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An Examination of the Four-Day School Week Schedule in Select Minnesota School Districts

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**An Examination of the Four-Day School Week Schedule
in Select Minnesota School Districts**

by

Heather L. Hanson

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Education in

Educational Administration and Leadership

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Dissertation Committee:

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Abstract

Statement of The Problem

Each year public school districts throughout the United States experience difficult decisions about how to allocate their limited educational funds. When the economy weakens, heightened consideration is given to methods by which school districts can more efficiently use their financial resources to make up for decreased funding (Gaines, 2008). One cost cutting method that some states and school districts have adopted is to retain the number of instructional hours in each school week but to shorten the length of the school week from five days to four days (Griffith, 2011).

Minnesota districts applying for authorization to employ a four-day week option have encountered opposition from state leadership and the education commissioner (Steward, 2015). An investigation of the literature reveals that no recent studies of the four-day school week have been conducted in the state of Minnesota. Additionally, national research on this topic is scarce (Idaho Education News, Dec. 2015).

Study Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine two rural Minnesota school districts that were employing a four-day school week during the 2016-17 school year: to ascertain support among school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents for the four-day schedule. Further, the study intended to gather perceptions from these stakeholder groups regarding advantages of, disadvantages of, and changes (if any) in their school districts' four-day school week. The following research questions were designed to support these aims:

1. How supportive were school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents of select school districts' four-day school week?
2. What did school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents perceive as advantages of their school districts' four-day school week?
3. What did school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents perceive as disadvantages of their school districts' four-day school week?
4. What changes, if any, would the school board, administrators, teachers, and parents identify that would increase their support of the school districts' four-day school week?

In order to address the research questions, the researcher created an online survey that gathered data from two school districts, totaling over 450 respondents' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of the four-day school week schedule. In order to enrich study findings, one-on-one interviews were conducted with seven respondents who volunteered to expand upon survey questions with the researcher.

Key Findings

Although the four-day school week began as a means for school districts to reduce costs and save money, the study indicated there were other advantages to the four-day school week for both teachers and families, including providing additional time for teacher/lesson planning, allowing families more quality time together, and increased school attendance.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, for their endless support and encouragement throughout this journey. They have been there for me from the beginning of this process and stood by me until the very end. I appreciate the love you have for me and for instilling the belief that you can achieve anything that you pursue wholeheartedly.

I encourage others to believe in yourself and remember with confidence, courage, and discipline no one can stop you from achieving your goals.

Acknowledgment

The completion of this dissertation has been a journey that required persistence, guidance, encouragement and self-confidence. The process of completing a doctoral degree has been a rewarding experience both personally and professionally.

A special thank you to my professors and especially to my committee members: Dr. James Johnson, Dr. Nicholas Miller, Dr. Kay Worner and Dr. Roger Worner. I appreciate the many hours they spent reviewing my dissertation drafts and providing me with constructive feedback.

Being a member of Cohort V, was an amazing experience for me, because I was a part of a very special group of people. I loved every weekend we spent together and the drive from Minneapolis to St. Cloud was worth every minute because I was able to learn from each of you and made some forever friends.

My parents, Ken and Kathy Hanson, have always provided me with the love, support and encouragement required to navigate through difficult and challenging times in my life. My mother, Kathy, spent many hours reading and re-reading this dissertation throughout the entire process. Her enthusiasm throughout the journey kept me motivated and excited to continue the writing process.

Thank you to my sister, Melissa, who told me time and time again...“You are a writer.” She would tell me this even when I told her that I did not want to write. Thank you for providing sweet treats and plenty of diet coke during my long hours of writing.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

As schools nationwide struggle with decreases in educational state funding, diminishing resources, and increasing costs, a growing number of districts across the United States are examining innovative approaches to saving money. Consequently, the four-day school week has gained momentum as a method for reducing expenditures. It has been reported that school districts in South Dakota in the 1930s were the first to employ a four-day week schedule (Donis-Keller and Silvernail, 2009). However, it was not until the energy crisis of the early 1970s that the shortened school week gained popularity (Ryan, 2009). When costs spiked again in the 1980s, another cohort of states and school districts followed (Ryan, 2009).

Education funding received a substantial blow after the Great Recession began in 2007. Though federal funding from the economic-stimulus package in 2009 softened the impact and marked the turn of an improving United States economy, school funding was slow to recover (Ogletree and Robinson, 2016). In fact, schools still feel the recession's effects nine years later (ibid). The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2016) reported that although 35 of the 46 states surveyed increased their general state aid per student in 2016, 25 states were still providing less general state funding than they were in 2008. At least seven of those states had cut 10 percent or more from their general state funding per student since the recession (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2016). Further, Minnesota 2020 report “Minnesota School District Finances: FY 2003-FY 2015” examined trends in total school district operating revenue, property tax levies, and state aids over a thirteen-year period. One finding indicated that total school district revenues declined by \$846 (7.9%) per pupil in the state of Minnesota over that span of time (VanWychen, 2013).

Rural school districts play an important part of the United States education system. According to a report from the Rural School and Community Trust Policy Program (2014), 9,765,385 public school students were enrolled in rural school districts, a figure that is slightly larger than 21% of the nation's total public school enrollment. The state of Minnesota has one quarter of their students attending rural schools. D'Amico and Nelson (2000) found that rural communities have a long tradition of pulling together to do whatever needs to be done to benefit students. One approach, embraced primarily by rural schools, is the four-day school week. According to Smith (2009), the most prevalent factor motivating the implementation of the four-day week was potential financial savings. One school district in the state of Minnesota adopted the four-day schedule in 2008-09 school year, saving \$143,000 the first year. The district started a trend that resulted in eleven Minnesota school districts, statewide, employing the four-day week in 2009-10 (Fitzgerald, 2010). By the 2016-17 school year, Minnesota had only seven districts that continued to operate four-day school week schedules (MDE, 2016).

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (2013), 21 states have public school districts which operate on a four-day schedule, including: Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Minnesota is one of the more recent adopters, and is employing this schedule in a very limited number of schools. On the other hand, states like Colorado, have been using the schedule for decades and currently have about one-third of its school districts using the four-day school week (Hedtke, 2014). Most of the school districts operating the four-day schedule are small in size and located in rural areas.

Although the motivation for implementing the four-day school week has been primarily to reduce operating costs, there are additional national findings that support the decision to operate districts on a four-day week. Some researchers (Grau and Shaughnessy, 1987; Sagness & Salzman, 1993) reported that the four-day school week increased attendance for both teachers and students. A decline in high school dropout rate was also observed (Grau & Shaughnessy, 1987), as well as a decline in student disciplinary referrals (Koki & Pacific, 1992).

It was reported in a rural Minnesota news article entitled, *Educators Divide Over 4-day Week*, that despite increasing pressure from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to return to a 5-day school week structure—and amid debate over whether or not it is academically beneficial to students—a Minnesota school district’s school board decided to challenge the state for local control to continue the 4-day school week structure it has operated since 2009-10. Some of the cited benefits identified in the rural Minnesota article included: higher attendance rates among students and staff, increased enrollment from those that are drawn to the four-day structure, and more student contact hours (Faurie, 2015).

Nationally, select research has revealed that the four-day school week has some perceived disadvantages. A survey from an Idaho school district indicated that 24% of teachers reported greater stress and fatigue due to longer school days under the shortened week (Sagness and Sazman, 1993). Some critics have worried that it is more difficult for students to retain subject matter when given an extra day off (Gaines, 2008). Perhaps the greatest concern expressed was that the longer school days require extended focus and attention, and this challenge could be especially relevant for younger students (Dam 2006, Gaines 2008, Ryan 2009). In Minnesota, state officials raised concerns for children who would miss receiving lunch on that fifth day through the schools’ subsidized lunch programs (Broman, 2015).

It is the intention of the researcher to expand the body of knowledge on the support for the four-day school week, as well as identify advantages and disadvantages based on two rural Minnesota school districts.

Statement of the Problem

Faced with escalating fuel and energy prices, and rising education costs, school districts across the United States have sought methods to reduce expenditures and balance budgets (Donis-Keller & Silvernail, 2009). One cost cutting legislative policy that numerous states have adopted, including Minnesota, is the introduction of the four-day school week. This option maintains instructional time while shortening the school week from five days to four days. The four-day school week has been proposed as one solution to address budget shortfalls.

There are more than 120 school districts nationwide that host four-day school week programs, according to data collected by NCSL (2013). Minnesota has 7 of their 336 school districts operating four-day school weeks during the 2016-17 school year (MDE, personal email, October 24, 2016). Districts in the state of Minnesota which desire educating their students using a four-day schedule must submit an application to the Minnesota Department of Education under the Flexible Learning Year Program, and obtain approval from the Commissioner of Education in order to be authorized to operate a four-day week school schedule.

Minnesota districts applying for authorization to employ a four-day week option have encountered opposition from Minnesota Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius and Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton (Steward, 2015). An investigation of the literature revealed that no recent studies of the four-day school week have been conducted in the state of Minnesota. Additionally, national research on this topic is scarce (Idaho Education News, Dec. 2015). Most researchers caution that because of their inconclusive study results, decisions to change

schedules should not be based on test scores but on other stakeholders' concerns (Northwest Education, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine two rural Minnesota school districts that were employing a four-day school week during the 2016-17 school year: to ascertain support among school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents for the four-day schedule. Further, the study intended to gather perceptions from these stakeholder groups regarding advantages of, disadvantages of, and changes (if any) in their school districts' four-day school week. The following questions were designed to support these aims.

Research Questions

1. How supportive were school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents of select school districts' four-day school week?
2. What did school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents perceive as advantages of their school districts' four-day school week?
3. What did school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents perceive as disadvantages of their school districts' four-day school week?
4. What changes, if any, would the school board, administrators, teachers, and parents identify that would increase their support of the school districts' four-day school week?

Delimitations

According to Roberts (2010), delimitations identify the planned limits of a study, including factors the researcher is able to control and the manner in which the researcher focuses the study. The following delimitations were implemented:

- a) The location of the study was limited to the State of Minnesota
- b) Only 2 of the 7 rural Minnesota school districts employing the four-day school week during the 2016-17 school year were selected for participation in the study.
- c) The sample groups surveyed included school board members, administrators, teachers and parents of the two selected rural Minnesota school districts which employed the four-day school week during the 2016-17 school year.
- d) Members of the sample groups interviewed individually by the researcher numbered 7.

Definition of Terms

For purposes of this study, the following definitions are provided to enhance clarity for the reader.

Five-day week: Each school week consists of five instructional days: Monday – Friday.

Four-day week: Each school week consists of four lengthened instructional days in which the time allocated to student instruction is equivalent to the time allocated to student instruction in a five-day schedule.

Minnesota flexible learning year program: Any school district plan approved by the Minnesota Commissioner of Education that utilizes buildings and facilities during the entire year, or that provides forms of optional scheduling of pupils and personnel during the learning year in elementary and secondary schools (Minnesota Statute 124D.121, 2015, 2015).

Minnesota length of school year; hours of instruction: A Minnesota school board's annual school calendar must include at least 425 hours of instruction for a kindergarten student without a disability, 935 hours of instruction for a student in grades 1 through 6, and 1,020 hours of instruction for a student in grades 7 through 12, not including

summer school. The school calendar for all-day kindergarten must include at least 850 hours of instruction for the school year. A school board's annual calendar must include at least 165 days of instruction for a student in grades 1 through 11 unless a four-day week schedule has been approved by the commissioner (Minnesota Statute 120A.41, 2015).

Rural: Defined using the 12-item urban-centric from the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) locale code system released in 2006. Rural schools and districts used in this study are those designated with locale codes of rural fringe, rural distant, or rural remote.

Fringe: Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster.

Distant: Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster.

Remote: Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized in a five-chapter format. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study, purpose of the study, questions of the study, delimitations, definition of terms, and organization of the study. Chapter 2 contains related literature, including prominent references to the general history, perceived advantages and perceived disadvantages of the four-day school

week. Chapter 3 furnishes the study's research methodology, instrumentation, and an explanation of the processes and procedures for data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 provides data results with regard to the four research questions, and data analysis. Chapter 5 contains the conclusion/s and recommendations for further study on the four-day school week in the state of Minnesota.

Chapter 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

History of the Four-Day School Week in the United States

Each year public school districts throughout the United States experience difficult decisions about how to allocate their limited educational funds. When the economy weakens, heightened consideration is given to methods by which school districts can more efficiently use their financial resources to make up for decreased funding (Gaines, 2008). One cost cutting method that some states and school districts have adopted is to retain the number of instructional hours in each school week but to shorten the length of the school week from five days to four days (Griffith, 2011).

The four-day school week is not a new cost cutting alternative in the field of education. Madison School District in South Dakota implemented a four-day schedule as early as the 1931-32 school year (Richards, 1990). According to Hunt (1936), Madison's unique schedule involved teaching the required academic subjects for four days a week and then scheduling all extra-curricular activities on the fifth day. This new four-day schedule offered an alternative to the traditional five-day schedule.

It was not until the energy crisis of the early 1970s, however, that the shortened school week gained popularity in the United States (Ryan, 2009). High gas prices caused by the 1973 Arab oil embargo motivated school districts to seek means for lessening their energy consumption. School districts in Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Washington all began experimenting with the four-day school week, claiming the change saved heating and busing costs (Gaines, 2008). Some states, such as Oklahoma, introduced the four-day schedule during the depth of the oil shortage in the early 80s (Reeves, 1999). The total number of school districts employing the four-day school week in the United States slowly

increased throughout the 1970s and 1980s, reaching a total of 100 school districts in ten states by 1987 (Grau and Shaughnessy, 1987).

Cimarron School District in New Mexico has operated a four-day school week since 1973-74, making it the longest established school district using a four-day schedule in the United States (Feaster, 2002). Cimarron's four-day schedule was implemented out of necessity. The district was forced to either find a method for reducing costs or close its school. Changes were made in the calendar to decrease spending in transportation services and electricity. To implement the four-day week, the Cimarron School District divided one school day into four parts and added the resulting time onto each of the remaining four days, creating a four-day instructional week with one-quarter more time allocated to instruction and one-day set aside for extra-curricular activities (Reeves, 1999).

Schools in Colorado began adopting the four-day school week following the state legislative decision in 1985 to alter the minimum school year requirement from 180 days to 1,080 hours for secondary school students and 990 hours for elementary school students (Dam, 2006). According to a 2006 Colorado State Department of Education report, characteristics of schedules varied. For example, some schools scheduled 7.5 hours of school, per day for 144 days, employing a four-day school week, while the standard school schedule was comprised of six hours per day for 180 days (Dam, 2006). Not all school districts chose to utilize the four-day school week for the full school year; some employed a four-day schedule only during the winter months. Most often, the Colorado school districts using the four-day school week were rural, sparsely populated and had some students who had long bus rides to and from school (Gaines, 2008).

