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Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

Nannette W. Glenn, Ph.D.

Dr. Nannette Glenn, Dean of the
College of Graduate and Professional
Studies

02 / 25 / 2022

Dissertation Committee:

Libi Shen

Dr. Libi Shen, Chair

Joseph Rummenapp

Dr. Joseph Rummenapp

Karen Maxwell

Dr. Karen Maxwell

Abilene Christian University
School of Educational Leadership

Four-Day Modified School Systems in Rural Oklahoma

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Bryan D. Akins

March 2022

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the Oklahoma State Department of Education for improving the school system and providing a high quality of education. This dissertation is also dedicated to my grandmother, Alma LoRene Akins, who always believed that greatness was within me.

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I would like to thank God for giving me the ability to reach this milestone in my life. Without his divine guidance and acceptance, I would not be who I am today.

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Abstract

Over the past 40 years, school districts in rural areas have been forced to move to a modified four-day school schedule. As of 2019, 650 schools in over 25 states operate on a four-day modified school model. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the four-day school week. Four research questions guided the study: (a) How do teachers and administrators perceive the four-day school system in Oklahoma?, (b) Why do teachers and administrators support or not support a four-day school system in Oklahoma?, (c) How do teachers and administrators perceive the impact of the four-day school system on students' academic performance?, and (d) What suggestions do teachers and administrators have for districts considering the implementation of the four-day school week? The participants were 15 teachers and five administrators from rural school districts in Oklahoma. Interviews and a focus group discussion were adopted as instruments for the study. Data were collected through Zoom and analyzed manually. The findings showed seven significant emergent themes. The significant themes for interviews were (a) increased teacher and student attendance, (b) increased student morale and decreased discipline issues, (c) increased teacher morale and retention, and (d) more time for family and personal business. The significant themes for the focus group discussion consisted of (a) increased teacher and student attendance, (b) increased student morale and decreased discipline issues, and (c) school finance benefits. Recommendations were included.

Keywords: four-day school, five-day school, modified school schedule, teacher morale, teacher recruitment and retention

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The idea of a four-day work with 10-hour days to achieve a 40-hour schedule has been growing in both business and government over the last decade. Facer and Wadsworth (2010) indicated that four-day work weeks increase production as workers take fewer days off and have extended weekends to decompress. Their study showed that 55% of cities with populations greater than 25,000 have businesses with modified employee scheduling. This increases employee retention and recruitment. The medical field implemented a four-day schedule for nurses and other health professionals in the 1970s as common practice (Fottler, 1977), with law enforcement implementing similar practices in the 1980s (Cunningham, 1982). Federal agencies were allowed to implement compressed work schedules in the 1980s as well (Reagan, 1982).

The United States offers more formal education to all citizens than any other country in the world (Chaika, 2005). However, the amount of time spent on education is far behind those of other nations, with the average, traditional school system reporting five-day school calendars with an average of 180 days. The 180 days include professional development and parent-teacher days. This does not correctly reflect true instructional days or direct instruction. Chaika (2005) showed that the international average for school calendars is 210 days, with Japan averaging 243 days. The National Center on Time and Learning (2017) reported that school districts in the United States are experimenting with modified school schedules to mitigate the cost and increase instructional time, not days, with an emphasis on student achievement.

As schools see an increase in pressure to increase academic success, with a decrease in educational funding, finding alternative solutions is necessary. Marzano's (2010) research showed results directly connected instructional time to students' overall academic success. This

poses a dilemma for many school districts as they face societal pressures to increase student achievement with limited funding to do so.

Background

Questions surrounding the formation, implementation, and effects of modified schools are hot topics for rural communities and are becoming increasingly more prevalent. The use of modified school systems should come as no shock to educators familiar with increasing class sizes and decreasing school funding. Couple those factors with a decline in certified educators and decreased enrollment in certified teacher preparation programs, the need to retain teachers and recruit educators to the profession is in high need.

Traditional school systems dominate the educational landscape in the United States and operate on a five-day school calendar. The majority of four-day school week districts, nationally, are in rural locations (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020). Hedtke (2014) stated that less than 1% of school districts in the United States operate on a four-day week schedule. According to Morton (2021), 650 school districts in 25 states operate a four-day week schedule as of 2019. Each district shared similarity in schedule name alone and a primary rationale financial need but operate differently with attention to individual community needs (Donis-Keller & Silvernail, 2009). Many districts differ in four-day week schedule and philosophy with the day of the week that is taken off. This noninstructional day is typically placed on a Monday or Friday but differs from district to district (Hewitt & Denny, 2011). The day of the week that is taken off is typically affected by extracurricular activities within the districts. Another difference between districts in scheduling is the state-mandated instructional hours. As states have varying requirements for school year length based on hours, four-day school systems adjust their school day to add time, 60 to 90 minutes typically, to meet these requirements (Plucker et al., 2012).

According to the national cost savings analysis provided by Griffith (2011), the then annual savings for rural districts was a maximum of 5.43%, with the average being 2.5%. By adopting the four-day school week, schools can decrease spending in areas of transportation. Specific to rural schools, transportation provided by the school district is key to the enrollment and attendance of students. Four-day school systems go back to as early as 1936 but were not commonly used until the 1970s. The introduction of widespread use of the four-day school system in the 1970s was due to oil shortages that increased fuel costs. Sheehy (2012) found that rural school districts in the 1970s found roughly 20% savings in transportation by switching to a four-day school system. It is imperative to study the various perspectives of professionals within the nontraditional system to understand the financial aspect of the modified school system.

Another aspect of the four-day school system that has been proposed is the benefit of decreased absenteeism rates for teachers and students (Venosa, 2015). In addition to students being present more often, Long (2016) noted that teachers reported students being more engaged and not having the Friday slump. The ability for students to pay attention and increased attendance rates allows teachers to increase academic rigor and depth of lessons. Cummings (2015) stated that four-day school systems allow for teachers to teach more in-depth and provide time for valuable training on Fridays. In addition to increased instructional effectiveness and the ability of core curriculum teachers, Farris (2013) stated that four-day school weeks permit school districts to avoid instructional cuts, allowing for increased elective possibilities.

The ability to retain and employ highly qualified teachers is an increasing problem in rural schools. Jimerson (2005) indicated that rural districts face significant challenges when hiring teachers compared to larger school districts. The location, pay, and support offered by

rural school districts compared to larger school districts is a large hurdle for rural districts when attracting new teachers (Eppley, 2009; Farris, 2013; Maiden et al., 2020).

DeNisco (2013) described the rural Oklahoma school district's rationale for transitioning to a four-day school week due to the inability to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers. Four-day school systems increasing student and teacher attendance help boost the school district's ability to retain and attract highly qualified staff members. However, Anglum (2021) found that the majority of school leaders supported the four-day school system because it helped increase teacher retention, and it might save the budget as it leads to reduced spending on recruitment and hiring.

The rationalization by school districts to use the modified school schedules, saving money through decreasing utility and bus usage, has found an unintended positive aspect of recruiting and retaining teachers. In addition to the decrease in utility and bus usage, absenteeism decreased. Earlier, Barry and Kelley (1997) reported that Fridays traditionally carry a high absenteeism rate compared to other days of the week. The main concern with the move to a four-day school week is the educational impact on students and if there is truly a cost saving. The state legislature passed Oklahoma Senate Bill 441 to stop four-day school weeks and any modified school scheduling outside the traditional schedule. Oklahoma Senate Bill 441 (S. B. 441, 2021) stated that beginning in the 2020–2021 school year, all schools must do the following.

- a. Attend school for a minimum of 1,080 hours and 165 school days.
- b. Attend school for a minimum of 1,080 hours and less than 165 days if the school meets the state board of education requirements approved by the state legislature. Current requirements have not been provided or approved by the state legislature.

c. Attend school for 180 days.

Since this legislation has been passed, the requirements have been waived. Proponents in support of this legislation identified concerns that businesses were not coming to Oklahoma due to the state legislature's allowance of four-day school weeks and the modified school scheduling negatively affecting student academic success. Evidence to confirm these statements is not provided by any legislative office or confirmed by the state department of education. Therefore, research is needed to determine if modified school calendars are beneficial for all stakeholders within four-day school systems or if the traditional five-day calendar is justified.

Statement of Problem

Over the past 40 years, school districts in rural areas have been forced to move from five-day school weeks to a modified four-day school schedule. Morton (2021) indicated that “four-day school weeks have proliferated across the United States in recent years, reaching over 650 public school districts in 24 states as of 2019;” however, “little is known about the effects of the four-day school week on high school students” (p. 31). Multiple reasons were cited for the shift, but primary reasons found by Beesley and Anderson (2007) stated that school finance, teacher retention and morale, and student attendance were key aspects of the four-day school week. Dearien (2010) cited the national recession beginning in 2007 as a driving force for a decrease in educational spending in many states. The states with the most severe educational spending cuts were Idaho, Arizona, Alabama, and Oklahoma (Saunders, 2012). Cline (2017) reported that the number one option for school districts facing revenue decrease was to transition to a four-day schedule to help reduce overall spending.

The change to the traditional school week and shortening it by a day brings about concerns with stakeholders regarding academic achievement (Cline, 2017; Tharp et al., 2016).

The recent implementation of the four-day week in Missouri has brought about similar concerns in their state legislature. Similar to recent legislation in Oklahoma, SB 441, the Missouri legislator implemented a policy requiring four-day school districts to attend a minimum of 174 instructional days or more (Four-Day School Week, 2009). Heyward (2018) stated that to truly understand the impact of four-day school weeks on students after graduating is in employment and income and that further longitudinal studies are required.

Maxey and Bass (2019) identified that four-day school systems in Oklahoma had negative standardized test scores compared to traditional school systems at the elementary level. The majority of four-day school week districts, nationally, are in rural locations (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020). The analysis identified by Thompson (2019b), along with regional data, and according to the national cost savings, the annual savings for rural districts nationally was a maximum of 5.43%, with the average being 2.5%, making the modified school calendar desirable for many school districts. Thompson (2021a) found that the impact on academic achievement was not a factor compared to the financial benefit.

The specific problem is the lack of funding for public education, resulting in poor facilities, low teacher salaries, decreased morale, and difficulty in teacher recruitment, which forced rural Oklahoma public schools to find alternative methods to running their school systems (Brown, 2017). Currently, from 2008 to the present, Oklahoma public education funding has been reduced by 28.2% from the state and an inflation cost rate of 15.6%, for a combined funding reduction of 43.8% (Leachman, 2019). According to the Oklahoma State Department of Education (2019), 97 school districts in Oklahoma have implemented the four-day school week as a method to address funding issues. This funding problem affects Oklahoma public schools, causing them to take radical approaches to run and maintain their school systems by

implementing four-day modified school calendars. There are many possible factors contributing to this problem: school finance, teacher retention and recruitment, and student achievement. Funding for education and basic school operations has been problematic for Oklahoma school systems. School districts across the state instituted a statewide walkout in 2017 to address this issue. The walkout resulted in the Oklahoma State Department of Education conducting a study on the effects of four-day school systems on school finance, academics, crime, and student nutrition. As a result, HB 1684 was passed requiring school districts that implemented the four-day school calendar to submit a plan detailing the goals and an annual review by the local school board and state department. In addition to HB 1864 legislation, raising the state minimum salary schedule was passed but did not address the overall funding issue pushing rural school districts to the modified school schedules.

Purpose Statement

School districts have been forced to implement cost-savings strategies to help curb financial shortfalls and have found that the four-day school week is a method to save money. The majority of four-day school week districts, nationally, are in rural locations (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore principals' and teachers' perspectives on the four-day modified school system. This study identified positive and negative attributes associated with the four-day modified school systems based on teachers' interviews and administrative dialogue. These attributes fell into three main categories: student achievement, teacher retention and recruitment (morale), and school finance. School finance was limited to administrative responses. Strange (2013) defined rural school systems as schools with total enrollments fewer than 600 and the town population under 2,500. The study explored

principals' and teachers' perceptions, viewpoints, and suggestions regarding the four-day modified school schedule.

Research Design

I adopted a qualitative method with a case study design. Case study is a strategy of inquiry where the researcher(s) explore a program, event, individuals, or processes (Stake, 2008). Case studies are limited to a specific time and activity. Researchers may use a variety of data collection processes over the prescribed time. Stake (2008) described case study methodology as a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals in-depth. Cases are limited to time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period.

This case study was conducted through interviews and focus group discussion questions. The interviews were face-to-face through Zoom, and the participants were teachers. The focus group discussion data were collected from five school principals. Both interviews and focus group discussion data were collected through Zoom.

Methodological Approach

There were quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches for the research methods. Haegele and Hodge (2015) defined a quantitative study as testing hypotheses using descriptive and statistical analysis to test specific events. Based on this understanding, a quantitative study was not appropriate for this study as readers used quantitative data to determine if the hypotheses were supported or unsupported (Hope & Dewar, 2015). Quantitative studies by Bell (2011) and Hewitt and Denny (2011) focused on attendance and job satisfaction. Bell (2011) noted a significant increase in teacher morale and job satisfaction in four-day school systems.

The chosen methodology for this study was qualitative. Qualitative case studies allow for the study of “real-life settings” with the use of “interviews, questionnaires, observations, and focus groups” (Cronin, 2014, p. 22). Multiple case studies have been performed over the use and implementation of the four-day modified school system. Research conducted has been quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method. Qualitative studies were primarily used to help direct the focus of this case study.

The majority of qualitative studies cited in this study focused on academic achievement, school finance, and overall school performance (Anderson & Walker, 2015; Tharp et al., 2016). Anderson and Walker (2015) showed that academic achievement in the four-day school systems improved slightly in elementary schools. Tharp et al. (2016) showed a negative impact on student achievement for students in a four-day school system. Farris (2013) conducted a qualitative case study to examine teacher perceptions in a four-day school system and found that overall morale in the four-day school system increased. Hale (2007) conducted a qualitative case study to determine stakeholders’ perceptions and teacher satisfaction in a four-day school system. The study results showed that stakeholder and teacher perceptions within the four-day schedule increased but indicated that further study was needed to identify academic and attendance factors.

Rationale

The goal of this qualitative case study was to provide teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions on the four-day school systems, looking at student achievement, teacher retention and recruitment (morale), and school finance. A comprehensive study directed at the individuals responsible for running school systems (administrators) and the individuals responsible for

providing quality instruction (teachers) allowed for identifying specific advantages and disadvantages associated with a modified school system.

The information obtained in this study may be used by districts that are considering moving to a four-day modified school schedule or continuing the traditional five-day school system. Completing the case study involved administrator and teacher interviews from small rural school districts currently operating under a four-day modified school schedule. The final product of the study was to provide evidence for continuing or implementing the four-day modified school schedules for the benefit of teacher morale, student achievement, and school finance.

Research Questions

Creswell (2014) stated, “researchers need to think through the philosophical worldview assumptions that they bring to the study, the research design that is related to this worldview, and the specific methods or approaches of research that translate the approach into practice” (p. 5). Therefore, the experiences of 15 schoolteachers in four-day school systems and their administrators were examined. This study’s goal was to identify positive and negative attributes associated with the four-day modified school systems based on teacher interviews and administrative dialogue. Appropriate questions for this type of qualitative case study research were “how” and “why.” The potential research questions were as follows.

RQ 1: How do teachers and administrators perceive the four-day school system in Oklahoma?

RQ 2: Why do teachers and administrators support or not support a four-day school system in Oklahoma?

RQ 3: How do teachers and administrators perceive the impact of the four-day school system on students' academic performance?

RQ 4: What suggestions do teachers and administrators have for districts considering the implementation of the four-day school week?

Significance of the Study

The switch to modified school schedules to accommodate teacher shortages and school finance issues is needed to help modernize a profession that has seen very slow change. The world outside education is changing to meet a new world workforce that does not work the traditional 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday schedule. Companies like Google have changed the employee-employer relationship to include changing work schedules to four-day work weeks. Universities are seeing a change in traditional course scheduling and moving to two days a week courses with labs on Fridays or Wednesdays. Public education must adapt.

This study might benefit educational leaders and teachers as well as the community. The research presented in this study weighed the benefits of implementing a four-day modified school schedule in rural school systems. Many rural school systems are seeing a decrease in economic aid and a shortage of certified teachers. School systems must offer incentives that are not directly linked to monetary gain to recruit and retain teachers.

Definition of Key Terms

Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration. An incorporated, not-for-profit organization that establishes close and continuous communication and cooperation between educators, taxpayers, and legislators to improve the effectiveness of professional school administrators and communicate the schools' needs (Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration [CCOSA], 2021).

Educational expenses. This means the tuition cost of an eligible student to attend a public or nonpublic school, excluding students who were placed into a nonpublic school by their school district (Law Insider, 2021).

Emergency certificate. A temporary measure enacted by districts in some states to address local shortages of certified teachers. It helps to expedite the entry of candidates without an education degree into the teaching profession (Engle, 2019).

Four-day school. Most four-day week schools operate Monday through Thursday, with a few opting for Tuesday through Friday. School days are lengthened to deliver the same amount of instructional time over fewer days, as required by state law (Morton, 2021).

Modified school schedule(s). The use of school schedules outside the traditional Monday to Friday school schedule that balances the school year by shortening long breaks and incorporating shorter breaks (Ballinger, 1987).

Oklahoma State School Boards Association. “Works to promote quality public education for the children of Oklahoma through training and information services to school board members” (Oklahoma State School Boards Association [OSSBA], 2015, para. 1).

Rural school. Defined as having fewer than 600 total students and a town population of less than 2,500 (Strange, 2013).

School finance. A broad and evolving field encompassing three related functions: revenue generation, resource allocation, and resource utilization. All are designed to provide educational opportunities and produce educational outcomes (Rice et al., 2020).

Small schools. Refers to school systems that operate with 600 or fewer students’ prekindergarten to 12th grade (Strange, 2013).

Student achievement. Students' ability on standardized testing and classroom performance (Hewitt & Denny, 2011).

Teacher morale. Individual teachers' attitudes regarding job satisfaction and school environment (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020).

Teacher recruitment. Schools' ability to hire new teachers to the school system (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020)

Teacher retention. Schools' ability to rehire and keep educators already in the school system (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020)

Traditional school (five-day). This type of school calendar requires students to attend school for 180 days. This calendar is a nine-month calendar with schools closed for three months during the summer (Ballinger, 1987).

Assumptions

This study was based on the principle that teachers and administrators understood the questions and answered thoughtfully and honestly. Teachers and administrators were able to recall their experience prior to switching to a four-day schedule. Lastly, participants willingly participated in open faith with an understanding that results from the study would be published. Limitations were in the form of study size. The case study was conducted in rural Southeast Oklahoma, focusing on four-day rural school districts. Delimitations of the study were that 15 teachers were identified and selected to participate with five school administrators.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 included the background of the case study and the theoretical framework providing the stud's foundation. Three primary research questions were identified. Hattie (2003) provided the connection between teacher morale and instructional effectiveness. Gruenert and

Whitaker (2015) established the importance of morale for an increased positive climate in school systems. Fay (2019) stated that schools that moved to four-day modified schedules to address financial and teacher recruitment needs saw increased morale and building climate. Brown (2017) identified potential cost savings within the four-day school systems. Barry and Kelley (1997) showed that five-day traditional schools have a higher truancy and absenteeism rate compared to four-day school systems.

