



COLORADO
Department of Education

The Four-Day School Week Information Manual

OFFICE OF FIELD SERVICES

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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STATUS OF THE FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK IN COLORADO

Eighty-two school districts, constituting 46% of the 178 school districts in Colorado, plus one BOCES operated school and select schools of the Charter School Institute utilize the four-day school week as the structure for organizing their school year. In simple terms, such districts schedule 7.5 hours per day for 144 days of school instead of the normal six hours for 180 days. In some cases, only a few of a district's schools are on a four-day week. For example, in the Moffat 2 School District, only the Moffat PreK-12 school is on a four-day week. For the Mesa County Valley School District 51, only four of its schools are on a four-day week.

This paper is intended as an overview of the practice. Actual practices differ from district to district. The reader is encouraged to contact individual districts if there is a desire for specific information.

DEFINITION

Districts scheduling a school year of 160 days or more need no state approval. Local boards of education annually establish district calendars, but there is no requirement to report or submit calendars to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). Scheduling a school year of more than 160 days is at the discretion of local districts.

The law also requires any district offering less than 160 days of school to obtain prior permission from the Commissioner of Education. One of the duties of local school boards is:

C.R.S 22-32-109 (n) (I) To determine, prior to the end of a school year, the length of time which the schools of the district shall be in session during the next following school year, but in no event shall said schools be scheduled to have less than one thousand eighty hours of planned teacher-pupil instruction and teacher-pupil contact during the school year for secondary school pupils in high school, middle school, or junior high school or less than nine hundred ninety hours of such instruction and contact for elementary school pupils or less than four-hundred-fifty hours of such instruction for a half-day kindergarten program. In no case shall a school be in session for fewer than one hundred sixty days without the specific prior approval of the commissioner of education.

Some districts schedule adjusted or partial weeks for a variety of purposes. Some schedule four days per week during the winter, but not all year. Others arrange staff in-service days on a quarterly or monthly basis. Some have half-day in-services on a regular basis. There is complete flexibility for districts to schedule 160 or more days of instruction for a total of 1080 hours for the year.

The traditional instructional day has been six hours. Those districts on a strict four-day week normally hold classes for seven and one-half hours for 144 days per year. The total is still 1080 hours. Many districts exceed this total on a voluntary basis. Summer school, for example, is not counted in the annual hours since the requirement is that the schedule must serve all students.

The law states that local boards of education must schedule a minimum number of hours of teacher-pupil contact and teacher-pupil instruction for each school year. The specific hour requirements are found in Colorado Revised Statute 22-32-109. State Board Rule 1 CCR 301-39, amended in 2012, states that teacher-pupil contact and teacher-pupil instruction means that time when a pupil is actively engaged in the educational process of a district. Each local board of education shall define "educational process," which definition may include any work-study time provided under the supervision of a

certificated or licensed teacher but shall not include any time provided for lunch. Each local board of education shall define "supervision of a certificated or licensed teacher." Beginning with calendars adopted for the 10-11 school year, each local board of education shall define "educational process" which may include passing time in that definition.

CURRENT STATUS

During the 2015-2016 school year, the Commissioner of Education approved the applications of 82 school districts (plus one BOCES and the Charter School Institute) to conduct less than 160 days of school.

Districts utilizing the four-day week tend to be rural and sparsely populated. Many have great distances for students to travel with long bus routes. Many also have major distances to travel to athletic events, as they participate in differing sports, conferences, and leagues.

All four-day districts regularly conduct school on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Twenty-one districts conduct no Monday classes and the remaining districts conduct no Friday classes.

HISTORY

In 1980, the Colorado legislature allowed districts to pilot alternative weekly schedules. Districts desiring to pilot the four-day week made application to CDE. The law specified several criteria which had to be addressed prior to approval. An annual report was required. In 1980, three districts were approved for a four-day week. By 1981, 12 districts had been approved.

In 1985, the Colorado legislature changed the required school year from 180 days to 1080 hours. For three years, local districts were no longer required to make application and receive approval for alternative calendars. No records of local district schedules, calendars, or of any alternative school calendars were kept by CDE.

