

BLACKFOOT SCHOOL DISTRICT FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK F.A.Q.

Parents & Patrons,

Many of you may have already heard that the Superintendent of the Blackfoot School District would like to explore the feasibility of a four-day school week in our district. In an effort to be transparent, I am providing this document which addresses the more frequent questions regarding this topic.

Didn't the superintendent say "never in our district"? What changed his mind? Why now?

It is true, I have been properly quoted as saying there would never be a four-day school week in the Blackfoot School District. The number one reason for that stance was the safety and security of some of our students who rely on our schools to provide them meals, and other necessities, for all five school days.

While I was observing a panel discussion in a nearby district that was debating a four-day school week, I came to a very important realization. The most important thing I can do for all the students in our district is to ensure each class has a highly effective and highly qualified teacher. Apparently, the research suggests neither the school week nor the school calendar impacts student achievement in a positive or negative way. The teacher in the classroom actually has the highest impact on student achievement. I asked myself, "What is the biggest draw for teachers to come to our district?" We cannot compete with the salaries of the bigger districts to the north and south of us. The smaller districts surrounding us all have four-day school weeks. I asked myself, "What can be done to level the playing field?" The teacher shortage is real. We are finding it more and more difficult to recruit and retain teachers. I feel this adjustment might ultimately help our students by ensuring more quality teachers are interested in joining our family here in the Blackfoot School District.

Does a four-day school week impact student achievement

This is a question we must truly address. There simply isn't enough research to clearly evaluate its impact on student achievement. From what I have gathered thus far, the preliminary research shows there is "no statistically significant difference" in student achievement based on a four-day or five-day school week. This is a fancy research term which means there may be differences, but there is not enough evidence to prove the cause of the difference is due to the school week.

Why is the superintendent exploring a four-day?

Many of the school districts around the country, and here in Idaho, have implemented a four-day school week as a cost saving measure. **THIS IS NOT THE REASON I AM EXPLORING A FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK.** It is true that a four-day school week does generate modest financial savings, but I do not feel this is enough of a reason to explore the transition. The primary reasons I am considering a four-day school week are:

1. Potential improvement in teacher recruitment and retention
2. Potential increase to student and staff morale
3. Potential increase in student and staff attendance
4. Potential reduction in student discipline referrals
5. Provides additional, and extended, time for professional development
6. Potential to provide a day for intensive tutoring and enrichment
7. Potential to provide additional academic options for students and families in the 21st Century
8. Potential better quality of life for families

How much longer would each day be on a four-day school week?

I believe for the most part, schools would see a thirty-five (35) minute increase to each day. This would be accomplished by ending the day later. We do not anticipate the need to start the day earlier, with the exception of Blackfoot High School which would need to start five minutes earlier.

Will there be a loss of instructional time by transitioning to a four-day school week?

Even with the longer days, a four-day school week does create a decrease in annual instructional time. At the current time, I am unable to make an accurate prediction on the loss of annual instructional time. Regardless of the schedule we have, the Blackfoot School District will meet and exceed state instructional requirements.

Will a four-day week alter the number of classes needed and offered at Blackfoot High School?

This is another question I am not sure I can answer until I can more closely examine a more accurate schedule. I am aware that a nearby school district that is on a four-day school week currently has a six-period trimester schedule. That leads me to believe if they can do it, we should be able to as well. If we are unable to maintain a six-period trimester schedule, we would likely need to revert back to a five-period trimester schedule.

Will there be something at school on Friday for my student who needs additional academic support?

Right now, I cannot guarantee this will be an option for our students should we transition to a four-day school week. However, this is definitely one of the things our district could do to minimize the impact of some of the potential disadvantages of a four-day school week.

Will students be required to do more homework due to the shortened week?

Again, this is not something I can guarantee either way. For elementary students, I would not anticipate an increase in the amount of homework per se. I would, however, anticipate a recommended increase in the amount of reading done at home by our younger students. At the secondary level, normally the amount of homework correlates to the number and type of classes a student takes.

It is my hope this information provides answers to some of the more common questions about my current exploration of a four-day school week. If you would like to inquire about more specific items, please email the question to schedule_exploration@d55.k12.id.us I will only be able to respond to emails once a day. So, please be patient as we work through this process.