The research questions provided in Chapter 1 were directly connected to the purpose of this qualitative case study, which was to explore administrators' and teachers' perspectives on the four-day modified school system. Modified school schedules have been used in various school systems to address areas of need in finances, teacher retention, and overall school morale. It is important to note that key terms and language were specific to the topic and must be clearly defined as previously outlined. The intent of this study was not to say that one system was inherently better than the other. Implementation of any school schedule must have complete community and school cooperation to best serve the needs of the students within the school system. Chapter 2 will provide a literature connection to the purpose of the study and provide context for four-day modified school schedules. The chapter will include the theoretical framework, conceptual framework, historical background, five-day versus four-day school weeks, educational impact, academic advantages and disadvantages, educational policies for five-day school weeks, educational policies for four-day school weeks, school funding, teacher retention and retirement, teacher morale, and previous research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Following the same concept from the business world in the United States, there is a move away from the days-per-school-year concept to an hours-per-year model, allowing greater flexibility within the school calendar for school districts (DeNisco, 2013; Woods, 2015). Workers are now seeking greater opportunities to be with family and friends outside the workplace. Facer and Wadsworth's (2010) research showed that employees were seeking the ability to spend more time with family and friends outside work, causing government agencies and general employees to make radical changes to the traditional work schedule to improve morale, increase productivity, decrease absenteeism, recruit talented employees, and create the work/home balance employees were seeking. Stakeholders in school districts are concerned that modified school systems have a negative impact on the education of students.

The Oklahoma state legislature passed Oklahoma Senate Bill 441 in 2019 (S. B. 441, 2021) as an attempt to stop four-day school weeks and any modified school scheduling outside the traditional schedule. The primary motivation behind the bill was a concern with student achievement. Maxey and Bass (2019) identified that four-day school systems in Oklahoma impacted student achievement, which showed negative standardized test scores when compared to traditional school systems at the elementary level. However, information is needed as standardized testing has changed three times in the last seven years, preventing any direct comparison between student scores. Additionally, current information is unavailable on academic achievement due to the suspension of standardized testing during the 2019–2020 school year due to COVID-19.

Oklahoma schools currently modify their calendars in response to funding issues and lengthen their school days to ensure minimum state-required instructional time requirements are

met (Anderson & Walker, 2015). The change in state testing vendors in Oklahoma over the last five years makes it difficult to do any concrete analysis of academic performance. The only standardized test currently utilized and consistent in the majority of Oklahoma schools is elementary testing from reading and math assessments (Anderson & Walker, 2015). Therefore, an analysis of the impact of the four-day school week on students' academic performance, primarily in rural school districts, to ensure an equitable education is not possible at this time.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore principals' and teachers' perspectives on the four-day modified school system. This study identified positive and negative attributes associated with the four-day modified school systems based on teachers' and administrators' perceptions via interviews. The interview questions were broken into three main categories: student achievement, teacher retention and recruitment (morale), and school finance. The study explored principals' and teachers' perceptions, viewpoints, and suggestions regarding the four-day modified school schedule.

Documentation

The research for this study was conducted primarily using the online databases available from Abilene Christian University's Margaret and Herman Brown Library. There were a variety of databases available; however, the specific databases that were utilized most often were ProQuest, ERIC, Google Scholar, and SAGE Journals. The search terms were used in a variety of combinations to ensure an ample number of relevant research was found. The keyword *four-day school* was used as the primary search term. Key terms to sort search results were *four-day schools and funding*, *four-day schools and teacher retention*, *education funding and four-day schools*, *four-day schools*, *five-day schools and funding*, *absenteeism* and *four-day schools*, *five-day schools and public education*. Table 1 presents the summary of major study topics found.

The primary search yielded 236 sources. The following was found using keywords to narrow the search: school finance–38; teacher morale–nine; teacher retention–15; student achievement–43; social cognitive theory–six; and case study design–17.

Table 1

Summary of Studies by Topics and Sources

Topic of examination	Peer-reviewed articles	Dissertation and thesis	Online sources
Four-Day School Historical	236	5	21
Teacher Morale	3	5	1
Teacher Retention	12	0	3
School Finance	29	3	6
Academic Achievement	428	4	11
Social Cognitive Theory	4	0	2
Case Study Design	0	17	0
Total	312	34	44

Table 1 represents a breakdown of dissertations reviewed and analyzed during the research process. Seventeen dissertations were analyzed for case study design, and three were found to use the mixed-method process, five quantitative and eight qualitative. Dissertations were organized chronologically and provided a summary of date, author, title, research purpose, methodology, and summary of results and findings. In total, 390 sources were referenced.

Theoretical Framework

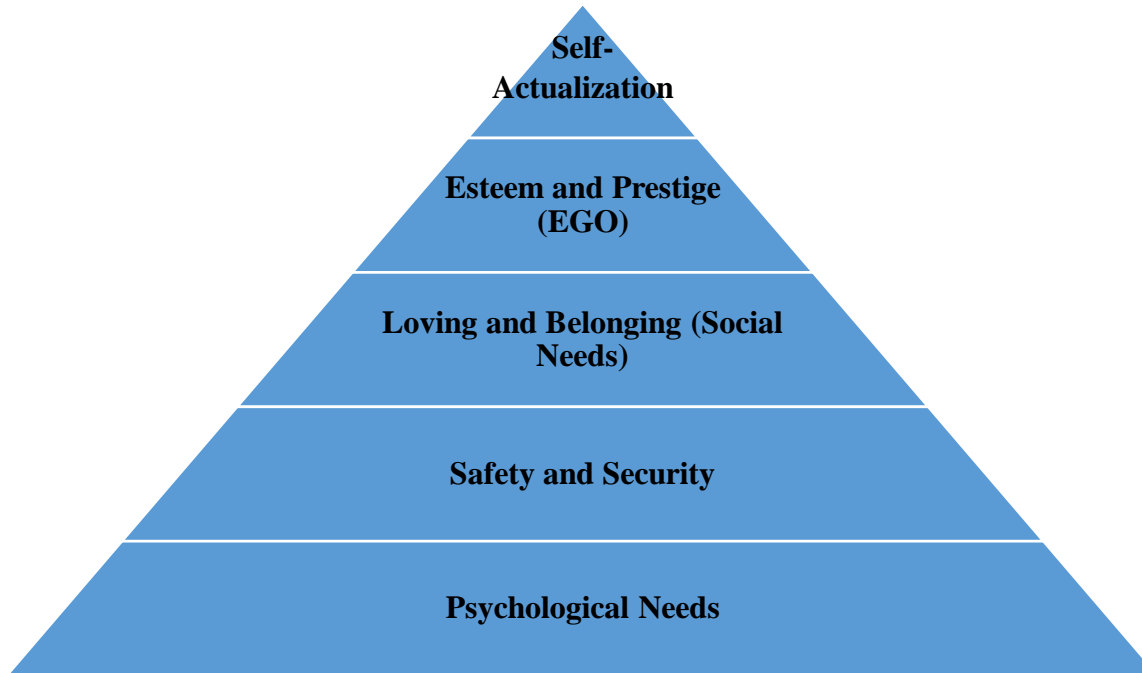
Some theories served as the foundation of the study. They were Maslow's hierarchy of needs, collective impact theory, and theory of education production function. The following section illustrates each theory.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory was one of the foundations for the study. Aruma and Hanachor (2017) described Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory in a pyramid (see Figure 1). Psychological needs make up the pyramid's base as it sets the foundation to address an individual's need for basic survival. These needs must be addressed for individuals to move up to the next level of needs in the ladder. Safety needs are closely linked to survival needs addressed at the bottom step of the pyramid. Once the individuals feel safe physically, they can move to the needs of safety and security. Love and belonging (social needs) are key for human interaction and integration into a community. Psychological and safety needs allow individuals to open up to community members building personal and professional relationships. Personal esteem or ego provides the drive for personal improvement. This need comes from social bonds developing for self-respect and social status. Confidence and independence increase personal growth. Self-actualization is at the top of the pyramid and provides for the development of individualized skills from physical development to educational growth. Each area of Maslow's hierarchy can be applied to the needs of the four-day school week instead of the five-day school week for administrators, teachers, and students.

Figure 1

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid



Note. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Adapted from "Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Assessment of Needs in Community," by E. O. Aruma and M. E. Hanachor, 2017, *International Journal of Development and Economic Sustainability*, 5(7), p. 16.

(<https://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Abraham-Maslow's-Hierarchy-of-Needs-and-Assessment-of-Needs-in-Community-Development.pdf>). Copyright 2017 by the European Centre for Research Training and Development UK.

Psychological needs can be perceived as the staff member's ability to provide basic survival needs as to food and shelter with additional time for other areas that increase psychological health. Safety needs are met with the school district's ability to provide job safety to reduce school expenses to secure staffing. Love and belonging or social needs are addressed in the teachers' and administrators' connection to the community and involvement in the school

environment. The four-day school systems could provide an avenue for increased participation in after-school activities and community events with the increase in personal time. Finally, self-actualization is found in the teachers' and administrators' abilities to better themselves professionally with increased time for professional development.

The human resource department at schools and the organizational leadership of a school district should cooperate to manage the needs of its employees. The employees of any organization feel valued and secure when their needs and values are acknowledged (Ciprian-Dumitru, 2013; Matache & Ruscu, 2012). Maslow's theory reinforced the idea that traditional needs of safety and security are essential for the motivation of any individual. Sun et al. (2016) also stated that Maslow's theory indicated that when employees are motivated and supported, there is an increase in years of service and loyalty to the institution. Job security and financial stability are key conditions to both physical and mental health within the current social institutions (Ciprian-Dumitru, 2013). To accomplish this in school systems, it is important that school districts and building-level leaders provide a teaching environment that allows teachers to focus on classroom instruction without the hidden concern of job security. This requires district leaders to identify economic issues and limitations and make decisions that do not negatively influence the overall culture of the school system and, ultimately, the staff's morale.

Collective Impact Theory

The collective impact theory was also considered as the foundation of the study. The external stakeholders can be instrumental in supporting the efforts of the local school district. Hanleybrown et al. (2012) described the collective impact theory as taking place when the organization and the surrounding environment (all stakeholders) have a mutual goal, background, and collective responsibility. The external stakeholders are instrumental because

they should support parents, community members, and business owners, while collective impact theory involves community collaboration and support around a collective problem. Based on Stanford University's winter 2011 Stanford Social Innovation Review issue, collective impact occurs when an entity and the larger surrounding environment have a common goal, mutually reinforcing activities, background support, collective measurement, and responsibility (Hanleybrown et al., 2012).

Understanding the perceptions of schoolteachers' and administrators' perceptions regarding the four-day school week is important in determining whether the initiative continued to be appropriate in satisfying the needs of the community's children. In fact, the school calendar changes might impact adult work schedules, childcare schedules, school finance, students' academic performance, students' ability to maintain part-time employment, and so forth. Therefore, the school district is responsible for educating the community's children and collaborating with community stakeholders to make initiatives come to fruition. It was important to understand better how Maslow's theory of the human hierarchy of needs affected the perceptions of internal stakeholders and how collective impact theory influenced the perceptions of external stakeholders to answer the research questions effectively.

Theory of Education Production Function

Another theory that supports the study was the theory of education production function. Thompson (2019a) looked at the overall impact of student achievement on multiple subgroups in the four-day school systems. The theory implemented in the study was the theory of education production function providing a connection between the implementation of the four-day school system with student achievement (Thompson, 2019a). The formula used by Thompson (2019a; $Achievement_{it} = f(\text{child inputs}_{i,t,0...T}, \text{family inputs}_{i,t,0...T}, \text{school inputs}_{i,t,0...T})$) provides a method for

determining academic success based on various factors associated with students. This function allows for potential determination if modifying school length impacts student performance based on changing instructional time (hours in a day and week length), teacher experience and certification, school finance, and student and teacher absenteeism.

Conceptual Framework

Modified school scheduling is not a new concept in education. Twenty-five states include provisions or active districts with a four-day modified schedule. Oklahoma must embrace this change in education policy and practice if they are to keep highly qualified teachers. The state must conduct continued research into best practices for schools looking to make the change to a four-day schedule and ensure that proper training and practices are in place for the school district to be successful both financially and educationally.

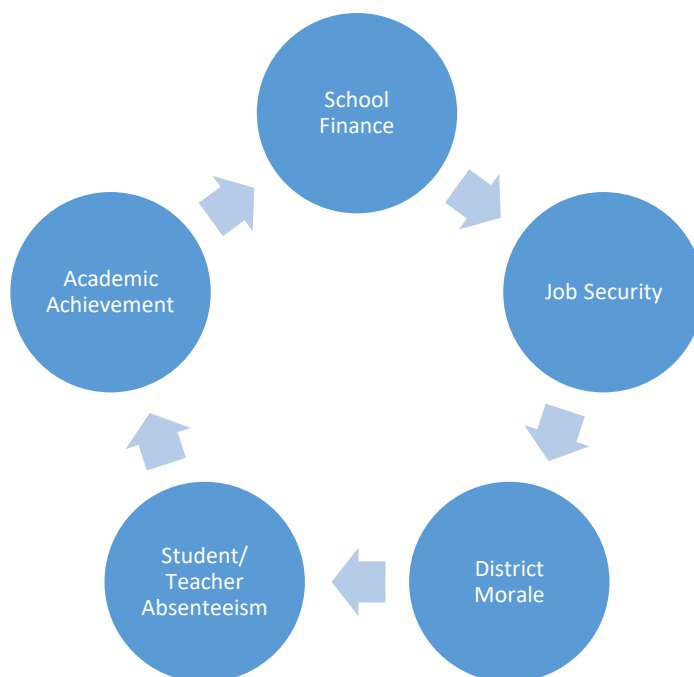
Implementing the four-day modified school system has been cited as increasing teacher and student attendance and district finances. Decreasing teacher and student absenteeism has a direct relationship to student academic achievement. Teacher absenteeism can indicate an increase in teacher morale. School financial standing directly impacts the overall district morale and builds confidence in school staff for position longevity and personal financial security.

Figure 2 presents the relationship of five major categories that contributed to the success of a school system. All schools operate based on funding. Larger school districts have larger revenue sources but often have larger expenses related to the school's operation. Respectively, smaller school systems usually have fewer students and often have a greatly reduced revenue source. The ability for the school district to operate safely financially provides a sense of job security for all staff members. Understanding that their job is safe from potential reductions in force or school closure due to financial reasons outside their control provides for increased staff

morale. Building morale affects district morale. Studies have proven that increased teacher morale increases school performance. Higher morale decreases absenteeism rates in staff and students. An increase in attendance rates positively affects students' achievement and graduation rates.

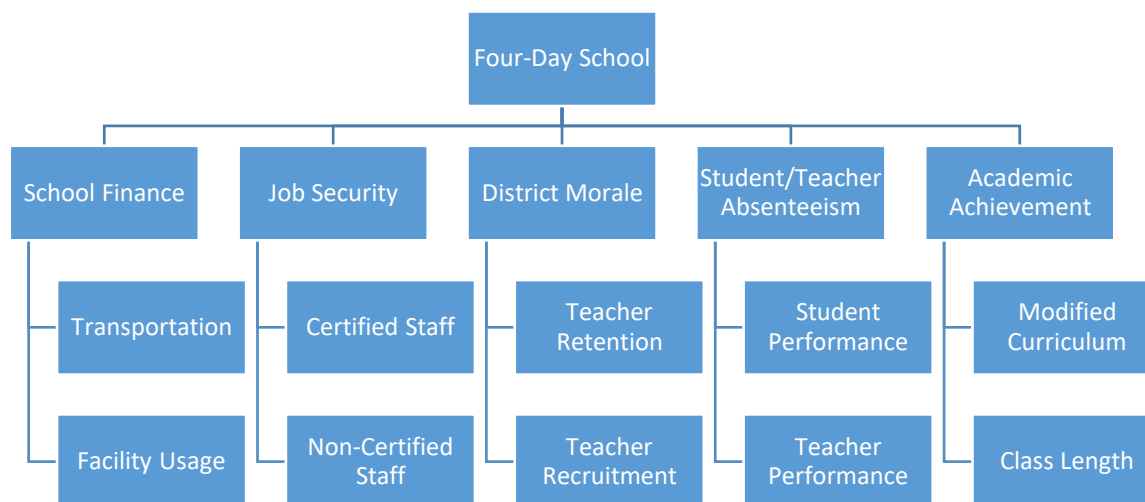
Figure 2

Four-Day School Week



Note. Major factors impacting four-day school systems

Figure 2 provides the relationship between the main areas of impact on a four-day school system. Within the five key areas described in Figure 3 are subareas that help define a four-day school system's potential success and differences.

Figure 3*Four-Day School Areas*

Note. Four-day school system and major factor relationship to school issues

The first area listed is school finance. Four-day school systems are commonly justified by citing financial savings through reduced transportation and facility costs. Job security for staff members references the ability for school districts that transition to modified school schedules to save money in transportation and facility usage to retain certified and noncertified staff members. District morale is increased with job security, allowing for teacher retention. In addition, districts that have transitioned to four-day schedules have noted an increase in teacher applicants. Next, student and teacher absenteeism see a noticeable decrease in four-day school systems. This has been connected to the shortened week and the frequency of extracurricular activities outside the four chosen days of instruction. Finally, student achievement has seen no statistical impact from the transition to the four-day school system. Thus, stakeholders can further justify the switch to a modified school schedule.

Historical Background of School Systems: Four-Day Versus Five-Day

Prior to the onset of COVID-19 and the drastic financial recession of the pandemic on the American economy, American school systems across the country had already been facing a continuous battle with balancing school openings, appropriate education, and health and safety as a result of decreasing funds for years. School systems consider traditional schooling to be Monday to Friday. However, rural school systems have begun the process of moving to a four-day modified school schedule running Tuesday to Friday or Monday to Thursday with longer instructional days. School systems across the country have implemented various strategies to deal with decreased funds and increased student bodies. Without increased funding by the legislature, public schools are at an impasse on maintaining traditional five-day school week schedules or transitioning to four-day school week calendars.

One of the earliest, if not the earliest, documented four-day school systems was from South Dakota, 1931, in Madison Central School District (Hewitt & Denny, 2011). The justification for the move was economic and was only implemented for a short time until economic circumstances improved (Hedtke, 2014). There was a reemergence of the four-day modified school schedule in 1971 in Maine. Maine School Administrative District III ran a trial four-day schedule for three years in conjunction with a federal grant to increase professional development for staff (Roeth, 1985). This trial gained popularity when the Arabian Oil Embargo in the Middle East caused schools in Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Washington to begin implementing a pilot of the four-day school schedule (Roeth, 1985). The rationale in these districts was to avoid cutting programs due to utility and fuel price increases. Many of the schools in these districts would return to a traditional schedule when the oil crises subsided. However, New Mexico saw a state oil crisis affecting state revenue and jobs leading

many school districts to implement the four-day modified school schedule in 1972 (Bell, 2011; Grau & Shaughnessy, 1987).

The number of schools implementing the modified school schedule in 2008 increased to over 100 schools in 17 states (Kingsbury, 2008). The Oklahoma State Department of Education (2019) currently reports that 97 school districts in Oklahoma currently operate on a modified school schedule. There was no current data to represent the number of schools that adopted a modified school schedule in Oklahoma due to the current pandemic. However, the state school board waved calendar requirements on districts, with many adding virtual instruction to their current calendar, replacing in-person instruction.

The literature review revealed a grey area in educational leadership that requires administrators and school leaders to have a sense of ethical awareness and social justice to make decisions. Bon (2012) stated, “School administrators may find it especially helpful to rely on their core ethical beliefs and values to guide their decisions” (p. 287). These core ethical beliefs are essential in determining school scheduling and curriculum standards for the communities they serve. In addition, the administration and the school leadership must understand the community’s expectations and biases to ensure that social justice concerns are addressed ethically and that equitability is provided to all stakeholders. Borgmann (2006) indicated, “Equality, dignity, and self-determination are crucial to the way we Americans think of ourselves as a moral community” (p. 33). The public school in Oklahoma is the heart of the community and, therefore, the moral center of the community.