In 1988, the legislature passed a provision that required any district scheduling less than 160 days of school to obtain permission from the Commissioner. In 1990, a formal application process was instituted by CDE.

For the 1990-91 school year, one additional district adopted a four-day week and one district returned to a five-day week for a total of 36 districts. For the 1991-92 school year, 35 school districts were approved to conduct a less than 160 days school year. This was one less district than the previous year because one district scheduled exactly 160 days. For the 1992-93 school year, 37 districts were approved.

In more recent years, the count of districts may also include a BOCES which operates a school and may also include the Charter School Institute (CSI). CSI first applied and was approved for this calendar for requested schools in the 2012-13 school year.

Below is a listing of approvals for each year from 2000-01 to present:

2000-2001	39 districts
2001-2002	46 districts (plus one BOCES)
2002-2003	49 districts

2003-2004	52 districts
2004-2005	52 districts
2005-2006	57 districts
2006-2007	62 districts
2007-2008	67 districts
2008-2009	66 districts
2009-2010	66 districts (plus one BOCES)
2010-2011	75 districts (plus one BOCES)
2011-2012	78 districts (plus one BOCES)
2012-2013	82 districts (plus one BOCES and CSI)
2013-2014	80 districts (plus one BOCES and CSI)
2014-2015	84 districts (plus one BOCES and CSI)
2015-2016	82 districts (plus one BOCES and CSI)

IMPACT

The remainder of this paper consists of CDE employees’ observations. These are based on extensive conversations with practitioners in four-day districts and visitations to most of those districts.

The specific characteristics of four-day week districts vary widely. A few do not have school on Monday, but most schools do not have school on Friday. Many have utilized the extra day for a variety of activities; some have not. For those wishing to investigate specific situations, a listing of the currently approved districts is provided at the conclusion of this report. The impact of the practice will be discussed under several topics detailed below.

POPULARITY

Among districts which have implemented the concept, the practice of the four-day week is very popular among students, parents, and teachers. Satisfaction surveys indicate that 80% - 90% of community members favor continuing the four-day week in districts which have been on the schedule for several years. The opposition seems to come from members of the community not directly associated with the school, and from those who feel that school employees should work a traditional week.

Districts moving toward a change from five-day to four-day weeks typically spend extensive time studying the issue, and seeking widespread community involvement and participation in the discussions. Many times visitations are made to other four-day week districts as part of the study. Even if the primary motivation is financial, careful attention is usually given to addressing questions and concerns of parents and teachers.

However, districts changing from the four-day week back to a five-day schedule usually have not engaged in extensive study and discussion. The decision has been made by the school board following an election which changed the board supporting the four-day week. The decision to go back has usually been greeted with much

controversy and dissension. In one case, the board made a decision for a five-day week just prior to a board election. The old board was removed in the election and the new board reversed the decision and the district remained on the four-day week.

Reasons for popularity vary from district to district. Some reasons offered are as follows:

- More time for family and family activities;
- Friday teacher preparation time instead of weekend preparation;
- A longer weekend break so that the intensity of the other days can be relieved and, also, as a strategy for increasing teacher recruitment and retention.

FINANCIAL

The initial reasons for going from five to four days of school per week have generally been financial. Once again, the financial picture differs from district to district. However, there are several general trends which are reliable.

Transportation

Transportation costs can be reduced by about 20%. In order to realize that level of savings, districts must severely restrict or eliminate transportation for activities or programs not conducted on regular school days. The capital, insurance, maintenance, and administrative costs remain relatively constant. Fuel, oil, salaries, and supervisory costs can be reduced. Transportation employees will have a reduction in net pay.

Food Service

If districts are subsidizing the food service program from the general fund, 20% of that subsidy may be saved since the program runs only four days. However, certain fixed costs are not reduced.

Utilities

If buildings are actually closed and placed on a weekend cycle, savings comparable to a three-day weekend can be realized. However, common practice is for buildings to be open for extra activities and for the use of staff. In most cases, heat is provided.

