

Exploring Teacher Perceptions on 4-Day School Weeks in Texas Public Schools: A Mixed Methods Study

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Abstract

This study focuses on the perceptions of teachers in a central Texas 4A school district, spanning kindergarten through fourth grade, following the implementation of a 4-day school week. Utilizing Google Forms surveys with binary quantitative and open-ended qualitative questions, informed consent forms were distributed to the superintendent and sixty-eight faculty members of an elementary school. The survey aimed to collect insights on instructional planning, student well-being, work-life balance, attendance, extracurricular activities, and potential impacts on after-school childcare. Results indicate positive responses in all areas surveyed. Teachers noted that the transition to a 4-day week positively affected instructional planning, lowered stress levels, and more time provided for various commitments. The study also explored personal reflections from educators, revealing positive changes in teaching style and outlook towards the education profession. The findings suggest that the 4-day school week has the potential to enhance teacher well-being, reduce burnout, and improve retention rates. This study contributes valuable insights for school districts considering this scheduling approach, highlighting potential benefits for both teachers and students. The positive teacher perceptions indicate that such changes may foster a healthier work-life balance, contributing to a more positive outlook within the field of education.

Keywords: 4-day school week, teacher perceptions, academic achievement, work-life balance

With a growing teacher shortage in the United States, schools are searching for ideas to attract educators to remain in the classroom or bring new educators into the education field. One of these ideas is implementing a 4-day school week with adjusted hours or Fridays off. The purpose of this study is to investigate and explore teacher perceptions of the 4-day school week. The research team aims to gather quantitative and qualitative data about the influence of this change in the areas of student achievement, work-life balance, and extracurricular activities. Our goal is to discover how teachers feel about switching to a 4-day school week and how it might affect them and their students. Teachers may expect to see changes in their students' academic performance, positive or negative. Teachers may also expect to see changes in participation in extracurricular activities. Some may anticipate negative changes in these areas, while some may anticipate positive changes.

Statement of the Problem

The field of education is ever-changing and adapting as new research policies and ideas are published. Thousands of teachers have decided to leave the profession, resulting in a shortage of teachers across the United States (Texas Classroom Teachers Association, 2022). To keep teacher turnover rates stable, 27 school districts have discussed the transition to a 4-day school week starting during the 2022-2023 school year (Texas Classroom Teachers Association, 2022). This conversion to a shorter work week has been introduced across numerous states to attract teachers to join or remain in the education field (Fay, 2019). The benefit of this switch is that it will allow more time for instructional planning, various commitments, and academic pressure.

Literature Review

Studies of 4-day school weeks have been studied and performed across the United States in various areas. Many Texas school districts have begun to adopt a 4-day instructional week in recent years. In an article published

by the Texas Classroom Teachers Association, at least twenty-seven districts have chosen to adopt a 4-day school week across Texas (2022). Twenty-five states have been analyzed nationally for changes in instructional time, cost, and labor supplies (Thompson et al., 2020). Many Texas districts with 4-day weeks have chosen to lengthen the school day to meet the legal requirement of 75,600 minutes of instructional time per calendar year (Texas Classroom Teachers Association, 2022-2023). The first reported school district, in rural West Texas, to adopt a 4-day school week began in the 2016-2017 school year, with instruction from Monday through Thursday from 7:45 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (Texas Classroom Teacher Association, 2022-2023). Within this data, the rise of 4-day school week adoptions has become commonly accepted during the 2019-2020 school year with 4 districts adopting this change. An article published by Peter Damian Fay has been useful in analyzing the characteristics of campuses that have chosen to adopt a 4-day school week. This article revealed that many of the schools that choose to adopt 4-day school weeks are from rural regions (Fay, 2019). With this information, we have compared if these trends correlated to previous studies and if the characteristics of the district chosen to be surveyed aligned with these findings. Areas of discussion included the financial aspects, and community impacts, and calls for further research to better understand the consequences of this scheduling approach in American education (Heyward, 2018). This information has been relevant to our research problem due to the study of the long-term effects and discusses community satisfaction, teacher recruitment, student impact, and more. Three studies were performed and analyzed to measure notable differences in student achievement between a traditional 5-day school week and a 4-day week. A study performed in Georgia at elementary, middle, and high school levels showed improvements in the district's success of a 4-day school week in comparison to a 5-day school week. Student attendance levels and standardized test scores have risen in comparison to a traditional 5-day school week (Reyes, 2020). Another study showed reading and mathematics scores saw a negative impact after the implementation of the 4-day week (Tharp et al., 2023). By diving deeper into these ideas, we have considered key factors that should be examined when making decisions about implementing the 4-day school week and future research.