If school leaders are to implement organizational change in the structure of the schools, leaders must first understand that multiple points of view increase the leadership involved in the decision-making process and their connection to educational leadership in the local school

districts (Harter, 2012). Identifying these various points of view increased the district's leadership role in policy change regarding implementing legislative language allowing for the continuance and support of modified school schedules across Oklahoma schools.

In order to effectively connect the legislature and schools, leaders must create personal connections to change organizational structures effectively. Hallowell (2014) noted that the more intense the connection the employee has with the employment environment the more effective the employee becomes. Leaders have an ethical responsibility to respond to community and student needs. Berger (2015) described the following:

[Educational] leadership is no longer bound to a position or the achievement of predefined goals, rather, it is manifested in the courage to speak and act—to tell a provocative story in a public forum and to remind the “audience” of the permanent human capacity to begin, to initiate and act together. (p. 486)

Accepting the disassociation from the predefined goals or making it work and internalizing Berger's (2015) speak and act, educational leaders must begin the change process by openly speaking to the funding issues and be willing to research educational practices that adjust for the decrease in funding while maintaining effective school systems.

In addition to building positive relationships to implement organizational change, leaders must understand the importance of placing individuals in positions to optimize performance (Hallowell, 2014). School districts can no longer stay out of the political debate regarding educational policy at the state and federal levels. Schmuck et al. (2012) claimed that organizational development (OD) in education is the change of a social organization. Communities, along with district administration and staff, must take active roles in the election

and promotion of education candidates that represent the community's needs at the appropriate levels of government to ensure the continued success of the school system.

The evolution of education and the globalization of society has reinforced the need for ensured equality in our leaders in every industry, and to create these leaders, our teachers and educational institutions must first “engage this struggle in a manner that benefits all learners, scholars have advocated for social justice leadership” (O'Malley & Capper, 2014, p. 291). Leaders must participate in learning opportunities with organization members to implement change effectively with equity for all stakeholders. Fullan (2011) stated, “The effective change leader actively participates as a learner in helping the organization improve” (p. 5). School administration and education representatives must work with state government agencies and the legislature to educate them on the current educational needs of students and the infrastructure needs for school districts. State and local leaders must understand that “moral purpose, relationships, and organizational success are closely interrelated” (Fullan, 2011, p. 52). Without appropriate education spending, teacher retention, and teacher recruitment, school districts are forced to make radical decisions.

Five-Day School Week Versus Four-Day School Week

Comparing four-day school systems with five-day school systems required understanding the basic components of the traditional educational system in the United States. The National Center on Time and Learning (2017) indicated that the average traditional five-day school system has 180 days of instruction, with an average school day of seven hours minus breaks, recess for elementary students, and breakfast and lunch times, leaving roughly six hours of classroom instruction. The four-day modified school systems report showed an average of 145 days of instruction, with the average school day 8.5 hours minus breaks, recess for elementary

students, and breakfast and lunch times, leaving roughly 7.5 hours of classroom instruction. Thus, five-day school systems have 1,080 hours of classroom instruction, and four-day modified school systems have 1,087.5 hours. Based on this information, four-day school systems increased overall instructional hours while decreasing the number of school days.

While hours of instruction may increase, the National Center on Time and Learning (2017) reported that the average start time increased and classroom instructional time was extended by period. Five-day school systems generally started between 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m., while four-day school systems started between 7:00 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. Five-day school systems ended school between 3:00 p.m. and 3:15 p.m., with four-day school systems ending school between 3:30 p.m. and 3:45 p.m. General seat time per period in a five-day school system was 35 to 45 minutes, with four-day school systems at 50 minutes to 1 hour for secondary students.

Significant areas of concern surrounding implementing the four-day school week were student supervision during an additional noncontact day with school personnel. Israel et al. (2020) cited that parents and schools that monitor students “are associated with reduced adolescent risk behaviors, including substance use and other negative health indicators” (p. 796). In Israel et al.’s (2020) study of 234 Colorado schools, 184 five-day and 50 four-day, found that four-day students were more likely to attend school regularly and possessed more positive health behaviors than those of the five-day school students. In addition, students in a four-day school were more likely to participate in extracurricular activities but also reported higher levels of bullying. Israel et al. (2020) stated that bullying was shown to increase in students who did not participate in extracurricular activities or participated in more than five hours a week of extracurricular activities. Longitudinal studies were needed on the overall health effects of students.

A study by Heyward (2018) indicated that overall parent and community support of four-day school systems was positive. However, when parents were interviewed in a Missouri study, and while overall parent and community support were high, lower elementary and special education student parents “were less happy with the four-day school week and more inclined to want to go back to a five-day school week” (p. 4). Additionally, Heyward (2018) cited that communities reported increased property damage and minor vandalism in four-day school systems but reduced student-on-student violence.

Educational Impact of the Four-Day School Week

One of the largest concerns with the transition to a four-day school week from the traditional five-day week is the impact on the overall education of the students (Henton, 2015). Research showed that student attendance improved along with time on task (Anderson & Walker, 2015; Cooper et al., 2003; Hewitt & Denny, 2011; Thompson, 2021b). Anderson and Walker (2015) noted that some risks to student performance might exist in teacher readiness. However, Hewitt and Denny (2011) stated that school districts could implement professional development in lesson plan creation and implementation prior to the change in instructional time. Cooper et al. (2003) claimed that the decrease in student absenteeism by adopting a modified schedule resulted in increased classroom time and, therefore, student academic performance. The reduction in one school day does not sound bad when viewed as a weekly number or even a monthly number at four. However, over the course of a school year, we are talking 36 to 42 school days being lost (Gower, 2017).

Research conducted in Montana by Tharp et al. (2016), a longitudinal study of the reading and math scores on standardized tests, compared the test results of four-day school weeks to the traditional five-day school week schools over seven years. The data collected

showed a significant drop, 13, in student test results over the first three years of the modified schedule implementation. The study attributed this to teachers learning to manage longer class periods and shortened weeks. In years four and five, the study showed an increase in the test results of the four-day school weeks closing the gap between four-day school week schools and five-day school week schools. After teachers had learned to manage time more efficiently and the school administration had lengthened class periods to increase student seat time, test scores improved significantly to fall within a standard deviation of $\pm 3\%$.

In addition to the Tharp et al. (2016) research in Montana, Denny and Hewitt (2011) conducted a similar study in Colorado. During their research, the researchers determined a significant factor in play when analyzing data to compare the traditional five-day week with the four-day week. State and federal educational oversight agencies routinely changed testing clients and scores. Therefore, to compare schools properly, a consistent progress-monitoring client was needed. When Denny and Hewitt (2011) implemented this information, their research showed no significant difference between a four-day and five-day school week as scores fell within a standard deviation of $\pm 3\%$. Thompson (2021b) used third- to eighth-grade test scores from 2005 to 2019 in Oregon and found that math and reading test scores decreased after switching to the four-day school week. Thompson (2021a) believed that the reduction of school time drove these achievement declines.

Educational impact in the classroom was also affected by behavior. Student behavior incidents in the classroom decreased overall student performance and teacher effectiveness. Litke (1994) described that the modified four-day school week reduced student behavior issues in the classroom. Thus, increasing teacher productivity. Increasing teacher performance would inevitably increase student performance. Baker et al. (2001) stated that the four-day school week

had an even greater impact in the past reduction of behavioral incidents as it reduced student truancy. Students with a modified schedule that go to school on the Monday to Thursday schedule had an increased attendance rate compared to the traditional schedule. Student attendance is a key factor in student performance and reducing dropout rates.

Academic Advantages of the Four-Day School Week

Evidence for a negative impact of academic achievement within four-day school systems has not been confirmed (Anderson & Walker, 2015; Cline, 2017; Henton, 2015; Hill & Heyward, 2018). Using data to compare secondary school systems is difficult due to the number of secondary schools compared to elementary schools. In addition, more formative assessments are used in elementary students than secondary students. Fay (2019) and Gower (2017) found no statistically significant differences between student academic performance in Missouri schools that operated on a four-day school week than to that of the five-day school week. The researchers noted positive community perception of the four-day school system. Daleske (2021) noted a similar outcome in Idaho rural schools.

Anderson and Walker (2015) analyzed math scores in fifth-grade students in the four-day and five-day school systems in Colorado public schools from 2000–2010, which showed no statistically significant data to indicate that modified school systems had a negative impact on student performance. The same discovery was made with the fourth-grade reading scores (Anderson & Walker, 2015). Feaster (2002) did a similar study looking at a specific school district, analyzing elementary standardized test scores and secondary American College Test (ACT) scores and discovered no negative impacts from implementing the four-day schedule.

In Missouri, Gower (2017) compared school districts' student dropout rates and found that modified school schedules had no impact on increased dropout rates. Muir (2013) found that

dropout rates decreased in four-day school systems. Dropout rates in other states were found to decline because of the four-day school week (Muir, 2013). When comparing school districts in Missouri, Gower (2017) found that five of eight school districts reported increased ACT scores among high school students in four-day school systems. Thompson (2019a) indicated that negative effects of moving to a modified school schedule were mitigated or completely erased after multiple years of implementation and even saw an increase in student performance. Morton (2021) found that four-day school weeks decreased per-pupil bullying incidents by approximately 31% but had no detectable effect on students' ACT scores or attendance.

Academic Disadvantages of the Four-Day School Week

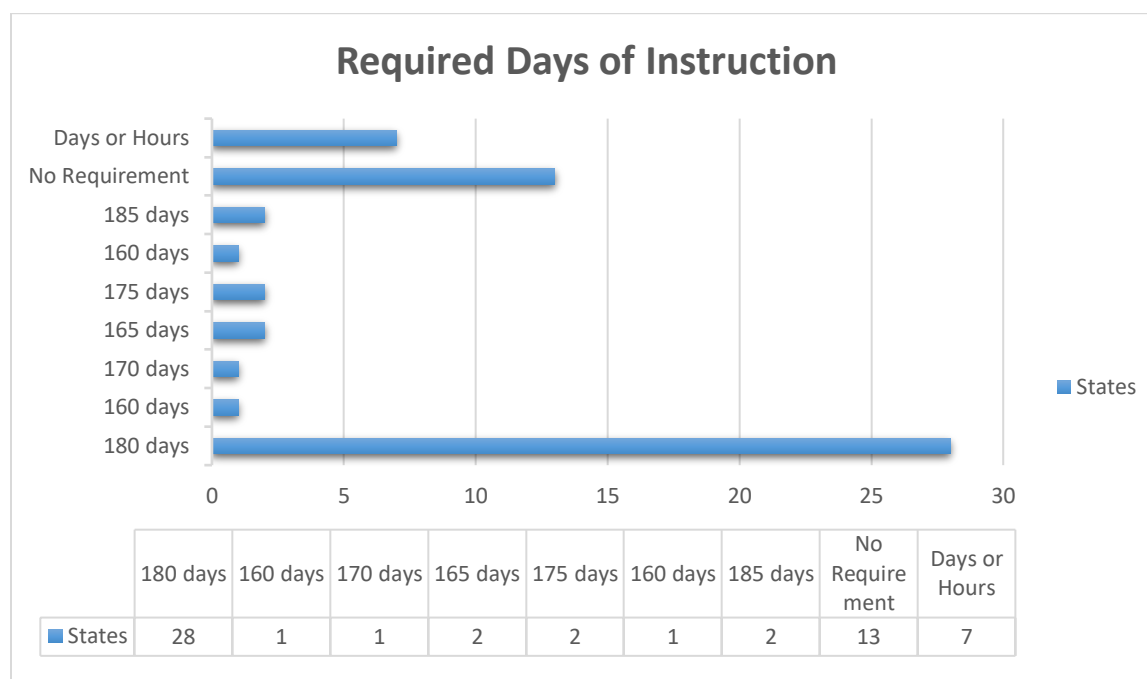
Savage (2018) found that there was a negative impact on Arizona school district student achievement that transitioned from a five-day to four-day school system. The study found that student performance on state-mandated reading tests remained flat. State math test performance decreased over the five-year implementation timeframe. Overall, stakeholder perception of the implementation of the four-day week was negative due to no significant sign of school benefits from the transition to the four-day modified school schedule.

Tharp et al. (2016) conducted a research study in Montana schools looking at four-day school systems that operated with modified school systems for greater than five years and compared them to Montana's five-day traditional school systems. The study found that four-day school system students in 2011 had proficient reading scores of 84% and declined to 79% in 2013. Students attending five-day school systems scored 86% and decreased to 84% in 2013. Tharp et al.'s (2016) data results showed a 5% decline in reading scores with four-day students and a 1% decrease in traditional students.

Math scores seemed to be more severely impacted. Four-day school systems in 2011 had a proficiency rate of 63% and declined to 53% in 2013. Five-day students scored proficient at 69% in 2011 and decreased to 67% in 2013. Tharp et al.'s (2016) results showed an 8% drop in four-day school math scores and a 2% drop in five-day school systems. In addition to Montana math and reading score differentials between four-day and five-day school systems, Tharp et al. (2016) identified that elementary writing scores were “significantly higher” in five-day school systems (p. 127).

Educational Policies for the Five-Day School Week in the United States

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) showed that the United States government currently does not require a minimum number of school days (Brixey, 2021). The ECS did collect data on the various individual state requirements. Figure 4 provides a total of the required school length.

Figure 4*Required Days of Instruction*

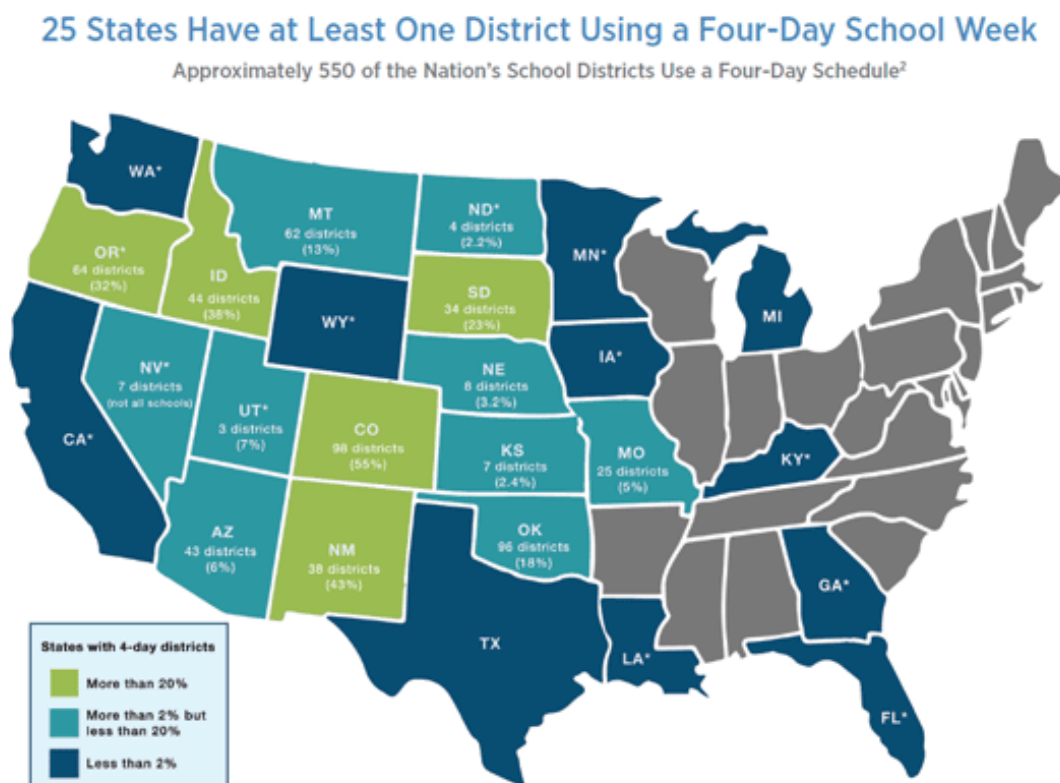
Note. Required days of instruction. Adapted from 2020 *Four-day School Week Overview*

National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020 (<http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/school-calendar-four-day-school-week-overview.aspx>). Adapted with permission.

In addition to school days, currently, 25 states allow for implementing a four-day modified school schedule.

Educational Policies for the Four-Day School Week

The National Conference of State Legislatures (2020) reported that 550 school districts in the nation use a modified four-day school schedule (see Figure 5).

Figure 5*States With Four-Day School Weeks*

* The number of districts in these states are estimates because the data are from old department of education reports or newspaper reports.

Notes:

a. We only included states that have districts currently using four-day schedules. Some states had districts using the four-day schedule in the past but no longer do (e.g., Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey).

b. All data are from the 2018 school year except for Arizona (2015), California (2011), Missouri (2017), Montana (2017), Nevada (2012), Oklahoma (2017), Oregon (2013), Texas (2016), and Utah (2013).

Note. States with Four-day School Weeks and Percentages. Adapted from 2020 *Four-day School Week Overview* National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020

(<http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/school-calendar-four-day-school-week-overview.aspx>).

With permission.

States reserve the right to create education policy they feel is best for their constituents. In addition, local school boards can create local policies to define further and regulate their local school system. New Mexico is one of the earliest widespread uses of four-day school systems

due to a revenue issue with the state that severely impacts educational spending. Pompeo (1981) showed that the revenue issues created restrictions in using the four-day school weeks in New Mexico. This was in response to a ruling by the New Mexico attorney general that four-day school weeks violated the 180-day rule. This led to groups of parents, teachers, administrators, and other key community leaders (mainly in rural school districts) to pressure the state legislature into action. Reeves (1999) reported that when the state legislature made concessions for the use of four-day school weeks, it excluded urban school systems, citing that many families in urban settings had two working parents and lacked appropriate childcare to operate on a four-day schedule, while rural schools were more family oriented and presented more options for childcare on nonschool days (p. 31).

Legislation in Arkansas was adopted in 1997, allowing for the use of four-day school weeks but presented stipulations for the adoption of the modified school schedule. The state legislature went from a day's formula for school systems to an hour's formula and required that four-day and five-day school systems meet the minimum classroom instructional hours required by the state (Johnson, 1977). Following a similar structure, Utah had ended the use of four-day school systems in 1994. However, due to need and demand, a transition back to the use of the modified school system was created if the schools met the minimum required instructional hours and added a requirement for the districts to show improved academic achievement and to remove extracurricular activities from the school week (Johnson, 1977).

Oklahoma has seen an increase in the four-day school systems in the past decade. Oklahoma House Bill 1864 (H. B. 1864 Oklahoma, 2009) amended current-day requirements for Oklahoma schools of 180 days and introduced language allowing schools to transition to an hourly based calendar that allowed school districts to implement a four-day school schedule. The

change being from 180 school days that included professional development or noninstructional days to 1,080 instructional hours does not include professional development or noninstructional time. Oklahoma Senate Bill 441 (S. B. 441, 2021) passed by the state legislature attempted to stop four-day school weeks and any modified school scheduling outside the traditional schedule. Oklahoma Senate Bill 441 (S. B. 441, 2021) stated that beginning in the 2020–2021 school year, all schools must do the following.

- a. Attend school for a minimum of 1,080 hours and 165 school days.
- b. Attend school for a minimum of 1,080 hours and fewer than 165 days if the school meets the state board of education requirements approved by the state legislature. Current requirements have not been provided or approved by the state legislature.
- c. Attend school for 180 days.

Due to COVID-19, SB 441 has been delayed to the 2022–2023 school year. In addition, education policy was currently being amended to allow school districts to apply for school day waivers to maintain the four-day status. These waiver requirements have not yet been established or passed into law. At the time of this study, there are 1,746 public school districts, with 97 of those school districts in Oklahoma operating on a modified four-day school week.