In 2007, after the Great Recession, school districts faced hard times with funding again and have yet to really recover (Education Week, 2016). The Great Recession's effect on state school finance systems was unlike the early 1990s and early 2000s in that it involved a considerable loss of taxable income in many states creating a greater loss of state general fund revenues (Baker, 2014). The Center of Budget and Policy Priorities Report (January, 2016) referenced that most of the United States provided less financial support for each student for elementary and secondary schools in 2014 than before the Great Recession. The same report determined that in 31 states, total state funding for each student was lower in the 2014 school year than in the 2008 school year, prior to the recession's full impact.

Increasing monetary pressures forced many school districts to consider alternative approaches to scheduling, with the intent of reducing costs. A study compiled by the American Association of School Administrators found that nearly one in seven school districts considered a four-day school week as a strategy for combating budget short falls (Vogt, 2008). In 2009, an Education Commission of the States policy brief (Ryan, 2009) reported that approximately 120 school districts (of the 15,000 school districts nationwide) in 17 states operated a four-day school week. Although the number of school districts using a four-day school week in the United States had increased by greater than 100 percent since its introduction, the 120 school districts utilizing the four-day school week constituted less than one percent of all school districts in the United States (Donis-Keller & Silvernail, 2009).

Three years later, the National Conference of State Legislatures (2013) reported that 21 states had school districts operating a four-day school week schedule including Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota,

Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming (NCL, 2013).

In 2016-17, the Commissioner of Education in Colorado approved 88 school districts, comprising 49% of the 178 school districts in Colorado, to utilize a four-day school week as the structure for scheduling their school year (The Four Day School Week Information Manual, August 2016). Colorado and New Mexico accounted for more than half of all school districts currently employing a four-day school schedule in the United States (The Council of State Government, 2008).

According to the Education Commission of the States' policy brief (ECS) in 2011, state requirements vary on the number of instructional days and/or hours that comprise a school year. The majority of states require 180 days of student instruction. Most also specify the minimum length of time that constitutes an instructional day. It is important to note that some states set instructional time in days, while others specify hours, and some states provide specifications for both (ECS, August 2011).

In states where four-day school weeks are authorized through legislative action, school districts must conduct classroom instruction for an equivalent number of instructional hours as are required in the minimum number of days (Ryan, 2009). In general, such school districts do not hold classes on either Monday or Friday and extend instructional time by 60 to 90 minutes per day. These school districts typically are small with student enrollments of fewer than 1,000 students, are rural and are located west of the Mississippi River (Gaines, 2008).

The four-day school week has been used by rural school districts for over 35 years to meet economic hardship and travel concerns (Hall, 2015). According to a report entitled Why Rural Matters (2014), 9,765,385 public school students were enrolled in rural school districts

across the United States. This was just over 20% of the nation's total public school enrollment. The national average for the percentage of rural schools in the United States was slightly less than 33% (Johnson, Showalter, Klein & Lester, 2014). Wilmoth (1995) studied 84 school districts employing a four-day school week, located in seven western states, and found that 71 of them identified themselves as rural school districts.

Financial Advantage

Findings in several studies (Chmelynski, 2003; Griffin, 2009; Shoemaker, 2002; Truesdale, 2009) indicated that cost savings necessitated by reductions to the annual budget were the major factors prompting the shift by school districts to the four-day school week in the United States. The Education Commission of the States (ECS) used national finance data supported by information from individual school districts to determine that the average school district could achieve a maximum savings of 5.43% of its total budget by implementing a four-day school week (Griffith, 2011). Those savings may seem small, but it has been a motivator for some districts to reduce their school week by one day.

School transportation is a considerable expense in rural areas and operating buses for fewer days leads to significant savings. An early 1980's study conducted by Richburg & Sjogren in rural Colorado schools reported the four-day school week schedule resulted in energy savings through using 7-25% less heating fuel and by paying for less gasoline and bus maintenance (Richburg & Sjogren, 1982). A school district in rural Minnesota indicated that the four-day schedule saved the school district money in transportation costs and saved time for students when they were involved in taking fewer bus trips to and from school (Broman, 2015). Two other rural school districts in Minnesota, reported savings of \$150,000-\$170,000 in fuel costs (Post, 2015). Another public school district in west-central Minnesota voted to change their

schedule to a four-day school week with the anticipation of saving 10% on their transportation costs (Hewitt & Denny, 2011).

Grau and Shaughnessy (1987) examined 10 New Mexico school districts employing four-day school schedules and found cost savings of 10-25% on fuel, electricity and transportation. School officials from Caldwell Parish School District in Louisiana reported the amount saved by changing to a four-day school week was more than \$135,000 or 5% of the total district operating budget. The largest quantity of the savings, \$92,000, was in the area of transportation. Parish school buses travel more than 1,000 miles a day (Darden, 2008).

According to Yarbrough and Gilman (2006), Webster County School District in western Kentucky implemented a four-day school week in anticipation of reducing 20% from their budget. Over a three-year period, the actual annual saving was just 2%. Superintendent Kemp of Webster County, Kentucky reported a saving of \$220,000 annually. The school district received another \$50,000 in state aid because its daily student attendance increased (Darden, 2008).

In the Spring of 2009 and 2011, the state of Montana surveyed the 32 school districts operating four-day school weeks to solicit information about the schedules. Nearly half of the districts, 15 out of the 31 school districts, believed cost savings were worthy of mentioning in one or more of the following cost centers: transportation, utilities, substitute pay, and lunch budgets (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2011).

Bisbee Unified School District in Arizona forecasted savings of 17.7% for utility costs, 17.4% for student transportation costs and 16.7% for custodial costs. The total predicted cost savings to the district was \$154,000 annually or 2.5% of the district's total budget. The district's superintendent acknowledged that the savings might not have been as great as some people had

anticipated, but the 2.5% in budgetary savings was substantial enough to justify the districts continued use of a four-day school week (Griffith, 2011).

In Georgia, the Peach County school district employed a four-day school week in 2009 to manage state budget reductions. The change from a five-day school week to a four-day school week decreased transportation, cafeteria and operational expenses (Dixon, 2011).

While school districts do have the potential of saving millions of dollars in their budgets each year by changing from a five-day school week, to a four-day school week, such results are frequently not achieved. The actual savings generally range from 0.4% to 2.5% in the school districts that modified their schedule from a five-day to a four-day school week (Lake, 2015). The financial savings achieved with a four-day school week vary greatly from school district to school district depending on the fidelity with which the districts adhered to the cost saving measures. If school facilities were completely closed on non-school days, the savings would be greater than when the buildings are used on the fifth (non-school) day for tutoring, staff development and/or student activities (Hewitt & Denny, 2011).

Attendance Advantage

A positive finding in several studies and reports examining the four-day school week was the increased attendance by both teachers and students (Blankenship, 1984; Koki, 1992; Grau & Shaughnessy, 1987; Sagness & Salzman, 1993). An informational analysis of the four-day school week in 12 small rural Colorado school districts indicated reduced teacher absences accounted for an average savings of 24.5 substitute teacher days (Culbertson, 1982).

In an NEA Today article (Long, 2016), a third grade teacher from Apache Junction Unified District in Phoenix, Arizona commented, “Absences are down, and gone is the Friday slump, when students would drag through the day, tired and disengaged. Now, even though all

four days are tightly packed, she says her students seem to know that their continued attention is vital to getting through the lessons. They are on at all times, she says, and are more engaged and reactive to lessons” (p. 22). A superintendent of a school district in Minnesota reported the change to the four-day week schedule yielded unexpected benefits, such as lower absentee rates among students and teachers, who can schedule appointments and other errands on Mondays (Layton, 2011).

An in-depth, four-month examination by Idaho Education News and Idaho Public Television (2015) found that teachers have grown to like the four-day schedule. Many superintendents view the four-day school calendar as a key to recruiting teachers to rural Idaho and keeping experienced teachers on the job (Richert, 2015). Likewise, the superintendent in Chouteau, Oklahoma hoped a shorter week would entice candidates to fill vacant teacher positions and solve the district’s growing teacher shortage (Williams, 2015).

Research on six small, rural Oregon School Districts (Reinke, 1987) employing the four-day school week recorded a decrease in student absenteeism in all participating school districts. One teacher commented, “If kids miss school, they’re in serious trouble. We cover more material so it affects them more when they miss a day” (p. 6). The Union School District Superintendent reported a 27.5% decrease in teacher absenteeism, which led to an additional savings in substitute costs (Reinke, 1987). Likewise, Saratoga School District in Arkansas observed that teacher absence rates decreased from 35 per term in the fall of 1996 to 15 per term in the fall of 1997, saving \$800.00 (Parker, 1998).

Student Behavior Advantage

Often when students were in attendance for fewer days each week, teachers observed improved behavior. Fewer students were leaving the classroom for disciplinary reasons in school

districts operating on a four-day school week (Sherwood, 2011). Disciplinary actions decreased by 55% in Saratoga School District the first year of employing the four-day schedule, and the number of students failing subjects fell by more than half (Parker, 1998). The superintendent of the Chattooga County School District in Georgia, reported that the discipline referral frequency of students decreased 73% after a year of employing the four-day schedule (Sherwood, 2011). Student morale, attitudes and behavior were positively affected by the four-day week (Toppo, 2002).

In Hawaii, at Ma'ili Elementary, the school reported a decrease in discipline referrals from 203 in the semester prior to the implementation of the four-day school week, to only 75 referrals during the first semester of the initial year of the four-day school week implementation. At the same school, the percentage of teachers who requested transfers to another school declined from 43% in 1989-90 when employing a five-day school week, to 9% in 1991-92 when the district employed a four-day school week (Koki, 1992).

Stakeholder Satisfaction

Some studies have focused on teacher, student, and community satisfaction with the change to a four-day school week (Feaster, 2002; Hale, 2007; & Wilmoth, 1995). Dam (2006) reported that among Colorado school districts using a four-day school week, 80-90% of teachers, students, and parents favored the continuation of the four-day school schedule, noting that opposition often comes from those not directly associated with the schools. Although there is often public opposition to the initial approval of a four-day school schedule, once implemented, districts have reported a high level of public support for the practice (Chmelynski, 2003; Reeves, 1999). The superintendent of Animas Public Schools in Animas, New Mexico experienced reluctance at first from his community, when he proposed the four-day school week. The first

year of implementation (1994), the community survey regarding the switch to the four-day schedule was split 60-40. Four years later (1999), the approval rating reached 80 percent (Reeves, 1999).

Similarly, a school board in a Minnesota school district decided to challenge the state for local control to continue the four-day school week it had been utilizing since 2009-10. In a letter to the Minnesota Department of Education, the superintendent indicated that the four-day school schedule worked for the local, rural community. She requested that the school board be given the authority of local control and determine what is best for their students, families, and staff. School district parents who participated in parent surveys reported a 95 percent satisfaction rate with the four-day school week (Faurie, 2015).

According to Rouse (2006), teachers and parents who were positive about the four-day school week said they had more time to take care of personal business like doctor and dental appointments, spend time with family, and have an extra day to plan for the upcoming week. A staff survey given to Apache Junction school teachers revealed that 90 percent favored the four-day school week over the five-day school week, and between 70-80% of middle and high school students favored it (Long, 2016). Select articles and research revealed that one of the benefits to society is the improved opportunity for family interaction that occurs as the result of long weekends associated with a four-day school week (Kenworthy, 2004; Sagness & Salzman, 1993; Parker, 1998; Richard, 2002). In a New York Times article (Fiske, 1982), a parent expressed that the four-day school schedule strengthened her family life by allowing more time for camping and fishing. It had created more “family togetherness.” In a USA Today article (June, 2004), a superintendent reflected that the four-day school schedule in the mountain towns of Granby, Fraser and Grand Lake, Colorado started out as “a shock” (p.1). But now, he says, “it fits in with

the lifestyle” of communities that cherish outdoor recreation and extra family time. Similar findings in a study conducted by the Peoria Unified School District in Arizona (Hall, 2015) indicated families were attracted to the possibility of three-day vacations over the extended weekends, due to the four-day school week, and appreciated the quality time it allowed families.

The superintendent of Saratoga, Arkansas, reflected on his decision to employ a four-day schedule in his district. He said, “No district ever wants to be swallowed up by another one. The four-day school week gives small schools and a community a chance to try to save themselves. If a rural school can stay as the center of a community and avoid merging, then it has done something worthwhile for its students” (Parker, 1998).

Instructional Advantage

Schools which have implemented the four-day school week schedule, do so by adding daily instructional time onto the allotted daily hours in a five-day schedule—to comply with state legislative requirements. The number of annual instructional hours, in virtually all school districts that changed their schedules from a five-day school week to a four-day school week, either remained the same or increased (Kordosky, 2011).

Studies of teachers and students found that longer days associated with the four-day schedule resulted in fewer class interruptions and distractions, which led to increased efficiency of instruction (Blankenship, 1984; Grau & Shaughnessy, 1987; Koki, 1992). When school districts are strict about reducing interruptions in instructional time, the quality of that time can increase. Teachers, students, and parents are able to adapt to the longer day by planning creatively for, and pacing the delivery of, instruction—even for younger children (Dam, 2006). Yarbrough and Gilman (2006) found that teachers reported a substantial amount of wasted time within the five-day school week, and that the four-day school week caused them to focus on

instruction to a much higher degree. Durr (2003) found that teachers reported completing more content during the four-day school week than they did in the five-day school week.

In Louisiana, Merryville High School, officials found the change to the four-day school week resulted in academic improvements. Merryville's test scores improved while employing a four-day school week. ACT scores increased from an average of 18.7 to 20.0, student grades improved significantly, and the number of junior and high school students on the honor roll doubled. Teachers reported increased teaching time due to less time lost in transitions, more quality time to address individual student needs and to develop positive relationships in the classrooms (Chmelynski, 2003).

A third grade teacher, from Apache Junction School District utilized Fridays for lesson planning with her colleagues. She commented in a news article, "It really gives us an opportunity to close our week and think fresh about what is going to happen, and it's been helpful for us with the kids" (Olgin, 2015). Some teachers in a Minnesota school district reported that they were further along in their curriculum than they were a year ago under the standard five-day week. The district figures indicated that actual instruction time increased by 518 minutes (about 8 ½ hours) during the four-day school year compared to previous five-day school year (Bonham, 2014).

At the secondary level, the additional minutes in each period provides teachers with more time to engage in discussions, and students the opportunity to start and sometimes finish homework with a teacher nearby to help (Parker, 1998). Further, the productivity discovered in longer, concentrated class time has been found to improve test scores (Delisio, 2004). The president of a local teacher's union, who is a teacher at a high school in Minnesota, reported that student test scores met or exceeded the statewide average. This was

largely the result of longer days, in which teachers and students interacted more frequently. Teachers were also available on some Mondays at the high school to provide students extra help (Lopez, 2014).

In a Denver Post article (September, 2012) Weld County RE-1 school district teachers offered their opinions regarding the four-day schedule in relation to classroom instruction. A mathematics teacher at the district's South Valley Middle School, found more hours for lesson planning and more finely tuned his instructional time. A second grade teacher at Gilcrest Elementary School, had used the extra off day to visit other districts and learn new teaching strategies to support students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students from various cultural backgrounds, including English learners (Simpson, 2012).