Search Strategy

Three keywords were commonly investigated to better understand and research 4-day school weeks. One of the first keywords searched for is "4-day school weeks". All analyzed articles and literature were published from 2018 to 2023. Many literature articles provided a basic overview of how a 4-day school week differs from a traditional 5-day instructional week. This has assisted us in gaining insight into how this instructional change affected teachers, students, and parents. Four research papers and articles detailed parent labor changes to adapt to a 4-day school week. The second keyword searched was "academic achievement in 4-day school weeks" yielded 7 articles. The final keyword for our research paper was "teacher perceptions" of 4-day school weeks, which displayed nine results. These articles provided personal experiences of how daily instruction has been altered.

Methodology

Participants of this study were located in a 4A district in suburban Central Texas. To increase responses, an email was distributed to all sixty-eight teachers from one of the student researchers. Five educators in kindergarten through fourth grade were surveyed. Instruments used to conduct this study included Google Forms surveys, which used binary quantitative questions and open-ended qualitative questions. Participants were informed of the survey goal and received informed consent forms and survey materials. In addition, all research materials were sent to the superintendent of a mid-sized rural school district. Two school principals also distributed surveys and consent forms to their teachers.

Limitations of this study include the fact that this 4A district's decision to adopt and implement a 4-day school week was implemented for one semester at the time of data collection. All teacher perceptions were collected after the implementation had been in effect for five months. The surveyed district had recently transitioned to a 4-day week effective August 7, 2023. Survey and interview responses regarding factors such as student attendance and well-being were collected too early to accurately determine any definite effects of 4-day versus 5-day school weeks. In the survey and reflection questions, we received the perspectives of five teachers. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 had an undisclosed number of years in teaching experience.

Teacher 3 had 8 years of teaching experience. Teacher 4 had eighteen years of teaching experience in the classroom. Teacher 5 had five years of teaching experience and 4 years of experience in the surveyed district. During the last year of discussing the transition of instructional days in school board meetings and communities, numerous surveys had been distributed to teachers, causing possible survey fatigue. For future research, teachers can compare student achievement scores and attendance records to the effectiveness of 4-day instructional weeks to 5-day instructional weeks.

Data Synthesis

The three themes that emerged complimented our quantitative results. By asking participants to elaborate on their responses to binary questions, we were able to further understand the effects of changes to the district's transition. These themes and responses align with our literature review. Key themes were shared using open-ended questions and survey feedback. Teachers were able to alter their instructional plans to fit the new schedule or personal interests. Motivation and flexibility were recurring findings among reviewed articles showing how the educators adjusted to these changes. Qualitative patterns indicated the effectiveness of the 4-day school week across the five grade levels studied, as reflected in the binary question results. The results from these binary questions added valuable information to the overall analysis by aligning with our literature review. The mixed methods data showed patterns of convergence where positive perceptions in adaptive teaching align with high quantitative scores on the impact of the 4-day school week on the classroom environment. There were similarities in the responses regarding parent involvement. An inconsistency in parent involvement was observed with four teachers reporting no change in parent involvement, while one teacher reports a shift in parent involvement through assisting with homework on Friday and requests for additional at-home learning materials. This data displays the importance of understanding how the 4-day school week impacts parent engagement. These patterns of agreement and differences provide a variety of perspectives about how the 4-day school week affects the teachers.

Key Themes

Teacher Perspectives

Many articles discussed how the teachers perceived the changes and how they coped with changes set by their administrators without their input. These studies provided a series of questions about the changes and how they affected teachers. A study was performed by Peter Fay (2019) in a rural Missouri school district. The purpose of this research study was to analyze possible benefits or incentives to maintain teacher retention in schools. In addition, this study measures other incentives for school districts such as cost and district savings, trends in 4-day school weeks, and faculty surveys. We believe that this information can be beneficial when applied to our study and enhance the benefits of a 4-day school week. This was beneficial to our research because it provides perceptions from teachers teaching various grade levels. This information helped us gain a better understanding of research on teachers' perceptions of 4-day school weeks.

Student Success

Two articles investigated the impact of a 4-day school week on student achievement compared to a traditional 5-day school week. The researchers analyzed data and concluded that students in 4-day school weeks performed less favorably in reading and mathematics. A 2022 New Mexico study published by Martha Whipple reviews the expectations of younger students and the impact on below-grade-level students in 4-day school weeks. We can use these results from New Mexico and compare them to results in a rural Texas school. The ideas researched in this study can inform teachers and parents about the possible negative effects of a 4-day week on student learning. Instructional strategies and policy implications are additional topics that administrations and parents must consider. Another article addressed the benefits of 4-day weeks and compared student data from state assessments of 4-day weeks to 5-day weeks (Thompson et al., 2023). The achievement results started at the kindergarten level and later assessed the same group of students in third grade (Thompson et al., 2023). This article is beneficial to our research by presenting data on possible long-term effects of 4-day school weeks with a control group (the standard 5-day school week).

