



# 4-Day School Week Research

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March 2024



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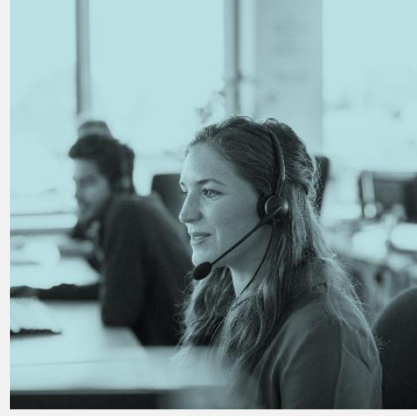
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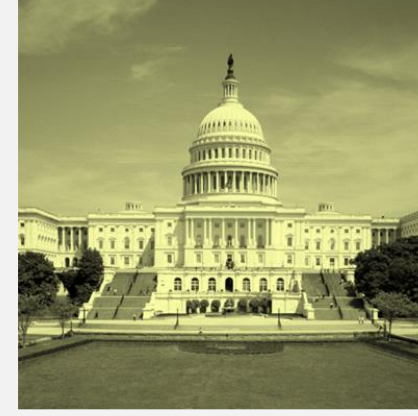
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# Overview: 4-Day School Weeks

*Trending up, more research in recent years, still mixed findings.*



In the spring before the pandemic, a total of 662 public school districts used the 4-day schedule – up more than 600% since 1999.

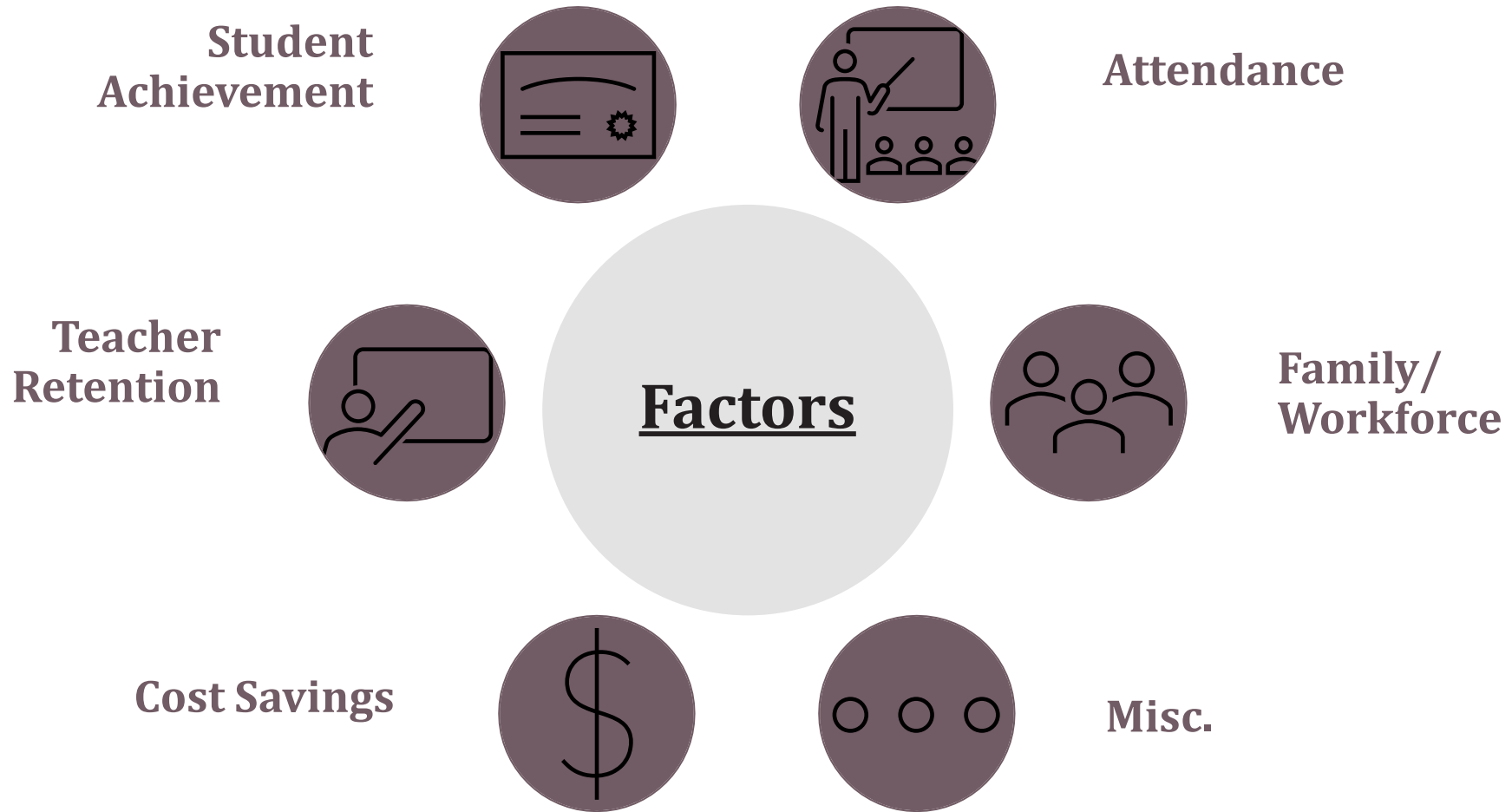


That number climbed to 876 school districts nationwide during the 2022-23 school year.



