

# MONTANA'S SHIFT TO 4-DAY SCHOOL WEEK

Imagine waking up on a Friday morning, and you start to get ready for school. A quick glance at the alarm indicates it is 8:30 AM. Panic overcomes you because you are officially late! You start to question yourself 'why is no one else up and ready to go yet?' It dawns on you that it's Friday. You no longer have school on Friday! This is just a little scenario, but there are currently 139 schools from Montana that have gone to a 4-day school schedule. Residents should consider the pros and cons and consider if this is something that Malta Public Schools should think about doing for the future.

Some parents are against 4-day school weeks because some working parents depend on the lunch and breakfast programs. It's also expensive for daycare or a babysitter/nanny. It can be hard for families with low incomes. Some parents even get anxious when it's a snow day. Some believe that it will be harder on younger kids and it would damage their abilities to concentrate and retain information. Allison Weiss, says that "some people complain that they forget things over the weekend that they learned during the school week and they end up failing the test." She enjoys the weekends with friends and more time for homework. She even talks about how she loves having no school on Fridays for sports. She enjoys not having to rush for the bus, and completing Friday school work.

Mr. Sean Estill, who was once an administrator, says "Our youngest students, kindergarteners, handled it especially well. I talked with many parents who had students in kindergarten during the five day week and the four day week. The feelings were pretty consistent that the four day week kids were tired on Thursday, but no more tired than their kids who had been on the five day week were on Friday. The bonus is the four day week students got an extra day to rest and their parents reported this made it easier to wake them up and start the next week on Monday." Some parents are even worried that older kids will get into more trouble with this extra free time. They are afraid of the increased risk of juvenile crime because they have more time on the weekend to do these things. This can be caused by numerous things, including peer pressure, poor school attendance, or poor grades. They may even do it to look cooler or to impress a certain peer group. The Edvocate says that the Oklahoma Department of Education watched 16 schools that have a 4 day school week. They discovered that seven schools saved money in 4-day school weeks. The other nine ended up spending more of the money. Estill said, "We saved between one and two percent on the four day week and this was eaten up by inflation after the first year. I did the predictions of costs when we were looking at changing and schools have many costs that are fixed, insurance, salaries, leave, pay, and many of the other expenses. They are already very efficient with their money. Almost none of the money that was saved came from the general fund. The three places we saved the most money were transportation, special education, and Title 1 aides. Our aides took the biggest hit. They lost about two hours each week from their paycheck but almost all of them were willing to trade that for the extra time they got on Fridays with their families."

We know many kids and teachers who are all for 4-day school week. These individuals understand that they have a long weekend to travel and catch up on homework. As for teachers, they can correct papers and keep up with school work, while they have time for their families too. Another added ideal benefit is that sports teams won't miss school all that much if athletic schedules can be aligned. Attendance may be more likely to go up. Some schools found it easier to recruit teachers or staff because of the short week. Sidney, Montana even took this into consideration as they became the first Class A school to go to a 4-day school week. Kassadee Olson, even agrees that she is excited to go to this type of school schedule, so she can catch up on homework. Her parents aren't upset at the idea. The school's rationale is that they are trying to attract teachers and staff. According to the KPAX website, the school has lost eight teachers to the 4-day week. They decided to give it a try. The Sidney Herald Website shares that in the beginning of the process, they even reached out to the Boys and Girls' Club to help out with this situation. The Sidney Herald website confirms that the school lost eight teachers to Fairview.

Our own superintendent, Mr. Kris Kuhen, knew about the Sidney situation pretty well. He started by saying, "Well, I commend Sidney because for the first time they at least acknowledged why they did it. This is a recruiting and retention tool." Kuehn called it "a management nightmare". He found a lot of struggles from a management standpoint. His biggest hang-up is that he believes we are going the wrong direction with the 4-day school week. He believes that students succeed with the more contact they have. He continued, "from an athletic standpoint, I could see it. That you could schedule your games for Friday, Saturday, Sunday so you aren't missing school days." The staff and students could be encouraged to schedule their appointments for Fridays; however, it doesn't always work with the doctor because they are open on certain days. Interested readers may be thinking that there has to be a way to convince him to go to this scheduling. Kuehn adds, "Somebody is going to have to make a really strong argument." He doesn't want to go in the wrong direction with it either. He needs evidence. Kuehn commented "I think the very root has to be what's best for the kids' learning and teachers' teaching. We are here to teach kids not for another day off. The kids are here to learn."

We come to find out that 4-day school weeks can be good and bad coming from different people. Mr. Kuhen isn't all up for it because it can get messy. Mr. Estill enjoyed it so that he could spend time with his family. The pros and cons should be considered equally. Voters should remember that some children depend on the lunch and breakfast program. School is also a good place to have kids. This is a safe place and students aren't running rampant through the streets when they are in school. Kids also see this as a great opportunity to have a 4-day school week for homework. They even can go to sports games or meets without the worry of homework.

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