Gaps in the Literature

Several gaps in the literature were observed while researching 4-day school weeks and teacher perceptions. One of the biggest gaps in the literature included published research on 4-day school weeks in Texas schools. Many of the articles published focused on various states with a brief national analysis that included the state of Texas published in 2020. According to Thompson et al.'s research, in the 2018-2019 school year only one Texas school district adopted a 4-day school week (2020). Data displayed in Table 1 shows that the states with the highest number of 4-day weeks include Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, and South Dakota during the 2018-2018 school year (Thompson et al., 2023). Our research focuses on a Texas public school, this can provide insight into its effects since 4-day school weeks have newly been introduced.

Statement of the Problem

A problem related to our study was the rising issue of teacher turnover and shortages of qualified teaching professionals. The primary objective of our mixed methods study is to investigate how current educators have been affected and adjusted to a 4-day school week. In this study of Texas schools by investigating common themes found in other states, data can be compared with the existing studies and results of the surveyed district. To gain perspectives on how teachers are affected, teachers were asked to reflect on changes to their daily schedule, feelings of burnout, retention or turnover due to 4-day weeks, parent involvement, and campus culture. To investigate how students may be affected are observations of attendance rates, parent involvement, and academic success. The research question that guided our study was "What are the perceptions of teachers regarding a 4-day school week?" Concepts of adaptive teaching, flexible schedules, engagement levels, and motivation levels are essential to this study. Our research methods align with current research frameworks of numerous states evaluating the effectiveness of 4-day school weeks. Teacher perceptions and retention rates in a Missouri school district were studied. To understand teacher retention rates, Fay (2019) analyzed factors that can influence turnover including pay scales, school resources, professional development opportunities, and teacher satisfaction. Concepts that will be studied in our research align with Kyle Tapper's (2022-

2023) study of 4-day school weeks in Saskatchewan schools. In this article, Tapper found that with the implementation of shorter school weeks student attendance rates, student engagement, and teacher morale have improved. The data and literature reviewed for our research show convergence with common themes of our study such as teacher perceptions, schedule flexibility, academic success, and retention rates.

Research Design

This research design is a convergent parallel mixed methods design. A convergent parallel mixed methods design uses both qualitative and quantitative data that are gathered at one period and not two unrelated studies (Mills & Jordan, 2023). This mixed methods design allows the researchers to review if the quantitative data and qualitative data found are related. This study is aimed to investigate the impact of transitioning to a 4-day school week on teacher perceptions. Using qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, we will explore how participant perspectives suggest that the 4-day school week affected factors such as teacher participation, work/life balance, academic performance, and extracurricular activities. Online surveys and reflection questions were used to collect data. The online surveys included closed-ended questions so the data could be quantified.

Data Collection

Qualitative Data Collection

To gather information about teacher perceptions, Google form surveys were submitted to sixty-eight teachers in kindergarten through fourth grade. Participants were asked to complete two binary question surveys and self-reflection questions regarding their experience in the field of education. Six open-ended questions were given for teachers to complete to assess their personal experiences with the transition to 4-day school weeks. Three questions were given to educators to reflect on their teaching philosophy, outlook toward the education field, and daily schedule adjustment in and out of the classroom.

Quantitative Data Collection

Google form surveys were distributed to sixty-eight teachers in kindergarten through fourth grade. While the participants were sample based on current employment at

the two campuses within the school district, their responses were voluntary. The following close-ended questions, educators were separately asked to elaborate on their experiences.

- Have you observed any changes in student engagement or participation as a result of extended school days or instructional schedules?
- Has the 4-day school week had any impact on the classroom environment or school culture?
- Have there been any changes in parent involvement as a result of the 4-day weeks?
- Did the transition to a 4-day school week attract you to remain or join the field of education?

Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis

The following open-ended questions were asked to educators in this district as part one of two for our mixed methods survey.

- How have the changes in school weeks affected your instructional planning time?
- How has the transition to 4-day school weeks impacted student well-being and academic success?
- Have there been any changes to your work-life balance with changes in the instructional schedule as an educator?
- Have there been any observable effects on student attendance with a 4-day school week?
- Has there been any change in student extracurricular activities as a result of the 4-day school week?
- How would a 4-day school week impact after-school care or childcare arrangements?

After completing part one of our survey, educators were asked to respond to three personal reflection questions regarding any changes to their teaching style and outlook towards their profession as a result of a 4-day week.

- How do you feel your teaching has improved or changed with the adjustment to a 4-day work week?
- How has a 4-day school week adjusted your daily classroom schedule compared to a 5-day school week?