Communities backing the trend cite benefits for teacher recruitment and retention, cost savings, community support for the schedule, and more.

# Overview: Potential Factors to Consider



# Student Achievement

## *Negative effects*

- [RAND](#) (2021): Student achievement differences originally hard to spot, became clearer after multiple years. Student achievement **did not grow as fast in the 4dsw districts after the adoption of the 4dsw policy** compared with similar 5dsw districts.
- [Morton et al.](#) (2022): The 4dsw is associated with significant declines in spring reading achievement and fall-to-spring achievement gains in math and reading; effects of a four-day schedule on **achievement become increasingly negative over time.**

# Student Achievement

*Negative effects, correlated with lower levels instructional time*

- [Thompson](#) (2021): Using 3rd through 8th grade test scores from Oregon, the author found that **math and reading scores decreased** following the introduction of the 4dsw. **Increasing instructional time** by one hour led to **increases in math and reading** achievement.
- [Thompson and Ward](#) (2022): The authors find reductions in ELA and math achievement when examining 4dsw nationally, and 4dsw are correlated with negative effects on math achievement in districts **with lower levels of time in school**.

# Student Achievement:

## *Positive Effect or No Effect Findings*

### Positive Effects

[Anderson and Walker](#) (2015):

Using **Colorado** Student Assessment Program data for **grades 4-5**, the authors found a **positive** relationship between the 4dsw and the percentage of students scoring at the **proficient or advanced levels** on **math** and **reading** achievement tests.

### No Significant Effects

[Morton](#) (2022):

Using data from **Oklahoma**, the author found **no significant effects** of the 4dsw on **math or English ACT** scores.

# Cost Savings:

*Savings averages 2%, but implementation matters*



- The most comprehensive study of 4-day school week cost savings was an [ECS 2011 Study](#) which found districts using the reduced schedule saw an average **cost savings of between .4 and 2.5%** of their budget.
- A more recent, 2021, study of [Oklahoma districts](#) specifically found those that moved to four-day weeks saved **about 2 percent of their budgets**, driven by savings in noninstructional costs such as operations, transportation, and food services. **The operations and maintenance cost savings were lower when schools were open on the fifth day.**
- **Comparing the cost savings-achievement trade-off for the four-day school week to other cost-savings approaches** (*general expenditure increases, class size increases, school closures, eliminating meal and teacher incentive programs*), [Thompson](#) (2021) found the 4dsw yielded a comparable cost savings-achievement trade-off.



# Attendance

- The [RAND researchers](#) found that student attendance may have improved slightly at the four-day schools, but the difference was not statistically meaningful.
  - Those with four-day weeks had an average attendance rate of 93.4 percent, compared with an average rate of 92.9 percent average in the comparison districts with a five-day week.

# Teacher Retention

*Staff morale generally improves, but not in all contexts. Limited data.*

- The RAND Study: Found that teachers were mostly supportive of 4-day school weeks, although a majority described it as little more than a perk. Other stakeholders thought it gave them a competitive advantage in teacher recruitment and retention.
  - In focus groups and interviews, some teachers did say they were willing to drive long distances just to teach at a four-day school. Others said they would retire if their district switched back to a five-day schedule.
- **What about suburban districts?** One of the first suburban districts to go to a 4dsw was 27J District in Colorado, had teacher retention rates improve, but not as much as in surrounding districts.
  - Teachers were 3% less likely to return after the switch to 4dsw. Mid-career teachers were even less likely at 5%

# Family/Workforce

## *Family Flexibility, More Free-Time, Child Care, Workforce Trends*

- Parents reported more flexibility in schedule allowed for more family time.
- Increase in student's free-time outside of school (By 3.5-4 hours/week)
- Child Care
  - Burden often falls on families, and women in particular
    - [RAND researcher](#) finds negative impacts on women in the workforce
  - Community-School Partnerships
    - Some schools offer scholarships, but limited slots.
    - Community input is key

# Miscellaneous Pros and Cons

## Positive Effects

- **Sleep:** Elementary students in 4dsw districts got more school-week sleep than their peers in 5dsw districts, but there was no difference in the amount of sleep that 4dsw middle and high school students got. (RAND, 2021)
- **Behavior:** Morton (2022): Four-day school weeks were associated with declines in bullying and per-pupil fighting incidents. Although, no change in school climate surveys.

