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Three-Day Weekends Commence

Evidence from school districts support the four-day school week



by Alex Villano

Students of all ages love the idea of only going to school four days a week. Although scoffed at by most of the higher-ups in the school system, this long-time dream of many students now has the support it needs to become a reality. In the 2015 summer issue of the *MIT Press Journal*, Dr. Mark Anderson and Dr. Mary Beth Walker of Montana State University and Georgia State University, respectively, published a study which compared elementary school standardized test scores from Colorado districts housing both traditional and four-day school week schedules. Conclusively, the odds look better than were anticipated when it comes to student achievement improvements.

Across the nation, school districts are scrambling to find new and innovative ways to cut costs across the board without compromising student success in the classroom, thus fueling the research of Anderson and Walker. While researchers have previously conducted case studies, no mathematical correlation has been done to show how the four-day schedule impacts students in the classroom. In 2008, seventeen states within the U.S.

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reportedly had districts implementing the four-day school week, with Colorado reporting 60 out of 178 districts on the non-traditional path. The four-day schedule included better student and teacher attendance—expected to enhance student performance, as well as allowing the fifth day to be used for personal medical appointments and school events that would otherwise take up the traditional school day. Negative prospects also lingered: teachers had increased stress and fatigue from working longer days. Also, there are greater possibilities for teens to engage in criminal activity with an extra day off. Most notable was the question of whether students’ classroom success would be hindered by the schedule change.

Anderson and Walker attempted to answer this question by taking averages for reading and math scores. Traditional schools indicated 66.9 percent and 63.2 percent of students scoring either proficient or advanced on these tests, respectively, while four-day schools indicated 66.1 percent and 60.3 percent scoring proficient or advanced for reading and math, respectively. While traditional schools included over 8,000 test scores, four-day schools only included about 600 test scores, therefore leaving a large gap about what contributed to the slight decrease in test scores among the compared schools. When using a subset of schools who switched from traditional to four-day schedules during the data collection period, it was found the test scores were significantly higher after the schedule switch occurred: 60.8 percent reading and 53.2 percent math averages before the switch to 71.0 percent and 72.0 percent reading and math averages, respectively, after the switch. Switched schools acted as controls, and evidence built to support a positive correlation between the four-day schedule and improved student performance in the classroom. Those students, while changing from year-to-year, have the same academic environments to dwell in with only the amount of time spent in the classroom on a particular day changing.

So, now that we have the chance to change the future of education with this cold hard evidence, start sending copies to your local legislatures and school administrators. Backed by mathematical reasoning, how could such a change be the wrong one? 🐾