School Funding

The increasing cost of educational expenses and decreases in state funds allocated to public education have caused strain on rural school districts leading to the need for modified school calendars in Midwest school systems (Beesley & Anderson, 2007; Donis-Keller & Silvernail, 2009; Lynch, 2008). Lynch (2008) specifically looked at the movement in Utah school districts to a four-day week due to increasing fuel costs across the state and reports that districts saw an expense savings average of 3.5%. Beesley and Anderson (2007) found the

financial impact of four-day weeks in seven states, and Donis-Keller and Silvernail (2009) provided similar information for 17 states. Large school expenses through the school year, except for staff salaries, are transportation and utilities. By decreasing school days, schools decrease transportation costs and can modify facility utility usage (Donis-Keller & Silvernail, 2009). Additionally, Thompson (2021b) found that the economic impact of transitioning to the four-day school system was significant. The financial benefits provided in this research show that Oklahoma's school districts' move to four-day school weeks is not an isolated incident but rather a national epidemic caused by reduced educational spending by the states and federal government.

Teacher Retention and Recruitment

Teacher recruitment and retention was a focus of education media coverage in Oklahoma. As of the 2018–2019 school year, the Oklahoma State Department of Education reports receiving requests for 2,153 emergency certificates across the state (as cited in Zheng, 2018). Some rural school districts have moved to a modified four-day week not only to help with school budgets but also to lure teachers to their school systems and retain current teachers. Traditional school weeks are five days, and the school year length was determined by hours and instructional day calculation. However, as the trend regarding school year length has grown, some state school systems have gone from a day-based calendar to an “hours-per-year requirement” (Turner et al., 2017, p. 169). Creating the four-day school week is enticing to young professionals looking to enter the education profession. However, it is not new teachers who are affected as much as it is keeping experienced teachers in the classroom.

Turner et al. (2017) polled three independent school districts in Missouri that were all in their first year of implementing the four-day school week. The study showed that 70% of

teachers felt a positive impact on teacher morale, 87% felt a positive impact on what was being taught in class, and 91% reported they preferred to work in a four-day school week school (Turner et al., 2019). Maiden et al. (2020) found that there was “no evidence that implementation of the four-day school week will improve teacher retention over time” (p. 129). However, Morton (2021) found that implementing the four-day school system had a positive impact on teacher retention with a greater positive impact on teacher recruitment.

Teacher Moral of the Four-Day Week Versus the Five-Day School Week

Rural teacher salaries are 11% to 17% lower compared to teachers in urban and suburban communities (Mollenkopf, 2009). Lower salaries in rural areas create an economic incentive for teachers to leave and lower the morale of teachers that work in rural communities. Four-day school systems provided a balance to decreased pay with shorter workweeks. Five-day school weeks saw an increase in the time teachers spent outside the contract day on weekends or evening planning. The additional day helps provide more family time for teachers and helps make up for the pay gap between educators in rural areas. Students interviewed by Younker (2015) reported that they “liked everything about” the four-day school week compared to five-day school weeks (para. 2).

Teacher morale directly impacts overall school success (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) defined teacher morale as the dedication, satisfaction, and overall happiness among teachers. Hattie (2012) defined effective educators as teachers who exhibit passion and enthusiasm for their perspective grade level or content, thus increasing student achievement stating, “teachers’ beliefs and commitments are the greatest influence on student achievement” (p. 25). In addition to direct student achievement in the classroom, teacher morale directly impacts the overall school culture and morale of all personnel.

Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) stated that individual teacher morale is contagious, spreading negativity and positivity throughout the staff. Thus, individual teacher morale directly impacts the overall school culture and climate. Individual teachers with a negative attitude or morale can create a negative space that encompasses other teachers and staff, influencing how individuals within and outside the school interact with each other (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). If the mindset of the educators in the school system is negatively affected or becomes negative overall, the effectiveness of classroom teachers decreases (Hattie, 2012). One-way school leaders have addressed decreasing morale is by exploring modified school schedules to include the four-day school schedule (Griffith, 2011).

In addition to addressing teacher and staff morale, school systems must address increasing student academic achievement, decreasing educational spending on state and federal levels, and recruiting and retaining certified staff members (Turner et al., 2017). As school districts began to move to modified school schedules, away from the traditional five-day school system, to address financial and teacher recruitment needs, districts saw improved educational climate and teacher morale (Griffith, 2011). The side effect of increased educational climate and teacher morale was an increase in student achievement (Turner et al., 2017). Therefore, a modified school schedule and the four-day school week could be a key factor in increasing teacher retention and recruitment, student achievement, and school finance (Fay, 2019). Creating a positive school climate increases teacher effectiveness, directly influencing student achievement and increasing the likelihood of teachers returning to the school (Cummings, 2015). The four-day school week could be a factor in improving teacher morale and improving school climate (Fay, 2019).

Previous Research Studies on the Four-Day School Versus the Five-Day School System

Various research methods and designs have been used to study four-day school weeks and five-day school weeks in the past. This research looked at different aspects of the four-day school week and five-day school weeks in the areas of academic impact, financial impact, teacher morale, and stakeholder perceptions. Appendix A presented a table of 17 dissertations reviewed that addressed these areas. Dissertations were listed in chronological order with eight qualitative, four quantitative, and three mixed-methods. The research results showed that four-day school systems provided financial savings, specifically in the areas of transportation and utilities (Duchscherer, 2011; Leiseth, 2008; Palmer, 1984). Researchers found no significant impact on academic performance between a four-day school week and a traditional five-day week, but all agreed that further longitudinal research was needed (Barzee, 2020; Bronson, 2010; Daleske, 2021; Meadows, 1995; Savage, 2018). Teachers and administrators in the studies indicated a positive perception of the four-day model over traditional scheduling and reported increased morale (Leiseth, 2008; Roeth, 1985). Kreyling (2015) found that student support for the four-day week was high as it allowed students additional days for homework and reduced overall stress with long weekends. Savage (2018) found that stakeholders' perceptions outside the school systems were negative, presenting concerns about future work habits, attendance, and academic performance. No research showed a significant difference in teacher or student attendance.

Palmer (1984) conducted a comparative study of transportation costs for a four-day school week and a five-day school week for Dougherty County schools. The purpose of the qualitative case study was to determine the effect the four-day school week had on the facility and transportation costs in a school district that transitioned from five-day to four-day. The case

study concluded that four-day school systems could provide a cost-effective solution to school funding but primarily in school transportation costs. Facility usage on off days persisted as teachers were found to utilize the building for prep time and other noninstructional tasks.

Roeth (1985) conducted a quantitative study on implementing the four-day school week into elementary and secondary public schools. The purpose of the study was to gain information to provide school administrators with information on implementing the four-day modified school system. Roeth (1985) found that the majority of schools that implemented the modified school schedule were rural. Implementation was supported by administrators and teachers and often supported by community members.

A preliminary program review of the four-period day implemented in four high schools was conducted by Meadows (1995). The mixed-method study looked at the four-period day on a four-day week schedule and the effect on student performance, attitudes, behavior, teacher morale and instructional practices, and administrator perceptions. The Meadows (1995) study found that administrators, teachers, and students preferred the nontraditional schedule. Students reported feeling less stress with fewer overall courses. Teachers reported a positive impact on morale and did not see a significant impact on student achievement. Administrators reported that the transition showed no significant impact on student truancy.

Hale (2007) conducted a qualitative case study on the four-day school week in five South Dakota public schools. The study was designed to detail the process following the implementation of the four-day week and the perceptions of stakeholders in each district. The case study found that school districts that spent more time in the planning stages, engaged various stakeholders in the community, and involved the community in the decision to transition to the four-day school week had higher levels of success. Districts with high levels of planning

and involvement were able to anticipate issues and address concerns in a more productive manner.

Leiseth (2008) performed a qualitative case study of the four-day school week as an alternative to traditional public school scheduling. The purpose of the study was to explore the participants' perspectives of implementing a four-day week in a rural district. The decreasing enrollment, financial constraints, and rural community needs will be involved. The research showed that the overall impact on the school district was positive. Financial savings and community support were positive with no significant impact on academic performance.

Bronson (2010) conducted a qualitative investigation into the four-day school week. The focus of the research was to determine the overall effects of the four-day school week on rural school districts in eastern Oregon. Bronson (2010) found that the majority of research participants agreed that the quality of education provided by four-day school districts had not been negatively affected by the transition from a traditional schedule to a modified schedule.

Duchscherer (2011) performed a qualitative case study of school districts transitioning from a five-day traditional schedule to a four-day modified school week. Duchscherer's (2011) main purpose was to evaluate the district's leadership decision-making process for transitioning to a modified school schedule and then evaluate their perceptions after the transition.

Duchscherer (2011) found that the main reason for the transition was to decrease district expenditures, primarily in facility and transportation costs. Overall perception by district administration was positive, but it was noted that transportation savings were the primary revenue savings source.

Hull et al. (2013) conducted a quantitative case study looking to provide policymakers and school leaders with information regarding implementing the four-day school schedule. The

primary purpose was to determine considerations, implementation, tools, and best practices for four-day school weeks. Hull et al. (2013) found that prior to implementing a four-day schedule, district leaders and policymakers needed to understand community needs, instructional strategies for teachers, and prepare for an influx in attendance. Hull et al. (2013) noted that school districts that transitioned to a four-day week saw an attendance bounce when surrounded by traditional school districts.

Farris (2013) conducted a mixed-methods case study on teacher perceptions in rural secondary school districts that operated on a four-day school week. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore principals' and teachers' perspectives on the four-day modified school systems. The purpose of Farris's (2013) study was to determine teacher perceptions regarding four-day schools compared to five-day schools in the areas of teacher and student attendance, student achievement, and teacher preparation. The study found contradicting information when comparing the literature to that of the interviewees. Teachers felt that students were able to adjust to lengthen school days in four-day school systems but that their productivity decreased due to the length of classes and the school day.

Hanson (2014) performed a qualitative case study to determine superintendent perceptions for professional development in South Dakota school districts implementing a four-day school system. The purpose of the research was to examine perceptions about the quality of professional development provided to school employees from 10 South Dakota school districts to implement the four-day modified school schedule successfully. The study found that professional development in four-day school systems included teacher effectiveness, addressed common core standards and curriculum development, technology integration, and student data analysis. No

specific professional development was provided strictly for four-day schools that were not provided in the majority of traditional schools.

Kreyling (2015) conducted a qualitative case study of stakeholder perceptions for implementing a four-day school week. The study looked at implementation regarding academic performance, student and teacher absenteeism, and overall morale. Specifically, the study addressed if schools utilized resources appropriately to maximize student and staff morale, academic performance, and attendance. The study found that students reported the four-day school week as less stressful. There was no significant increase or decrease in student performance.

Amys (2016) conducted a qualitative research study on the four-day school week, looking at extended weekends. The purpose of the case study was to examine rural stakeholders' perceptions of the four-day school weeks extended weekends with a detailed look at effects on school activities regarding student participation. Stakeholders responded with a positive outlook on extended weekends, noting that they were beneficial for school activities and showed a perceived increase in student participation. In addition, stakeholders noted that student decision-making on extended weekends was relatively positive and in line with those of traditional five-day school week students.

Gower (2017) performed a mixed-methods case study of the impact of four-day school based on performance prior to the transition. The purpose of Gower's (2017) study was to compare state and nationally mandated test scores from students in four-day school districts with similar data before transitioning to the modified school schedule. The analysis found that attendance ratios increased in four-day schools, decreasing dropout percentages. The study found mixed results in academic performance, with some areas seeing no impact. School administration

and teachers reported a net positive gain from transitioning to a four-day school system from the traditional school schedule.

Savage (2018) conducted a qualitative case study to determine the impact of the four-day school week on an Arizona school district. The purpose of the case study was to determine how implementing the four-day week influenced stakeholder perceptions over five years. Primary areas of focus were on attendance (student and teacher), student achievement, and school finance. The case study results showed no significant impact on teacher attendance. There was a minimal positive impact on student attendance. However, teachers reported a negative impact on student achievement and an overall negative perception by stakeholders within the district.

Fay (2019) performed mixed-methods research on the impact of the four-day school week in the areas of teacher retention and recruitment, perceptions, and student achievement. The primary purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of modified school scheduling on recruiting and retaining qualified teachers in rural Missouri school districts (Fay, 2019). Fay (2019) found that teacher morale in four-day school systems was higher than in five-day traditional school systems. The increase in morale led to a decrease in teacher turnover and an increase in teacher recruitment.

Barzee (2020) conducted a quantitative research study to identify the academic impact of the four-day school week in rural Idaho schools. The primary purpose was to determine student achievement by looking at standardized testing on students that have transitioned from traditional school scheduling to a four-day model. The study found no statistical impact on student performance, with an emphasis on no impact on economically disadvantaged students.

Daleske (2021) conducted a quantitative study of student achievement and school climate in four-day and five-day secondary schools in Missouri. The case study focused on comparing

four-day and five-day schools in the areas of teacher and student attendance, student achievement, and school climate (morale). Daleske (2021) found no significant impact on student achievement but noted that five-day school systems did perform slightly higher than four-day school systems. There was no statistical variance in staff or student attendance.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 included literature review findings on four-day and five-day school systems. Various case studies and peer-reviewed sources have been reviewed to explore the impact of four-day school weeks. The research found that attendance for teachers and students showed no significant difference between four-day and five-day school systems. The literature results showed that teacher morale and school climate were higher in four-day schools compared to traditional school systems (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). The literature results indicated no impact on academic performance but indicated needed longitudinal studies (Long, 2016).

Tharp et al. (2016) cited an increase in elementary test scores in four-day school systems in early implementation, but those scores dropped in the following years. The drop in test scores was attributed to the instructional changes needed to meet reduced weekly instruction. Tharp et al. (2016) suggested that school administration and districts needed additional professional development. There is a gap in the literature that does not address teacher or administrator perceptions of four-day school systems in Oklahoma.

Chapter 3 includes the methodology used in this case study. The purpose of this study was to identify teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the four-day modified schedule in rural school districts in Southeast Oklahoma. Research design, population and sampling, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis will be described. A brief overview of data

analysis will be presented along with ethical considerations to ensure the confidentiality of all participants.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the four-day modified schedule in rural school districts in Southeast Oklahoma. This qualitative case study looked at a rural school system using the modified school week in Oklahoma compared to before changing to a modified school week. Chapter 3 includes the research design, research questions, research population and sampling, data collection, instrumentation, identification of attributes, data analysis procedures, limitations and delimitations of the research design, ethical issues, and the summary.

Purpose of the Study

The study looked at teacher and administrator perceptions of four-day school weeks. The majority of four-day school week districts, nationally, were in rural locations (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020). According to the national cost savings analysis provided by the National Conference of State Legislatures (2020), the then annual savings for rural districts was a maximum of 5.43%, with the average being 2.5%. The study sought to identify teacher and administrator perceptions of the impact of the four-day school system on students' academic performance. It is a perception of various stakeholders that four-day school systems decrease academic achievement due to a lack of instructional days.

Research Questions

The purpose of this case study was to explore teachers' and administrators' perspectives on the four-day modified school system. Administrators are defined as school leaders at specific sites, commonly referred to as principals that oversee teacher recruitment, student achievement, and school finance. There are five primary components to an effective case study: research questions, study propositions, unit analysis, linking data to propositions, and interpreting

findings (Yin, 2009). Research questions and study propositions for this type of qualitative case study research were “how” and “why” to address the various reasons cited that influence the transition from traditional schedules to four-day modified schedules, including teacher retention, recruitment, and school finance, forcing the school district administration to implement the changes (Cooley & Floyd, 2013). The research questions are as follows.

Research Question 1 was, “How do teachers and administrators perceive the four-day school system in Oklahoma?” This question solicited information regarding perceptions on the four-day school system from experienced professionals. It was important that I determined the individual perceptions regarding modified school scheduling to help identify the system’s validity and potential for future implementation. The research questions were supported in the teacher interview question and administrators’ focus group discussion questions. Teachers were asked to describe if they faced challenges in a four-day school week school. This helped determine teacher perception of the risk and reward of the four-day system. Administrators were asked to describe the benefits or drawbacks of the four-day system and what system they preferred. This helped elicit responses in the areas of administrative perceptions of the four-day school system.

Research Question 2 was, “Why do teachers and administrators support or not support the four-day school system in Oklahoma?” Understanding justification for implementing or removing the modified school schedule was an important aspect of the case study. The purpose of this research question was to understand why teachers and administrators support or not support the four-day school week. First, why do they (teachers) support or not support a four-day school week? This question was to gain the teacher’s perception of the personal and professional justification for implementing or removing the four-day schedule. Second, teachers were asked

how they supported the four-day school system. This was more of a follow-up to why they supported the system. This helped determine areas of interest in academics, attendance, and finance and may open other areas not previously identified. For those individuals who might not support the four-day model, this question provided information on how teachers within the four-day system make it successful even if they are not in full support of the general idea of a modified school system. Last, the focus group discussion questions asked how school districts supported administrators running a four-day school system. This question allowed me to gather information regarding various stakeholders' support of the school system from the administrator's perspective.

Research Question 3 was, "How do teachers and administrators perceive the impact of the four-day school system on students' academic performance?" Academic performance is a key concern with implementing the modified four-day format (Anderson & Walker, 2015). It is vital that teachers and administrators in this study identify the perceptive impact on student performance. Teachers were asked two interview questions in this area to gain further information. First, teachers were asked to describe their challenges in a four-day school week. This allowed for teachers to describe various challenging areas of the four-day school system. Teachers were asked to describe if there were positive or negative impacts of the four-day system on students. Administrators were asked similar questions.

Research Question 4 was, "What suggestions do teachers and administrators have for districts considering the implementation of the four-day school week?" Research Question 4 provided a method for gathering recommendations from teachers and administrators for school districts considering implementing the system. Their individual and group perceptions of the system from professional and personal perspectives were an important aspect to understand

before any educational group considers modifying their school schedule. Teachers were asked to provide any suggestions for the successful implementation of the four-day school week.

Teachers were asked about their challenges in the four-day school system. Identifying challenges prior to implementation allows future educational institutions considering implementing the schedule to prepare and address this concern proactively. Administrators were asked about the support they received from the school district in implementing the four-day school system. This question identified areas of need for implementing the four-day school system successfully.

Research Design

Qualitative research design was chosen for this study. This section covers the five reasons for implementing a qualitative study. Creswell (2011) stated five reasons a qualitative study should be implemented. The first reason was to research a specific single problem (case) or issue comprehensively. Yin (2009) stated that case studies were to be holistic, examining all areas or embedded linking two or more case-specific issues. The second reason was when researchers were looking at specific perceptions of research participants as it related to them personally in a narrative style (Creswell, 2011). The third factor for considering a qualitative research design was to conduct research using interviews to create a theory or model (grounded theory study) using a targeted group with specific or unique experiences (Creswell, 2011). Ethnographic research study described the fourth factor and is when a researcher is looking at a specific culture or group (Creswell, 2011). The fifth and final rationale for conducting a qualitative research design is phenomenological research to gather information about a specific or unique shared experience for a selected group of study participants (Creswell, 2011). The five research rationales within the qualitative method were all connected by using direct inquiry and contact with research participants and that the data collection is antidotal with no method for statistical

analysis (Creswell, 2011). Due to the nature of the case study performed by looking at the four-day school system from teachers' and administrators' perceptions, the phenomenological qualitative design was chosen. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the four-day school weeks in small rural school districts in Southeast Oklahoma by using participant interviews and focus group discussion questions.

