students at more than 1,600 schools in 24 states. And it's certainly favored by families: A 2021 study by the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit research organization, found that the four-day schedule is popular with both parents and students in districts that use it. A whopping 85 percent of teens in the study said they "like it a lot." Still, the trend has some experts wondering: Is spending less time at school the best choice for students? **(CLAIM 1: "The four-day week is good for students, parents or the school.")**

More Convenient?

Over the past century, many schools have experimented with four-day weeks during tough times. When electricity and gasoline prices skyrocketed in the 1970s, for example, several states shortened school weeks. The shortened week enabled them to spend less on gas for buses and less on heating and cooling buildings. Many schools returned to a five-day schedule after prices came down.

Today, saving money remains a big reason that schools make the switch to the new schedule. Saving money isn't the only reason though. Shorter weeks can also be convenient—particularly in rural (country/farming) areas, where the four-day week is most popular.

Rural (country/farming) communities tend to be spread out, and students and staff in rural areas can spend hours traveling to and from school each day. A weekday off means less time on the road. For students, a Friday off leaves more time for extracurriculars, errands, chores, jobs, and sleep—a key benefit for teenagers. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 60 percent of middle schoolers and 70 percent of high schoolers don't get enough rest each night.

(CLAIM 2: "The four-day week is bad for students, parents or the school.")

However, the longer school days that often come with four-day schedules can cut into after-school activities. Between homework, dinner, and sleep, there may not be time for much else with a four-day weekday. That means it could be tough to squeeze in activities like basketball, music lessons, and martial arts on school days with a four-day schedule.

Less Time in Class

Extracurriculars aside, there are also questions about how a shorter week *impacts* learning. On average, students on four-day schedules spend 58 fewer hours in class each year than students on five-day schedules, according to the RAND study.

Most research shows students on four-day schedules don't perform as well on standardized tests, according to Paul Thompson, a professor at Oregon State University, who studies this topic. "Being in front of a teacher in a classroom matters a lot," he says. On the other hand, in the RAND study, teachers, principals, and parents all reported that kids learned as much—or *more*—on a four-day schedule as on a five-day one.

Finding Balance

Of course, a day at school usually involves more than learning how to solve equations and write essays. In a school day, there may also be physical education, electives like theater and robotics, face-to-face time with peers, and access to free meals. With one fewer day at school, students can miss out on extracurricular activities and free services—and that can be detrimental.

For example, socializing is important for mental health. Some research shows that teens who feel less connected to friends and adults at their schools may more likely feel sad or hopeless. Could being away from school one additional day each week contribute to feelings of disconnection?

There are logistical challenges too. Working parents and guardians may need help finding childcare on the extra day school is closed. "Making sure that the four-day week is working for all students and all families is important," says Thompson.

Some schools offer virtual learning or special activities on days off to find the right balance. In the Hull-Daisetta district, for instance, all students come in for a half-day one Friday each month. They come in on that extra Friday and use the time for a range of activities—from field trips to classes on cooking or building computers.

After that? They're off to enjoy the weekend.

Name _____

Date _____

(CLAIM 1: "The four day week is GOOD for students.")

Which quotes/evidence supports this claim: paste them from the story below/ **include the line numbers**

1. Line # 23 : Quote: "The longer school days that often come with four-day schedules can cut into after-school activities.

1. The author is saying that " _____ "

2. Line # : Quote: "A weekday off means less time on the road." (hint: gas)

2. The author is saying that " _____ "

3. Line # : Quote: "

3. The author is saying that " _____ "

4. Line # : Quote: "

(CLAIM 2: "The four-day week is BAD for students.")

Which quotes/evidence supports this claim: paste them below /**include the line numbers**

1. Line # : Quote: "

1. The author is saying that " _____ "

2. Line # : Quote: "

2. The author is saying that " _____ "

3. Line # : Quote: "

3. The author is saying that " _____ "

4. Line # ____: Quote: "