The four-day school week has been found to lessen instructional interruptions due to extracurricular travel. For many rural school districts, where travel times for extracurricular activities can be long, the four-day school week reduces lost instruction time because athletic events can be scheduled on non-school days (Kenworthy, 2004).

Academic Achievement Advantage

Two rural school districts, Saratoga, Arkansas and Beauregard, Louisiana, chose to implement the four-day school week: not to save money, but because of perceived academic and social benefits. The superintendent of Beauregard Parish Schools reported that statistical information from the Louisiana Department of Education indicated the highest achievement scores for the district's third grade students were achieved in the 3 schools operating on a four-day schedule in the Beauregard Parish School District (Reeves, 1999).

A Colorado study (Daly & Richburg, 1984) gathered longitudinal student achievement data from schools utilizing the four-day school week. Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) grade

equivalent scores were obtained in 1984 from five rural Colorado school districts for four consecutive years—two years prior to, and two years following the district’s implementation of the shortened school week. Analysis of the ITBS scores revealed that the district’s change to a four-day school week had no significant effect on student academic achievement. Analysis of the same grade data level during the four-year period also provided no clear evidence that the change had any effect on student achievement.

Another study (Grau & Shaughnessy, 1987) investigated and analyzed third, fifth, and eighth grade scores on Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills for 16 small New Mexico school districts, including seven employing a four-day school week from 1982-1986. Based on a review of the available evidence, students who attended New Mexico schools with four-day school week schedules appeared to perform comparably in school districts with five-day school week schedules.

An Idaho study of suburban Shelley School District, investigated the impact of a four-day school week employed during the 1992-93 school year. When comparing four-day week performance to five-day week performance, student data for grades 4-6, 8 and 11, showed that student achievement increased at some grade levels and remained comparable in others (Sagness & Salzman, 1993).

The Custer School District in South Dakota began employing a four-day school week during the 1995-96 school year. Feaster (2002) examined student achievement data from Grades 2, 4, 8, and 11 on standardized achievement tests administered in Custer, South Dakota from 1994-2001. The findings revealed that district fourth and eighth grade students continued to exceed the state achievement average, performing as well after the district’s implementation of a four-day school week as it had when employing a five-day week schedule. Additionally,

achievement levels among all district students had not significantly changed from a five-day schedule to a four-day schedule (Feaster, 2002).

In 2006, Bonnersferry School District in Idaho, reported having achieved academic progress by meeting all 41 federal benchmarks tested by the No Child Left Behind Act following the change to a four-day school week (Geranios, 2006). Similar results were reported by Montana public schools, which revealed improved test scores and GPAs in several Montana school districts employing a four-day schedule (Juneau, 2011).

In another review of the four and five-day school week, Lefly and Penn (2009) compared 55 four-day school week districts in Colorado to five-day school week districts of similar size. Lefly and Penn (2009) analyzed and compared academic achievement and student growth data in the school districts to determine the impact of the four-day week on student academic performance in Colorado. Overall, the results indicated that both groups of districts performed similarly on the state assessments, and their students demonstrated similar academic growth as reflected by the Colorado Academic Growth Model.

In a more recent study (Anderson & Walker, 2015) the researchers analyzed school-level longitudinal data from the state of Colorado to investigate the relationship between the four-day school week and academic performance among elementary school students. The results of the Colorado Student Assessment Program were utilized to examine performance in reading, writing, and mathematics in grades 3-10. The data reflected the assessments of 37,325 students from sixty-two Colorado districts operating on four-day school week schedules. The results revealed that there were no statistically significant differences in overall student academic performance between students in school districts with a four-day school week and students in a five-day school week.

A comparative research study (Tharp, 2014) examined the relationship between student achievement scores on the Montana statewide standardized assessment (MontCAS), in schools employing four-day school week schedules and five-day school week schedules, over a period of seven years. The MontCAS is the standardized assessment in reading, mathematics, and science. The findings indicated that student achievement may increase during the first year of implementation of the four-day week schedule, but over time, student achievement decreases, compared to the remainder of the students in the state of Montana.

In contrast, a featured article in the Mora News (Faurie, 2015), cited the superintendent from a school district in Minnesota acknowledging that students' academic achievement trends for both reading and mathematics illustrated continued growth since the inception of the district's four-day school week structure. The school district achieved Adequate Yearly Progress for the 2013-14 school year, and its most recent Multiple Measurement Rating data demonstrated improvement (Faurie, 2015).

Channel 2 Action News Atlanta (July, 2015) featured a story about Chattooga High School in Chattooga County, Georgia, regarding the four-day school week and its impact on the school system. The story reported that students have more time for learning, and test scores have increased at Chattooga High School. "The school keeps academic data and students have shown improvement in six of the eight end of course tests as of this year," commented the principal.

Hewitt and Denny (2011) concluded in their study, that decisions to implement a four-day school week schedule should be for sound reasons, including cost savings or stakeholder preference, not based on student academic performance. Despite the cited sound reasons (or positive attributes) for a four-day week implementation, perceived negative attributes should be considered any time a school district is contemplating employing the change.

Financial Disadvantage

Dire state budget conditions throughout the United States have found school districts searching for vehicles to accomplish more and do better with less money. Although Americans named financial and funding issues as the greatest problem facing public schools in their communities, they are not focused on solving those problems with a four-day school week and longer days (Ray, 2003).

According to the 2003 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools released on August 20, 2003 in Washington D.C., 74% of 1,011 U.S. adults randomly surveyed opposed employing a four-day school week consisting of longer days to save money (Ray, 2003).

Classified employee union positions, like: secretaries, bus drivers, cooks, instructional aides, library aids and custodians' work hours were reduced as a result of a four-day week implementation. Typically, classified unions highlighted the negative attributes of the four-day week, in order to protect the employment status of their members (Kordosky, 2011). Reducing staff hours was always a difficult decision in rural communities, where jobs are often scarce (Richert, 2015). Bus drivers, cafeteria employees and custodians typically experienced the most negative effects in switching to a four-day school week. If they were not able to maintain their hours, they risked seeing their paychecks shrink by as much as 20% (Lake, 2015). Morrow County School District 1, located in Lexington, Oregon, saved an estimated \$250,000 in a \$14 million budget. Unfortunately, according to the principal, some of the savings came on the backs of employees, such as the cooks, bus drivers, and teacher aides (Chmelynski, 2003).

Some school districts experienced difficulties in changing to the four-day school week due to the need to negotiate with teachers' unions (Richard, 2002), or because teacher labor contracts often were based on days of employment rather than hours (Durr, 2003).

A 2008 Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) study concluded that potential savings appears to be a small percentage, approximately 2 percent, of the overall budget. Actual savings may be even lower because districts may choose to use the unscheduled days for additional assistance, particularly for at-risk students, enrichment activities, professional development or extracurricular activities (Darden, 2008). Substantial savings may not result if schools remain open on the fifth day for non-instructional activities (Ryan, 2009). Cautions were issued in a report from the New Mexico Public Education Department, where education officials found that cost savings in a four-day school week appeared minimal with no measurable impact on student outcomes (Williams, 2015).

According to Reinke (1987) once a decision was made to operate a four-day school week, the decision was difficult to reverse and the budget reductions may have proven difficult to restore.

Family Life Disadvantage

The four-day school week often imposes difficulties in finding day care for children whose parents work outside the home (Darden, 2008). For one Minnesota school district, it was estimated that a four-day school week would cost families an additional \$600.00 per year in childcare expenses (Long, 2016). An independent education researcher, agreed, "I would think it would wreak havoc with any working parent's schedule" (Toppo, 2002, p. 2). Even supporters of the four-day school week conceded that the schedule might pose problems in school districts with large numbers of working mothers who would have to decide how to accommodate their

children on the fifth day (Fiske, 1982). A news article in the Wall Street Journal (Shellenbarger, 2010), reported that changing to a four-day school week could create immense problems and new costs for working parents to find part-time child care one full day each week. This situation could force parents to leave their school-age children home alone.

Parents of older children also face a unique set of challenges. Leaving teenagers home alone and unsupervised for eight to ten hours on a work day could result in potential safety risks and bad habits (Nagrath, 2011).

A parent in Idaho believed the four-day school schedule disrupted family life. Her three children were tired all week, and devoted Fridays to hurrying to catch up on chores. In an interview with Idaho Education News, she reflected on her own family experience with the four-day school week and stated, “Fridays were not this relaxing luxury day that I thought they were going to be.” She lobbied the Preston school district in Idaho to return to a five-day school week schedule (Richert, 2015).

Some families who found the four-day school week unacceptable chose alternative options like private schools, or enrolled in nearby school districts employing a traditional five-day school week (Olgin, 2015). The Apache Junction Unified School District in Arizona reported the four-day schedule was unpopular with families and expected to lose several hundred students to other school systems. That was bad news for Apache Junction Unified, which funded on a per-student basis (Olgin, 2015).

Disadvantages to At-Risk Students

Macomb Public Schools, a school district of 300 students in Oklahoma, reverted to the traditional five-day school week due to implementation concerns with the four-day school week schedule. One concern noted by the superintendent was that the four-day school week prohibited

access to food for the 76 percent of students who qualified for free or reduced-rate school meals (Long, 2016). “There were kids I firmly believe were leaving school on Thursday and weren’t getting a good meal until Monday morning when we served breakfast again,” he told Tulsa World (Long, 2016). One concern raised by Minnesota state officials was that children would miss receiving lunch on the fifth day through schools’ subsidized meal programs (Broman, 2015). The superintendent of Boundary County, Idaho shared the same concern. He preferred a five-day school schedule because he believed Fridays off were harmful for at-risk students (Richert, 2015).

Several low-income school districts in Kentucky abandoned the four-day week after test scores lowered and concerns arose over students missing meals they would have received at school (Cummings, 2015). In Minnesota, the state education department ordered school districts to revert to five-day schedules if low-income students, specifically, failed to make academic progress (Cummings, 2015).

Some high school teachers who worked with handicapped or low-achieving students said that since repetition was central to their learning strategy, the four-day school week harmed academic achievement for at-risk students (Fiske, 1982). In a Four-Day School Week Report in Montana Public Schools (Juneau, 2011), data collected from 32 public school districts indicated a concern for high-risk students, students with disabilities, and young students, because the longer school days may not have been beneficial to them. In their report, Montana Public Schools referenced research that showed more instructional time was necessary, not less, for the at-risk student (Office of Public Instruction, 2011).

Student and Teacher Fatigue

Another problem identified with the four-day school week is the length of the school day for younger children. Numerous parents reported to Colorado researchers that seven to eight hour days, coupled with long bus rides, were too long for elementary aged students (Fiske, 1982). A former superintendent of a four-day school week schedule in a small rural mountain district in Colorado, claimed that longer days were burdensome for the youngest students and for children identified with special needs (Williams, 2015). Perhaps the greatest concern reported was that the longer school day required extended focus and attention which could be difficult for younger students (Dam, 2006; Gaines, 2008; Ryan, 2009).

Critics of the four-day school week noted that teachers could initially face difficulties adapting their lesson plans to the change of schedule (Chamberlain, Cierniak & Plucker, 2012). Results from a teacher survey administered at an Idaho school district indicated that 24% of teachers reported greater stress and fatigue due to the longer school days under the shortened four-day school week (Sagness & Salzman, 1993).

After operating a four-day school week schedule for six years, the Saratoga School District in Arkansas returned to a five-day school week schedule in 2002. The superintendent told *Education World* (Delisio, 2002), that the four-day week took a toll on students. “The children need more academic time; even though it’s a longer school day, the kids get tired in the afternoon and are not as productive,” he said. “We decided we could make better use of time over five days. In addition, most of the kids ride buses, so they were up early and out of school late.” The superintendent of the Lake Arthur District in Lake Arthur, New Mexico, stated she would also like to end the four-day schedule after almost 20 years. Her main concern was fatigue among her students and staff. The staff members were encouraged to schedule personal

appointments on Fridays when they were off, but many were still taking time off during the week (Delisio, 2002).

Some teachers interviewed reported the pressure of having to condense more teaching time into the end of the day, when children were tired and less attentive. They felt they had to be exceptionally creative to gain student attention due to student fatigue and shortened attention spans near the end of the day. Other schools tried to avoid end of the day burnout by front loading more demanding academics in the first part of the day and reserving classes such as art and physical education for the later afternoon (Nagrath, 2011). Survey results conducted in Hot Springs, South Dakota, indicated teacher fatigue with the longer days associated with the four-day school week (Chmelynski, 2003).

Instructional Disadvantage

The National Center on Time and Learning (NCTL), an organization dedicated to expanding learning time to improve student achievement and enable a well-rounded education, stated its belief that the four-day school week is a move in the wrong direction, especially if there is a reduction in total instructional hours (Long, 2016).

Some educators expressed concern that the four-day week appeared to be inconsistent with the new emphasis for more time in school. The president and co-founder of the National Center on Time and Learning, felt that the decision to employ a four-day school week was a move in the wrong direction during a time when school districts are trying to upgrade the education system in America (Simpson, 2012). Some educators expressed concern that certain students in need of more frequent reinforcement had trouble with continuity of learning with the three-day weekend (Dam, 2006). Others worried that it was difficult for students to retain subject matter when given an extra day off (Gaines, 2008).

The four-day school week operates on the premise that schools employ a greater number of hours on each instructional day than in a five-day school week. Typically, districts add an additional 40-60 minutes of instruction to each day of the four-day school week. Students who are absent for a school day will miss more instruction (Kordosky, 2011). Twenty percent more instructional time is lost when a student or teacher misses a day in a school district that operates with a four-day schedule (Gaines, 2008). A report issued from the Colorado Department of Education (2006), on the status of the 62 school districts employing the four-day school week in Colorado, referenced that 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 (Dam, 2006). Additional instruction time could be lost if Monday is a federal holiday and Friday is the scheduled off day which could then result in multiple three-day school weeks (Reinke, 1987).

Student Academic Results

Existing data on the effect of the four-day school week on student achievement have been inconclusive. Some school districts report student academic gains after changing to a four-day schedule, while others report only slight increases or no change at all (Chamberlain, Cierniak, & Plucker, 2012). Since many school districts employing the four-day school week are small districts, a lack of numbers can sway test scores that don't accurately reflect true student performance (Reeves, 1999).

Research conducted by Sunburst Schools Superintendent Timothy Tharp, in his doctoral dissertation at the University of Montana, examined the relationship between student achievement in the four-day school week and student achievement in the five-day school week in the state of Montana. The study provided conclusive evidence that students in the four-day

school week did not perform as well, over time, as students enrolled in the traditional five-day school week (Tharp, 2014). Tharp was featured in the Great Falls Tribune newspaper in which he reported that, in 2011, standardized test scores of four-day school week students were slightly below the state average. The test scores continued to show a decrease in 2012 and, again, in 2013 (Richert, 2015).

A comparative study of South Dakota Schools examined four-day week school's standardized test results and compared them to the test scores prior to the change to a four-day school week schedule—as well as a comparison to similar schools on a five-day school week (Hedtke, 2014). When comparing the seven individual four-day week schools to their seven individual five-day counterparts, the results varied and yielded somewhat mixed results for 3-5, 6-8, and 11 grade mathematics and reading, while favoring five-day week schools (Hedtke, 2014). Furthermore, the study showed that four-day week schools experienced a decrease in the number of students scoring in the advanced category of the Dakota STEP standardized test when compared to themselves and students in five-day week schools (Hedtke, 2014).