Staff

Most staff members are either on contract or on regular work weeks. Secretaries usually work 10-hour days with offices closed on the off day. Teachers and administrators usually receive the same annual salary. Hourly employees tied directly to the school day, such as aides and paraprofessionals, may or may not work the same number of hours per week.

CHILD CARE

The issue of baby-sitting seems to be a wash. With the longer school day, students get home at approximately the same time as their parents. The latchkey issue is virtually non-existent on school days. The issue is the full day of childcare needed on the fifth day. Most people have made the adjustment within neighborhoods or in

other ways. With schools closed, more baby sitters are available. It does not seem more difficult to arrange for a single full day of baby sitting than for a couple of hours five days per week. In many cases, a single day is simpler.

INSTRUCTION

The use of instructional time is probably the most controversial and least studied of all the issues. At the beginning, teachers clearly are faced with rearranging the instructional day. The major concern is for younger students and their ability to avoid fatigue.

When districts are strict about reducing interruptions of instructional time, the quality of that time can increase. The three-day weekend allows more flexibility for dealing with family and other conflicts which normally disrupt school. Appointments with doctors and dentists can be scheduled outside of school time. Sometimes, it takes all day to go to the dentist when a major drive is involved.

Some of the travel time associated with athletics and other activities occurs when school is not in session. A negative point is when a day of school is lost for any reason, it is a 20% longer day than a six-hour day, and, therefore, more hours are lost.

The general conclusion is that when strictly enforced, there are fewer disruptions to instructional time during the four-day week. Teachers, students, and parents are able to adapt to the longer day by planning creatively for and pacing the delivery of instruction. This is true even for younger children.

There has been a concern expressed by some that certain students in need of more frequent reinforcement have trouble with continuity of learning with the three-day weekend. This matter has not been studied or documented.

POLITICAL

Colorado has a deeply ingrained tradition of local control. The general belief is that the best decisions are made by those at the grass roots level. This tradition led to the flexibility provided by the legislative decision requiring hours instead of days. That tradition is sometimes questioned on a number of fronts. One of them is the use of time. There is a push in Colorado, as there is in the rest of the nation, for an increase in instructional time.

Even though the total number of instructional hours is the same, there is a negative reaction to the concept of 144 days of school. This is especially true for those pushing for a 200-day or longer school year.

Within local communities, the issue of four versus five days raises strong emotions. One board member indicated his brother would not speak to him because he voted to return to the five-day week. As with everything in education, opinions are strong and feelings run high.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

The general feeling is that students do no worse on the four-day week than on the traditional schedule. If student performance is judged by satisfaction, then the results are very favorable.

An academic comparison study of Colorado school districts operating four-day and five-day calendars was completed by Dianne L. Lefly, Ph.D., Director of CDE Research & Evaluation and Jhon Penn, Executive Director of CDE Field Services in 2011. At the time

of the study, there were sixty-seven Colorado school districts that operated all their schools on a four-day week rather than a five-day week. Because Colorado law requires that all districts provide a specified amount of 'contact time' for students, the shorter week includes longer days so the actual 'contact time' is the same as the schools with longer weeks. The study compared the academic achievement and student growth of the four-day districts to the academic achievement of five-day districts of similar size. Overall, the results indicated that both groups of districts performed similarly on the state assessments and that their students showed very similar amounts of academic growth as reflected by the Colorado Growth Model. The study may be accessed at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/research/download/pdf/coloradofourdayandfivedaydistricts.pdf>

Few, if any, districts have changed from five to four days with the expressed purpose of improving student achievement. It has not been a significant issue.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The four-day week presents only one interesting method of utilizing time in ways other than the traditional. For many communities, it meets a need for efficiency. These communities tend to be small and rural in nature. Probably, these communities also have a larger percentage of traditional families with at least one parent not working outside the home. Many communities have a strong agricultural base with a tradition of family farms. There are potential implications beyond the rural setting. In the cities, school usually gets out around 2:30 or 3:00 p.m. If students stayed until 4:30, the latchkey problem could be reduced. The fifth day could then be used for family, recreational or community activities. In other words, the positive characteristics experienced by small districts might hold potential for larger districts as well.