Creswell (2011) stated three main study designs: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods. Qualitative study designs allow researchers to look at social events without interrupting the environment they are studying (Merriam, 2001). Merriam (2001) explained that qualitative designs allow researchers to collect data that provides valuable content in a descriptive format and interpret the study results. I selected a qualitative approach that incorporated teachers and administrators into the research process. Barzee (2020) described that research participants were equal contributors to the researcher's research process. Therefore, potential participants were provided a clear understanding that they were participating in a qualitative research study and were key contributors to the success of the research.

Yin (2009) stated that case study design falls into three areas and proposes a different description. Yin (2009) described that pilot case studies are utilized to pre-examine a specific topic to create a framework prior to conducting a full case study. The second type is a descriptive study that explains natural events using a descriptive framework (Yin, 2009). This process was ideal for researching an organizational practice or processes (Yin, 2009). The embedded style described by Creswell (2011) is explained by Yin (2009) as a method for examining different constructs in a single case study. Last, Yin (2009) explained that the third type is exploratory in nature to examine an event using knowledge-driven, problem-solving, or social-interaction

frameworks. Furthermore, Yin (2009) indicated that case study frameworks should be used to answer “how” and “why” questions.

Turner (2010) provided directions for completing a qualitative case study using three interview methods: informal conversational interview, general interview guide approach, and standardized open-ended interviews. Turner (2010) noted that this style “is extremely structured in terms of the wording of the questions. Participants are always asked identical questions, but the questions are worded so that responses are open-ended” (p. 756). Turner’s (2010) interview methods helped ensure that all research participants were asked the same questions to maintain research fidelity.

Appropriateness of the Design

Major approaches in a qualitative research design include historical analysis, ethnography, grounded theory, case study, phenomenology, and narrative research. Historical analysis is designed to study past history through historical events and documents (Creswell, 2011). It was not the intent of this study to look at historical events. Ethnography studies cultural groups in their natural setting over a distinct amount of time through interviews and observations (Creswell, 2011). This study did not focus on cultural groups. Grounded theory looks to create new theories based on selected participant viewpoints and requires the researcher to determine the “abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants” (Creswell, 2011, p. 12). This study was not designed to create a new theory. Phenomenological studies are “a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about [the] phenomenon as described by participants” (Creswell, 2011, p. 13). The phenomenological study looks for individual participant perceptions and suggestions and does not meet the purpose of the phenomenological study. Narrative research focuses on individual

participants and requires participants to share personal stories (Creswell, 2011). The case study design was the only suitable method. A qualitative research study allowed for the incorporation of the social, contextual, and personal aspects of participant behavior (Creswell, 2011). The case study allowed for the exploration of participants' lived experiences and viewpoints.

Participants

The population in the targeted school districts consisted of 600 students. Location, population, and current school schedule (operating a four-day school system) identified the three rural school districts that participated in the study. Permission from the school districts to conduct the study was requested (see Appendix B). Fifteen teachers and five administrators were purposefully selected to participate in the study.

Individuals identified to participate were provided a brief study overview and asked to participate (see Appendix C). The primary method of correspondence between the research participants and me was email. Respondents' answers were kept confidential from the school districts to ensure the reliability of answers and avoid conflict of interests. Research participants and participating schools were provided pseudonyms to allow for anonymity. All correspondence will be kept in a secure file for three years after the study and destroyed. Teachers were asked to answer foundational questions of experience, certification level, and education level. In addition to educational experience, experience operating in a traditional school system and modified school system were key to gaining perspective regarding the difference and success or failure of the four-day school system.

Instrumentation

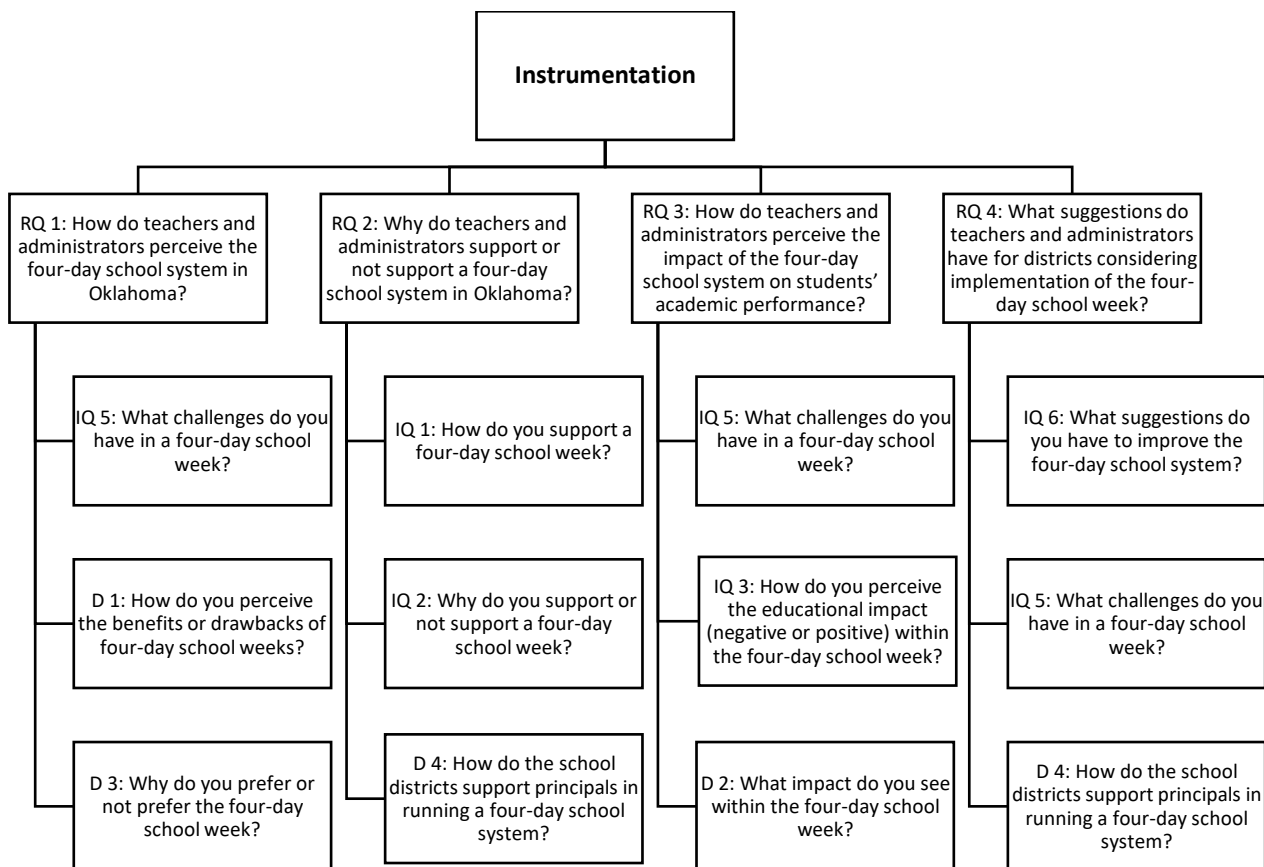
The instruments for this study were interview questions and a focus group discussion. The interview questions were aligned with the research questions. The focus group discussion

questions were generated based on research questions and serve as triangulation of the study.

The committee has reviewed and approved those questions. Figure 6 presents the association between research questions, interview questions, and focus group discussion questions.

Figure 6

Research Question Connection to Interview Questions and Focus Group Discussion Questions



The interview questions (for 15 participants) were as follows:

- IQ 1: How do you support a four-day school week?
- IQ 2: Why do you support or not support a four-day school week?
- IQ 3: How do you perceive the educational impact (negative or positive) within the four-day school week?
- IQ 4: What educational impact do you perceive in the four-day school week?

- IQ 5: What challenges do you have in a four-day school week?
- IQ 6: What suggestions do you have to improve the four-day school system?

The focus group discussion questions (for five administrators) were as follows:

- D 1: How do you perceive the benefits or drawbacks of four-day school weeks?
- D 2: What impact do you see within the four-day school week?
- D 3: Why do you prefer or not prefer the four-day school week?
- D 4: How do the school districts support principals in running a four-day school system?

Due to scheduling conflicts and COVID-19 precautions, interviews took place using a digital format such as Zoom. Interviewees were given the ability to answer anonymously using the digital format. Participants were selected on teaching experience and certification level determined from the State Department of Education database. Administrative responses for focus group discussion questions were collected through Zoom.

Data Collection

After obtaining institutional review board (IRB) approval from Abilene Christian University (see Appendix D), participating school districts were provided information on the nature of the study. Written confirmation of understanding and willingness to participate was obtained from each school district. No teacher was required to self-identify to their school district, and individual information was not released to the school districts. Initial emails to each potential participant included an informed consent disclosure (see Appendix E). I retained all documents indicating the willingness and understanding of each research participant. During the study and data collection process, no inherent risks were anticipated. I ensured that all participants' privacy was maintained and confidentiality of data was upheld.

Prior to data collection, permission to participate from school districts was obtained, and a letter to potential participants was sent (see Appendix B and Appendix C). Data collected during this case study was done in multiple facets. Teacher interviews were conducted using a digital format via email and Zoom. Emails for research participants were available on school websites. Once introductions and requests for participation took place, individual participants were asked if they preferred using the school email, private email address, or Zoom. The option was left to the research participants. Once signed consent forms from all research participants were obtained, interview questions were distributed. Data collection took place via emails, with Zoom meetings if necessary for clarification or by the request of research participant(s). Interview questions for teachers (see Appendix F) and focus group discussion questions for administrators (see Appendix G) were used to solicit responses.

Another data collection method was a focus group discussion. Data were collected via Zoom by inviting five principals to discuss the questions related to the topic. I collected all principals' responses as a second source of evidence and transcribed them manually.

All participants were assigned a code for the confidentiality issue. All participants' responses were collected, transcribed, and analyzed. Member checking was used; that is, follow-up questions during the interview process were asked to get clarification. All participants' responses were kept in computer files and password protected. All files will be kept for three years in a secure digital file and destroyed after three years.

Data Analysis Procedures

Once interview data and focus group discussion data were collected, data analysis began. Yin (2018) described the data analysis process of creating categories to create themes and subthemes during the information gathering process. Thematic analysis was used to determine

teacher interviews and administrators' focus group discussion patterns. Thematic analysis was broken into six categories to determine themes: transcribing data, gathering codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining or naming themes, and creating a report. Bernard (2018) explained the process of data collection and analysis as the process of determining patterns and ideas within the data to explain how the pattern exists. Bernard (2018) stated the coding process as organizing and grouping data into groups and categories based on similar characteristics. I created codes for data based on reoccurring words, phrases, and patterns, resulting in corresponding themes.

In this study, data analysis procedures began after data were collected and compared. Interview question responses were compared to help establish shared themes. The data analysis procedure involved the following steps.

- a. Interview questions were compiled and transcribed manually.
- b. Focus group discussion questions were compiled and transcribed manually.
- c. Fifteen teacher participants' and five administrators' responses were documented.
- d. Interview categories were created based on interview questions. Participants were assigned codes, such as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, and FG1, FG2, FG3, FG4, and FG5. Transcription of interview responses with participants' codes helped ensure the participants' privacy.
- e. Data were sorted in a Microsoft Excel® document using interview categories, participants' codes, and responses.
- f. General themes emerged based on the similarity of responses.
- g. Data analysis based on general themes was presented.

- h. Significant emergent themes were retrieved from the highest frequency of general themes, and further analysis was conducted. Words and phrases used consistently or similarly were themes and were used to answer the research questions.
- i. Findings were written based on significant emergent themes.

Credibility, Dependability, and Trustworthiness

The interview design method implemented in this study provided a “description of trends, attitudes, and opinions of a population, or tests for associations among variables of a population, by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 183). There were three threats to validity that must be addressed in qualitative research: accurate descriptions, personal biases, and the reaction of interviewees to the researcher that may impede the acquisition of data (Locke et al., 2017). I intended to ensure accurate descriptions by providing each of the 15 teacher participants and five administrator participants with a copy of the draft summary of their comments to ensure that any inaccuracies or misrepresentations were eliminated, which Creswell (2011) termed *member-checking*. I utilized *peer debriefing* (Creswell, 2011) to review and question the study to identify with individuals other than the researcher.

Truthful data collection and analysis procedures ensured dependability in the study. Transparency was supported in this study by following the steps outlined in this chapter. Dependability was maintained with careful attention to the study’s conceptualization, and the methods for data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). After all interview responses were collected, I transcribed the data, and member-checking was used to ensure the interview responses were correct.

A naturalistic approach was used to help ensure the study’s trustworthiness remained intact by helping to develop the personal feelings and beliefs of each participant. Stake (2010)

described the naturalist approach in qualitative interviewing as being conducted in a natural setting with connection to personal action, complex environment and context, and integrity of thinking. To create relationships with individual participants, it was important that the researcher ask meaningful questions that solicited honest reflection in participant experiences within the four-day school system. Interviewers should possess deep listening skills that listen to what participants say, listening for the inner voice, and listening while remaining aware of surroundings and the time (Seidman, 2019). The researcher listened intently, taking notes to ensure that the interviewee was understood.

Expected Findings

Throughout the study, the researcher expected to find teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the four-day school week in Oklahoma rural school districts. The case study helped identify areas that made four-day weeks successful or caused them to fail. The findings within the case study may be used to help increase the usage of four-day school systems as a means to assist with revenue issues, teacher recruitment, student success, and staff morale in rural school districts. Based on previous research, four-day modified school systems were becoming more common across the United States.

Ethical Issues in the Proposed Study

Creswell (2011) indicated that "four core ethical principles guide research practices" those core principles were "respect for person, beneficence, justice," and "respect for communities" (p. 128). It was key that the research design protected individual participants from any potential harm from participating and ensure that the research participants understood the risk of participating in the research. The researcher recognized the views and values of the community that each research participant was a part of (Creswell, 2011). Targeted and selective

sampling was an issue in identifying the respondents and potentially limiting responses to generalized norms rather than truth (Hossain & Scott-Villiers, 2019). The study ensured all participants remained anonymous within their perspective school district to avoid potential ethical issues in this area. Individual administrative participants were not named, but school identification may be an issue. It was not the researcher's intent to undermine any administrative authority or place a person in professional jeopardy. If at any time a respondent felt the direction of the questions or dialogue presented a professional issue, they were given the opportunity to opt-out of the study. The intent of the study was to identify the pros and cons of the modified school system for the purpose of guiding small school districts in implementing or removing the said system.

Limitations

Locke et al. (2017) stated that all scientific research as levels of limitations that are not in the researcher's control. This case study has three identified limitations. There was a level of bias within the research for or against four-day school systems. As the research was based on individual perceptions, research participants may hold biases. The first limitation was the small sample size issue in a qualitative study. The findings cannot be generalized to larger populations due to the small sample size in one school district.

The second limitation was the research geographic location. This case study used target sampling. Three rural school districts in Southeast Oklahoma that currently operate on the four-day schedule were chosen for the study. Due to the size of the school districts, a limited number of participants were available. The target group was 15 teachers, five from each participating school district. Administration participation was limited in size as well.

The last limitation was the focus of the research participants on a select group representing the school district. As teachers and administrator perceptions were the focus of the study, the exclusion of other stakeholder groups took place. It is important to note that future study may be necessary within the other stakeholder groups to determine further perceptions of modified school systems in rural Southeast Oklahoma.

Delimitations

Delimitations are choices researchers make in the course of a research study that should be mentioned by the researcher (Locke et al., 2017). As identified in limitations, the researcher in this case study chose a specific sample group with a target on perceptions of teachers and administrators. The primary motivation for this course was to determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the modified school district to understand better if the further implementation of the modified school schedule is beneficial. The primary research tool of the qualitative case study was interviews. The option to interview other stakeholders was present but deemed unwarranted for this study, with future studies of the community and other stakeholder groups possible.

The Researcher's Role

As an educational leader and administrator in a rural school district in Oklahoma, the researcher identified with the challenges that small school systems face regarding school finance, teacher retention, student achievement, and staff morale. It was imperative that rural school systems identify methods for overcoming revenue shortfalls, employing and retaining certified staff members, and increasing student achievement. It was critical that the researcher bracket out his own viewpoints or biases and listen to participant viewpoints. Bracketing was critical to the

success of the research as the researcher is an administrator in one school district within the study and connected through committees with other school districts.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the methodology selected for this qualitative study. Information provided in Chapter 3 outlined study design, data collection, and data analysis. The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of the four-day modified schedule from teachers and administrators in rural school districts in Southeast Oklahoma. The problem statement addressed concerns regarding teacher and administrator perceptions of the four-day school week and its impact on school finance, teacher recruitment and retention, and student academic performance.

The research questions were aligned with the problem statement by asking “how” and “why” questions designed to identify these areas in interviews with teachers and administrators. The theoretical framework for the study used Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and the collective impact theory. Primary sources of information were direct interviews with teachers and administrators. Trend analysis is used from data collected from interviews. Summarization of information identified thematic connections and generated themes to structure interviews.

Documented informed consent from each participant and privacy rights were protected throughout the study. A narrative summary of the case study was developed. Chapter 4 presents the results from data analysis for this qualitative case study. Interview results were organized using descriptive and data analysis procedures. A narrative summary of the findings and limitations of the study are provided.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter begins with the study's overview of the study. Chapter 4 contains the description of the participants, research methodology, data collection procedures, data analyses procedures, and the findings. Both general themes and significant themes will be illustrated.

The purpose of this case study was to explore the teachers' and administrators' perspectives on the four-day modified school system. Administrators were defined as school leaders at specific sites, commonly referred to as principals that oversee teacher recruitment, student achievement, and school finance. Four research questions guided the study: (a) How do teachers and administrators perceive the four-day school system in Oklahoma?, (b) Why do teachers and administrators support or not support a four-day school system in Oklahoma?, (c) How do teachers and administrators perceive the impact of the four-day school system on students' academic performance?, and (d) What suggestions do teachers and administrators have for districts considering the implementation of the four-day school week? Teacher participants with four-day school experience and five principals with four-day experience were invited to participate in the study.

Description of Participants

The participants included 15 teachers for interviews and five administrators for a focus group discussion; all had experience teaching in K–12 settings. Among the participants, 70% were female, and 30% were male. All participants had previously taught in or currently teach in a four-day modified school system. Specifically, 15% had five to 10 years, 25% had 11–20 years, 35% had 21–30 years, and 20% had more than 31 years of experience, with three teachers with 40 years of experience. By grade level, 30% of participants taught elementary school, 15% taught middle school, 40% taught high school, and 15% were superintendents responsible for the

entire district. Within the participant population, 100% had more than five years of teaching experience. Table 2 presents each participant's gender, position, grade level taught, years of teaching experience, and age range.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Position	School grade level taught	Years of teaching experience	Age range
1	Female	Teacher	Middle	14	31–40
2	Female	Teacher	Elementary	17	41–50
3	Female	Teacher	High	40	61–70
4	Male	Teacher	High	40	61–70
5	Female	Teacher	Middle	15	31–40
6	Female	Teacher	Elementary	40	61–70
7	Male	Teacher	High	15	31–40
8	Female	Teacher	Elementary	25	41–50
9	Female	Teacher	Elementary	25	41–50
10	Female	Teacher	High	4	21–30
11	Female	Teacher	Middle	9	41–50
12	Female	Teacher	High	21	41–50
13	Male	Teacher	High	7	31–40
14	Female	Teacher	Elementary	10	31–40
15	Male	Teacher	High	42	61–70
FG1	Male	Superintendent		25	41–50
FG2	Male	Principal	High	13	31–40
FG3	Female	Superintendent		27	41–50
FG4	Female	Superintendent		37	61–70
FG5	Female	Principal	Elementary	27	41–50

Note. FG = Focus Group Participant

I was an educator with a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education and a Master of Education in Educational Leadership. I asked open-ended interview and focus group discussion questions to avoid bias and to collect participants' perceptions and viewpoints. The interviewees

were given ample time to answer the open-ended questions. The data collection and analysis procedures were documented in detail in the following sections.

