

Frequently Asked Questions About the Calendar

(Questions asked by parents, staff and community members)

Q: Will the modified calendar proposed require the district to apply for the four-day?

A: The total number of days is currently 160. If the day count falls under 160, then an application would be sent.

Q: With the current approved calendar, our children will go back in the beginning of August, the heat of summer. How does this impact our children and staff and their ability to effectively teach and learn?

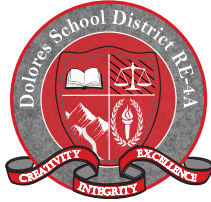
A: This is one of the reasons our leadership has considered a different start date. It is correct that starting in early August has some challenges.

Q: The current approved calendar has several inconsistencies in regards to teacher work days and days off. How would having a consistent school schedule help students, parents and school staff?

A: Again, this was pointed out to the leadership by parents and staff. We want to be respectful to those who took so much time last year in planning so we are moving carefully through this process. One of the concerns has been the inconsistency of the schedule. Many parents have been frustrated with not knowing whether it is a Friday for school or not. Having consistency is important for children's security and parent's planning.

Q: What are the benefits of going to a four-day school week?

A: This is a decision that the school board would have to approve; however, there is a movement toward this in our state. Currently 119 out of 178 school districts have gone to a modified schedule which is less than 160 days and more than the minimum of 140 days required. Many of the rural districts (Dolores is one of



these) have transitioned to this schedule in order to provide other options for children, more family time, adequate rest for all, and teacher retention.

Q: What is the reasoning behind proposing the four-day schedule?

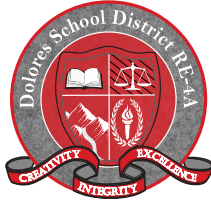
A: There are several reasons (list is not exhaustive):

- All of the districts in our County and some close to us have either gone to four days a week or are considering it. They have seen tremendous partnership in their community with the Friday programs for elementary students.
- The research that is provided by the Colorado Department of Education states, “The general feeling is that students do no worse on the four-day week than on the traditional schedule. If student performance is judged by satisfaction, then the results are very favorable.

An academic comparison study of Colorado school districts operating four-day and five-day calendars was completed by Dianne L. Lefly, Ph.D., Director of CDE Research & Evaluation and Jhon Penn, Executive Director of CDE Field Services in 2011. At the time of the study, there were sixty-seven Colorado school districts that operated all their schools on a four-day week rather than a five-day week. Because Colorado law requires that all districts provide a specified amount of ‘contact time’ for students, the shorter week includes longer days so the actual ‘contact time’ is the same as the schools with longer weeks. The study compared the academic achievement and student growth of the four-day districts to the academic achievement of five-day districts of similar size. Overall, the results indicated that both groups of districts performed similarly on the state assessments and that their students showed very similar amounts of academic growth as reflected by the Colorado Growth Model. The study may be accessed at

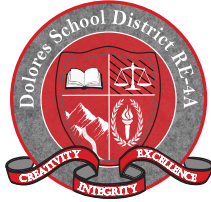
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Few districts have changed from five to four days with the expressed purpose of improving student achievement; it has



not been a significant issue.” Retrieved from Colorado Department of Education website at <https://www.cde.state.co.us/>

- The system in our country is not working for all students and geographical areas. American students are 21st in the international rankings. Many believe one of the reasons is that we have taken the childhood from our kids and replaced it with stress, testing, long days, and no play. The top performing countries tend to have shorter school days and much longer recess and breaks for the students. Families who have been involved in four-day schools report more quality time with their children, rested children, and time to have fun and explore.
- In our school district it is very difficult to attract teachers. Our pay is near the bottom of the pay scale and our facilities are lacking. Why would a teacher choose Dolores over another district they can work 20-30 days less for more pay? When recruiting teachers, they are not aware of the wonderful people in our district, they are only looking at their future. We have gone an entire year with two less teachers in elementary and no counselor. Our school board has generously raised salaries to as high a level as is possible given our current level of state pupil revenue. We are not able to pay teachers any more, but we can make their time more valuable by moving to a 4-day week.
- Enrollment in teacher preparation programs in Colorado has declined sharply in recent years. Between 2010-11 and 2015-16 the decline was 24%. More teachers are leaving the profession than are entering the profession. This trend has created a teacher shortage in Colorado that continues to grow. Colorado currently imports 50% of its teaching workforce from out of state and the majority of that workforce goes to work for larger, more urban districts. Rural districts suffer from the teacher shortage much more profoundly than big districts. <https://coloradosucceeds.org/teachers->



[leaders/colorados-teacher-shortage-get-facts/](#) (March, 26th 2018 Colorado Succeeds)

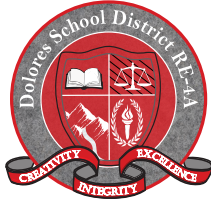
- Our state is currently last in the nation for teacher pay. (July 9, 2019 USA Today), <https://chalkbeat.org/posts/co/2018/04/05/colorado-teachers-can-claim-an-unwelcome-distinction-most-underpaid-in-the-nation-or-close-to-it/> Taking care of our teachers is essential to our students having what is best for their education. We often hear that children need more “seat time” at school to get everything possible. That is only possible when the teachers standing in front of them are able to pay their bills and get adequate planning and rest to do their jobs well. (July 9, 2019 USA Today). 95% of the school districts in Colorado (mostly rural district) pay teachers a salary that is below the cost of living in the community in which they live and work. <https://coloradosucceeds.org/teachers-leaders/colorados-teacher-shortage-get-facts/> (March, 26th 2018 Colorado Succeeds)

Q: How would moving to a four-day calendar impact the community?