- Has the transition to a 4-day school week changed your outlook or attitude toward the field of education?

The process used for coding and analyzing common themes is putting all responses and questions in a spreadsheet. Each response was individually analyzed by each student researcher and compared with common keyword(s) to summarize each participant's response. Our emergent themes were adaptive teaching, flexible schedules, and the motivation of teachers. When asked about instructional planning changes Teacher 3 stated, "Since teachers are required to work some Fridays, I can plan on those days without students...I am doing less planning at night or on the weekend". An example of a keyword for this response would be flexibility. Teacher 1 replied, "Every moment is more intentional, carefully planned to extract the most utility from our time" and "We recognize better that the purpose of school is to educate and educate well, rather than to adhere to a model that is convenient in a society as busy as ours" when asked about changes of classroom and school culture. This response was coded with the keywords time conscious and motivation. There were noticeable changes in student well-being with the transition to a 4-day instructional week. Teacher 2 stated that "It gives me a day to regroup and adjust as needed for students' needs" and they [students] seem to have adjusted easily". The keyword for this response was adapted.

Quantitative Data Analysis

As mentioned above, the quantitative data came from the survey instrument. These questions were crafted to determine teacher perceptions of the change, whether positive or negative. The data determined that there was both a positive and negative impact of the transition to the four-day school week.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Binary Survey Questions

Participant	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	Have you observed any changes in student engagement or participation as a result of extended school days or instructional schedules?	Has the 4-day school week had any impact on the classroom environment or school culture?	Have there been any changes in parent involvement as a result of 4-day weeks?	Did the transition to a 4-day school week attract you to remain or join the field of education?
Teacher 1	0	1	0	0
Teacher 2	0	1	0	1
Teacher 3	0	1	1	1
Teacher 4	0	1	0	1
Teacher 5	0	1	0	1

Yes = 1 point No = 0 points

In Table 1, binary questions were scored on a scale where zero indicated 'no' and one indicated 'yes'." Table 1 shows each participant's response to the provided question.

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation for Each Binary Question

Binary Questions	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Question 1 (Q1)	0.0	0.0
Question 2 (Q2)	1.0	0.0
Question 3 (Q3)	0.2	0.40
Question 4 (Q4)	0.8	0.40

Table 2 displays the mean (*M*) and standard deviation (*SD*) for each binary question distributed to participants. The mean was calculated for each question to match the data displayed in Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4. The standard deviation was also calculated for each question. The standard deviation highlights the unanimous agreement

among participants in their responses to Question 1 regarding student engagement. In Question 2, all participants consistently indicated a positive shift of the campus and classroom culture. However, Question 3 reveals variations in perceptions of parent involvement following the implementation of the 4-day school week, with some participants reporting no change or negative impacts. Finally, Question 4 shows that 4-day school weeks encouraged most participants to remain in the education field.

Figure 1

Transition to Four-Day School Week as a Teacher Retention Incentive

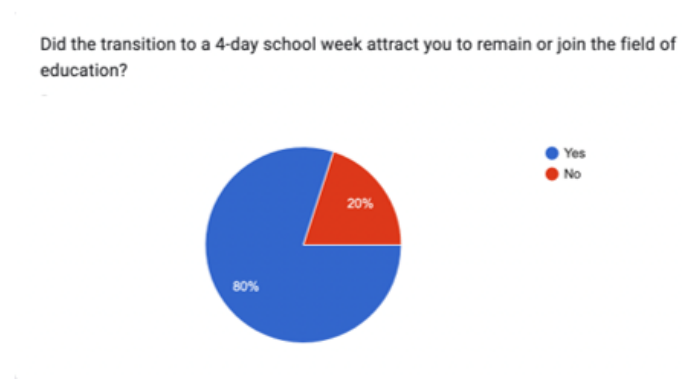


Figure 1 discusses teacher attitudes toward turnover in the education field with the transition to a 4-day school week. This data shows that transitioning to 4-day school weeks has positively influenced most teachers to remain in the teaching field. These responses were an average of teachers including experienced and first-year teachers.

Integration of Data

One goal of conducting this study was to further understand teacher perspectives on various areas of the implementation of a 4-day school week. The data collected was organized by directly transferring qualitative and quantitative data from the Google Forms survey to a spreadsheet. Qualitative and quantitative data approaches were used to gain insight into how scheduling changes impacted student achievement, work-life balance, and additional activities. As part of our survey instruments, participants were asked to elaborate on their experiences using open-ended binary questions and open-ended reflection questions regarding their teaching outlook and classroom schedule. The integration of these insights