The Minnesota Department of Education rejected one school district's application to continue its four-day schedule for another three-year period. The four-day schedule saved the school district money and was popular with families and teachers, but the Minnesota Education Department determined state test scores had not improved enough while employing the four-day schedule. The Interim Superintendent declined to discuss the state's decision. The school district returned to a five-day school week in the Fall of 2014 (Bonham, 2014).

No academic gains were found by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) in a study released in August 2008 entitled, *Focus on the School Calendar: The Four-Day School*

Week. According to the report, there was a lack of evidence that the four-day school week helped or hurt student achievement. Anecdotal information seemed to point merely to a lack of harm (Gaines, 2008). Donnis-Keller and Silvernail (2009) at the University of Southern Maine reported that the broadest conclusion that may be drawn from the limited research on the impact of the four-day school week on student achievement is that it has no negative impact.

Challenges to Implementation

The change to a four-day school week schedule was rarely a swift transition and required school districts to research the practice, examine existing models, and weigh advantages and disadvantages (Donis-Keller & Silvernail, 2009). Reinke (1987) pointed out that success or failure of a four-day school week depended on the involvement of all concerned. Joseph Newlin, Executive Director of the National Rural Education Association at Colorado State University, agreed with this approach stating, “for this to really work, the whole community, especially parents, need to support it” (Parker, 1998, p. 2).

In his book entitled, *The Four-Day School Week Less Is More*, Dr. Donald Kordosky, urged interested districts to: review research, look at case studies or examples, develop an investigatory team that includes all stakeholders, have multiple sessions for each stakeholder group to meet and question, identify the positive and negative attributes, develop a calendar, enter into negotiations with the teacher and classified staff when necessary and achieve formal school board support (Kordosky, 2011).

An in-depth case study (Hale, 2007) of the implementation process of a four-day school week in five South Dakota PreK-12 public schools, concluded that school districts that devote more time in the planning stages, engaging stakeholders in decisions and gathering support from

community agencies will have better success in solving problems and implementing a successful four-day schedule. The same study recommended school districts considering a four-day school week should make a commitment of five years to employ the four-day school week. It takes time to adjust curriculum, develop programming and offer teachers staff development opportunities to make the scheduling format successful and derive reliable data (Hale, 2007).

Sagness & Salzmann (1993) attributed the abandonment of the four-day school week after one year of implementation in Shelley School District, located in Idaho, to the district's lack of following key elements of systematic change, including: vision, public and political support, cooperative networks, attention to teachers and learning, clearly defined administrative roles and responsibilities, and policy alignment.

Some school districts wanting to employ a four-day school week may find themselves at odds with state legislators. In the state of Minnesota, Governor Mark Dayton had an opposing vision for the state's schools. The Governor expressed that he wanted legislation to consider raising the number of school days required by state law (Lopez, 2014). In his inaugural speech, Dayton said he opposed the four-day approach because he thought it shortchanged students (Broman, 2015).

The change from a five-day school week schedule to a four-day school week competes with conversations in national education circles that are focused on more learning time, adding weekend study sessions, and shortening summer vacation to better compete with countries employing year round schools (Layton, 2011).

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The contents of Chapter 3 include the study's purpose, research questions, participants, human subject approval, instruments of data collection and analysis, research design, procedures and timeline, and a summary of the methodology.

In recent years, throughout the United States, lean economic conditions have led to state and local agency budget cuts, including reductions to elementary and secondary education (Dixon, 2011). School board members and district administrators have been charged with the responsibility of looking for, finding, and implementing innovative and creative ways to improve the efficiency of their school districts. During the past three decades, a number of schools and districts, particularly those in rural areas, have transitioned to a four-day school week (Beesley & Anderson, 2007).

In 2007-08, a school district in rural Minnesota became the state's leader in its implementation of the four-day school week schedule. Nine years later, in 2016-17, the same school district continued to employ the four-day schedule, while additional districts in Minnesota had explored or implemented the modified schedule (Plucker, Cieriniak, & Chamberlin, 2012). At the time of this study, Minnesota had seven public school districts employing the four-day school week in rural areas throughout the state (MDE, 2016).

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine two rural Minnesota school districts that were employing a four-day school week during the 2016-17 school year: to ascertain support among school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents for the four-day schedule. Further,

the study intended to gather perceptions from these stakeholder groups regarding advantages of, disadvantages of, and changes (if any) in their school districts' four-day school week.

As the literature review revealed, there has been minimal research conducted of the four-day school week in the United States, and no studies were located by the researcher on the topic in Minnesota.

Research Questions

The four questions explored in the study were as follows:

1. How supportive were school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents of select school districts' four-day school week?
2. What did school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents perceive as advantages of their school districts' four-day school week?
3. What did school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents perceive as disadvantages of their school districts' four-day school week?
4. What changes, if any, would the school board, administrators, teachers, and parents identify that would increase their support of the school districts' four-day school week?

Participants

The researcher conducted the study of two select rural school districts in Minnesota, which employed four-day school week schedules during the 2016-17 school year. The study population of Minnesota school districts employing the four-day school week schedule was seven at the time of the study. Since the school districts which agreed to participate in the study represented 28.6% of the Minnesota school districts operating this modified four-day school

week schedule, the researcher concluded the data gathered and conclusions drawn would not be generalizable to all Minnesota school districts employing four-day school week schedules.

The study secured participation of school board, school administrator, teacher, and parent stakeholders from the two participating Minnesota school districts. Total study participants surveyed included: 22 school board/administrators, 105 teachers and 340 parents.

Human Subject Approval – Institutional Review Board

The researcher's training on the conduct of a study involving human subjects was completed on February 4, 2017.

Following approval of the preliminary study design by the researcher's doctoral committee on March 17, 2017, the study design was submitted to the Instructional Review Board (IRB) for review on March 27, 2017. Final approval was secured from the IRB on March 31, 2017. Data collection measures, analysis and instruments included proper controls to ensure confidentiality for all participants and establish that no damage would occur to the school districts or participants associated with those school districts. The approval document from the IRB is included as Appendix A.

Instruments for Data Collection and Analysis

Two data collection tools were used in the study to gather information on respondents' perceptions of the four-day school week schedule. Respondents in the study included school board members, administrators, teachers and parents from two Minnesota school districts which employed four-week school week schedules.

The first data collection instrument in the study was a ten question, online survey which contained nine forced-choice questions and one open-ended question (Fink, 2009). Two survey instrument questions focused on gathering demographic information about study participants.

The remaining survey questions were sub-divided into four categories including: financial, student/family, teacher/staff, and instructional/academic impact, including respondents' ratings of perceived advantages and disadvantages of the four-day school week schedule.

The study participants' required time for completing the online data collection instrument was 10-12 minutes. Results were obtained from the internet-based SurveyMonkey program and compiled by the Center for Statistics at St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, MN.

The second data collection instrument focused on one-on-one interview opportunities provided to seven study respondents who volunteered to expand upon survey questions with the researcher by telephone. The follow-up interview was comprised of five questions (3,4,5,6,10) extracted from the initial SurveyMonkey instrument. The follow-up interview sought further specifics about support of, perceived advantages of, disadvantages of, and changes (if any) to the four-day school week schedule that would increase respondents' support of the school districts' four-day school week.

Validity and reliability of the data collection instruments were established through an initial review of those instruments by a panel of experts, comprised of two St. Cloud State University professors of educational administration, and examination by and feedback from members of St. Cloud State University doctoral cohort.

The Center for Statistics at St. Cloud State University prepared the survey and provided the informed consent agreement and electronic survey link for distribution to participants by email.

Using two instruments in the research study was purposefully undertaken to enhance instrument validity through triangulation. Slavin (2007) defined triangulation as "...supporting conclusions using evidence from different sources" (p. 133).

In summary, the researcher intended to achieve instrument validation through review by an expert panel, review by a doctoral cohort, and committee member analysis and feedback, assisting the researcher in understanding the feedback provided by respondents.

Research Design

The research methodology employed in the study was a mixed method design, employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. According to Roberts (2010), “qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study complement each other by providing results with greater breadth and depth. Combining what with possible why adds power and richness to your explanation of the data” (p. 145).

The researcher gathered quantitative data from four stakeholder groups, including: school board members, administrators, teachers and parents from school districts which had implemented four-day school week schedules. The respondents were surveyed through administration of online-based research tool, SurveyMonkey (Appendix C). As stated by Haq (2014), “quantitative social research is about collecting numerical data and analyzing it using statistical methods to explain a phenomenon” (p. 5). Surveys were the primary data collection instrumentation in the study, with the intention of gathering as much information from the stakeholders about their perceptions of the four-day school week schedule as possible (Fink, 2009).

Further, the researcher gathered qualitative data from a small subset of the sample group to provide depth of understanding about the quantitative responses of sample group members. This approach was consistent with Slavin’s (2007) observation that “qualitative research seeks primarily to describe a situation,” yielding a “thick description of social settings...” (p. 8).

Procedures and Timeline

Following approval of the researcher's study and instrumentation by the St. Cloud State University Institutional Review Board, the study's data collection process was initiated in mid-April and concluded in late-May of 2017.

With the assistance from the superintendents of the two participating school districts, the school districts secured email addresses of potential respondent stakeholders, including school board members, administrators, teachers and parents. Each school district electronically mailed potential respondents a brief description of the study's purpose and an invitation for participation in the study (Appendix B). Following respondents' agreement to participate, the school district's superintendent distributed the SurveyMonkey instrument provided by the researcher, and requested respondents to complete their surveys.

Upon completion of the survey, respondents were asked to specify if they were willing to participate in a personal, one-on-one interview with the researcher, and, if so, to indicate potential dates and times of their availability along with their email addresses and contact telephone numbers. The follow-up interviews were classified as structured interviews. Slavin (2007) defined structured interviews as "a structured series of questions given by an interviewer to which the respondent makes verbal responses" (p. 388). Confirmation emails were distributed to the selected interviewees prior to their scheduled interviews. The interviews were conducted by telephone mid to late May. The researcher sought and received from interviewees permission to audiotape all interviews.

After each one-on-one interview, the participants received a non-coded transcript of the interview to ensure accuracy. Participants were asked if there were additional remarks that should or could be added to the transcript. Follow-up communication occurred as was necessary.

Summary

The methodology employed in the study was a mixed method approach, using both qualitative and quantitative measures. Two qualitative data collection tools were used in the study to gather information on respondents' perceptions of the four-day school week schedule. Respondents in the study included school board members, administrators, teachers and parents from two Minnesota school districts which employed four-week school week schedules.

The first data collection instrument in the study was a ten question, online survey which contained nine forced-choice questions and one open-ended question (Fink, 2009). The second data collection instrument focused on one-on-one interview opportunities provided to seven study respondents who volunteered to expand upon survey questions with the researcher by telephone. Total study participants surveyed included: 22 school board/administrators, 105 teachers and 340 parents.

In addition to a description of the study methodology, participants, and instrumentation, Chapter 3 provided a description of the human subject approval, research design, data collection and analysis, along with procedures and timeline. Results of the study are described in Chapter 4, and organized by research questions. Additionally, data collected from the structured interviews with select respondents was incorporated to enrich survey results.

Chapter 4: RESULTS

Introduction

With declining state budgets and the possibility of significant reductions in overhead and transportation, the four-day school week has been an increasingly attractive option for legislators seeking to cut education costs, particularly in rural areas.

A literature review completed by the researcher found that supporters of the shortened school week claimed: improved morale, increased attendance, an open day for doctor appointments, and more time to spend with loved ones. Opponents of the four-day school week cited: problems with long, exhausting class days, and difficulty finding day care for children whose parents work outside the home. Some educational experts worried that longer weekends could lead to regression in learned concepts.

Much of the information about the four-day school week was found to be conflicting and difficult to verify. Even though the four-day school week has existed for more than three decades, reliable research on the academic and financial benefits was severely limited.

Study Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine two rural Minnesota school districts that were employing a four-day school week during the 2016-17 school year: to ascertain support among school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents for the four-day schedule. Further, the study intended to gather perceptions from these stakeholder groups regarding advantages of, disadvantages of, and changes (if any) in their school districts' four-day school week.

Four research questions were developed to guide the four-day school week study. These four questions were as follows:

1. How supportive of the four-day school week were school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents in select school districts?
2. What did school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents perceive as advantages of their school districts' four-day school week?
3. What did school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents perceive as disadvantages of their school districts' four-day school week?
4. What changes, if any, would the school board, administrators, teachers, and parents identify that would increase their support of the school districts' four-day school week?

Results provided in the chapter are organized by each research question, for each school district (referred to as District A and B). The mixed methods study consisted of a survey and telephone interviews of selected respondents who volunteered to provide further insights to the researcher of the four-day school week. Data displayed within tables include numbers and percentages related to how much the respondents' agreed or disagreed with the survey statements, regarding the four-day school week.

Analysis of the data was conducted at the Saint Cloud State Office of Statistical Analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). The data for each participating school district were analyzed and reported independently for School District A and School District B.

In School District A, 300 respondents indicated that they had read the information about the study survey and agreed to complete the four-day school week instrument for their school district. School District A respondents included 12 school board/administrators, 59 teachers, and 229 parents.

School District A respondents had a range of years of experience with the four-day school week. A total of 82 or 28% of the respondents had experienced the four-day school week less than 3.5 years. Respondents who identified themselves as experiencing the four-day school week between 3.6-5.5 total years numbered 75 or 25.6% of the respondents. The remainder of the respondents totaling 136 or 46.4% have experienced the four-day school week schedule 5.6 years or longer.

In School District B, 167 respondents indicated that they had read the information about the study survey and agreed to complete the four-day school week instrument for their school district. School District B respondents included 10 school board/administrators, 46 teachers, and 111 parents.

School District B respondents reported a range of years of experience involved with a four-day school week. Respondents who experienced the four-day school week less than 3.5 years, numbered 41 or 25.0% of all respondents. Respondents who identified themselves as experiencing the four-day school week between 3.6-5.5 total years numbered 33 or 19.6% of the respondents. Respondents who experienced the four-day school week schedule 5.6 years or longer totaled 93 or 55.4%.

Findings: Research Question One

How supportive of the four-day school week were school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents of select school districts?

The first question of the study sought to determine the level of respondent support for School District A and School District B's four-day school week. Respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: "I am supportive of the

school district’s four-day school week.” And, “I am supportive of continuing to operate the school district’s four-day school week.”

Table 1 reports School District A respondents’ level of agreement with the survey statement, “I am supportive of the school district’s four-day school week.” Two hundred eighty-four respondents or 94.6% in School District A, strongly agreed or agreed that they were supportive of the school district’s four-day school week and supportive of continuing operation of the school district’s schedule.

Table 2 reports School District A respondents’ level of agreement with the survey statement, “I am supportive of continuing to operate the school district’s four-day school week.” Sixteen respondents or 5.4% did not support the current four-day school week (Table 1) and did not support continuing to operate the school district’s four-day school week (Table 2).