There are many reasons why districts which originally changed to four days for financial reasons during the energy crisis have maintained the practice even though the energy crisis has passed. These reasons may have implications for consideration of a four-day school week calendar beyond just financial saving considerations.

If you have questions about the four-day school week, please feel free to contact Jhon Penn, Executive Director of Field Services, at 303-866-6632 or penn_j@cde.state.co.us

SCHOOL DISTRICTS APPROVED FOR LESS THEN 160 DAYS 2015-2016 SCHOOL YEAR

<u>SCHOOL DISTRICT NAME</u>
1. Agate 300
2. Aguilar Reorganized 6
3. Bennett 29J
4. Big Sandy 100J
5. Branson Reorganized 82
6. Briggsdale Re-10
7. Calhan RJ-1
8. Campo RE-6
9. Centennial R-1
10. Charter School Institute (New America School – Lowry, The New America School, Frontier Charter School, Caprock Academy)
11. Cheraw 31
12. Cheyenne County RE-5
13. Cotopaxi RE-3
14. Creede School District
15. Cripple Creek-Victor RE-1
16. Crowley County RE-1-J
17. Custer County School District C-1
18. Deer Trail 26J
19. Denver County 1 (Academy of Urban Learning)
20. Dolores County Re No. 2
21. DeBeque 49JT
22. Del Norte C-7
23. Eads RE-1
24. East Grand 2 (Granby Elementary, Fraser Valley Elementary, Middle Park High, East Grand Middle)
25. Edison 54 JT
26. Elbert 200
27. Ellicott 22
28. Frenchman RE-3
29. Garfield RE-2
30. Garfield 16
31. Genoa-Hugo C113
32. Gilpin County RE-1
33. Greeley 6 (Frontier Charter Academy)
34. Hanover 28
35. Hi-Plains R-23
36. Hinsdale County RE 1
37. Hoehne Reorganized 3
38. Holly RE-3
39. Huerfano RE-1
40. Jefferson County R-1 (New America School)
41. Karval RE-23
42. Kim Reorganized 88
43. Kiowa C-2
44. Lamar RE-2
45. Las Animas RE-1
46. La Veta RE-2
47. Liberty J-4
48. Limon RE-4J
49. Lone Star 101
50. Manzanola 3J
51. Mc Clave RE-2
52. Meeker RE 1
53. Mesa County Valley School District 51 (Juniper Ridge Community School, New Emerson School at Columbus, Independence Academy, Dual Immersion Academy School)
54. Miami/Yoder 60 JT
55. Moffat 2 (Moffat PreK-12 School)
56. Monte Vista C-8
57. Mountain BOCES
58. Mountain Valley RE 1
59. North Park R-1
60. Otis R-3
61. Park County RE-2
62. Pawnee RE-12
63. Peyton 23 JT
64. Plainview RE-2
65. Plateau Valley 50 (Plateau Valley Elementary, Plateau Valley Middle, Plateau Valley High)
66. Prairie RE-11
67. Primero Reorganized 2
68. Pritchett RE-3

69. Pueblo County 70 (70 Online, Beulah Elementary, Beulah Middle, Cedar Ridge Elementary, Liberty Point Elementary, North Mesa Elementary, Pueblo West High, Rye Elementary, Sky View Middle, Swallows Charter Academy, Avondale Elementary, Liberty Point International, Pueblo County High, Craver Middle, Sierra Vista Elementary, Vineland Elementary, Prairie Winds Elementary, Vineland Middle, Pleasant View Middle, Desert Sage Elementary, Rye High, South Mesa Elementary)
70. Rangely RE-4
71. Revere School District
72. Salida R-32
73. Sanford 6J
74. Sangre De Cristo RE-22J
75. Sierra Grande R-30
76. South Conejos RE-10
77. Springfield RE-4
78. Trinidad 1
79. Vilas RE-5
80. Walsh RE-1
81. Weldon Valley RE-20(J)
82. West Grand 1-JT
83. Wiley RE-13 JT
84. Woodlin R-104

For statistical information such as district pupil membership, please visit the Colorado Department of Education's website at:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/>