Data Collection Procedures

After obtaining IRB approval, the researcher contacted local school district administrators for permission to email staff to participate in the study. The approval was received, and the researcher used the school website to email staff members. An introductory letter was used (see Appendix B and Appendix C). After the potential participants responded with interest, an informed consent was emailed to the participant. After the researcher obtained the signed informed consent from the participants, a time was set up for one-on-one interviews. All participants were teachers with at least five years of experience in education teaching elementary, middle, and high school. Prior to the start of the interview, the researcher read the informed consent to the participants and informed them that the interview would be recorded. The interviews were recorded, and the responses were transcribed. In total, 15 interviews were conducted, and participants were asked a total of six structured, open-ended questions. After the interviews, the researcher transcribed the data and analyzed the findings.

For the second source of data, a focus group discussion was conducted. An introductory letter was sent to potential participants (see Appendix C). Five participants were identified via emails to the rural school district administration. An informed consent was emailed to the potential participants. Then, the researcher set a time for the focus group discussion. The focus group discussion was recorded. Prior to beginning the focus group discussion, the researcher read the informed consent to all participants and informed the participants that the focus group discussion would be recorded. In the focus group discussion, participants were provided with four structured, open-ended questions. All participants in the focus group discussion were

administrators with experience as a principal or a superintendent in a four-day school system. Their discussion, which included their perspectives and viewpoints, were recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis Procedures

After collecting interview responses, those responses were transcribed verbatim. The researcher carefully documented and checked every response for accuracy. After the transcripts were generated, the researcher checked them carefully for accuracy, and member-checking was performed to ensure the contents were exactly what the participants said. The data were examined, and a table of interview categories, participant codes, and general themes was created. The data analysis procedure included the following steps:

1. Transcribed each participant's interview responses.
2. Saved the files to the researcher's personal computer in an encrypted folder.
3. Read interview questions and each interview response.
4. Created a table of interview categories, general themes, and participants' codes.
5. Grouped similar responses into general themes.
6. Identified the common themes that emerged.
7. Grouped the common themes from highest frequency to lowest frequency.
8. Identified the significant emergent themes.
9. Wrote the analysis and findings of the general themes found.
10. Wrote the analysis and findings of the significant emergent themes found.

A focus group discussion was conducted for this study. After conducting the focus group discussion, the researcher carefully transcribed the participants' responses. Each response was transcribed verbatim, and the researcher checked them for accuracy. Once the transcription

process was complete, the researcher created a table of focus group discussion categories, general themes, and participants' codes. This table was used for analyzing the general themes and significant emergent themes that emerged in the focus group discussion. The data analysis procedure for focus group discussion included the following steps:

1. Transcribed each participant's responses from the focus group discussion.
2. Saved data files to the researcher's personal computer in an encrypted folder.
3. Read discussion questions and participant responses.
4. Created a table of focus group discussion categories, participant codes, and general themes.
5. Grouped similar responses into themes.
6. Identified the common themes that emerged.
7. Grouped the common themes from highest frequency to lowest frequency.
8. Identified the significant emergent themes.
9. Wrote the analysis and findings of the general themes found.
10. Wrote the analysis and findings of the significant emergent themes found.

More detailed information regarding the study's findings is included in the next section.

Findings

The purpose of this case study was to explore the teachers' and administrators' perspectives on the four-day modified school system. This study used 15 teacher participants with four-day school experience and five principals with four-day experience. The following participants' profiles consisted of their background, experiences, and thoughts regarding the four-day school system.

Interview Participants' Profiles

Participant 1 (P1). Participant 1 was a 38-year-old female teacher with 14 years of teaching experience and four years in a four-day school system. Participant 1 teaches middle school English. As a classroom teacher, Participant 1 indicated there are positives and negatives to teaching in a four-day school system, stating, "I support a four-day school week, but feel like some modifications need to be made to it in order to make it more productive."

Participant 1 elaborated on the specific reason for supporting a four-day modified school system by stating:

I support a four-day school week because it allows me, as a teacher, one extra day during the week to take care of personal and professional needs that would cause stressors in my life if I did not have this day out of the classroom. I am able to use this day to attend Dr. appointments, so I don't have to miss an instructional day with my students. I am able to complete planning and classroom housekeeping items I don't get to in the school day, such as grading, organization, and [Individualized Education Plan] IEP paperwork. I feel like a four-day week allows teachers to feel more refreshed and excited about their job, which in turn has a positive impact on student performance.

Participant 1 indicated a benefit of the four-day school system was in allowing for personal time during the traditional week for doctor's appointments and other events. Using this time outside the school day increases teacher and student attendance.

When asked how they perceived the educational impact (negative or positive) within the four-day school week, Participant 1 answered, "I think overall the positive benefits outweigh the negative impact." In connection, Participant 1 was asked what educational impact they perceived in the four-day school week. Participant stated:

I think the positive impacts of a four-day week are increased positive attitudes of both teachers and students and an increase in teacher-student expectations. Teachers and students both have an extra day to refresh mentally as well as take care of personal needs. Students can work all day on the three days out of school instead of during the school week at night. Parents can use the day to schedule a variety of appointments for their students. This idea, hopefully, causes less [sic] absences among students, resulting in more instructional time in the classroom. Teachers are also able to use this day to refresh mentally and take care of appointments, causing a decrease in teacher absences. When the teacher is in the classroom more often, the quality of instruction increases. Teacher and student morale increases.

By only having four instructional days, teachers are forced to increase the rigor of their instruction to make gains. Students are held more accountable for focusing and applying themselves to gain an understanding of their lessons in four days rather than being spread out over five. The level of seriousness that students and teachers take is increased.

When asked what challenges they have in a four-day school week, Participant 1 said:

I teach special education, and I find it hard to see gains in some students when they have a three-day break from school. Sometimes they forget what we discussed the previous week. It also makes it difficult if a student is absent one day, their services are decreased to three days a week. This decrease in direct intensive instruction can cause my students to gain skills at a slower rate. I put pressure on myself to really provide targeted intensive instruction without interruptions, knowing I only have four days in person with my students. This makes me feel like a failure or [an] ineffective teacher any minute I am

pulled away from them or not able to provide instruction because of unforeseen events. For struggling students, one extra day of instruction during the week may make a difference.

Participant 1 was asked what suggestions they had to improve the four-day school system. She responded, stating:

I think that at least half of one of the days without students in the classroom in a month should be used for staff development, collaboration, and fellowship. There is little time during the day to have staff members communicate with each other and share experiences, concerns, or ideas. As a special education teacher, I find it hard to speak with and collaborate with general education teachers about students and share ideas and ask for suggestions. Their planning periods rarely align with mine, and some things that I would like to discuss or ask are not conducive to email conversations. I feel like adding a half-day a month for discussion of things like I mentioned above would increase the workplace culture and relationships and make teachers more effective and open to developing relationships with other teachers and staff members.

Participant 2 (P2). Participant 2 was a female veteran teacher with 17 years of teaching experience at both the elementary and middle school levels. She taught in both traditional school systems and the four-day modified school system. She was part of the teacher team that was charged with implementing the four-day school system at her school when the transition was made. She stated that the reason cited by the district administration was financial at the time.

When asked how she supported a four-day school week, Participant 2 responded with, “I love the four-day school week. I feel like longer class periods help the students because we get more time for hands-on activities.” When asked why she supported or did not support a four-day

school week, she stated, “I think that the student’s attendance is better with a four-day week because it gives them a day for appointments and other activities that sometimes cause them to miss school.” Multiple participants cited the statement of support for additional time outside the school day as a positive reason.

When asked how she perceived the educational impact (negative or positive) within the four-day school week, P2 responded:

I believe there are some negatives. Children get the three days away, and we know they forget things, but I also know that at the ages they are, they really need relaxation time.

They also come to school knowing we have four days jam-packed with learning, and they work hard knowing they get an extra day at home.

In connection with the previous questions, P2 was asked what educational impact she perceived in the four-day school week and stated:

I don’t think in the long run there is a negative impact because the kids are still learning. I get more time during the day to integrate activities that shorter periods don’t give me.

They’re still learning the same things they just spent four days learning as opposed to five days.

Looking at the challenges, P2 was asked what challenges she had in a four-day school week. She stated, “I also think it is beneficial because teachers have that extra day for things and do not have to take days off for personal business. This helps with the shortened school week and not missing school.” In conjunction with the challenges, P2 was asked what suggestions she had to improve the four-day school system. She stated, “The only challenge I see with the four-day week is that it is sometimes more complicated for parents due to extracurricular activities on Friday.”

Participant 3 (P3). Participant 3 was a veteran female teacher with over 40 years of teaching experience in both rural and urban school systems. She taught in four-day school systems and traditional school systems. Her career has been as a secondary education teacher and teaches core subject areas of language arts and history.

When asked how she supported a four-day school week, she responded:

I support a four-day school week because I believe it is the best way to achieve our school's educational goals. There is less downtime and more time on-task for both students and faculty, and, I believe, more learning is actually occurring. By working to achieve specific goals as far as quality and quantity of subject matter presented in a four-day week, I have become better at my job, and I support the four-day school week as the impetus for that improvement.

The next question connected with question one and asked why she supported or did not support a four-day school week. Participant 3 stated:

I support a four-day school week because it has invigorated both students and staff at my school. The four-day format makes it more imperative to stay on task and deliver content in a timely fashion. The 'leaner and meaner' feel means I am much less inclined to pad or put off objectives. While I know the time spent in class is still the same as if it were a five-day week, I actually believe I get more done in the four-day framework.

The next question asked was how she perceived the educational impact (negative or positive) within the four-day school week. She stated:

I believe the educational impact of the four-day school week is positive. No matter how hard we, as educators, try, all students have times when they just don't want to be in a classroom. I find this happens less with the four-day school week. The length of a class

period is not as daunting (to the student) as the frequency of the period. My students are more cooperative and more receptive to four days of presentation than they were to five.

In conjunction with the previous question, she was asked what educational impact she perceived in the four-day school week. Participant 3 responded:

There is probably little difference in educational impact between a four-day school week and a five-day school week. Motivated students are still succeeding, while unmotivated students are still finding it all a struggle. Still, given that those unmotivated students often find classes more tedious, the four-day school week seems to have actually helped a few of my students to endure and succeed where in the past, with the five-day [school week], they would have shut down by midweek.

The next two questions focused on challenges and suggestions. When asked what challenges she encountered in a four-day school week, P3 responded:

When the four-day school week began at my school, I found it challenging to adjust my curriculum and lesson plans. However, as I became accustomed to the faster pace, I found I was actually accomplishing more than I had before the switch. There is a learning curve for [the] length of lesson presentations, for example, but I find that my students and I all have more energy and can get everything accomplished than we did in the old five-day system—and sometimes it even seems we manage to do more.

When asked what suggestions she had to improve the four-day school system, she stated:

I believe my school's utilization of Fridays (the fifth day, if you will) for virtual work should continue. Our students will live in an increasingly "plugged-in" world, and by blending in-person and online learning, we are giving them more assurance to navigate

the modern world. Otherwise, I have no suggestions for improvement beyond allowing the four-day school week to continue.

Participant 4 (P4). Participant 4 was a male teacher with over 40 years of teaching experience. He taught in both public and federal school systems in numerous states. He taught in both four-day and traditional school systems. His primary focus has been secondary education with an emphasis on language arts. Participant 4 supported the four-day system but felt that more planning is required in the beginning to be successful, stating:

In order to support a four-day school environment, I find that I have to plan more extensively. This planning demands that I shape my lessons for the extra time for each class period without becoming pedantic while still allowing myself the opportunity to adapt to what students are actually signaling to me. Assigning work that can be done in the longer class period allows me to more effectively ascertain a student's comprehension of the material. I can also work with students individually.

Participant 4's rationale for supporting the four-day system was student-focused, and he cited that students have more opportunity in class due to the extended amount of time, and with proper planning, educators have more time.

My support of the four-day school week environment is accomplished by planning. On the surface, it seems like it would be easier to plan this type of environment; however, so that not too much student downtime (because there is insufficient work/teaching going on) occurs, being overly prepared is a must. I do not mean to imply that loading students with work is what should happen either. I have implemented D.E.A.R., which I find helps some students work on reading skills. This time of program allows students to do something without the fear of failing at that something.

The educational impact on students results in longer class periods and longer school days. While there is more time in class to engage students, keeping them engaged can be difficult. The flip side to this is that the shortened school week reduces burnout.

The negative impact of the four-day school week is the longer school day. It is a monumental task at times to engage every student in the learning process. That is even more of a challenge when the student is tired (due to the earlier school start and later end). The positive is that the week progresses at a good pace, which avoids student burnout as well as teacher burnout. I think a logical response to this is to place core classes starting [the] second hour to [the] fifth hour.

The big picture of educational impact is the teacher's ability, with proper planning, to cover more material through using the longer class periods. Participant 4 felt that student work was complete and progress in the curriculum was further along, but extended weekends can result in some content loss.

This is the third year I have experience with the four-day school week. I find that the major educational impact is that I can actually cover the material I am teaching in more depth. Students seem to do more of their assigned work because there is more time in the extended class time for them to do it. I am able to help students because there is more time for me to do so. A negative impact is that the extra day allows some students to forget what has been taught the previous week, etc.

The challenges addressed by P4 connected back to the overall theme regarding planning. The major challenge for P4 was to ensure that lesson plans incorporated practical applications of the lesson, not just direct instruction.

The challenges I face in a four-day school week environment [are] to plan my classes to not be filled with just me teaching all the time. I would not want to listen to me drone on and on. It becomes important to have more student hands-on work; I do not mean busy work, but work that reinforces the standards I am required to teach and students are required to master. Therefore, I strive to incorporate a system where I can quickly ascertain where students are and where I want them to be. Also, to be able to seamlessly adapt to where my students are as opposed to where I think they should be.

Suggestions for improving the four-day modified school system centered around start and end times. Participant 4 felt that schools needed to be cognizant of the effects of start and end times on students. Four-day school systems result in longer school days. Participant 4 felt that schools could easily decide to start earlier. Starting early is an issue as it results in increased tardiness in the morning and other negative impacts on students.

Some of the things that I believe need to be changed in the school's four-week environment [are] the start and end times. Starting too early, I have found, tends to have negative impacts on students. It is also important that a system (plan if you will) be in place to allow students to progress at their own pace. This four-day system has the ability to allow teaching to be individualized and not be cookie cutter. As yet, I do not see that being the case. I think that the solution is to give students the ability to come to school on a fifth day in order to be remediated, etc.

Participant 5 (P5). Participant 5 was a female career teacher with 15 years of teaching experience. She taught in two different states in both traditional and four-day modified school systems. She is currently a middle school language arts teacher but has taught self-contained classes as an elementary teacher.

Participant 5 addressed the interview questions from a more holistic approach. When discussing if she supported the four-day school week, she did not confirm if it was her preferable choice but stated the entire community must support it. She went on to state that the entire school community must support it for it to be successful.

A four-day school week must be supported by the entire school community: faculty, staff, students, and parents. It is supported through organization and commitment on everyone's part to get educational goals accomplished. This means that I and everyone else at my school [have] to be informed about activities and schedule changes in order to adjust lesson plans and ensure that learning is continuous.

Participant 5 continued to address the issue from a more holistic approach when asked why she supported or did not support the four-day modified system. Her support was focused on it being best for her community. Specifically, she addressed the issue economically but did add a brief comment that she felt students were more engaged during the week due to it being shortened.

I support a four-day school week because I believe it is a good fit for our school and our students. From an economic perspective, services from busing to meals to afterschool programs cost less; to a school in a poor, rural community, this is meaningful as it frees more funds for other educational uses. From a learning perspective, I find the students are more engaged—perhaps because the time seems to pass more quickly (even though the cumulative teaching hours are the same as they were when we were five-day).

Participant 5 stated that she felt the overall educational impact of the four-day system would be positive. She believed that if students were truly more engaged due to the shortened week, more learning would take place during these times.

I would be very surprised if there were a negative educational impact. We cover the same material as we did when we were five-day, and we still utilize the same teaching strategies. If the students really are more engaged, the educational impact of a four-day week should actually be positive.

Participant 5 stated that she believed the educational impact on a four-day school system was greater than that of a traditional school schedule. Her belief was student-focused, stating that students have an easier time staying “buckled down” due to the shortened week.

I believe the educational impact is the same or greater for a four-day school week as compared to a five-day school week. I still see the same range of students with the same range of learning styles and levels of engagement; however, because our week is only four days, the students who had trouble remaining “buckled down” seem to have an easier time remaining attentive. The psychological impact of four days versus five days is definitely a factor.

Again, Participant 5 addressed the challenges faced by a four-day school system from a holistic perspective. She stated that the major challenge facing a four-day modified school system was the external perception that a four-day school system was “radical” and nontraditional.

The challenges are all in the perceptions of outsiders. Because a four-day school week seems radical or “less” than the traditional, parents and community members may see our school as slacking off on education. This is definitely not true, and it only takes a little student to see the actual time spent on-task for a year is the same.

In addition, P5 suggested that improvements to the four-day system needed to be on stakeholders being more vocal in supporting the four-day modified school system.

When asked what suggestions she had to improve the four-day school system, she stated:

I would like to see more schools follow a four-day school week. I would also like to see more faculty, administrators, and parents endorse the practice and voice their approval. Four-day school weeks work just as well as five-day school weeks—more positive examples and endorsements would help convince the skeptics.

Participant 6 (P6). Participant 6 had over 40 years of teaching experience. She taught in two school systems and participated in implementing the four-day school week in one school. Her primary focus as an educator has been elementary education and physical education.

Participant 6 “completely” supported the four-day school system, stating her rationale as “students have a better attitude and discipline problems are reduced.” Specifically, her support was due to what she saw as a decrease in discipline issues and increased student attendance. She added that extended weekends for teachers are a bonus. “Discipline issues are decreased, and attendance is better. Students, teachers, and support staff all attend school more when they have the additional time off.”

Participant 6 connected the extended weekends with her positive perception of the educational impact on students. She stated:

Students perform better when allowed an extra day for family and personal activities.

When parents share custody of children, more time is available to visit with both parents.

Students have time to go to doctor appointments without the worry of losing perfect attendance and having make-up work.

This perception was reinforced when P6 stated that students perform better in a four-day school system because “their instruction is more compact, and they have more time to recharge with the additional day off.”

Childcare was a challenge brought up by P6. The concern was the additional day of childcare due to extended weekends and the issue of students attending school activities that fall on noninstructional days. Participant 6's overall suggestion for improving the four-day modified school system needed to be answered by each school district individually "so schools decide the best plans to meet their needs."

Participant 7 (P7). Participant 7 was a 38-year-old male high school teacher and coach with 15 years of teaching experience. Participant 7 taught four years in a four-day modified school system. His overall perception of the four-day system was mixed.

Participant 7 felt that attendance in a four-day school system was higher, stating, "I think the kids are able to attend school more often in a four-day week rather than a five-day week. Teachers and students are able to use that extra weekday for doctor or dentist appointments if they so choose." However, he felt that "teachers at a four-day week school have extremely long days. Coaches are usually working throughout that fifth day, whether it be practicing or games, whereas classroom teachers do not have to be at the school on their day off." In addition, he felt that for students and teachers, "five days of a routine is better than four days of a routine."