Table 1

Overall Level of Support for the Four-Day School Week – District A

School District A	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	244	81.3%
Agree	40	13.3%
Disagree	10	3.3%
Strongly Disagree	6	2.1%
Total	300	100.0%

Note. Responses to “I am supportive of the school district’s four-day school week.”

Table 2

Overall Level of Support for Continuing to Operate the Four-Day School Week – District A

School District A	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	245	81.7%
Agree	39	13.1%
Disagree	8	2.6%
Strongly Disagree	8	2.6%
Total	300	100%

Note. Responses to “I am supportive of continuing to operate the school district’s four-day school week.”

Tables 3 reports level of agreement with the survey statement, “I am supportive of the school district’s four-day school week” and Table 4 reports level of agreement with the survey statement “I am supportive of continuing to operate the school district’s four-day school week.” Table 3 and Table 4 report that 101 School District B respondents or 60.5% expressed current support, along with 101 respondents or 60.5% reported strong agreement or agreement for continuing the operation of the school district’s four-day school week. Respondents who did not support the current four-day week totaled 66 or 39.5%. Likewise, 66 respondents or 39.5% did not support continuing to operate the school district’s four-day school week.

Table 3

Overall Level of Support for the Four-Day School Week –District B

School District B	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	77	46.0%
Agree	24	14.4%
Disagree	28	16.8%
Strongly Disagree	38	22.8%
Total	167	100.0%

Note. Responses to “I am supportive of the school district’s four-day school week.”

Table 4

Overall Level of Support for Continuing to Operate the Four-Day School Week – District B

School District B	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	76	45.5%
Agree	25	15.0%
Disagree	26	15.5%
Strongly Disagree	40	24.0%
Total	167	100%

Note. Responses to “I am supportive of continuing to operate the school district’s four-day school week.”

Table 5 data for School District A reveal that the level of support for the four-day school week among the school board/administrators and teachers was 100.0%. Of the 229 parents who responded, 213 or 93.0%, either strongly agreed or agreed that they supported the current four-day school week.

Likewise, Table 6 data affirmed that 213 parents or 93.0%, and 100.0% of responding school board/administrators and teachers, were supportive of continuing the operation of the school district’s four-day school week.

Table 5

Level of Support by Group for the Four-Day School Week – District A

School District A	SB/AD	Teacher	Parent
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency
Strongly Agree	10	56	178
Agree	2	3	35
Disagree	0	0	10
Strongly Disagree	0	0	6
Total	12	59	229

Note. Responses to “I am supportive of the school district’s four-day school week.”

Table 6

Level of Support by Group to Continue to Operate the Four-Day Week –District A

School District A	SB/AD	Teacher	Parent
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency
Strongly Agree	10	57	178
Agree	2	2	35
Disagree	0	0	8
Strongly Disagree	0	0	8
Total	12	59	229

Note. Responses to “I am supportive of continuing to operate the school district’s four-day school week”

Table 7 reported that in School District B, 33 or 71.7% of the teacher group rated themselves as non-supporters of the four-day school week. Within the school board/administrator group, 9 of 10 or 90.0% of respondents supported the four-day school week, while 79 parents or 71.1% were also supporters of the district’s four-day school week.

Table 7

Level of Support by Group for the Four-Day School Week – District B

School District B	SB/AD	Teacher	Parent
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency
Strongly Agree	5	5	67
Agree	4	8	12
Disagree	1	13	14
Strongly Disagree	0	20	18
Total	10	46	111

Note. Responses to “I am supportive of the school district’s four-day school week.”

According to Table 8, the school board/administrator had 10 of 10 respondents or 100.0% express support for continuing to operate the school district’s four-day school week, while only 13 of 46 teachers or 28.3% supported continuation of the current four-day school week. Parents (88 of 111) or 79.3% strongly agreed or agreed to continuing operation of the four-day school week.

Table 8

Level of Support by Group to Continue to Operate the Four-Day Week – District B

School District B	SB/AD	Teacher	Parent
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency
Strongly Agree	5	5	66
Agree	5	8	12
Disagree	0	12	14
Strongly Disagree	0	21	19
Total	10	46	111

Note. Responses to “I am supportive of continuing to operate the school district’s four-day school week”

Findings: Research Question Two

What did school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents perceive as advantages of their school districts’ four-day school week?

The second question of the survey sought to determine the advantages of School District A and School District B respondents’ perceptions of their school districts’ four-day school week. Respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “I believe there are definite advantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.”

Table 9 indicates that 284 of 300 or 94.7% of the respondents in School District A strongly agreed or agreed that there were definite advantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week. The total number of respondents who strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement was 16 of 300 or 5.3%.

Table 9

Overall Perception of Advantage of the Four-Day Week – District A

School District A	Frequency	Percent
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	226	75.4
Agree	58	19.3
Disagree	10	3.3
Strongly Disagree	6	2.0
Total:	300	100.0

Note. Responses to “I believe there are definite advantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.”

Table 10 reports that of the 167 respondents in School District B, 107 respondents or 64.0% strongly agreed or agreed that there are definite advantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week. The total number of respondents who strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement was 60 of 167 or 36.0%.

Table 10

Overall Perception of Advantage of the Four-Day Week – District B

School District B	Frequency	Percent
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	68	40.7
Agree	39	23.4
Disagree	26	15.6
Strongly Disagree	34	20.3
Total:	167	100.0

Note. Responses to “I believe there are definite advantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.”

An analysis was conducted of each respondent group to determine the level of belief that there were definite advantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.

Table 11 shows that 71 of 71 or 100.0% of school board/administrator and teacher respondents in School District A strongly agreed or agreed that there are definite advantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week. In the parent group, 213 of 229 respondents or 93.0% strongly agreed or agreed that there were definite advantages of employing a four-day school week.

Table 11

Comparison of Belief Levels in Four-Day Week Advantages by Group – District A

School District A	SB/AD	Teacher	Parent
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency
Strongly Agree	8	52	166
Agree	4	7	47
Disagree	0	0	10
Strongly Disagree	0	0	6
Total	12	59	229

Note. Response to “I believe there are definite advantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.”

Table 12 shows a comparison of respondent groups in School District B. Findings indicated that 8 of 10 or 80.0% of the school board/administrators strongly agreed or agreed that there were definite advantages of employing a four-day school week compared to the five-day

school week. In the teacher group, 16 of 46 respondents or 34.8% strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while the remaining 30 teachers or 65.2% strongly disagreed or disagreed. The majority of the parents, 83 of 111 or 74.8%, strongly agreed or agreed that the four-day school week had definite advantages compared to the five-day school week.

Table 12

Comparison of Belief Levels in Four-Day Week Advantages by Group – District B

School District B	SB/AD	Teacher	Parent
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency
Strongly Agree	3	6	59
Agree	5	10	24
Disagree	2	11	13
Strongly Disagree	0	19	15
Total	10	46	111

Note. Response to “I believe there are definite advantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.”

To further investigate perceived views regarding the advantages of the four-day school week, respondents in School District A and School District B were asked to express their opinions on how much they agreed or disagreed with the following advantage statements:

- a. Improves student behavior
- b. Improves student academic achievement
- c. Improves staff morale
- d. Reduces teacher stress
- e. Improves student morale

- f. Saves the school district money
- g. Allows family more quality time together
- h. Provides more time for teacher lesson planning
- i. Provides more time for professional development
- j. Increases student attendance
- k. Increases staff attendance
- l. Helps retain teachers in rural areas
- m. Allows scheduling person appointments on Mondays (when school is not in session).

Table 13 displays that greater than 90% of 300 respondents in School District A rated ten advantage statements as either strongly agreed or agreed. The top ten statements identified as advantages of the four-day school week were as follows: allows scheduling personal appointments (97.0%); provides more time for professional development (94.7%); saves the school district money (94.3%); improves staff morale (94.0%); improves student morale (93.0%); increases student attendance (92.3%); provides more time for teacher/lesson planning (92.4%); helps retain teachers in rural areas (91.6%); increases staff attendance (90.6%) and reduces teacher stress (90.4%). The remaining advantage statements were positively rated as follows: allows families more quality time together (88.7%); improves student academic achievement (88.0%); and improves student behavior (85.6%).

Table 13

Overall Level of Agreement with Advantage Statements (w/ percentages) – District A

School District A	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Improves student behavior	91 (30.3%)	166 (55.3%)	35 (11.7%)	8 (2.7%)	300
Improves student academic achievement	119 (39.7%)	145 (48.3%)	30 (10.0%)	6 (2.0%)	300
Improves staff morale	143 (47.7%)	139 (46.3%)	12 (4.0%)	6 (2.0%)	300
Reduces teachers stress	131 (43.7%)	140 (46.7%)	22 (7.3%)	7 (2.3%)	300
Improves student morale	133 (44.3%)	146 (48.7%)	17 (5.7%)	4 (1.3%)	300
Saves the school district money	168 (56.0%)	115 (38.3%)	12 (4.0%)	5 (1.7%)	300
Allows families more quality time together	188 (62.7%)	78 (26.0%)	25 (8.3%)	9 (3.0%)	300
Provides more time for teacher/lesson planning	152 (50.7%)	125 (41.7%)	19 (6.3%)	4 (1.3%)	300
Provides more time for professional development	162 (54.0%)	122 (40.7%)	14 (4.7%)	2 (.6%)	300
Increases student attendance	151 (50.3%)	126 (42.0%)	18 (6.0%)	5 (1.7%)	300
Increases staff attendance	133 (44.3%)	139 (46.3%)	25 (8.3%)	3 (1.0%)	300
Helps retain teacher in rural areas	127 (42.3%)	148 (49.3%)	21 (7.0%)	4 (1.3%)	300
Allows scheduling personal appointments on Mondays (when school is not in session)	228 (76.0%)	63 (21.0%)	5 (1.7%)	4 (1.3%)	300

Note. Responses to “Please give your opinion on how much you agree or disagree with the following as advantages of a four-day school week”

Table 14 reveals that School District B’s 168 total respondents rated the 13 advantage statements on the basis of how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements. The highest

rated advantage statement for the four-day week was: Allows scheduling personal appointments on Mondays (when school is not in session); this statement had 150 of 168 respondents or 89.3% strongly agree or agree. The two other advantage statements receiving the greatest support were: Provides more time for professional development (72.1%) and Saves the school district money (71.4%). The remaining advantage statements received strongly agreed and agreed total ratings that ranged between the 50th and 60th percentiles. The three lowest rated as advantages of the four-day school week among School District B respondents were the following: reduces teacher stress (51.2%); improves student academic achievement (51.2%); and improves student behavior (50.6%).

Table 14

Overall Level of Agreement with Advantage Statements (w/ percentages) – District B

School District B	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Improves student behavior	27 16.1%	58 34.5%	52 31.0%	31 18.5%	168
Improves student academic achievement	29 17.3%	57 33.9%	48 28.6%	34 20.2%	168
Improves staff morale	30 17.9%	73 43.5%	39 23.2%	26 15.5%	168
Reduces teachers stress	30 17.9%	56 33.3	52 31.0%	30 17.9%	168
Improves student morale	51 30.4%	51 30.4%	41 24.4%	25 14.9%	168
Saves the school district money	62 36.9%	58 34.5%	34 20.2%	14 8.3%	168
Allows families more quality time together	71 42.3%	27 16.1%	42 25%	28 16.7%	168
Provides more time for teacher/ lesson planning	46 27.4%	55 32.7%	46 27.4%	21 12.5%	168
Provides more time for professional development	50 29.8%	71 42.3%	35 20.8%	12 7.1%	168
Increases student attendance	59 35.1%	48 28.6%	43 25.6%	18 10.7%	168
Increases staff attendance	46 27.4%	56 33.3%	48 28.6%	18 10.7%	168
Helps retain teacher in rural areas	41 24.4%	52 31.0%	44 26.2%	31 18.5%	168
Allows scheduling personal appointments on Mondays (when school is not in session)	91 54.2%	59 35.1%	14 8.3%	4 2.4%	168

Note. Responses to “Please give your opinion on how much you agree or disagree with the following as advantages of a four-day school week”

Table 15 displays that, 71 of 71, or 100.0% of respondents who identified themselves as either school board members, administrators or teachers in School District A strongly agreed or

agreed that the four-day school week provided more time for professional development and allowed scheduling personal appointments on Mondays when school was not in session. Among School District A teachers, 59 of 59 or 100% strongly agreed or agreed the four-day school week allowed families more quality time together, improved staff morale, and improved student morale. Parents in School District A rated all 13 advantage statements favorably with 85.5% or greater strongly agreeing or agreeing with each of the listed advantages. The lowest rated advantage was reported by the school board/administrator group, which revealed that 7 of 12 strongly agreed or agreed that the four-day school week improved student behavior, while 59 teacher respondents or 91.5% rated improved student behavior as an advantage and 196 parent respondents or 85.5% strongly agreed or agreed that the four-day school week improved student behavior.

Table 15

Level of Agreement with Advantage Statements by Group (w/ percentages) – District A

School District A	School Board/Admin. Total = 12	Teachers Total = 59	Parents Total = 229
	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
Improves student behavior	2 5 5 0 (58.3) (41.7)	18 36 4 1 (91.5) (8.5)	71 125 26 7 (85.5) (14.5)
Improve student academic achievement	3 8 1 0 (91.7) (8.3)	15 42 2 0 (96.6) (3.4)	101 95 27 6 (85.5) (14.5)
Improves staff morale	4 7 1 0 (91.7) (8.3)	44 15 0 0 (100.0)	95 117 11 6 (92.6) (7.4)
Reduces teachers stress	4 7 1 0 (91.7) (8.3)	37 20 2 0 (96.6) (3.4)	90 113 19 7 (88.6) (11.4)
Improves student morale	4 7 1 0 (91.7) (8.3)	26 33 0 0 (100.0)	103 106 16 4 (91.3) (8.7)
Saves the school district money	6 5 1 0 (91.7) (8.3)	46 12 1 0 (98.3) (1.7)	116 98 10 5 (93.4) (6.6)
Allows families more quality time together	6 5 1 0 (91.7) (8.3)	42 17 0 0 (100.0)	140 56 24 9 (85.6) (14.4)
Provides more time for teacher/lesson planning	6 5 1 0 (91.7) (8.3)	41 14 4 0 (93.2) (6.8)	105 106 14 4 (92.1) (7.9)
Provides more time for professional development	9 3 0 0 (100.0)	46 13 0 0 (100.0)	107 106 14 2 (93.0) (7.0)
Increases student attendance	5 7 0 0 (100.0)	27 29 3 0 (95.0) (5.0)	119 90 15 5 (91.3) (8.7)
Increases staff attendance	2 8 2 0 (83.3) (16.7)	32 23 4 0 (93.2) (6.8)	99 108 19 3 (90.4) (9.6)
Helps retain teacher in rural areas	3 8 1 0 (91.7) (8.3)	33 23 3 0 (95%) (5.0)	91 117 17 4 (90.8) (9.2)
Allows scheduling personal appointments on Mondays (when school is not in session)	10 2 0 0 (100.0)	48 11 0 0 (100.0)	170 50 5 4 (96.1) (3.9)

Note. Responses to “Please give your opinion on how much you agree or disagree with the following as advantages of a four-day school week”

Table 16 indicates that the school board/administrator and parent groups more positively supported the four-day school week than the teacher group in School District B. The parent group recorded between 65% and 91% of its 111 respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with each of the 13 advantage statements. All three respondent groups strongly agreed or agreed that the four-day school week allowed scheduling personal appointments on Mondays when school is not in session as an advantage at high levels: 10 of 10 (100.0%) school board/administrators; 38 of 46 (82.6%) teachers; and 101 of 111 (91%) parents.