allowed a clear interpretation, deepening understanding beyond what each data type could provide on its own. The initial stage consisted of separate analyses for qualitative and quantitative data, with thematic analysis for qualitative data and statistical analysis for quantitative data. Before merging, a plan was created to help identify important research questions and themes for integration. Quantitative and qualitative insights worked together to provide an understanding of the research topic. For instance, when analyzing how the 4-day school week affects student engagement (quantitative result), qualitative responses shared specific teaching strategies (adaptive teaching theme) that teachers used to enhance engagement. The quantitative data showed a positive trend in teacher retention (binary questions), and qualitative findings explained how the flexible schedules (flexible schedules theme) made work-life balance better, influencing teachers' decisions to stay. When comparing the qualitative and quantitative analyses, areas of convergence, divergence, and emerging patterns were identified. The qualitative data showed themes of adaptive teaching, flexible schedules, and motivation among teachers. For example, Teacher 3 mentioned gaining flexibility by planning on Fridays without students, which aligns to the theme of adaptive teaching. Teacher 1 highlighted planning and understanding the purpose of education aligning with the theme of motivation. However, the quantitative data presented in Table 1 and Table 2 reveal the differences in responses to questions regarding student engagement, classroom environment, parent involvement, and teacher attraction to the field. Comparing this information provided a detailed understanding of the research questions enhancing the overall analysis.

Concluding the integrated analysis emphasizes the importance of combining qualitative and quantitative insights for a complete understanding of 4-day school weeks. The combination of these data types improves the analysis by offering detailed perspectives that may be incomplete when considered separately. For instance, themes from the qualitative data, such as adaptive teaching and flexible schedules add depth and context to the quantitative findings on changes in student engagement. This blend ensures conclusions are well-rounded, considering both teachers' experiences and statistical aspects of the 4-day school week.

Results

To organize our qualitative data a narrative text is used to portray the experiences of five in-service teachers. The responses and reflections will be organized into five individual paragraphs. Our qualitative responses will combine the initial questions about work-life changes and reflection questions about whether their teaching has improved, daily schedule adjustments, and outlook toward the field of education.

Qualitative Data Results

Teacher 1

Teacher 1 (T1) has an unknown number of years in the teaching field. Her experience in the classroom was not disclosed in her survey responses. T1 commented that having a daily conference provides adequate time for preparing activities and student materials. A benefit of having changes in instructional planning time is "when I need more time and choose to do work part of a day on Friday, it protects my weekend (Saturday and Sunday) from being consumed by my professional responsibilities." Student well-being does not appear to be negatively impacted. Students in T1's class are eager to share events that happened over the extended weekend compared to prior school years. Student engagement and participation have no observable change. The campus culture and classroom environment have become more present in learning for staff and students. T1 feels that with the 4-week change the district "[recognized] that the purpose of school is to educate and educate well, rather than to adhere to a model that is convenient in a society as busy as ours." Due to this change, T1 found enjoyment in teaching again. She felt that this will reflect in student achievement. No changes in parent involvement have occurred. The transition from a 5-day school week to a 4-day school week did not affect retention for T1. Teacher 1 shares positive changes to work-life balance from 4-day weeks. Some activities that T1 can partake in more often include personal hobbies, self-care, and quality time with their children. Having an additional day off work (Fridays) T1 can take care of their health by attending doctor appointments. Fridays off allow reduced stress from arranging a guest educator and plans for students. Student attendance had minimal change. T1 reported that "student excuses for absences are much more assigned to illness

rather than ‘Oh, my family was out of town’.” Changes to student participation in extracurricular activities were unknown or had minimal change. She responded that families created solutions to their personal childcare needs. T1 is aware that several local childcare facilities extended their services offered or created programs to accommodate Fridays out of school. T1 did not participate in the three reflection questions regarding personal teaching philosophy and, changes in instructional days, and outlook toward the education field.

Teacher 2

Teacher 2 (T2) has an unknown number of years in the teaching field. Her years of experience in the classroom were not disclosed in her survey responses. T2 revealed that a 4-day week change in instructional planning has allowed more time to differentiate the needs of students and prioritize herself. Student well-being and academic success appear to have adjusted well to a 4-day school week. T2 has observed no noticeable changes in student participation in the classroom. Regarding changes in the classroom environment and school culture, faculty and students have “much-needed mental breaks”. District staff have an increased amount of time to plan, organize materials, and incorporate the differentiation needs of students. No noticeable changes in parent involvement have been observed. The transition to a 4-day school week did attract T2 to remain in the field of education. T2 revealed that positive changes have occurred to her work-life balance due to changes to the school day and instructional week. Teacher 2 saw no changes in student attendance during the current school year. Changes in student participation in extracurricular activities and childcare arrangements were unknown to Teacher 2. T2 did not participate in the three reflection questions regarding personal teaching philosophy, changes in instructional days, and outlook toward the education field.