When asked about the educational impact of a four-day school system, P7 indicated that the impact could be both positive and negative depending on the student. First, as a teacher, he felt that he must fit more into each lesson due to the shortened week, stating, "In a four-day school week, it sometimes feels like you cram five days of school work into four days." Students who have positive attendance and miss fewer days due to the modified school system schedule have a "positive outcome due to more class time and more time to complete their work in class." However, students that miss or have poor attendance fall even more behind than a traditional schedule. Participant 7 stated, "When a student misses one day in a four-day school week, it feels

like they miss more than that one day of instruction because of the amount of content teachers have to teach.”

When asked about specific students’ educational impact, P7 indicated that students take on a lazier lifestyle due to the shortened week. He stated, “Students sometimes adapt a more “lazier” approach to school work, work, or just life in general due to the lack of routine on a regular basis. The students may not have the opportunity to learn as much.”

The challenge faced by four-day school systems is a “lack of routine in a student’s life, longer school days, and sports participation may decrease.” Participant 7 constantly addressed the routine issue. Regarding athletics, his primary concern was that students might be more apt to miss game practices on noninstructional days. Participation in extracurricular activities was the suggested area of improvement for four-day modified school systems, stating four-day schools need to “create a method to increase student participation in activities or other areas during nonschool days” and that “schools need to help create a routine for students to make them more productive when they get older.”

Participant 8 (P8). Participant 8 was a 47-year-old female elementary teacher with 25 years of teaching experience. She taught in a four-day modified school system for five years. Her teaching experience was with one school district. She had experience within that district in the same grade level while it was a traditional school system and during their transition to a four-day school system, and the subsequent years following the transition. She is not a full supporter of the four-day modified school system but stated that it has some positive benefits.

Participant 8 stated that her perception of the four-day school system was negative from a student academic performance standpoint, stating, “I am worried about a decline in students’ academic performance especially after COVID shutdowns the previous years.” Prior to COVID,

student progress may have been slightly hindered, but losing an additional day after schools were shut down due to the pandemic was highlighted as a concern by P8. However, she stated that “it is nice to have the extra day for doctor’s appointments or other personal things that I would normally have to miss school for,” identifying that her attendance was better with a four-day school system.

Participant 8 stated she saw the value in the additional day off from a parent perspective and stated, “I can see the value for parents in teachers to be able to go to the doctor or other things and not miss school.” However, the shortened week was a concern for students who missed instructional days. She stated, “It is very challenging to teach all necessary content for the week while trying to catch students up.” This indicated that students miss less with the additional day for appointments and other nonschool-related items but that students with negative attendance fall behind quickly.

Participant 8 continued with the educational impact from a student attendance perspective. Students with positive attendance perform well in a four-day school system, while students with negative attendance fall further behind. She stated, “It is hard to catch students up that are behind. Students that perform well will continue to perform well.” To address this issue, P8 suggested a modified schedule of blending the traditional schedule with the modified school schedule. She suggested, “a split schedule where we went five days a week until Christmas then switched to a four-day week.”

Participant 9 (P9). Participant 9 was a 49-year-old female elementary teacher with 25 years of teaching experience. Similar to P8, her teaching experience was with one school district and had experience within that district in the same grade level while it was a traditional school

system and during the transition to a four-day school system and the subsequent years following the transition. However, she was a supporter of the four-day school system.

Participant 9 stated that she supported the four-day modified school system as it is an extension of the community. The community supports the use of the modified school system, and, therefore, it is the school's responsibility to uphold and honor the community's beliefs. She stated, "I think that is special about small-town schools. The school is an extension of families. If we can all agree or come to an agreement together, the system works." Specifically, P9 supported the modified school system and stated, "I support a four-day week. I find that it allows me extra time to plan and prepare for my students. I miss school less and feel more rested during the year." The modified school system allows for additional time to plan and increased school attendance.

Participant 9 felt that the academic impact of the four-day modified school system was both positive and negative. She stated:

I think the impact is both positive and negative. First, the positive side comes [from] students being present more often. We have Fridays off. This keeps students from missing those days for activities and having to make up the work or teachers having to reteach material that students missed. The negative is that school days are longer. We start about 30–45 minutes earlier than schools around us and go about 20 minutes longer. Our average school day is 8:00 a.m. to 3:40 p.m. Larger schools around us go [from] 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. or 3:15 p.m.

The positive of increasing student attendance is noted as a major impact for four-day school systems and relates directly to student performance. However, the shortened school week makes it difficult for teachers to catch students up that miss school time. Participant 9 stated that

she had not seen a negative impact educationally as “(her) students performed just as well on state testing as four-day students as we did when we were five days.” In addition, she stated she is a better teacher and more prepared in the classroom because she and students are well-rested, stating:

I think students tend to enjoy the four-day week because of the extra day off. As a teacher, I like that I have an additional day to plan and grade papers. Before, I would take my Saturday and then end up grading and planning on Sunday night. Now, I do my grading and planning on Fridays, and I have the entire weekend to enjoy.

The biggest challenge that P9 identified was that students with poor attendance fall further behind in a four-day school system. The lack of an additional instructional day to “catch” students up was a concern. She stated:

The biggest challenge I see is that if students do get behind or miss multiple days, it is harder to catch them up. You have one less day a week. On the other hand, the student does have an extra day in their weekend to do make-up work. It really depends on the student and parents.

The ability for students to use the extended weekend to catch up on missing work can be a positive, but it negates the idea of an extended break as a positive for students to decompress.

Participant 9 finished with a statement regarding retention. She stated that four-day school systems needed to maintain their current calendar.

First, keep it. It would be hard for me to stay at the school I really enjoy now if we went back to five days a week. I can move to a larger district and make more money or even across the border and drive an extra 20 minutes and make a lot more money. I just prefer small schools.

The concept of teachers moving to larger districts to make more money is a key factor for rural schools that operate on a four-day schedule as a means to recruit and retain teachers.

Participant 10 (P10). Participant 10 was a 29-year-old female high school teacher with four years of teaching experience. Her only teaching experience was in a four-day modified school system. She stated that she supported the four-day school system where schools used the time wisely and that instruction was student-centered, stating,

I feel that a four-day school week has the potential to be very beneficial. I feel that an emphasis must be put on student learning and ensuring that the extra time during class each day is valued and used properly. Forming a plan and executing that plan to maximize learning time and student retention is vital to the success of a four-day week.

Participant 10 identified planning as a key contributor to the success of a four-day school system.

The specific reason for her support of the four-day school system was in the area of parent and teacher attendance, stating:

As a school employee, I am able to miss [fewer] school days to attend to personal matters. As a parent, my child misses less school and still receives the same amount of instruction time. I also feel that a four-day week has helped my district raise enrollment by drawing students because of the schedule.

Attendance was a large factor identified by participants. Increased time outside the instructional day to complete personal matters was a big contributor to the support of the four-day school system.

Participant 10 admitted that there was a potential for a negative impact of four-day school systems with the reduction in instructional days, but that teachers can mitigate the issue by initiating and ensuring that the material is covered. She stated:

I do see the potential negative impact that [fewer] school days can have on students, but I feel that we as teachers and school employees must ensure that the same amount of learning is taking place in our classroom. I feel that if we as teachers take the initiative to ensure we are teaching the same material in four days versus five, it is a positive for the district.

Participant 10 expanded on the educational impact, stating that she felt there was currently a positive impact. She felt that content was still covered correctly and that “if anything, we are progressing.”

When asked about the four-day school systems’ challenges, P10 identified childcare as a concern. She stated that she knew several parents who struggled with finding childcare.

Participant 11 (P11). Participant 11 was a 42-year-old female middle school teacher with nine years of teaching experience. She was in “total support” of a four-day modified school system. Participant 11 identified both personal and professional reasons for her support, stating:

I feel like as a teacher, it gives me more flexibility. I am able to make appointments and not miss school due to the extra day I have during the week. This would, in turn, save the school money. It saves the district money in several ways, such as fuel for bus routes, food, and electric or water bills.

Additionally, she stated that a four-day school week could be “an enticement to teachers seeking employment.” From a student perspective, she stated, “Some students help at their home with different jobs or chores, and this gives them another day to help.”

From an educational perspective, P11 identified the additional day off as a positive for students as it allows them to pursue other interests. She stated:

I feel like the students still have the opportunity to learn, and on their day off, they could pursue other interests. They are given opportunities to learn and improve daily life skills. Many students enjoy being off an extra day to do activities they enjoy, and they have the extra day to study for the upcoming week.

She said the positive impact on education was the shorter week and extended days. The extended days allowed teachers to cover the same material as a traditional school, and the longer weekend allowed students to pursue other interests and be more focused when in school.

The challenge addressed by P11 was the shorter window for students to complete work each week. The shortened week meant students must utilize class time wisely. She stated her students do have one day less to turn in the work for each week, but they would be able to work on unfinished work on their day off. The area that P11 saw for school improvement was to require students to participate in some sort of physical activity during the school week as they may not get that when at home.

Participant 12 (P12). Participant 12 was a 45-year-old female high school teacher with 21 years of experience. Her teaching experience included traditional and modified school districts. She taught in Arkansas and Oklahoma. Her personal opinion on the four-day modified school district was “neutral to slightly opposed to the four-day week.” When asked about her perception of the four-day week, she viewed it negatively. She stated:

I feel like four-day weeks leave so much off time in the week that we begin to see school as an interruption to the rest of our week instead of it being the main event. The perception becomes that school is just something to get through so I can go on to doing

leisure activities. I think it discourages a good work ethic for many students. It also makes it more difficult for parents to keep a consistent sleep schedule for their students, which, in turn, affects their learning.

Participant 12 was the only participant to mention the shortened school week as a break from the weekend and that school was in the way of “leisure activities.”

Participant 12 considered the educational impact of the four-day modified school week to be “neutral to slightly negative.” Her opinion was that students were getting further behind and that teachers were not able to cover as much material. She stated, “Since we have gone to a four-day week, we seem to get further and further behind each year. Students are retaining less information, and progression is stalling because we spend more time on “review” and “reteach” items.” Participant 12 identified pacing as a challenge for four-day school systems. Reviewing and reteaching were issues with the shortened week, stating, “The gap between Thursday and Monday is also an issue for student recall.” When asked about suggestions for addressing these challenges and for four-day school systems in general, she stated, “I really don’t have any suggestions. Things I would like to suggest are not feasible for all classes throughout the day.” Participant 12 identified that she understood the need for her district to operate on the current four-day model due to teacher shortage and school finance.

Participant 13 (P13). Participant 13 was a 33-year-old male high school teacher with seven years of teaching experience. His experience included traditional and four-day modified school system experiences. When asked about his perception of the four-day school system, he stated:

I am in complete support of the four-day school system. The primary reason I have stayed at my current school is that we have extended weekends. I would have moved across the

border to Arkansas and made \$10,000 more a year, but I like having more time for myself and my family.

Participant 13 identified that moving to another school district would allow him to make more money but that the extended weekend was more valuable to him. When asked to be more specific on his reasons for supporting the four-day week, P13 stated:

I think it is important for teachers to get more breaks during the week. Most of us do not work from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., as most people believe. I drive a bus before school and after. I get to school at 6:30 a.m., drive my bus route, and then go teach. After school, I drive until around 4:30 p.m. After I get off my bus route, I go back to my classroom to plan lessons for the next day or grade papers. I would say my average day is 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. The additional day off allows me to catch up on grading or lesson planning. Sometimes, it is just nice to have another day to decompress.

The additional time off to lesson plan, grade, or decompress was a common theme among participants.

When asked about the educational impact, P13 identified student and teacher attendance as a big positive. He noted that there were negatives and positives, stating:

The negative is that if a student misses during the week, they miss a lot. But they miss a lot, whether it is a four-day or five-day school week. The positive is that I think students are present more. The ones that would skip just to skip know they have a three-day weekend coming every week and tend to show up more. As a parent, I use this time to take my kids and myself to the doctor. When scheduling appointments, I know I have Friday off and can request it without worrying about doing substitute plans and asking for a day off.

Another theme among participants was identifying student and teacher attendance as a positive in a four-day school system. Participant 13 identified the modified school system as having an overall positive impact on student education, stating:

I think my students perform better in a four-day than they did in a five-day system. They are here more. More time for in-class assignments with the longer class periods means that I have less late work. Instead of using the entire hour for direct instruction, I am able to allow them to do some practical exercises to ensure they understand the concept before they take it home and do it wrong 10 times in a row.

Most participants identified the increase in class time as a positive.

Other participants echoed the challenge identified by P13. He identified childcare as a primary challenge for four-day school systems. Participant 13 stated:

Childcare is an issue anytime students are not in school. I think it is important for the school to partner with the community to make sure everyone is on board with the concept. We are lucky to live in an area with grandparents that can help and many churches that offer activities or childcare at low or no cost.

When asked if he had any suggestions, he stated:

Schools should consider using their facilities for childcare. Not so much for your older students (seven to 12), but rather you lower elementary students. This would be a great time to do STEM projects or other fun educational activities. The school could use it as a revenue source and offer teachers additional stipends to work.

Participant 14 (P14). Participant 14 was a 35-year-old female elementary school teacher with 10 years of teaching experience. Her experience was in traditional and four-day modified

school systems. Participant 14 supported the four-day school system. When asked about her perception of the modified school system, she stated:

As a mom, I like spending time with my kids. Saturday and Sunday just are not enough time. I spend one of those nights grading papers or lesson planning. I get behind on housework and end up putting off fun things with my kids. The additional day has made me less stressed about school.

The theme of having more family time was present in multiple participant interviews.

Participant 14 identified the educational impact as being both negative and positive. Specifically, in her experience, the transition from traditional scheduling to modified school scheduling was the issue. She stated:

When we first changed to the four-day week, I don't think we were prepared for what that meant. We didn't prepare our lessons well enough, and I ended up having wasted time each class period. By year three, my students were performing better, and I had a pattern down. If I could have started the way I teach now, I think my kids would have benefited from the beginning.

Being prepared for the transition was an important component for success identified by P14.

The biggest impact on the educational benefit of the four-day system identified by P14 was student attendance. She stated:

The biggest education impact I see is in student attendance. My kids do not miss much. Most parents that I deal with seem to understand and put more importance on their students being at school when we are in session.

Students who spend more time in the classroom have a larger impact on student performance.

The biggest challenge for four-day school systems identified by P14 was parent and community concerns regarding childcare. Participant 14 noted:

The biggest challenge I think four-day schools face is that most parents want their kids in school or at least not at home. The pandemic put a bigger spotlight on that. I saw all over Facebook and other social media sites about parents complaining schools were closed and they couldn't handle their children all the time. At the same time, maybe parents will understand why we need a break too.

The identification and understanding of parent concerns about childcare was a common theme among participants.

Participant 15 (P15). Participant 15 was a 66-year-old male high school teacher with 42 years of teaching experience. He taught in four different school districts. Two of the districts operated on a four-day modified model. Participant 15 was in full support of the four-day modified school system. He stated, “[he] would have retired prior to the pandemic if I had not been at a four-day school. I will retire when or if the school is forced to move to a five-day schedule.” When asked about the specific reasons he supported the four-day school system, he stated:

After years of teaching, I believe the longer school day is more beneficial to students. Compacting learning into fewer hours for more days makes less sense than lengthening the day for a shorter week. Students are more engaged and miss less school. As a teacher, I miss less, and I think my colleagues do as well. As a coach, I liked the four-day system as it allowed for a freer schedule on Fridays. I could go to tournaments and not have to worry about players of myself missing school.

When discussing the educational impact, P15 stated, “Any system has negatives and positives.” These were not limited to four-day school systems. He cited absences as a positive, stating:

When I taught at a five-day school, student absences were the leading cause of students failing my classes. Students miss less at a four-day school. However, if you do not plan well, homework given on a Thursday has a longer period to disappear than on a Friday. In addition, he stated that the overall impact of the four-day system was “positive.” His justification was as follows.

Students and teachers do not seem as stressed when they know there is a three-day weekend coming up. Discipline issues seem to be smaller. Students have a longer break to get over their differences if there is an issue. Classroom attention can be a struggle in the beginning with the longer class period. I have learned to implement brain breaks or build time into my lesson for students to do what would normally be homework. The ability to use class time for homework has increased student grades.

Participant 15 identified politics as the biggest challenge for four-day school systems. He stated, “In [his] experience, if educators think something is good for education, politicians tend to go the other direction.” He went on to say that school leaders and teachers must be the ones to “make sure the community they are in supports the four-day school and voices that approval.” He also stated that schools must allow for teachers to plan and prepare adequately for the modified school schedule. He stated that an area of improvement was to allow teachers the “ability to plan lessons freely based on their subject area to maximize classroom time to keep students on task.”

After careful examination of teacher and administrator perceptions of the four-day modified school system, an analysis of general themes was conducted. Appendix H shows the interview categories with the general themes and corresponding participant codes. Appendix I shows the focus group discussion topics with the general themes and corresponding participant codes. Each response was coded manually and carefully crosschecked. During the data collection process, interview participants were asked six questions, and focus group discussion participants were asked four questions to obtain their perspectives on the four-day modified school system. The responses were carefully transcribed to ensure that every response was accurately reported. Upon transcription, the general themes were identified. The purpose of these questions was to investigate teachers' and administrators' perceptions regarding the four-day modified school system, which was shown in their responses.

General Themes From the Interviews

Thirty-four general themes were identified from six interview categories (see Appendix H). The general themes were illustrated and briefly listed as follows.

1. The first category discussed was the teachers' perspectives of the four-day school week in Oklahoma. The general themes found were divided into positive and negative categories.
 - a. Positive perspectives
 - i. More time for family and personal business
 - ii. Increased morale
 - iii. Students can work outside the school on nonschool days
 - iv. Reduced discipline issues
 - b. Negative perspectives

- i. Early start time
 - ii. Discourages work ethic
- 2. The second category discussed was the reasons they support or do not support the four-day school week. The general themes found were divided into support or not support categories with the reasons.
 - a. Support
 - i. More time for planning
 - ii. Miss school less
 - iii. Longer class periods
 - iv. Intervention time
 - v. Cost savings
 - b. Not support
 - i. Childcare can be hard on some parents (P2, 3, 6, 10)
 - ii. Academic performance (P8, 12)
 - iii. Lack of parent support at home (P8, 12)
- 3. The third category discussed was the positive or negative impact of the four-day modified school system. The general themes were organized into positive and negative categories.
 - a. Positive impact
 - i. Increased student attendance
 - ii. Increased teacher attendance
 - iii. Longer class periods
 - iv. Shorter week avoids teacher and student burnout

- b. Negative impact
 - i. Three-day break provides time for academic slide for some students
 - ii. More planning
 - iii. Longer school days
4. The fourth category discussed was the perceived educational impact of the four-day school week. The general themes were organized into positive and negative categories.
- a. Positive educational impact
 - i. Increased morale for students and teachers
 - ii. More in-depth instruction
 - b. Negative educational impact
 - i. Three-day breaks could lead to educational slide
 - ii. Students do not learn
5. The fifth category discussed was the challenges for running a four-day school. The following were general themes identified.
- a. Challenges
 - i. Community support
 - ii. Extracurricular activities
 - iii. Modifying curriculum
 - iv. Start and end times
 - v. Childcare
6. The final and sixth category discussed was suggestions for improving the four-day system. The following were general themes identified.