School board/administrators (90.0%) and parents (76.6%) identified that the four-day school week provides more time for professional development. Over half of all respondents in each group strongly agreed or agreed that the four-day school week saved the district money: 10 of 10 (100.0%) school board/administrators; 26 of 46 (56.5%) teachers; and 84 of 111 parents (75.7%). Between 70% and 80% of both school board/administrators and parent group strongly agreed or agreed that student and staff attendance increased with the four-day school week schedule. The teacher group in School District B identified higher percentages of strongly disagree and disagree than the school board/administrators and parent groups. Teacher respondents had 40 of 46 or 87.0% who strongly disagreed or disagreed that the four-day school week reduces teacher stress. A majority of the teacher respondents, 42 of 46 or 91.3%, strongly disagreed or disagreed that the four-day school week improved student academic achievement. Likewise, 38 of 46 or 82.6% of the teacher respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed that the four-day school week improved student behavior.

Table 16

Level of Agreement with Advantage Statements by Group (w/ percentages) – District B

School District B	School Board/Admin. Total = 10	Teachers Total = 46	Parents Total = 111
	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
Improves student behavior	1 3 4 2 (40.0) (60.0)	0 8 22 16 (17.4) (82.6)	26 47 26 12 (65.8) (34.2)
Improve student academic achievement	1 6 2 1 (70.0) (30.0)	0 4 24 18 (8.7) (91.3)	28 47 22 14 (67.6) (32.4)
Improves staff morale	2 4 4 0 (60.0) (40.0)	1 9 19 17 (22.0) (78.0)	27 60 15 9 (78.4) (21.6)
Reduces teachers stress	1 4 5 0 (50.0) (50.0)	1 5 19 21 (13.0) (87.0)	28 47 28 8 (67.6) (32.4)
Improves student morale	4 3 2 1 (70.0) (30.0)	1 14 17 14 (32.6) (67.4)	46 34 21 10 (72.0) (28.0)
Saves the school district money	5 5 0 0 (100.0)	5 21 14 6 (56.5) (43.5)	52 32 20 7 (75.7) (24.3)
Allows families more quality time together	4 4 1 1 (80.0) (20.0)	8 7 22 9 (32.6) (67.4)	59 16 18 18 (67.6) (32.4)
Provides more time for teacher/lesson planning	3 4 2 1 (70.0) (30.0)	3 7 20 16 (21.7) (77.3)	40 43 24 4 (75.0) (25.0)
Provides more time for professional development	6 3 0 1 (90.0) (10.0)	7 19 14 6 (56.5) (43.5)	37 48 21 5 (76.6) (23.4)
Increases student attendance	5 3 1 1 (80.0) (20.0)	5 13 19 9 (39.1) (60.9)	49 32 22 8 (73.0) (27.0)
Increases staff attendance	2 6 1 1 (80.0) (20.0)	5 11 18 12 (34.8) (65.2)	39 39 28 5 (70.3) (29.7)
Helps retain teacher in rural areas	2 4 3 1 (60.0) (40.0)	1 10 16 19 (24.0) (76.0)	38 38 24 11 (68.5) (31.5)
Allows scheduling personal appointments on Mondays (when school is not in session)	7 3 0 0 (100.0)	17 21 6 2 (82.6) (17.4)	67 34 8 2 (91.0) (9.0)

Note. Responses to “Please give your opinion on how much you agree or disagree with the following as advantages of a four-day school week”

The researcher conducted telephone interviews with seven randomly selected volunteer respondents from School District A and B to secure their perceptions on advantages of the four-day school week.

Table 17 contains the comments from the seven interviewees regarding their perceptions on advantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week. Interviewees answered the question: “What do you perceive as definite advantages of the four-day school week compared to a five-day school week?” The four main topics identified as advantages from the interviews included: opportunity for professional development on Mondays, cost savings to the school district, additional family time, and improved attendance.

Table 17

Interview Comments Regarding Advantages of the Four-Day School Week

Telephone Interview	Comments
Interviewee 1	The availability of Mondays for professional development for teachers and to use Mondays as snow make up days, so we don't have to extend the school year. We save money in busing, we save money by reducing electrical costs and stuff like that.
Interviewee 2	Possibly improved attendance for appointments to be completed on Mondays. I would say that's mostly for staff.
Interviewee 3	Providing opportunities on our Mondays to do things like professional development. Things like Targeted Services Programs on Mondays for extra math and reading instruction for our students in need. It was initially done as partly a cost-saving measure.
Interviewee 4:	I personally do not have any.
Interviewee 5:	More family time on the weekends. I think we are able to participate in a lot more activities, whether they're school related on Mondays or extra-curricular that go on Mondays, or just the family time at home together or homework.
Interviewee 6:	The continuing education and training for teachers, staff training and stuff like that takes place on that day when there's not kids. I think the four-day week allows for some family time on the three-day weekends. Economically, especially in the winter months with heating and everything, we save money on heating and stuff like that. Saving money on bus transportation and things like that ...it is very advantageous.
Interviewee 7:	Attendance rate has increased with the four-day school week. Most parents will make medical appointments, or other appointments on Mondays, if they can, so less students are taken out during the regular school day. I know a lot of high school students like it because they can work a full day on Monday. I know there is some cost-savings to our district. Our district has such a very tight budget.

Findings: Research Question Three

What did school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents perceive as disadvantages of their school districts' four-day school week?

The third research question sought to determine what the respondents of District A and School District B perceived as disadvantages of their school district's four-day school week.

Respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the following

statement: “I believe there are definite disadvantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.”

Table 18 reports that 93 of 300 or 31.0% of the respondents in School District A strongly agreed or agreed that there were definite disadvantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week. The number of respondents who strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement totaled 207 out of 300 or 69.0%.

Table 18

Overall Perception of Disadvantage of the Four-Day School Week – District A

School District A	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	24	8.0
Agree	69	23.0
Disagree	99	33.0
Strongly Disagree	108	36.0
Total	300	100.0

Note. Responses to “I believe there are definite disadvantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.”

Table 19 shows that 96 of the 167 total School District B respondents, or 57.5%, strongly agreed or agreed that there were definite disadvantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week. The remaining respondents, 71 or 42.5%, strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.

Table 19

Overall Perception of Disadvantage of the Four-Day School Week – District B

School District B	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	52	31.1
Agree	44	26.4
Disagree	37	22.2
Strongly Disagree	34	20.3
Total	167	100.0

Note. Responses to “I believe there are definite disadvantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.”

A comparison of each of the respondent groups in School District A and School District B was analyzed to determine the level of belief that there were definite disadvantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.

Table 20 highlights that in School District A, 7 of 12, or 58.3% of board member/administrators, strongly agreed or agreed that there were definite disadvantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week. The teacher group in School District A had a lower percentage of respondents, 17 of 59 or 28.8% who strongly agreed or agreed. The parent group had 69 of 229 respondents or 30.1% who strongly agreed or agreed. The teacher group (71.2%) and parent group (69.9%) in School District A strongly disagreed or disagreed that the four-day school week had definite disadvantages compared to the five-day school week.

Table 20

Perceived Disadvantages of the Four-Day Week Schedule by Group – District A

School District A	SB/Admin.	Teachers	Parents
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency
Strongly Agree	2	0	22
Agree	5	17	47
Disagree	4	26	69
Strongly Disagree	1	16	91
Total	12	59	229

Note. Responses to “I believe there are definite disadvantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.”

Table 21 displays the frequency data for School District B’s respondent groups regarding how each group viewed perceived disadvantages of the four-day school week. Within the school board/administrator group, 7 out of 10, or 70%, who strongly agreed or agreed that there were definite disadvantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week. The parent group had 47 of 111 or 42.3% who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Teachers had the highest percentage of respondents, who either strongly agreed or agreed that there were definite disadvantages to the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week (42 of 46 or 91.3%).

Table 21

Perceived Disadvantages of the Four-Day Week Schedule by Group – District B

School District B	SB/Admin.	Teachers	Parents
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency
Strongly Agree	2	27	23
Agree	5	15	24
Disagree	2	3	32
Strongly Disagree	1	1	32
Total	10	46	111

Note. Responses to “I believe there are definite disadvantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.”

To further investigate the respondents perceived views regarding the disadvantages of the four-day school week, the respondents were asked to rate their opinion on how much they agreed or disagreed with the following disadvantage statements:

- a. Contributes to student fatigue due to longer school days
- b. Contributes to teacher fatigue due to longer school days
- c. Increases safety concerns/crime in our community
- d. Causes difficulties in finding child care
- e. Increases child care costs for families
- f. Decreases academic achievement for students
- g. Decreases academic achievement for students with disabilities or at-risk students

Table 22 contains frequency data from 300 stakeholders in School District A who responded to the perceived disadvantage statements by indicating their agreement or

disagreement with each statement. A total of 116 out of 300 respondents or 38.7% strongly agreed or agreed that the four-day school week increased childcare costs for families, while 184 of 300 or 61.3% strongly disagreed or disagreed. The respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the four-day school week contributed to student fatigue (21.0%) and caused difficulties in finding childcare (23.4%). The percentage of respondents who strongly disagreed or disagreed that the four-day school week increased safety concerns/crime in the community was 91.0%. Likewise, 270 of 300 respondents (90.0%) strongly disagreed or disagreed that the four-day school week decreased academic achievement for students. A significant majority of the respondents from School District A strongly disagreed or disagreed with all seven disadvantage statements. Six out of seven statements each had ratings between 76% and 91% with which the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Table 22

Overall Level of Agreement by Disadvantage Statement (w/ percentages) – District A

School District A	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Contributes to student fatigue due to longer school days	18 (6.0%)	45 (15.0%)	160 (53.3%)	77 (25.7%)	300
Contributes to teacher fatigue due to longer school days	6 (2.0%)	40 (13.3%)	172 (57.3%)	82 (27.3%)	300
Increases safety concerns/crime in our community	3 (1.0%)	24 (8.0%)	132 (44.0%)	141 (47.0%)	300
Causes difficulties in finding child care	14 (4.7%)	56 (18.7%)	165 (55.0%)	65 (21.7%)	300
Increases child care costs for families	22 (7.3%)	94 (31.3%)	130 (43.3%)	54 (18.0%)	300
Decreases academic achievement for students	8 (2.7%)	22 (7.3%)	136 (45.3%)	134 (44.7%)	300
Decreases academic achievement for students with disabilities or at-risk students	13 (4.3%)	22 (7.3%)	170 (56.7%)	95 (31.7%)	300

Note. Responses to “Please give your opinion on how much you agree or disagree with the following as disadvantages of a four-day school week:”

Table 23 details the opinions of 168 School District B respondents on how much they agreed or disagreed with disadvantage statements regarding the four-day school week. The disadvantage, contributes to student fatigue due to longer days, received 107 of 168 or 63.7% of respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Similar results occurred regarding

teacher fatigue due to longer school days with 97 of 168 respondents or 57.7% strongly agreeing or agreeing that it was a disadvantage of the four-day school week. The respondents had minimal safety/crime concerns: 17.9% strongly agreed or agreed that the four-day school week increased safety concerns/crime in the community. Increased childcare costs for families was equally viewed as a disadvantage or not a disadvantage in School District B: 50% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed and 50% of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.

Table 23

Overall Level of Agreement by Disadvantage Statement (w/ percentages) – District B

School District B	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Contributes to student fatigue due to longer school days	63 (37.5%)	44 (26.2%)	36 (21.4%)	25 (14.9%)	168
Contributes to teacher fatigue due to longer school days	51 (30.4%)	46 (27.4%)	47 (28.0%)	24 (14.3%)	168
Increases safety concerns/crime in our community	6 (3.6%)	24 (14.3%)	88 (52.4%)	50 (29.8%)	168
Causes difficulties in finding child care	24 (14.3%)	52 (31.0%)	51 (30.4%)	41 (24.4%)	168
Increases child care costs for families	32 (19.0%)	52 (31.0%)	52 (31.0%)	32 (19.0%)	168
Decreases academic achievement for students	23 (13.7%)	45 (26.8%)	60 (35.7%)	40 (23.8%)	168
Decreases academic achievement for students with disabilities or at-risk students	32 (19.0%)	40 (23.8%)	59 (35.1%)	37 (22.0%)	168

Note. Responses to “Please give your opinion on how much you agree or disagree with the following as disadvantages of a four-day school week:”

Table 24 delineates ratings for each respondent group of School District A regarding the disadvantage statements. Each respondent group had a low percentage of respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with any of the seven disadvantage statements. The highest percentage level which strongly agreed or agreed that increased childcare costs for families was a

disadvantage of the four-day school week, was from the school board/administrator group (6 of 12 or 50.0%) along with parents (96 of 222 parents or 43.2%). The school board/administrator group tallied 5 of 12 respondents or 41.7% who cited that the four-day school week contributed to student fatigue due to longer days. The parent group cited that 63 of 222 respondents or 28.4% strongly agreed or agreed that the four-day school week caused difficulties in finding childcare. The teacher group strongly disagreed or disagreed at percentage rates between 79.7% and 96.6% with all seven disadvantage statements. All three respondent groups had minimal concern regarding safety or crime in the community due to the implementation of the four-day school week.

Table 24

Level of Agreement with Disadvantage Statements by Group (w/ percentages) – District A

School District A	School Board/Admin. Total = 12				Teachers Total = 59				Parents Total = 222			
	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
Contributes to student fatigue due to longer school days	0	5	5	2	1	4	41	13	17	36	110	59
	(41.7)		(58.3)		(8.5)		(91.5)		(23.9)		(76.1)	
Contributes to teacher fatigue due to longer school days	0	2	6	4	0	3	38	18	6	33	124	59
	(1.7)		(83.3)		(5.0)		(95.0)		(17.6)		(82.4)	
Increases safety concerns/crime in our community	0	1	6	5	0	2	22	35	3	21	100	98
	(8.3)		(91.7)		(3.4)		(96.6)		(10.8)		(89.1)	
Causes difficulties in finding child care	0	2	8	2	0	2	39	18	14	49	116	43
	(16.7)		(83.3)		(3.4)		(96.6)		(28.4)		(71.6)	
Increases child care costs for families	0	6	5	1	0	12	34	13	22	74	88	38
	(50.0)		(50.0)		(20.3)		(79.7)		(43.2)		(56.8)	
Decreases academic achievement for students	0	0	7	5	0	3	29	27	8	19	98	97
	(100)			(0)	(5.0)		(95.5)		(12.2)		(87.8)	
Decreases academic achievement for students with disabilities or at-risk students	0	2	6	4	0	7	32	20	13	13	130	66
	(16.7)		(83.3)		(11.9)		(88.1)		(11.7)		(88.3)	

Note. Responses to “Please give your opinion on how much you agree or disagree with the following as disadvantages of a four-day school week:...”

