

What We Know: The Four-Day School Week in Arkansas

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Office for
Education
Policy

Providing current research
to support thoughtful
decision-making concerning
PreK-20 education in Arkansas

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In recent years, Arkansas has seen a notable transformation in its educational landscape, driven by the adoption of four-day school weeks (4DSW). The shift began in the 2019-20 school year with the Kirby School District and has rapidly spread across the state.

This report provides a detailed examination of Arkansas's move to 4DSW, exploring legislative changes, the growth of districts adopting this schedule, district characteristics, motivations behind the shift, relevant research, and additional resources.

Report Summary

The report is organized into the following sections:

- Four-Day School Week vs. Traditional School Calendar
- Profiles of Arkansas 4DSW districts - Analysis of enrollment sizes, demographic composition, and socioeconomic factors, comparing 4DSW districts to those on traditional calendars.
- Arkansas Research
 - Motivations for 4DSW adoption
 - Teacher retention and quality
 - Teacher burnout
 - Student attendance
 - Student academic outcomes
- Resources and Further Reading

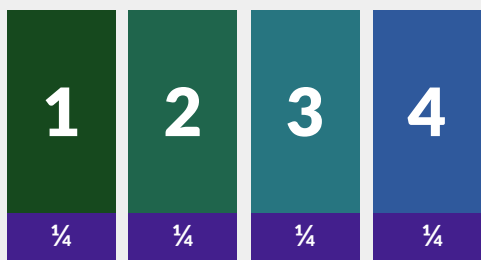
This report serves as a comprehensive resource for stakeholders seeking to understand the 4DSW model's impact and implications for Arkansas schools.

Four-Day School Week vs Traditional School Calendar

[Act 688](#), passed by the Arkansas General Assembly in 2021, was the key driver behind the adoption of non-traditional school calendars in Arkansas. This law offered school districts four calendar options starting in the 2022-23 school year. While the weekly structure differs, **the 4DSW calendar has the same instructional hours as the traditional school calendar.**

Four-Day School Week

142 school days
30 hours per week
7.5 hours a day
1,068 total hours



VS

Traditional Calendar

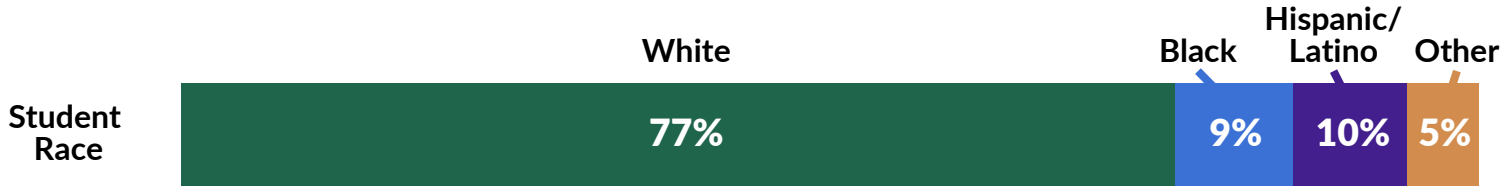
178 school days
30 hours per week
6 hours a day
1,068 total hours



Instead of five school days, 4DSW districts redistribute the same amount of learning time across four longer days.

Profile of 4DSW Districts

Roughly 20% of Arkansas school districts (47 districts) have adopted a four-day school week, serving about 5% of the state's student population. These districts tend to be smaller and more rural, averaging 710 students compared to 2,180 students in districts with traditional calendars.



4DSW districts have **higher percentages of White (77% vs. 71%) students and Hispanic/Latino (10% vs. 8%) students** than Arkansas districts on the traditional calendar.



4DSW districts also have **higher percentages students eligible for free or reduced price lunch (FRL)** than Arkansas districts on the traditional calendar (72% vs. 66%).

Arkansas School Districts

The map displays the location of all 4DSW districts in the state. Below are the Arkansas 4DSW districts by the school year they adopted a new calendar.

