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EFP Takeaways

Are All Four-Day School Weeks Created Equal? A National Assessment of Four-Day School Week Policy Adoption and Implementation

Background

Over the past two decades, an increasing number of primarily rural schools in the United States have adopted four-day school weeks. Four-day school weeks feature a shortened schedule, with either Monday or Friday off and limited off-day student activities. Thompson, Gunter, Schuna, Jr., and Tomayko conduct the first comprehensive, national analysis of four-day school week policy adoption and implementation. Their work is published in vol. 16 issue 4 of *EFP*.

The Study

The authors created their own database of four-day school week districts using school calendars and direct correspondence with schools. They supplement this with data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Using these data, the authors explore the characteristics of schools that adopt this model, the rationale for the policy adoption, and the structure of these schools' schedules.

For more details:

- View the [full issue](#).
- See the [full article in *Education Finance and Policy*](#).
- [Sign up here to receive future *EFP Takeaways*](#).
- Summary of:
Thompson, P., Gunter, K., Schuna, Jr., J., & Tomayko, E. (2021). Are All Four-Day School Weeks Created Equal? A National Assessment of Four-Day School Week Policy Adoption and Implementation. *Education Finance and Policy*, 16 (4): 558-583.

Findings

Shorter school schedule yields on average a 2.5-week reduction in contact time compared to a five-day model. Four-day school weeks are now found in 24 states across the United States (see figure below).

Adoption of a four-day school week is primarily motivated by financial considerations, but rural school issues (e.g., teacher retention, long bus commutes for students) and student attendance considerations also play a role. The authors find that the specific design of the four-day school week varies widely—resulting in large differences in instructional times, daily starting times, school resources, and off-day student activities. Variation in these structures should be examined in future research to determine their effects on student achievement and child wellbeing.