Table 25 reports the ratings for each respondent group of School District B regarding the seven disadvantage statements. The teacher group respondents strongly agreed or agreed with six out of the seven disadvantage statements between 74.0%-97.8% regarding the four-day school week. Over 90% of the 46 teacher respondents identified that the four-day school week contributed to both student (97.8%) and teacher (91.3%) fatigue due to longer days. A majority

of the parent group, 80 of 111 (72.0%) strongly disagreed or disagreed that the four-day school week decreased academic achievement for students in the school district. The school board/administrator respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with 5 out of 7 disadvantage statements and were evenly split (50%/50%) on 2 disadvantages, while parent respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with 6 out of 7 disadvantage statements.

Table 25

Level of Agreement with Disadvantage Statements by Group (w/ percentages) – District B

School District B	School Board/Admin. Total = 10	Teachers Total = 46	Parents Total = 111
	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
Contributes to student fatigue due to longer school days	2 3 3 2 (50.0) (50.0)	31 14 1 0 (97.8) (2.2)	29 27 32 23 (50.5) (49.5)
Contributes to teacher fatigue due to longer school days	1 4 2 3 (50.0) (50.0)	32 10 4 0 (91.3) (8.7)	17 32 41 21 (44.1) (55.9)
Increases safety concerns/crime in our community	0 2 3 5 (20.0) (80.0)	3 8 31 4 (24.0) (76.0)	2 14 54 41 (14.4) (85.6)
Causes difficulties in finding child care	0 2 4 4 (20.0) (80.0)	11 22 11 2 (71.7) (28.3)	12 28 36 35 (36.0) (64.0)
Increases child care costs for families	0 3 2 5 (30.0) (70.0)	15 19 9 3 (74.0) (26.0)	16 30 41 24 (41.4) (58.6)
Decreases academic achievement for students	1 1 5 3 (20.0) (80.0)	15 19 9 3 (74.0) (26.0)	7 24 46 34 (28.0) (72.0)
Decreases academic achievement for students with disabilities or at-risk students	2 1 4 3 (30.0) (70.0)	17 18 8 3 (76.0) (24.0)	13 20 47 31 (29.7) (70.3)

Note. Responses to “Please give your opinion on how much you agree or disagree with the following as disadvantages of a four-day school week:...”

The researcher conducted telephone interviews with seven randomly selected volunteer respondents from the two participating school districts, to have them elaborate on their perceived disadvantages of the four-day school week. Three perceived disadvantages of the four-day school week that were identified through the interview process included: fatigue, length of day, and childcare concerns.

Table 26 contains the comments from the seven interviewees regarding the perceived disadvantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.

Table 26

Interview Comments Regarding Disadvantages of the Four-Day School Week

Telephone Interview	Comments
Interviewee 1:	I do wish that special groups/activity groups would do more activities on Mondays that might free those kids up to not miss school the rest of the week.
Interviewee 2:	<p>Students feeling exhausted with the long day, getting on the bus extra early, stay extra late, not having as much outside play time and family time.</p> <p>Quality of instruction...I feel like we're kind of filling the time some days, because they're just tired, to continue going with quality instruction, so just trying to fill the time to make it until 4 p.m. It is a really, long day for younger students.</p> <p>Then the older students, if they're in sports and those kinds of things, they're starting those later, so then by the time they get home, too, and having after-school jobs or family time or homework, there really just isn't enough time for them to do all of those activities and get a good balance.</p> <p>Daycare costs for families.</p> <p>For the younger learners, I feel like it's just not developmentally appropriate for them to get on a bus at seven in the morning, sometimes earlier, 6:30. They don't get home until 5:30, five, 5:30, depending. We're in the country, so a lot of them have an hour bus ride on either end of their day, too.</p> <p>Then the older kids, I feel like we're not really preparing them for the real world. Most jobs have five days and not just that extra day to goof off.</p> <p>I feel the day is just really long, because we're trying to cram so much into a short period of time.</p>
Interviewee 3:	The students' day is long and elementary students get pretty tired and spent by the end of the day. I think mainly the long days are a challenge for students.

Table 26 continued

<p>Interviewee 4:</p>	<p>Length of the school day and then the length of the school including class time for a lot of our students. I would also say the amount of time that teachers are teaching that quality seems to decrease, rather than increase, or the perception is that we're able to teach better because we have more time, but it seems to be more classroom management than anything. Then 2:30, 3:00 hits, and I think a lot of people are tired and fatigued, students and teachers alike.</p> <p>Sport practices go really late, because we get out of school at 4:05 then we have practice until 6, 6:30 sometimes, just with how late it starts and then we have kids that have homework. A lot of kids go into practice and they're just tired and a lot of them are up until midnight sometimes just because of homework and practice and so they've been trying to stuff all those extracurricular activities after the school day, and so the four-day week, what I have seen, has meant longer days and they become even longer due to everything that we want to do.</p>
<p>Interviewee 5:</p>	<p>I think sometimes our students are leaving school for sports and missing more of the classroom time than they would if they were done at the same time as the other schools.</p>
<p>Interviewee 6:</p>	<p>I know there are some parents, there are some families that are looking for childcare.</p>
<p>Interviewee 7:</p>	<p>I think for our students and staff, the biggest disadvantages is our extra-curricular activities. Right now, most of the time, when kids are leaving for events, they're leaving at 2:45 or 3:00, so then, they're missing that last hour of the school day.</p> <p>The other thing is with teachers who are coaching, it makes quite a long day, because they start their coaching at 4:15, 4:30. They usually go til 6:30 at night, and then to try and get home and ready to be back to school by 7:30 in the morning, and correct papers, is quite harsh on them sometimes.</p> <p>We are in school much longer, if you take the actual amount of minutes, and transfer it to how many minutes in a school year, compared to our neighboring districts. That's why I think we should shorten our school day a little bit.</p>

Note. Interviewee responses to: “What do you perceive as definite disadvantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week?”

Findings: Research Question Four

What changes, if any, would the school board, administrators, teachers, and parents identify that would increase their support of the school district’s four-day school week?

The fourth research question sought to determine changes, if any, the respondents would identify as necessary to increase their level of support of the school district’s four-day school week.

Responses from the open-ended survey question from School District A and School District B were analyzed to determine suggested changes for the school district's four-day school week that were mentioned two or more times.

Table 27 highlights the duplicate responses from within School District A respondents, to the open-ended survey question about those changes, if any, they would recommend to the district's current four-day school week. The majority of the respondents' comments, 32 of 71 or 45.1%, indicated no changes were necessary. Suggestions regarding childcare or additional activities were mentioned by 12 of 71 respondents or 16.9%. Eight respondents stated they preferred having shorter school days during the four-day school week. Transportation was commented on by five respondents who suggested shorter bus rides. Other changes included adding a spring break to the calendar, changing the off day to Friday instead of Monday, and suggestions for both professional development and sports.

Table 27

Frequency of Responses for Recommended Changes to the Four-Day School Week – District A

Recommended Changes	Frequency	Comments
No Changes Needed	32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None (10) • No changes, I love the four-day school week. (2) • None, I like it the way it is right now. (8) • None, I think it is great. Let kids be kids, they have their whole lives to work 5 days. (1) • It is working perfect! (2) • I am in full support of the four-day school week schedule. (2) • I am very happy with the four-day school week that our district uses. (1) • My kids are use to 4 days and really like it. (2) • Keep it the same as it is.(1) • I am pleased with the current set up. (1) • I think it is great for students, teachers, and parents as a whole. (1)
Childcare Options and Activities for students on Mondays	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More time for teacher and student time on Mondays (1) • Have study/homework help available on Mondays. (2) • I would suggest stronger more active and enriched childcare options within the district or community for Mondays that could educate and engage students. (1) • More child care options (2) • Some sort of activities in the community to have the children doing on the day off. (2) • Special day care provided by the school on Mondays (1) • Have the school day care have more openings on Mondays for those that need that offered. (2) • An option to have school provided day care for the day without school (1)
Shorter School Days	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start time at 8 a.m. (1) • Later start day, 8:15 or 8:00 a.m. (1) • Start 8:15-4:00 or 7:45-3:30 (1) • Shorter days (2) • Later start time (2) • A little shorter day and add a day or two at the end of May (1)
Transportation	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More bus routes to decrease time on bus. Some students are on from school for over 1 hour (1) • The only issue we have with the 4 day school week is the long bus rides making our children’s days too long. (1)

		Table 27 Continued
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorter bus ride times (1) • Bus schedules (2)
Spring Break	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a spring break or longer weekend over spring season (1) • Schedule a spring break (1) • Have a spring break (1) • A spring break would allow families to take a vacation without the student missing school. (1)
Sports Schedule/Practice	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monday sport practice transportation or not have lower grades practice (1) • Ensure coaches are not cancelling practices and short changing student athletes (1) • Less sports practices mandated (1) • No sports activities on Mondays (1)
Professional Development	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More days of teacher and paraprofessional trainings be added to Mondays • Shorter days for teachers on professional development days • Teachers should work Mondays to prepare and keep up with grading...
Fridays off instead of Mondays	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fridays should be the off day, not Mondays (1) • School on Monday, off on Friday (1) • Move the day off to Friday instead of Monday (1)
Total:	71	

Note. Responses to “What changes would you suggest be implemented to increase you support of the current four-day school week schedule?”

Table 28 highlights the duplicate responses from within School District B respondents, to the open-ended survey question about those changes, if any, they would recommend to the district’s current four-day school week. Twenty-five respondents commented that shorter school days would increase their level of support of the four-day school week. The topic of scheduling appeared on 14 open-ended surveys. The respondents suggested no core classes be held at the end of the day and schedule the last hour for study hall. The five-day school week schedule was preferred by 13 respondents. However, 11 respondents commented that they supported the

current four-day school week. Five respondents mentioned concern about homework and the need to eliminate or lessen it.

Table 28

Frequency of Responses for Recommended Changes to the Four-Day School Week – District B

Recommended Changes	Frequency	Comments
Shorter School Days	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorter school day (24) • I would suggest ending our school day earlier (1)
Scheduling	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the last hour for study hall (3) • No core classes at the end of the day (8) • Attempt to change scheduling to decrease of loss of instruction time for students in activities (1) • Create a daily schedule that intentionally breakup the students day so it doesn't seem so long (1) • • A better class schedule arrangement and activities schedule so students aren't being pulled from class constantly (1)
Five-day School Week	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go back to traditional five-day schedule (6) • Go back to 5 day week and shorter day (4) • I do not support a four-day school week prefer five-day school week (3)
No Changes Needed	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None (3) • We don't think any changes need to be done. We love the program. (1) • Going great! (1) • It's awesome! (1) • No changes necessary. (4) • No changes, they are doing a great job! (1)
Homework	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No homework (1) • Go back to less homework during the school week (2) • Less homework (1) • Less or no homework (1)
Transportation	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase bus routes so students don't have to get on the bus so early and get home so late (1) • Activity bus is needed (1)
Total:	70	

Note. Responses to “What changes would you suggest be implemented to increase you support of the current four-day school week schedule?”

The researcher conducted telephone interviews with seven randomly selected volunteer respondents, from both School Districts A and B, to have them elaborate on any changes they recommended be implemented to increase their level of support of the current four-day school week.

Table 29 includes the comments offered by interviewees regarding suggested changes for the four-day school week. Five out of the seven interviewees suggested ending the day earlier by shortening the length of day. Two of the interviewees were concerned about students missing instruction time at the end of the day for sports and activities.

Table 29

Interviewee Suggestions to Increase Their Support Level of The Four-Day School Week

Telephone Interview	What changes would you suggest be implemented to increase your support of the current four-day school week?
Interviewee 1	Comment: Communication can always be improved. Like if there's a change in the basketball schedule or that there's an activity going on Monday that people need to know about.
Interviewee 2	Comment: I can't think of any suggestions, because I just really am not in support of it.
Interviewee 3	Comment: I would suggest examining our student contact hours in comparison to other schools in the state and what the requirements are, so we can cut back some student contact hours. Shaving some of that time off the end of the day.
Interviewee 4	Comment: Decreasing the day by like half an hour
Interviewee 5	Comment: End the day earlier, cutting back on the release time, which will help with students missing that last hour of class for sports.
Interviewee 6	Comment: On the day off, I have wondered if there would be someone maybe a volunteer program for homework help.
Interviewee 7	Comment: I think if we could shift our day a little bit, or even our times a little bit to where we could get out a little bit earlier. I wish we could end our day with an advisory type class so if students are leaving early for activities, then they're, at least, not missing a class, whether it's core or elective.

Note. Responses to “Elaborate on any changes you recommend be implemented to increase your level of support of the current four-day school week.”

At the completion of the survey, respondents were asked whether or not they would recommend consideration of the four-day school week to other school districts, if they were looking at alternative schedule options. Of the 293 respondents in School District A, 274 or 93.5% would recommend consideration of the four-day school week. In School District B, 102 of 166 or 61.4% indicated they would recommend consideration of the four-day school week, while 64 of 166 (38.6%) would not recommend it as an alternative schedule option.

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction of the study, the study's four research questions, and data findings by research question, with introductory and summative remarks. Based on the findings of Chapter 4, the researcher tendered conclusions, limitations, recommendations, and further research suggestions in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Study Overview

Faced with escalating fuel and energy prices and rising education costs, school districts across the United States have sought methods to reduce expenditures and balance budgets (Donis-Keller & Silvernail, 2009). One cost cutting legislative policy that numerous states adopted, including Minnesota, was the four-day school week schedule. This schedule option maintains the hours of instruction each week while shortening the number of school days from five to four.

In examining the literature on the four-day school week, there appeared to be little information regarding this alternative schedule in the state of Minnesota. Likewise, national research on this topic is scarce. The intention of the study was to expand the body of knowledge on the support for, and advantages and disadvantages of, the four-day school week in two rural Minnesota school districts.

The study examined two rural Minnesota school districts that were employing a four-day school week during the 2016-17 school year to ascertain the support or lack of support of the four-day school schedule among school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents. Further, the study gathered perceptions from the stakeholder groups on the advantages of, disadvantages of, and recommended changes, if any, in their school districts' four-day school week.

The following research questions were the focus of the study:

1. How supportive were school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents of the select school districts' four-day school week?

2. What did school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents perceive as advantages of their school districts' four-day school week?
3. What did school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents perceive as disadvantages of their school districts' four-day school week?
4. What changes, if any, would the school board, administrators, teachers, and parents identify that would increase their support of the school districts' four-day school week?

