

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

RESOLUTION ON FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEKS

Resolution Summary

In an effort to reduce operational expenses, an increasing number of school districts, mostly those in rural areas, have instituted four-day school weeks. Approximately 100 school districts in 17 states currently use some form of the alternative four-day schedule. Five years ago, schools in just nine states used four-day schedules, according to a study by the National School Boards Association. Rising fuel prices is clearly one factor as more districts adopt shortened school weeks. Under these alternative schedules, each school day is lengthened to compensate for the loss of instructional time on the days when school is not in session. Some districts have adopted modified four-day schedules in which schools hold classes four days during most weeks, and five days during weeks leading up to, and including, state testing.

Closing schools one additional day per week enables local districts to cut transportation costs as well as energy expenses to heat and cool school buildings. Districts have also reported savings from using fewer substitute teachers and providing fewer school lunches. Furthermore, some districts have found that attendance and test scores increased under a four-day school week and that drop-out rates and discipline problems have reduced. In some cases, local districts have redirected savings to fund new programs, such as full-day kindergarten. Nevertheless, some concerns remain. Specifically, some working parents are concerned about child care and whether younger children can remain focused during lengthened school days. Districts may also encounter contract issues with teacher unions.

School districts that have adopted a four-day school week are located in states that empower local school districts to provide a minimum number of instructional hours each year as an alternative to being in session a minimum number of days. Not all states provide this level of flexibility. A majority of states currently have laws in place that require schools to provide a minimum number of instructional days, typically 180, without providing an alternative minimum number of instructional hours that would permit districts to adopt four-day school weeks.

Additional Resource Information

Center for Policy Studies, Education Research, and Community Development research brief: http://icee.isu.edu/Policy/The_rationale_of_the_Four_Day_Week-1.pdf

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory: <http://www.nwrel.org/request/feb97/article4.html>

The Principals Partnership research brief: <http://www.principalspartnership.com/fourdayschoolweek.pdf>

CSG *State News* article: "Dark Days in School", November 2008.

CSG Management Directives

Management Directive #1: Promote efforts to modify laws and/or regulations to allow local school districts to meet a minimum number of instructional hours as an alternative to a minimum number of instructional days.

Management Directive #2: Support efforts of local districts that wish to do so to initiate four-day school weeks.

Management Directive #3: CSG staff will post approved resolution on CSG's website and make available through its regular communication venues at the state and local level to ensure its distribution to the state government and policy community.

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WHEREAS, school districts face steep increases in energy costs related to transporting students and heating and cooling school buildings;

WHEREAS, local school districts in many states are experiencing reduced revenue;

WHEREAS, many school districts could realize significant savings in transportation and energy costs from four-day school weeks, which could be redirected into other educational programs;

WHEREAS, approximately 100 school districts have initiated four-day school weeks in order to reduce operational expenses;

WHEREAS, school districts using four-day school weeks report numerous non-financial benefits including higher attendance, declines in drop-out rates and decreased discipline problems;

WHEREAS, a study by the Principal's Partnership found that four-day school weeks result in more efficient instructional practices as a result of less interrupted class time that comes from longer class periods and fewer transitions at all grade levels;

WHEREAS, the Principal's Partnership research also found that students and teachers in schools with four-day weeks reported improved morale and more positive attitudes toward school and more time for staff development;

WHEREAS, multiple school districts with four-day school weeks have reported that test scores have either improved or remained stable following moves to a four-day school week; and

WHEREAS, a majority of states have policies that prevent school districts from adopting four-hour days by requiring a minimum number of instructional days without providing an alternative minimum number of instructional hours.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that The Council of State Governments encourages all states to adopt measures that give local school districts the option of adopting four-day school weeks by providing for a minimum number of instructional hours as an alternative to minimum number of instructional days specified by state law.

Adopted this ____ Day of November, 2009 at the CSG Annual Meeting in La Quinta, California.

Gov. Joe Manchin III

Sen. Bart Davis

CSG President

CSG Chairman