A: The community would be an integral part of the Friday success. The leadership in Mancos has shared how going to four days has brought their community together. They currently have about 40 children who come on Fridays and follow a schedule of visiting different locations in the community and learning from some of the folks in town. The Rotary already has programs we would work to develop together. The beautiful surroundings of Dolores are perfect for outdoor adventure and education.

Q: Will there be offerings for our children on Fridays?

A: If the board were to approve a four-day calendar, there are conceptual plans for a Friday program. There are many classified staff (hourly employees) who are fully capable of assisting in a Friday Fun Day program. This program would provide breakfast and lunch to students who are in need of that. It would also be on a rotating schedule of activities and events.



Q: How will moving to a four-day week effect when we go back and get out?

A: There is no difference on the start date and ending date. Actually, the starting date has been moved to a bit later in August. The required days are less (140) but the hours of instruction are similar.

Q: How many student contact hours do we have to reach to be compliant and how many are we currently over by?

A: The state requires that students are in school for a minimum of 990 hours in elementary and 1,080 hours in middle and high school. Certain unstructured times are not calculated in those hours. We are currently over this amount by around 200 in the secondary and almost 250 in the elementary.

Q: Is there any cost savings from one calendar to another?

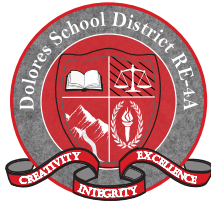
A: The answer is “not really.” There may be less activity on one day but it would not account for enough savings. Cost would not be a factor in the decision.

Q: Would there be a cost to families on Fridays if they utilized the Friday Fun Day Program?

A: There would not be a cost to families for this. The only exception could be on days of field trips that have cost attached. The district would work to obtain additional funds (grants, donations, county resources) to support any students who could not contribute to the cost of field trips.

Q: How is the modified calendar different from the one planned last year?

A: The major difference is on Fridays. Every other Friday is off for students. This is a more consistent expectation for parents and addresses the many concerns. Also, the professional development days are more strategically placed for training and end of the quarters.



Q: Is there any research on student academic performance in schools that are five days versus schools that are four days?

A: The Colorado Department of Education provides this information:

- “The general feeling is that students do no worse on the four-day week than on the traditional schedule. If student performance is judged by satisfaction, then the results are very favorable.

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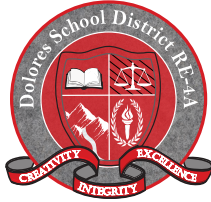
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Q: It has been rumored that the backpack program is starting back up again. Can this be used for families to receive food on Thursday?

A: Absolutely.

Q: What are some of the ideas for students on Friday if the district were to go to a four-day calendar?



A: Rotary Service Projects, Ski Club, Outdoor Adventures, Internships in the Community, Sports Workshops, Arts Explorations, Field Trips, Science Clubs, Boggy Draw, McPhee Reservoir, Walking Trips to the Library, Museums, Senior Center, and so much more.

Q: Aren't the days much longer for four-day weeks?

A: The current and proposed times are:

Current

Elementary: 8:15 am – 3:35 pm

Secondary: 8:04 am – 3:35 pm

Proposed

Elementary: 8:00 am – 3:30 pm

1015 Contact hours

(990 required hours)

Secondary: 7:50 am – 3:40 pm

1087.5 Contact hours

(1080 required hours)

Q: Won't this hurt the staff that works by the hour (classified staff)?

A: If the board were to approve a four-day calendar, the research and input gathered would be considered for these valuable employees. Some ideas that have been discussed are giving the classified staff the first opportunities to run the Friday program, extend their hours Monday – Thursday, meet individually with each classified employee, increase bus driver's wage, and other possibilities. The Per Pupil Revenue to the district would remain the same if the district were to transition to a 4-day week. Since the district is able to sustain its current workforce, it is reasonable to conclude that in removing a day the district would still be able to fully pay its staff. This could be done in a variety of ways. Classified staff could move to four 10-hour shifts. Paraprofessionals could become salaried employees as they are in many other districts. Hourly wages could be increased to account for the change in the number of hours worked.



Q: What about meals for the children who come on Friday?

A: Students who attend on Friday would have breakfast and lunch provided to them. If a family qualifies for free or reduced meals, they would receive that benefit. Other families would have to help with the cost of breakfast or lunch.

Q: How would moving to a 4-day week calendar impact student attendance?

A: A four-day school week has the advantage of having a day built into each week that students and staff can utilize for the scheduling of appointments. This will help improve attendance for students and staff. It will also increase the amount of time that teachers are in their classrooms and reduce the need for substitute teachers.