In order to address the research questions, the researcher created an online survey to gather data on the respondents' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of the four-day school week schedule. In order to enrich study findings, one-on-one interviews were conducted with seven respondents who volunteered to expand upon survey questions with the researcher. Chapter 5 provides conclusions of the study, a discussion of the most significant findings, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Conclusions: School District A

From the study's electronically distributed online survey (Appendix C), the researcher received 300 responses, regarding their perceptions of the district's four-day school week. The respondents included 12 school board/administrators, 59 teachers and 229 parents. Below are provided the more significant outcomes derived from an examination of School District A's survey results:

- All stakeholder groups supported the school district's four-day school week.
- All stakeholder groups supported continuing to operate the school district's four-day school week.

- All school board/administrators, all teachers, and a majority (%) of parents believed that there were multiple advantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.
- All teacher respondents rated improves staff morale, improves student morale, allows families more quality time together, provides more time for professional development, and allows scheduling personal appointments on Mondays as definite advantages of the four-day school week.
- All stakeholder groups strongly agreed or agreed with at least 12 of the 13 advantage statements about the four-day school week schedule. Parent respondents rated all 13 advantage statements favorably.
- A significant majority of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with all seven disadvantage statements about the four-day school week schedule.
- Increased childcare costs (38.6%) and difficulties in finding childcare (23.4%) were issues most frequently identified as disadvantages of the four-day school week schedule.

A positive finding in School District A, that was consistent with several studies and reports examining the four-day school, was increased attendance for both teachers and students (Blankenship, 1984; Koki, 1992; Grau & Shaughnessy, 1987; Sagness & Salzman, 1993).

Improved student morale (94.2%) and improved student behavior (85.9%) were identified by all stakeholder groups as advantages of the four-day school week. This finding was consistent with the literature by Toppo (2002).

Positive findings regarding more time for teacher/lesson planning (92.2%) and professional development (94.7%) in School District A were found to be consistent with several research sources (Durr, 2003; Dam, 2006; Yarrow & Gilman, 2006).

Stakeholder satisfaction in School District A was positive, with all advantage statements receiving 85.9% or higher agreement ratings. These results were found to be consistent with research (Chmelynski, 2003; Dam, 2006; Reeves, 1999).

Conclusions: School District B

School District B received responses to the electronically distributed online survey from 167 stakeholders regarding their perceptions of the district's four-day school week. The respondents included 10 school board/administrators, 46 teachers and 111 parents.

Below are summarized outcomes of an examination of School District B's survey results:

- Two stakeholder groups (school board members/administrators and parents) supported the district's four-day school week. The teacher stakeholder group did not.
- Two stakeholder groups (school board members/administrators and parents) supported continuing to operate the district's four-day school week. The teacher stakeholder group did not.
- A majority of school board/administrator (80%) and parent stakeholders (74.8%) believed there were definite advantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.
- A majority of teacher respondents believed there were few advantages (65.2%) of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.

- All respondents identified the ability to schedule personal appointments, provide more professional development, and save the school district money as advantages of the four-day school week.
- Increased child care costs for families was equally viewed as a disadvantage or not a disadvantage by respondents with 50% who either agreed or disagreed with it.
- A majority of teacher respondents strongly agreed or agreed with six of the seven disadvantage statements. Specifically, student fatigue and teacher fatigue due to longer days.

School District B's teacher respondents rated student fatigue (97.8%) and teacher fatigue (91.3%) as disadvantages of their district's four-day school. These findings aligned with research conducted by Fiske (1982) and Sagness & Salzman (1993). Decreased academic achievement for students was perceived as a disadvantage by 74.0% of teacher respondents in School District B. This opinion was consistent with research finding in a study conducted by Tharp (2014) which concluded that students in a four-day school week did not perform as well, over time, as students enrolled in the traditional five-day school week in Montana.

It is evident from the survey results, that School District B's school board/administrator and parent respondent groups supported the district's four-day school week while the teacher respondent group did not support it. Opposing views on the four-day school week were found in related literature articles (Long, 2016; Lopez, 2104).

Conclusion Consistencies for Both Districts

Below are detailed commonalities that were found through an examination of School District A and School District B's survey results:

- In both school districts, the majority of respondents supported continuing to operate the four-day school week.
- In both school districts, the majority of respondents believed there were definite advantages of the four-day school week compared to the five-day school week.
- The highest rated advantage statements by respondents of both school districts included allowing the scheduling of personal appointments, providing more professional development, and saving the school district money.
- Parent respondents in both school districts identified increased student attendance as an advantage of the four-day school week.
- Parent respondents (40%) in both school districts identified increased childcare costs to families as a disadvantage of the four-day school week.
- A majority of both school districts' respondents would recommend consideration of the four-day school week to other school districts if they were examining alternative schedule options.

Both School District A and School District B respondents identified allowing the scheduling of personal appointments, providing more professional development and saving the school district money as the greatest advantages of the four-day school week. During one-on-one interviews, Interviewee 7 stated, "Most parents will make medical appointments or other appointments on Mondays, if they can, so less students are taken out during the regular day."

School District A respondents (97.0%) and School District B respondents (89.3%) rated allowing the scheduling of personal appointments as a definite advantage of the four-day school week. A similar conclusion was found in a Minnesota news article (Layton, 2011), in which a

superintendent identified scheduling personal appointments on the off day of school as an unexpected benefit of the four-day school week.

Another advantage that appeared as an advantage in the study survey results and, also, during the one-on-one interviews was that the four-day school week provided teachers with more opportunity for professional development. Interviewee 1 stated, “The availability of Mondays for professional development is an advantage of the four-day school week.”

Multiple sources in the literature, including those of Smith (2009) and Griffith (2011), identified reducing operating costs as the primary reason school districts considered changing to the four-day school week. The study had a high percentage of survey respondents from School Districts A (94.5%) and B (71.4%) indicate that the four-day school week saved the school district money. Likewise, multiple interviewees mentioned cost savings as an advantage of the four-day school week. Interviewee 6 reflected on cost savings in the areas of heating and transportation.

As discovered in the findings from the study and related literature, a disadvantage of the four-day school week could be increased childcare costs for families. Changing to a four-day school week could create new costs for working parents to employ part-time childcare one full day each week (Shellenbarger, 2010). Forty percent of parent respondent groups, in both school districts, identified increased childcare costs as a disadvantage of the four-day school week.

Discussion

The study concluded that both School District A and School District B supported the four-day school week. A majority of the survey respondents from both school districts indicated they would recommend consideration of the four-day school week to other school districts if they were considering other alternative schedule options.

Although the four-day school week began as a means for school districts to reduce costs and save money, the study indicated there were other advantages to the four-day school week for both teachers and families, including providing additional time for teacher/lesson planning and allowing families more quality time together.

There were disadvantages cited in the literature review that were not found to be conclusive in the study. Respondent groups expressed minimal concerns around safety and crime in the community, as well as minimal concerns about the academic achievement of students with disabilities or at-risk students as a result of operating a four-day school week schedule.

The researcher believes school districts considering implementing a four-day school week should be encouraged to gather broadly-based data regarding the potential schedule change and dedicate sufficient time to planning for the change. Additionally, sharing information about the four-day school week schedule with the community and seeking public input are essential.

Adequate research and communication with stakeholder groups are key components to making the decision to adopt a modified school week. Communication with stakeholders has been consistently recommended for school districts considering the implementation of a four-day schedule (Juneau, 2011; Sagness & Salzman, 1993).

In preparation for a four-day school week implementation, it is suggested that school district leaders provide professional development for teachers, that prepares them for incorporating instructional strategies that address the demands of the new schedule. Teachers will need to adapt their curriculum and activities to assist students in remaining engaged for longer periods of time.

Twenty-one states have statutes that allow school districts to implement four-day school week schedules, according to NCSL data. The researcher recommends that school districts that

employ the four-day school week schedule be mindful of instructional minutes, and plan their schedules to ensure there is not a loss of total instructional hours when compared to five-day school week schedules.

The state of Minnesota currently has legislation requiring approval to operate a four-day school week schedule from the Commissioner of Education. The researcher believes that school districts should be accorded local control to determine what is most appropriate for the education of their students, with support from their communities.

Limitations

Limitations of the study included:

- Respondents had the ability to complete the survey from multiple devices. It is unknown if this occurred in the study. It is recommended that future researchers establish a single platform to prevent respondents from accessing the survey from multiple devices.
- The researcher contacted two Minnesota school districts that employed the four-day school week schedule and gained permission to conduct the research in their school districts. Due to time and distance constraints, the five other Minnesota school districts employing the four-day school week schedule were not offered the opportunity to participate in the study.
- The total number of one-on-one interviews was seven, established by the researcher, and included volunteer participants from each of the two participating school districts. It is recommended that researchers significantly increase the number of interviewees and include an equal number in each respondent group from each participating school district.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations for further research or expansion of this study are offered below:

- It is recommended that a larger quantity of one-on-one interviews be undertaken to confirm or refute the survey results.
- It is recommended that additional one-on-one interviews be undertaken with teacher respondents of School District B to identify those changes, if any, that would increase their level of support of the current four-day school week schedule.
- It is recommended that a comprehensive qualitative research study be conducted to investigate those changes, if any, that would increase the level of support of school districts' current four-day school week schedules.
- It is recommended that research be conducted in the remaining five school districts in the state of Minnesota employing the four-day school week.
- It is recommended that a Midwest regional research study be conducted of multiple school districts regarding advantages and disadvantages of the four-day school week schedule.
- It is recommended that a research study of the four-day school week schedule be undertaken in which an additional respondent group, students, is included.
- It is recommended a comparison qualitative study be conducted to ascertain strategies that may be of value in supporting teachers employing the four-day school week schedule in School District A and School District B.

- It is recommended that a qualitative study be conducted in which respondents with opposing views be interviewed to gain a deeper understanding of multiple perspectives regarding the four-day school week schedule.

Recommendation for Practice

The following are recommendations for school districts considering implementation of the four-day school week schedule:

- It is recommended school leaders involve community stakeholders in the exploration and decision-making processes prior to implementation of the four-day week schedule in their school districts.
- It is recommended school leaders explore and, as appropriate, provide or encourage provision of childcare options within the districts or communities for families who need such services on non-school days.
- It is recommended school leaders create comprehensive professional development plans to enhance teaching and learning for licensed staff members, periodically incorporating the non-school days for such training.
- It is recommended school leaders study the length of the student day to insure that the time required to meet legislative requirements for the school year is fulfilled but not exceeded.
- It is recommended school leaders be mindful when scheduling secondary school courses to avoid conducting core courses at the end of the student day to decrease the loss of instructional time for students involved in school activities.

- It is recommended school leaders provide opportunities for feedback from all stakeholder groups during the four-day school week schedule study, adoption, and implementation processes.

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Appendix A: IRB Consent Form



Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Name: Heather Hanson

Address

USA

Email: heather_hanson@rdale.org

**IRB PROTOCOL
DETERMINATION:
Exempt Review**

Project Title: An examination of the Four-Day School Week Schedule in Select Minnesota

Advisor Dr. Roger Worner

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).

- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.

- Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.

- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-3290 or email ri@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Institutional Official:

Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan
Interim Associate Provost for Research
Dean of Graduate Studies

OFFICE USE ONLY

SCSU IRB# 1704 - 2132

1st Year Approval Date: 3/30/2017

1st Year Expiration Date:

Type: Exempt Review

2nd Year Approval Date:

2nd Year Expiration Date:

Today's Date: 3/31/2017

3rd Year Approval Date:

3rd Year Expiration Date:

Appendix B: Electronic Study Invite

Four-Day School Week Survey

Informed Consent

Procedures:

You are invited to participate in a research study about the four-day school week schedule. You were selected as a possible participant because your school district employs a four-day school week schedule.

If you agree to be part of the research study, participants will be asked to complete a short survey regarding individual perceptions on the advantages of and disadvantages of the four-day school week. After completing the survey, respondents will be asked if they are interested in a future interview opportunity to answer follow-up questions from the survey. The survey should only take 10-12 minutes.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to examine the four-day school week schedule employed in select rural Minnesota school districts to ascertain support among school board members, administrators, teachers and parents. Further, the study intends to gather perceptions from these stakeholder groups of advantages of, disadvantages of, and changes, if any in their school districts' four-day school week.

Benefits of the Research:

The results of this survey will be published to better plan and sustain successful implementation of the four-day school week. The districts that participate in the study will be able to review the results for future strategic planning of the educational structure for their students, teachers, and families.

Risks:

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The confidentiality of the information gathered during your participation in this study will be maintained. Your personal identity will remain confidential. You will not be identified by your name in any published materials. Your specific school district will not be identified in the study. All printed data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked room and/or on a computer secured with a password. This data will be destroyed within three years. All interviews will be recorded to allow the researcher to review responses for data collection purposes. The recorded interviews will be deleted within one year of the study being completed.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University, or the researcher.

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Research Results:

Upon completion, the researcher's dissertation will be electronically available for you to review the results. You may also contact the researcher for the final report.

Contact Information:

If you have questions about this research study, you may contact the researcher, Heather Hanson, at hahe1301@stcloudstate.edu or the advisor of the study, Dr. Roger Worner, at rbworner@stcloudstate.edu.

Acceptance to Participate in the Four-Day School Week Study:

Your completion of this survey indicates that you are at least 18 year of age, you have read the information provided above, and you have given consent to participate. If you participate in the interview portion of the researcher, you give consent for the interview to be recorded and for direct quotes from your interview to be used. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty after signing this form.

Appendix C: Study Survey

Four-Day School Week Survey Heather Hanson

1. What is your role in the school district? Check all that apply.	School Board Member	Administrator	Teacher	Parent
2. How many total years have you experienced the four-day school week?	0-2 years	3-4 years	5-6 years	7+ years
3. I am supportive of the school district's four-day school week.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. I am supportive of continuing to operate the school district's four-day school week.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5. I believe there are definite advantages of the four-day school week to the five-day school week.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. I believe there are definite disadvantages of the four-day school week to the	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

five-day school week.				
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7. Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following as **advantages** of a four-day school week.

a. Improves student behavior	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
b. Improves student achievement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
c. Improves staff morale	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
d. Reduces teacher stress	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
e. Improves student morale	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
f. Saves the school district money	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
g. Allows families more quality time together	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
h. Provides more time for academic teacher planning	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
i. Provides more time for professional development	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
j. Increases student attendance	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
k. Increases	Strongly	Agree	Disagree	Strongly

staff attendance	Agree			Disagree
l. Helps retain teachers in rural areas	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
m. Allows scheduling personal appointments on Mondays (when school is not in session)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please list any additional perceived advantages of the four-day school week:

8. Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following as disadvantages of a four-day school week:

a. Contributes to student fatigue due to longer school days	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
b. Contributes to teacher fatigue due to longer school days	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
c. Increases safety concerns/ crime in our community	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
d. Causes difficulties in finding child care	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

e. Increases child care costs for families	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
f. Decreases academic achievement for students	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
g. Decreases academic achievement for students with disabilities or at-risk students	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please list any additional perceived **disadvantages** of the four-day school week:

9. I would make recommendations to other school districts to consider the four-day school week IF they were looking at alternative schedule options.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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10. What changes would you suggest be implemented to increase your support of the current four-day school week schedule?

Would you be willing to participate in a future telephone interview with the researcher to further discuss the four-day school week? Yes or No