Teacher 3

Teacher 3 (T3) has five years of teaching experience in the classroom. Due to changes in instructional times, T3 utilizes Fridays off to do less planning on the weekends outside of school. Changes in student well-being and academic success have improved with the transition to a 4-day week. T3’s students appear to have lower stress levels and improved perspectives toward attending school. She

has not observed any changes in student participation and engagement in school activities. T3 states that the campus culture and classroom atmosphere has improved with the transition to 4-day school weeks. She shared that from her experiences “students seem to get along better and have more patience.” T3 has observed changes in parent involvement compared to a traditional 5-day week. She reported that “many of my parents spend Fridays doing any homework that I have sent home or are asking for extra work to complete with them on our Fridays off.” In response to teacher retention with a 4-day work week, this adoption has influenced T3 to remain in the education field. T3 responded that she has overall reduced stress levels throughout the work week. T3 has an improved work-life balance by having downtime to spend with family and flexibility to accomplish more tasks outside of school hours. T3 reported an increase in attendance rates for her students. Few absences have been reported this school year. Changes in student participation in extracurricular activities were unknown. T3 shared that a 4-day school week and childcare was no different than summer vacation. During summer break parents/guardians find arrangements for childcare by having Fridays out of school. No negative perspectives have been shared by parents according to T3. Reflecting on their changes in instruction as a result of 4-day school weeks, T3 has time to plan more interactive activities rather than paper assignments. With the adjustment of school hours and length of the week, T3 responded that there is more time to finish classroom activities compared to a 5-day week. Her attitude and outlook towards the education field have improved by having lower stress levels.

Teacher 4

Teacher 4 has been in the education field for eighteen years. When asked about changes in personal planning time T4 stated, “ [having an extended school day] gives me time to complete my daily tasks which helps [me] not have to bring as much work home.” This is due to T4 knowing that Fridays can be used to catch up on grading and planning. No observable change has been recorded other than students having more energy on Mondays. T4 believed that this is due to children having time to relax and play outside of school. A significant improvement has been reported with changes in school culture and classroom environment. Both students and faculty appeared to have lower stress

levels as a result of 4-day school weeks. This educator responded positively to changes in work-life balance with a 4-day work week. An increased amount of time spent on mental health and personal well-being was recorded. T4 reports having a lower amount of work and lesson planning has been completed outside of school hours. Student attendance rates showed no significant improvement. T4 reported no known change to extracurricular activities. No changes in parent involvement were reported. Changes in childcare arrangements were not observed by T4 since she has older children.

In reflection questions regarding improvements to classroom teaching, T4 responded that they have more energy during instructional days and throughout the week. In comparison to a 5-day school week, T4 felt that there is more time in the day to complete tasks and prepare materials for her students. T4 reported that her perspective and outlook toward the education field has been a positive change with the adoption of 4-day school weeks.

Teacher 5

Teacher 5 (T5) has been in the education field for eight years. In response to changes in their instructional planning within a 4-day school week, Teacher 5 reported a positive change. Each day of the week is equally important, and teachers are conscious of their instructional time usage. Having Fridays off or no students in the classroom allows her to grade papers, plan upcoming activities, and prepare materials. T5 reported that having a 4-day week and Fridays off creates an increased amount of downtime. In response to changes in student well-being and success, there were mixed results. This teacher observed no changes in parent involvement within a 4-day school week. T5 reported that the local community has adjusted childcare hours or created programs to accommodate a 4-day school week. Overall, T5's observations of student well-being and academic success seem unaffected due to the 4-day school week. According to T5, the campus and local community have an abundance of programs to be responsive to student needs such as food pantries, clothing donations, classroom supplies, etc. When discussing the 4-day school week, changes to classroom atmosphere, and campus culture, T5 shared how the district is supportive of their staff and work environment. This educator reported that changing the length and times of the school week creates a manageable

occupation. When asked if the change to a 4-day school week influenced teacher retention, T5 reported feeling burnout after eight years and considered searching for an alternative career. Before transitioning to 4-day school weeks, sacrifices were made with "several important priorities [including] family, self, health, hobbies, friendships and I didn't have the time to spend adequate time on all of them". After the transition, T5 shared that now she has increased time for planning instruction and time for other activities without making sacrifices to their personal life. This educator reported there have been noticeable and consistent improvements in student attendance.

When reflecting on personal teaching improvements, T5 shares that their academic approaches have not significantly changed with the transition to a shorter school week. Teacher 5 did notice a change in their energy levels and preparation throughout the school week. She responded that she feels "[engaged] with [her] students about their learning on a more authentic level" and this is more achievable when she has the flexibility in her schedule to practice self-care. T5's outlook towards the field of education has been increasingly optimistic for the future. T5 felt that in previous years it was discouraging to remain in the field with no change and "feeling that nobody is bold enough to take action".