## Negative Effects

- **Juvenile Crime:** A Study (Fischer and Argyle, 2018) of 4 day school week districts in Colorado found juvenile crime increases of 20 percent after the switch to 4dsw.
- **School Meals:** Numerous studies mentioned challenges facing students and families that rely on school meals.

# In Summary:

*(Morton, 2023) Study of Studies found the following:*

## Student Achievement & Attendance

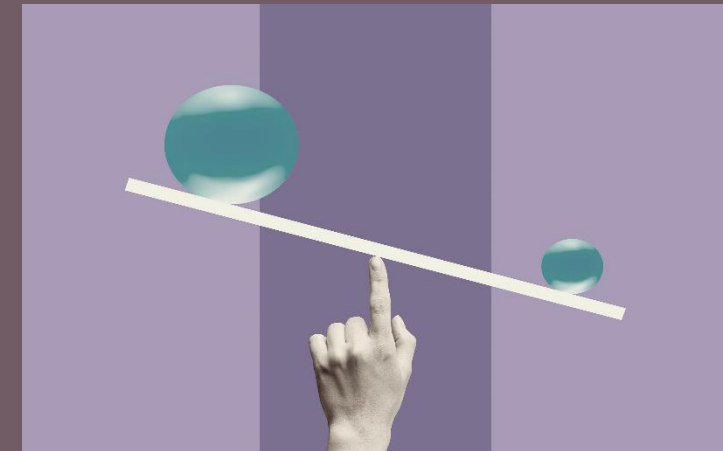
- 4dsw: a small negative effect on **student achievement**, medium effect in districts with [less instructional time](#) and in [non-rural districts](#).
- **Student attendance**: largely the same for students going to four-day schools.
- However, **rural** districts on 4dsw show very small differences or no difference in **student achievement** compared to districts on regular five-day schedules.

## Behavior and Cost Savings

- **Student behavior** in school improves slightly.
- The four-day school week offers **minimal [cost savings](#)**.

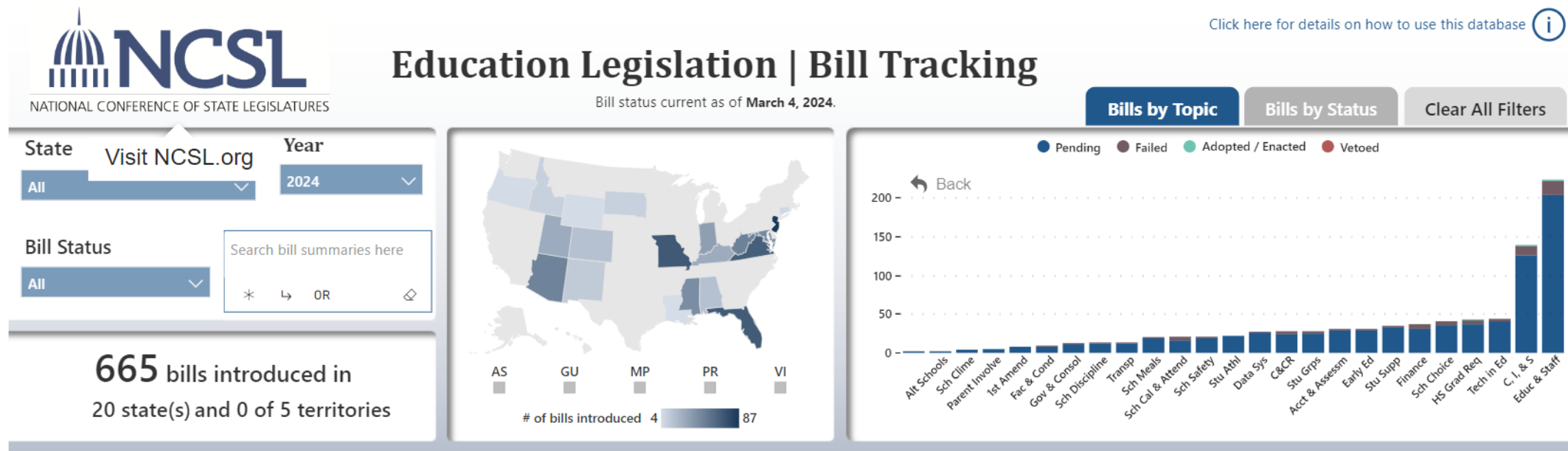
# Considerations

- **Maintaining Instructional Time is Impactful**
- **Cost Savings May Depend on Implementation**
- **Shorter Schedules May Create Calmer Schools**
- **One Size May Not Fit All**
- **Community Buy-In is Important**
- **Check-in Periodically**



# NCSL Resources

- [Four Day School Week Overview Brief](#)
- [Pre-K-12 Education Legislation Database](#)



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# Questions and Follow-up

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