2019-20

Kirby

2020-21

Cossatot River, East End, England, Norfolk, Ozark Mountain, Viola, Western Yell County, Westside (Johnson)

2021-22

Atkins, Buffalo Island Central, Mineral Springs, Nevada, Ouachita

2022-23

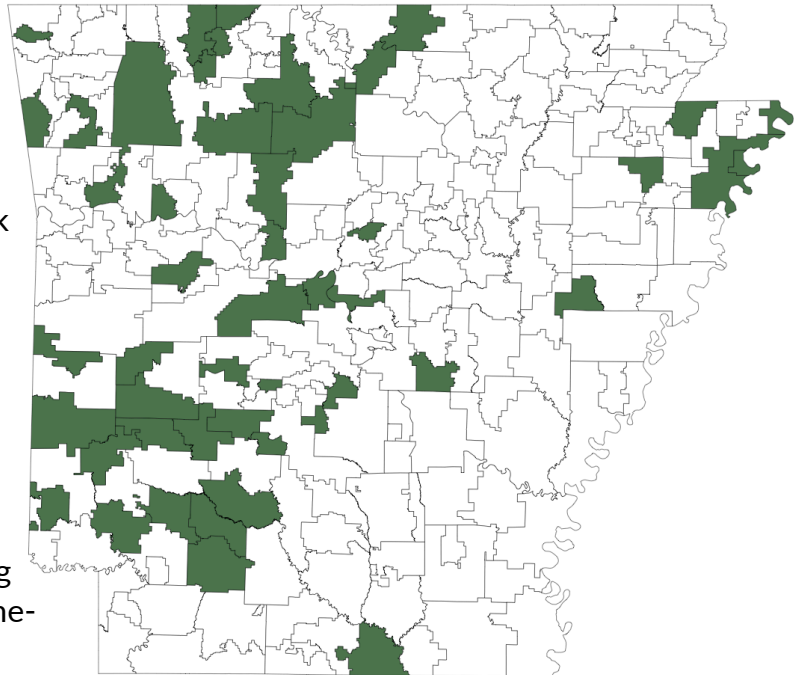
Blevins, Caddo Hills, Centerpoint, Cutter-Morning Star, Deer/Mt. Judea, Dierks, Mayflower, Palestine-Wheatley, Perryville, Poyen, Rivercrest, Trumann

2023-24

Alpena, Armorel, Bismarck, Green Forest, Guy-Perkins, Hector, Lincoln, Mountain Pine, Omaha

2024-25

Bauxite, Decatur, Greenland, Gurdon, Horatio, Huntsville, Mulberry/Pleasant View, Osceola, Ouachita River, Prescott, Searcy County, Strong-Huttig



Motivations for 4DSW Adoption

Authors: Kate Barnes & Sarah McKenzie, PhD

[Full Report](#)

[Policy Brief](#)

[Blog](#)

In this report, researchers interviewed 18 Arkansas superintendents to learn why they switched from a traditional calendar to a 4DSW. The primary motivations for adoption are:

1. Teacher Recruitment & Retention:

The 4DSW is used as a tool to attract and retain high quality teachers

2. Mental Health of Students & Teachers:

District leaders believe the extra day off improves well-being of students and teachers

3. Pandemic Related Learning Loss:

The lengthened school day allows for targeted interventions to help students catch up in key subject areas

Teacher Retention

Author: Andrew M. Camp, PhD

[Full Report](#)

[Blog](#)

This report examines the impact of four-day school week (4DSW) adoption on teacher retention and quality in Arkansas using difference-in-differences models. Key findings include:

1. Teacher Retention:

4DSW adoption reduced the likelihood of teachers moving to other districts by 1.4 percentage points. Neighboring districts may experience increased teacher turnover as educators move to 4DSW districts, suggesting a spillover effect.

2. Teacher Quality:

4DSW schools hired more teachers with advanced degrees after adopting a 4DSW, with new hires being 5.9 percentage points more likely to hold a master's degree or higher. Evidence of improved teacher effectiveness, as measured by value-added scores, are inconclusive.

Teacher Burnout

Author: Kate Barnes

Full Report Forthcoming

This study examines the relationship between a 4DSW and teacher burnout in Arkansas, focusing on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Key findings include:

1. Emotional Exhaustion:

Compared to teachers on the traditional calendar, teachers in 4DSW districts report lower emotional exhaustion, with the greatest benefits for early-career and rural educators.