Overview of Participant Responses

All educators report positive trends in planning time and having Friday's off. Several participants responded that with the adoption of 4-day school weeks, they were able to balance work life balance and better manage stress levels. These may include more time dedicated to families, health, or personal hobbies. Most participants noticed a change in the classroom or school culture as a result of 4-day school week adoption. T1, T2, T3, and T4 noticed minimal changes in student engagement. T1, T2, T4, and T5 saw little to no change in parent involvement. T2, T3, T4, and T5 disclosed that they wished to remain in the field of education due to 4-day work weeks. T3, T4, and T5 reported improvement in student engagement, while T1 and T2 noted mixed results in student engagement. T3 and T5 revealed an improvement in student attendance and fewer absences since the implementation of 4-day school weeks.

Qualitative Themes

Three key themes were found throughout open-ended survey responses. One of the key themes was adaptive teaching and adaptive learning for students. Teachers shared that they have an increased amount of time for planning instruction and time for other activities while maintaining a healthy work/life balance. The second key theme is balancing flexible schedules for students and school personnel. Significant changes have been reported with changes in school culture and classroom environment. Participants have reported that students are more engaged in learning due to “every minute counts” during instruction. Survey participants also revealed that without having students in school on Fridays, they have additional time to “focus on the special needs of students”. Both students and faculty appeared to have lower stress levels as a result of 4-day school weeks. Educators responded positively to changes in work/life balance with a 4-day work week. The third theme of our survey was engagement and motivation. Many teachers noted that the campus culture and classroom atmosphere have improved with the transition to the shorter school week. Many also reported that the shorter week has provided noticeable improvements in parent participation and involvement with their students’ academics.

Quantitative Data Results

To organize our quantitative data results the survey questions and results have been displayed using pie graphs. If the participant(s) responded “Yes”, the corresponding color is blue. If the participant(s) responded “No”, the corresponding color is blue.

Figure 3
Have you observed any changes in student engagement or participation as a result of extended school days or instructional schedules?

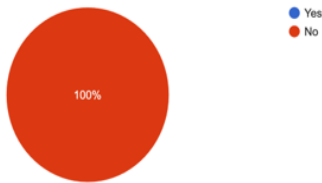


Figure 4
Has the 4-day school week had any impact on the classroom environment or school culture?



Figure 5
Have there been any changes in parent involvement as a result of the 4-day weeks?

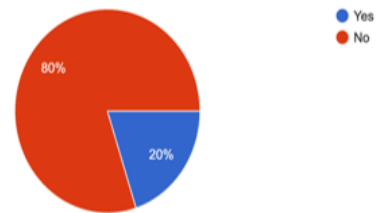
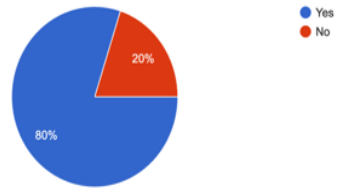


Figure 6
Did the transition to a 4-day school week attract you to remain or join the field of education?



Descriptive and Inferential Statistics

To summarize our findings, we use the mean to represent the central tendency of our quantitative questions. Participants of this survey ranged from kindergarten to 4th grade educators. If a participant responded to the survey question with “Yes”, the point value is one. If a participant responded to a binary question answering “No”, the point value is zero. Using these point values, the mean of our survey results is displayed in Table 1. The standard deviation was calculated for each quantitative survey question. To align with the data displayed on each figure [Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4], the standard deviation of each question is displayed in Table 2. Question 1 and Question 2 had a variance of zero. Question 3 had a standard deviation of 0.40. Question 4 had a standard deviation of 0.40. An inference can be made about teacher perceptions of 4-day school weeks. Questions 1 and 2 had

no variance, which can imply that educators have responded positively to the implementation of a 4-day school week. The data from Q3 implies that most participants saw minimal changes in parent involvement from the previous school year. Standard deviation results of Q4 imply that a 4-day school week attracted most participants to remain in the education field. This data can accurately display teacher perceptions across Texas with a common theme of burnout rates, teacher turnover rates increasing, and personal work/life balance.

