

Forsyth R-III Schools
4-Day School Week Calendar
Fact Sheet

Forsyth R-III Schools is committed to offering the best educational opportunities that we can to each and every one of our students. One of the key ingredients for providing an outstanding education to our students is to be able to hire and keep outstanding teachers in our classrooms. As the 2018-2019 school year ended and we prepared for the 2019-2020 school year, we were challenged with hiring 27 new employees to replace those who left the district. While we knew that we, as well as most other districts across the state, were seeing a reduction in applications for open teaching positions, the lack of both quantity and quality of applicants has decreased significantly over the last few years. This has driven the question of what can we do as a district to better our opportunities to attract, hire and retain high quality teachers for our district?

After following the discussion and actions of other area schools who have made a calendar change to a 4-day school week, we felt that it was worthy of our district's time and efforts to deeply review a 4-day school week calendar as an option to assist the district in addressing the priority of having the ability to attract, hire and retain quality teachers and staff. Based on the finding of our research, the Forsyth R-III School District feels strongly we should seriously investigate this option as a possibility for our district.

Forsyth R-III Schools will be hosting a Community Night on Monday, December 9th at 6:00 p.m. in the Performing Arts Center to present information regarding a potential change to a 4-day week. We will share the information we have collected as well as answer questions from parents and community members.

Below are many topics of considerations, along with feedback/research that we have received along the way in this discovery process. Forsyth Schools is examining using Monday as the day out of school during the week.

Why would Forsyth R-III Schools consider a 4-day school week calendar?

- To attract, hire and retain quality teachers and staff, which is a district wide priority.
- Enhance the quality of instruction and student engagement.
- Create a more consistent school calendar with built in make-up days that stakeholders can plan for.
- Over time the calendar would create cost savings (while minimal) that could be put back into the classroom.

How would the 4-day school week impact the hiring and retaining of quality teachers and support staff?

- We are competing with the likes of Branson, Reeds Spring, and Hollister for quality candidates, but cannot compensate our employees at the same rate as some of these schools (Branson, Reeds Spring).
- This may give us the ability to even the playing field and attract teachers and staff we could not attract or retain previously.
- This schedule could promote applicants from other districts and areas from which we usually do not attract.
- More time for teachers to prepare for lessons, collaborate, and commit to professional learning.
- Teachers will use set Mondays each month for professional learning and teacher work days.

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4-Day School Week Calendar
Fact Sheet

How would a 4-day school week impact student achievement?

- Research indicates that student achievement has remained neutral or is inconclusive in the impact, however, many schools in Southwest Missouri initially found a slight increase in student assessment scores.
- Missouri testing data has been hard to determine as we have only given the current Math and ELA MAP grade level assessments for two years now.
- Feedback from schools that we have personally interviewed indicate the same. They have not witnessed a decrease in student achievement and most have experienced a slight increase in some areas initially.
- Student attendance has increased in districts implementing a 4-day week. Crane school district saw a change from 91.87 to 95.81% in their first quarter high school attendance after implementation.
- Teacher absenteeism has decreased in districts implementing a 4-day week.
- Student discipline numbers have declined in districts implementing a 4-day week.

Would a 4-day school week create a childcare problem for our parents?

- This was a significant concern in other area districts during our initial discussions. Most indicated they had the same concerns we do, however, after implementation it simply turned out to be a non-issue. One district indicated that having a set schedule, from the parent's perspective, ended up being more beneficial than trying to find childcare for sporadic days out. Knowing ahead of time that previously scheduled Mondays were a non-school day allowed them to better plan.
- We currently operate on a 169 student day calendar that includes 11 professional development days in which we are not in session including 3 Monday holidays and 1 early release day. Most parents are already dealing with this issue on a smaller scale.
- We have communicated with the Boy's and Girl's Club and as of now they would plan to be open on Mondays if we were to make this change.

Would the 4-day school week provide the district financial savings?

- Our district is heavily funded by state aide. Enrollment as well as attendance effects our Average Daily Attendance (ADA). The ADA number is the starting point for state funding. If student enrollment increases or decreases, it financially impacts our district significantly. With increases in our current student's attendance, our ADA would increase creating an increase in state funding. Having 4-day weeks could potentially attract families and students, thus increasing our enrollments.
- Current research and feedback from other 4-day districts indicate an average of a 1%-2.5% overall budget savings for a fiscal year. For our district, this would provide us the opportunity to adjust the salaries of our most difficult non-certified positions to hire; bus drivers, aides, and cooks.

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4-Day School Week Calendar
Fact Sheet

- Although there are some other savings possibilities, it has been reported that the majority of the savings comes from the following areas:
 - Fuel savings (transportation)
 - Bus mileage (depreciation)
 - Energy savings (Electric/Heating/Cooling)
 - Substitute teacher reduction (Fewer days for teachers to miss & staff can schedule appointments on days in which we are not in session)
 - Food cost

What would the proposed school day length be while in session?

- Our current calendar is 169 student days with 1,067.77 instructional hours.
- We are looking at a preliminary calendar with an additional 40 instructional minutes per day.
- We would attend very close to the same instructional hours as we have attended with a 5 day calendar. Our preliminary calendar would provide 150 student days with 1,050 instructional hours.

What changes would this cause in after school activities?

- Activities and practices would still take place on Mondays, however many districts have set times when Monday practices/rehearsals/events could take place.
- We would build consistent practice times so that families could plan non-student day events in advance.

What about students who rely on the school for meals?

- We currently partner with the Gift of Hope to provide weekend meals for students in need. We would expect to expand the offerings packed on Fridays to meet the Monday need for those students.

How would this calendar impact snow make-up days?

- This schedule would allow for built in snow days during the year and could eliminate the number of times/days we would need to extend the school year for weather make-up days. If adopted, we would designate a set number of priority Monday's for weather make-up days during the first or second semesters. We should also be able to set our graduation date earlier as well as know for sure our last day of school, even when dealing with inclement weather.

What are additional possible benefits other than hiring and retaining quality staff and cost savings?

- Research supports an increase in student attendance rate. This schedule gives families more flexibility in scheduling appointments for students. Most districts making this change documented a significant increase in student attendance.
- Districts have indicated that staff morale is higher due to the extra day away during the week. Although finding hard data is difficult, districts report that their staff members feel more prepared and have more energy for class. Teachers feel that students are more engaged with this calendar setup.
- 4-day schools have indicated that students seem to prefer the 4-day week as it allows more time for working at their jobs and many use the extra day to work on projects and prepare for classes.

Forsyth R-III Schools
4-Day School Week Calendar
Fact Sheet

- Non-certified staff members (custodial and maintenance) could be more efficient and productive in their positions. For example, this schedule would allow more time to complete projects and tasks while students are not in the building with fewer interruptions.