2. Depersonalization:

Teachers in 4DSW districts reported lower levels of depersonalization, or feelings of emotional detachment toward students compared to teachers on the traditional calendar.

3. Personal Accomplishment:

Teachers in 4DSW and traditional calendar districts reported similar levels of personal accomplishment.

Student Attendance

Authors: Kate Barnes & Sarah McKenzie, PhD

[Policy Brief](#)

This policy brief examines the impact of the 4DSW on student attendance in Arkansas and Missouri. Key findings include:

1. Overall Impact:

Arkansas 4DSW districts experienced small but statistically significant improvements in attendance, particularly among economically disadvantaged students. These gains tend to decline over time.

2. Long-Term Considerations:

The findings suggest that 4DSW should not be implemented solely to improve attendance, as effects are modest and inconsistent.

Academic Outcomes - District Level

Authors: Kate Barnes & Sarah McKenzie, PhD

[Full Report](#)

[Policy Brief](#)

[Blog](#)

Researchers analyzed the academic impact of 4DSWs in Arkansas by examining student value-added growth, academic achievement, and attendance. Key findings include:

1. Academic Growth:

4DSW districts showed a slight, yet statistically significant increase in student literacy growth compared to similar traditional calendar districts. Math growth results were positive but not statistically significant.

2. Academic Achievement:

Literacy and math proficiency rates were similar to the comparison traditional calendar districts. Proficiency trends varied by cohort and year, with some districts showing post-adoption gains while others experienced declines.

Academic Outcomes - Student Level

Author: Kate Barnes

Full Report Forthcoming

This study uses six years of student-level data and a rigorous difference-in-differences design to estimate the academic impacts of four-day school week (4DSW) adoption in Arkansas, where instructional hours are held constant by law. The analysis includes standardized test scores in math, English language arts (ELA), and science for students in grades 3–10 across rural districts.

1. No Statistically Significant Effects of the 4DSW on Student Achievement:

On average, there were no detectable effects—positive or negative—on math, ELA, or science scores during the first three years after switching to a 4DSW.

2. Instructional time may be the mechanism buffering academic effects

Findings from Arkansas suggest that when total learning time is preserved, shifting to a four-day schedule does not significantly impact student performance. This supports prior research emphasizing instructional time as a key input in academic achievement.

Arkansas 4DSW Resources & Press Mentions

Resources:

- Calendar considerations
 - [District leaders](#)
 - [Families & Students](#)
- [Jon Turner's 4DSW Resource Center](#)

Radio Stories:

- [Why Schools Consider Four-Day School Weeks](#)
- [Lincoln Consolidated School District Trims School Week to Benefit Mental Health](#)
- [Results of a Time Study May Help Educators Get More Time Out of the School Day](#)

News Articles:

- [Four-Day School Week a 'Game Changer', Lincoln Superintendent Says](#)
- ['Learning is Required': CMS Ready for New School Year](#)
- [A Look Into the Four-Day School Week for Northwest Arkansas](#)
- [Bold... or Risky?](#)

About the Office for Education Policy

Opened in the fall of 2003, the Office for Education Policy (OEP) is one of several research centers within the College of Education and Health Professions at the University of Arkansas; our staff includes faculty members, research associates and graduate students who specialize in education research and policy.

We are here to serve as a resource to state lawmakers, educators, administrators, and other leaders, providing them with current national, state, and regional research in education to support them in thoughtful decision-making concerning PreK-20 education in the State of Arkansas.

The Office for Education policy strives to look at pressing issues through the lens of academic research. We seek to help Arkansas' education leaders and lawmakers bridge the gap between research and practice by providing them with newsletters, policy briefs, web-based resources, and consultation about current education policy issues. Our print and electronic materials and consultation are available to any interested citizen.

About the Author:

Kate Barnes is a Ph.D. candidate in Education Policy at the University of Arkansas and a Graduate Research Assistant with the Office for Education Policy. Her research and dissertation focuses on school calendar reform, particularly the implementation of four-day school weeks in Arkansas. She has presented findings at the [National Four-Day School Week Conference](#) and works with researchers nationwide to inform policy conversations on this growing trend.



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