Data Integration

Common qualitative themes align with our quantitative survey results. Key themes were shared using open-ended questions and survey feedback. Using open-ended survey materials allowed teachers to share changes in their updated instructional schedule and personal interests. The results of our binary questions and the option to elaborate on experiences added valuable information to our study. The purpose of Table 2 is to analyze each teacher's responses to questions regarding changes in student participation, campus culture, parent involvement, and teacher retention/turnover. In Table 2, the mean and standard deviation scores give perspective to each educator's narrative. The results of this table can imply a useful and optimistic growth from a 4-day school week. The key theme of flexible schedules connects with Figure 5, where 80% of participants reported no significant changes in parent involvement. Results of Table 2 (Q3) show a difference of 0.18 from the mean and standard deviation. This implies that there was minimal growth in parent involvement. Table 2 (Q4) displays a difference in teacher retention and teacher turnover rates. Of the five participants, one participant revealed that the transition to a 4-day school week did not affect their decision to remain in the teaching field. A key theme of teacher motivation corresponds with Figure 2, indicating that the district adopting a 4-day school week positively influenced teachers to remain in the field. These implications display a positive impact on the campus culture and classroom environment. This convergence helps with understanding the positive aspects of the altered schedule. These implications display a positive impact on the campus culture and classroom environment. These results imply that the data collected was too soon to determine any significant changes. By finding similarities and

highlighting key points across both data sets, a full overview and perspective of educators impacted by a 4-day school week.

Discussion

Implications

Questions and survey materials were collected to gain an understanding of any possible shifts or changes related to a 4-day school week. These results from in-service educators can be applied to inform administration research and policy change. The results of these surveys can be seen to match a similar pattern of characteristics of districts that adopt a 4-day school week and teacher perceptions of work/life balance. This in-depth study of student attendance, changes in school culture, and teacher turnover can benefit future policy and decision-making. The result of this survey assists the administration in decision-making for creating or altering the instructional calendar. These changes can positively affect student performance and teacher satisfaction in the field of education. The results of our research can impact the administration and future policy for educational instruction. The results of these surveys can be seen to match a similar pattern of characteristics of districts that adopt a 4-day school week and teacher perceptions of work/life balance. This in-depth study of topics such as student attendance, school culture, and teacher turnover can help inform others about 4-day school weeks. Practical implications of this data suggest the improvements that can be made in the education field within schools that choose to adopt a 4-day school week.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study and research results. As previously mentioned, the school district that was being studied has implemented a 4-day school week that was effective on August 7, 2023. An additional limitation is survey results do not reveal data for the entire 2023-2024 school year. Survey results were collected by November 2, 2023. Our methods of triangulation were not fully achieved in our qualitative data results. Triangulation was not achieved in planning using three tools that were distributed to kindergarten through fourth-grade teachers. A 10-question survey was sent to current teachers to gain insight into their personal experiences regarding instructional planning, student engagement, parent

involvement, childcare arrangements, school culture, and turnover rates. At the end of this survey, teachers were given an additional survey question if they would like to participate in an optional individual interview. In a 3-question open-response reflection, teachers were asked to evaluate if their teaching has been changed or impacted, their adjustments of instructional planning time, and overall attitudes toward the field of education. To gather information on teacher satisfaction, all staff members were surveyed during the 2022-2023 school year when the concept of a 4-day week was presented for adoption to the district school board. With this new school year transition, district staff has been consistently surveyed to measure any success or changes that need to be made throughout the current school year. We believe a low response rate can be attributed to survey fatigue. To address the possibility of low participation due to survey fatigue or busy schedules, we emphasized that participation in our survey was not mandatory but highly encouraged and appreciated. The superintendent of the school district also distributed the optional survey materials and informed consent documents to teachers from kindergarten through fourth grade. Our survey materials were distributed to sixty-eight kindergarten through fourth-grade teachers. Two reminder emails were distributed to educators over one month with informed consent documents and survey materials. Of the sixty-eight teachers who were selected to participate, five responses from participants were collected. Individual interviews were presented as optional for participants to complete.

Future Research

Future research can be performed as 4-day school weeks continue to be studied and adopted. Potential topics for the future can be a study comparing end-of-year test scores

from the 4-day school week to the previous school year (5-day school weeks) since this district implemented a 4-day week beginning August 7, 2023. This data can be compared to Fay's research in a Georgia school district showing positive trends in standardized testing. Teacher application and turnover rates can also be analyzed with the implementation of a 4-day instructional week. Future research could investigate if there is a pattern of improved attendance in students within districts with a 4-day school week. Due to gaps in literature for Texas public schools, future research can be explored on the effects of 4-day school weeks in schools from students, educators, and guardians.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate and explore teacher perceptions of the 4-day school week. Our goal was to gather quantitative and qualitative data about the effect of this change in the areas of student achievement, work/life balance, and student participation in extracurricular activities. Teachers may have expected to see changes in their student's academic performance, work/life, balance, and extracurricular activities. Teachers have found that this change has allowed more time for instructional planning, various personal commitments, and reduced stress levels. The five teachers surveyed responded positively across all areas questioned. School districts may consider making this change to reduce burnout and raise retention rates, how teachers feel about switching to a 4-day school week, and how that might affect them and their students. Teachers may perceive a better work/life balance leading to less stress or burnout.

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