- a. Use one noninstructional day a month for staff development
- b. Use fifth day as a noncontact virtual day
- c. Start later and end later. For example, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- d. Split schedule. For example, five days to Christmas and four days in the spring

Significant Emergent Themes From the Interviews

Four significant emergent themes were identified during careful analysis from the teacher participants. The significant emergent themes were:

1. Increased teacher and student attendance (P1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15)
2. Increased student morale and decreased discipline issues (P1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15)
3. More time for family and personal business (P1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15)
4. Increased teacher morale and retention (P1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15)

Significant Emergent Theme 1: Increased Teacher and Student Attendance

Thirteen participants (P1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15) identified increased teacher and student attendance as a benefit to the four-day school system. Participant 1 stated:

I support a four-day school week because it allows me, as a teacher, one extra day during the week to take care of personal and professional needs that would cause stressors in my life if I did not have this day out of the classroom.

Increasing teacher attendance allows for increased educational opportunities for students. In addition to teacher attendance, P1 stated, “Parents can use the day to schedule a variety of appointments for their students,” allowing students to miss less school. The increase in student attendance was reinforced by teacher P9, stating the “positive side comes in students being

present more often.” Thirteen out of 15 teacher participants identified teacher and student attendance as positives within the four-day modified school system.

Significant Emergent Theme 2: Increased Student Morale and Decreased Discipline Issues

Twelve participants (P1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15) identified increased student morale and decreased discipline issues as a positive to the four-day modified school system.

Participant 3 stated, “My students are more cooperative and more receptive to four days of presentation than they were to five.” Participants 5, 6, 7, and 9 had similar beliefs that students were more likely to participate and take the school week seriously, knowing they had four days instead of five. Participant 4 noted, “Students seem to do more of their assigned work because there is more time in the extended class time for them to do it.” Participant 5 identified that students that traditionally had issues being attentive in class did better, stating, “The students who had trouble remaining “buckled down” seem to have an easier time remaining attentive.” Twelve teacher participants perceived a decrease in overall student discipline associated with increased morale as a direct result of the modified school week.

Significant Emergent Theme 3: More Time for Family and Personal Business

Thirteen total participants (P1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15) identified that a benefit to the four-day school system was an increase in family and personal business time. Participant 1 stated, “It allows me, as a teacher, one extra day during the week to take care of personal and professional needs that would cause stressors in my life if I did not have this day out of the classroom.” Participant 2 echoed this sentiment, stating, “Teachers have that extra day for things and do not have to take days off for personal business.” Eleven participants agreed that the additional time off relieved the stress of needing to request a day off for appointments and

personal business. The additional day created more family time by providing that additional day to accomplish other tasks.

Significant Emergent Theme 4: Increased Teacher Morale and Retention

Fifteen participants (P1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15) identified increased teacher morale and retention as positives to the four-day school system. Participant 13 stated the benefit of the four-day school system on teacher retention.

The primary reason I have stayed at my current school is that we have extended weekends. I would have moved across the border to Arkansas and made \$10,000 more a year, but I like having more time for myself and my family.

Ten participants identified their continuation as educators being directly linked to the modified school week. Ten teacher participants cited the four-day school system as the primary reason they stayed with their current district when they could move to another district or state to make more money.

Focus Group Discussion Participants' Profiles

The focus group (FG) discussion served as a second data source in this case study. The focus group discussion was completed to provide data triangulation. Five participants were invited to engage in conversations and discussions. The interactions and conversations were recorded. Data were collected and analyzed. Participants were asked to maintain the confidentiality of the conversation and had no connection to one another. The participants were presented with predetermined questions by the researcher, and the participants responded. Participants (FG1, FG2, FG3, FG4, and FG5) were administrators with a principal or superintendent experience in an Oklahoma four-day modified school system. The participants' profiles, experiences, and thoughts were illustrated as follows.

Focus Group Discussion Participant 1

Focus Group Participant 1 (FG1) was a 48-year-old male superintendent. He has 25 years of experience in education. The school he currently operates was on the four-day modified school model when he became superintendent, but he was a teacher and high school principal at the time it was a traditional school system. He supported the four-day model.

When asked about the pros and cons of the four-day modified school system from his perspective, he stated:

Pros of a four-day week for our district are that it helps to alleviate the loss of instructional time because both students and faculty can schedule doctor visits, dentist appointments, etc. on their day off. We also use it as a recruiting tool for potential teaching candidates. Cons would be that it creates a burden for our parents by forcing them to secure childcare services for the day when we are not in session. It also creates a larger gap between instructional time for students each week by extending their weekend to three days which, in turn, creates the possibility for more learning loss.

When asked to identify if the educational impact of the four-day school week was positive or negative, his perception was that it was mainly positive. He cited morale as being the biggest positive contributor and that finances were not a difference-maker. He stated:

I feel that it is more of a morale and climate boost for our school population. We do not seem to experience the “burnout” amongst our students and faculty as much as our five-day week counterparts. I personally have not noticed a marked difference financially as many would expect. Generally, our budget has remained constant in comparison to the budget that was in place when our district was in a five-day schedule pattern.

Focus Group Participant 1 was asked if he preferred the four-day school system. He cited morale and student absenteeism as the main reason, stating, “I prefer the four-day week because our school morale seems to be better as well as our absenteeism rates for both students and faculty are better than they were in relation to what they were during our five-day schedules.”

When asked how school districts support principals in running a four-day school system, he cited the additional day to accomplish uninterrupted administrative duties as the primary area. He said:

Having Fridays student and teacher free allows me to have uninterrupted time in my office to work on scheduling, programming, budgeting, and other tedious tasks that need attention and that all too often get derailed by the daily grind of a principal’s duties.

Focus Group Discussion Participant 2

Focus Group Participant 2 (FG2) was a 38-year-old male high school principal with 13 years of experience in education. He taught at traditional school districts and a school district that used a modified five-day schedule implementing a modified block schedule. He is currently the high school principal at a four-day school.

Focus Group Participant 2 was asked to identify the benefits and drawbacks of the four-day school system. He stated:

Increase in student attendance, decrease in disciplinary issues, easier to recruit teachers and staff, and saves the school district money. Possible decline in students’ academic performance (especially in at-risk students), potential problem for working parents aligning childcare, and potential increase in juvenile crimes.

Focus Group Participant 2 was asked to elaborate on the answer and to include the educational impact. He stated that there was not enough information in his school district, citing,

“Long term effects of the four-day school week cannot be determined yet, not enough data or research.” When asked if he preferred the four-day system, he stated:

I prefer the four-day week, as a classroom teacher, I would not. A four-day week is less hectic in terms of a crisis or behavioral issues. As a classroom teacher teaching a tested subject, [there is] less time to cover content. Even though times are supposed to be equal by extending the day on four-day weeks, I believe it’s not really equal time. We know children’s attention span and ability to retain matter does not magically adjust with the extra 10–15 minutes of class time.

When asked how school districts support principals in a four-day school system, FG2 stated, “For principals and some teachers, Friday is not necessarily a day off. Employees should support their principals regardless. However, I would think teachers would support principals more because they have more energy and enjoy work more during four-day weeks.”

Focus Group Discussion Participant 3

Focus Group Participant 3 (FG3) was a 49-year-old female superintendent. She had 27 years of education experience. She had experience in the classroom, as a principal, and as a superintendent at four-day school systems and traditional school systems. She was in complete support of the four-day school system.

When asked to identify the benefits and drawbacks to operating a four-day school system, FG3 did not cite any drawbacks, only benefits, stating:

The financial benefit for our school is the cost savings in transportation. We save on fuel and a bus driver. This would be the largest single savings area. There are savings in utilities as well. The largest benefit is recruiting teachers to our district and teachers staying in the district. Low teacher pay in Oklahoma compared to surrounding states or

larger school districts makes it difficult to hire teachers. Offering a four-day school day is a huge recruiting tool.

Focus Group Participant 3 was asked to identify the impact of the four-day school system and stated there were both positives and negatives. She stated:

The shortened week makes it difficult to find staff to work activities on the off day (Fridays for us), and it can be difficult [for] some students getting to school. The positive is we see a significant decrease in student and teacher absenteeism.

Focus Group Participant 3 stated that she preferred the four-day school system as it “increases attendance rates and decreases discipline issues. We still discipline problems that every school runs into, but the shortened week seems to help some of the students.”

When asked to identify how school districts support principals in a four-day school system, FG3 identified teacher absenteeism, stating, “The primary support is having teachers present more often. With the shortened week, I find myself not having to find substitutes as often or have teachers cover other people’s classes.”

Focus Group Discussion Participant 4

Focus Group Participant 4 (FG4) was a 62-year-old female superintendent. She had 37 years of educational experience. She worked in multiple states as a teacher and principal. She oversaw the implementation of the four-day modified system at her current school as principal and now operates as the superintendent. She supported the four-day model.

When asked to identify the benefits and drawbacks of the four-day school system, she stated:

The main benefit of the four-day week is the ability to use it as a recruiting tool when looking for new teachers. As a small rural school, it is hard to compete with larger school

districts and other states that can offer more economic incentives. The four-day also makes Friday night games or activities feel more like an event than another duty. As administrators, we are constantly going all week. We are typically the first ones in the building and the last to leave. Having that extra day is nice. The drawback is identifying ways to save money. Transportation is key, and so are utilities. However, you do not want to cut hours for non-certified staff members. We moved out noncertified staff to 10-hour days to ensure they get their 40 hours a week.

When asked about the impact of the four-day system, FG4 stated:

I see huge cost savings in transportation and utilities. We have less teacher burnout and seem to always get applicants when we have openings. Educationally, it is a mixed review. We know that the more classroom time, theoretically, you should have increased academic performance. However, in a five-day school, you have increased absenteeism rates for teachers and students. So, seat time and instructional time balance each other out in that regard. The three-day weekends can be tough on parents. I think rural communities are blessed with grandparents or other family members that can help with childcare.

Focus Group Participant 4 explained that she preferred the four-day system as “it allows me an additional day without teachers or students on campus to catch up. It provides an office day that does not involve me sacrificing my weekends or evenings.”

When asked how school districts supported principals, she stated:

The district support in a rural school, like ours, is very hands-on. Most of my colleagues are both superintendents and principals. The key is the school board, teachers, and community. Teachers must understand the importance of using all available class time

appropriately. The school board generally supports the administration by allowing them to operate the day-to-day aspects of the school. Their primary role is making sure the school is balancing its money appropriately and spending wisely. The community must be bought into the idea of the extra day off. Our community is a big supporter of the additional day. I have had many parents tell me their students are less stressed with the extra day off and more motivated to go to school on Monday.

Focus Group Discussion Participant 5

Focus Group Participant 5 (FG5) was a 48-year-old female elementary principal with 27 years of educational experience. She taught in a traditional and four-day school system. She had served as an elementary principal in a four-day modified school system. She supported the four-day school system.

When asked to identify the benefits and drawbacks of the four-day school system, FG5 stated:

As an administrator, a four-day school week is beneficial to help recruit teachers. It is hard to find teachers in a small rural community school. It is appealing to just have to travel to work four days a week. It gives staff members a day to try to make appointments so they don't miss school. Saves on the cost of utilities. It gives me an extra day to work on things that I don't get to on a regular school day. The drawback is lost time with teachers. Virtual days do not work. True learning doesn't happen outside of school. Pep assemblies and spirit days are less meaningful when they aren't held on actual game day.

When asked about the impact of the four-day school system, she stated, "There has not been a rapid change in test scores. Enrollment is going up. Teachers aren't retiring as early."

Focus Group Participant 5 was asked if she preferred the four-day school week, and she claimed, “I prefer the four-day school week because it gives me the opportunity to complete reports and other responsibilities without any interruptions.” The final question asked was how the district supported principals in a four-day school system. She stated, “[I] feel like it was an adjustment at first, but the community has been very supportive. As a district, we work together to help each other.”

General Themes for the Focus Group Discussion

Appendix I presents the focus group discussion categories, general themes, and participants’ codes. Twenty-seven general themes emerged from the four discussion group questions.

The first category discussed among the administrators was the benefits or drawbacks of the four-day school week from principals’ perspectives. Focus group discussion participants identified themes into two areas labeled benefits and drawbacks.

Benefits included:

1. Student attendance (P16, 17, 18, 19, and 20)
2. Teacher attendance (P16, 17, 18, 19, and 20)
3. Morale (P16, 17, 19, and 20)
4. Decrease in discipline issues (P17)
5. School finance (P18, 19, and 20)
6. Teacher recruitment and retention (P19 and 20)
7. Increased enrollment (P20)

Drawbacks included:

1. Childcare (P16)

2. Potential increase in juvenile crime (P17)
3. Extracurricular activity coverage (P18)
4. Making sure a person saves money (P19)

The second category asked respondents to identify the impact of the four-day school week. General themes from the participants were organized into two categories: positive and negative impacts.

Positive impacts included:

1. Student attendance (P16, 17, 18, 19, and 20)
2. Teacher attendance (P16, 17, 18, 19, and 20)
3. Morale (P16, 17, 19, and 20)
4. Decrease in discipline issues (P17, 18, and 20)
5. Increased enrollment (P20)

Negative impacts included:

1. Potential learning loss over breaks (P16 and 17)

The third discussion category for administrators to identify was the reasons of preference for the four-day school week. General themes were organized under the category of rationale.

Rationale included:

1. Student attendance (P16, 17, 18, 19, and 20)
2. Teacher attendance (P16, 17, 18, 19, and 20)
3. Morale (P16, 17, 19, and 20)
4. Decrease in discipline issues (P17 and 20)
5. Fifth noncontact day allows for uninterrupted office time (P16, 19, and 20)
6. Decrease in burnout (P17 and 20)

7. Fewer substitutes (P18)

The fourth and final discussion category was how school districts supported principals in running the four-day school system. The general themes were identified and labeled as support. Support included budgeting, scheduling, and community support.

1. Budgeting (P16, 19, and 20)
2. Scheduling (P16, 19, and 20)
3. Community support (P19 and 20)

Significant Emergent Themes for the Focus Group Discussion

After careful analysis of the general themes identified from the administrative focus group discussion participants, significant emergent themes were identified. Some general themes were directly connected, combining them into significant emergent themes. There were three significant emergent themes identified during the analysis: increased teacher and student attendance (FG1, 2, 3, 4, and 5); increased student morale and decreased discipline issues (FG1, 2, 3, and 4); and school finance (FG1, 3, 4, and 5).

Significant Emergent Theme 1: Increased Teacher and Student Attendance

Five participants (FG1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) identified increased teacher and student attendance as a benefit to the four-day school system. Focus Group Participant 1 stated the “pros of a four-day week for our district are that it helps to alleviate the loss of instructional time because both students and faculty can schedule doctor visits, dentist appointments, etc. on their day off.” Focus Group Participant 3 stated, “I prefer the four-day school as it increases attendance (student and teachers) rates.” All five focus group discussion participants perceived a positive impact on teacher and student attendance in a four-day school system.

Significant Emergent Theme 2: Increased Student Morale and Decreased Discipline Issues

Four focus group discussion participants (FG1, 2, 3, and 4) identified increased student morale and decreased discipline issues as a positive to the four-day modified school system. Focus Group Participant 1 stated, “I feel that it is more of a morale and climate boost for our school population. We do not seem to experience the “burnout” amongst our students and faculty as much as our five-day week counterparts.” Focus Group Participant 2 identified a “decrease in disciplinary issues” as a major benefit to the four-day school system. This sentiment was echoed by FG3, who stated, “We still discipline problems that every school runs into, but the shortened week seems to help some of the students.”

Significant Emergent Theme 3: School Finance Benefit

Six focus group discussion participants (FG1, 3, 4, and 5) identified school finance as a benefit to the four-day modified school system. Focus Group Participant 1 stated:

I personally have noticed a marginal difference financially. Generally, our budget has remained constant in comparison to the budget that was in place when our district was in a five-day schedule pattern, but we were able to retain staff that we may have ended up releasing had we remained a five-day school system.

Focus Group Participant 3 noted, “The financial benefit for our school is the cost savings in transportation. We save on fuel and a bus driver. This would be the largest single savings area. There are savings in utilities as well.” Focus Group Participant 4 stated emphatically, “I see huge cost savings in transportation and utilities.” Four focus group discussion participants felt that the four-day school system provided financial benefits.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 contained information on the teacher participant and administrative focus group responses during the interviews and identified the general and emergent themes that were identified during the process. Chapter 4 discussed the demographics of each participant by gender, position, grade level, years of experience, and age. The data collected was analyzed into general themes and emergent themes. The emergent themes were more time for family and personal business, increased student morale and decreased discipline issues, increased teacher morale, recruitment and retention, increased teacher and student attendance, and school finance.

Chapter 5 includes the researcher's conclusions and recommendations. Chapter 5 consists of the research questions, the discussions and findings, and the emergent themes. The researcher discusses these findings in relation to previous research conducted. The researcher also provides limitations to the study, recommendations for educational leaders and teachers, and recommendations for future research. Finally, Chapter 5 includes the study's conclusion and the summary.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore principals' and teachers' perspectives on the four-day modified school system. Multiple reasons were cited for the shift, but primary reasons found by Beesley and Anderson (2007) stated that school finance, teacher retention and morale, and student attendance were key aspects of the four-day school week. The majority of four-day school week districts, nationally, were in rural locations (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020). Hedtke (2014) stated that less than 1% of school districts in the United States operate on a four-day week schedule.

Fifteen teacher participants were selected to participate in interviews and five administration participants were chosen to participate in a focus group discussion. Of the 16 interview participants, they all had experience teaching in a four-day modified school system. Participants in the focus group discussion had experience as a principal or superintendent in a four-day modified school system. Data were collected to identify general and emergent themes from the interviews and the focus group discussion. Chapter 5 includes the recommendations and conclusions from the study. Chapter 5 discusses the research questions, including subquestions. Chapter 5 discusses significant emergent themes, limitations, recommendations for educational leaders, and recommendations for future study. In addition, Chapter 5 includes the researcher's reflection, conclusion, and summary.

Research Questions

The purpose of this case study was to explore teachers' and administrators' perspectives on the four-day modified school system. Research questions and study propositions for this type of qualitative case study research were "how" and "why" to address the various reasons cited that influence the transition from traditional schedules to four-day modified schedules, including

teacher retention, recruitment, and school finance, forcing the school district administration to implement the changes (Cooley & Floyd, 2013). The primary design of the research question was to identify teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the four-day school system. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

RQ 1: How do teachers and administrators perceive the four-day school system in Oklahoma?

RQ 2: Why do teachers and administrators support or not support a four-day school system in Oklahoma?

RQ 3: How do teachers and administrators perceive the impact of the four-day school system on students' academic performance?

RQ 4: What suggestions do teachers and administrators have for districts considering the implementation of the four-day school week?

Central Question

The central question regarding administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the four-day school system was overwhelmingly positive. Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15, and FG1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 all felt an overall benefit operating a four-day school system. Participants identified additional personal time and family time as a major benefit to the four-day school system. Participants felt that the additional day for doctors' appointments, personal business, grading, and planning allowed for a significant increase in family time and a decrease in burnout. Some noted that there was a potential for learning loss with the extended weekends (P8, 12, FG1, and 2). However, the majority of participants identified that the extended school day in the four-day school system allowed for more instructional time, with the defining factor

being teacher preparation and a decrease in teacher and student absenteeism in the four-day school system.

Subquestions

Subquestion 1: How do Teachers and Administrators Perceive the Four-Day School System in Oklahoma? Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, and 15 and focus group discussion participants (FG1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) all preferred the four-day school system to the five-day traditional system, with Participant 12 as the only outlier.

Subquestion 2: Why do Teachers and Administrators Support or not Support the Four-Day School System in Oklahoma? The teacher interview participants identified three main forms as support for the four-day week: increased personal time, increased teacher and student attendance, and increased student and teacher morale. First, Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15 all noted that working in a four-day school system provided them more time to spend with family. Participants noted that the additional day of noninstructional time was spent grading, lesson planning, doctors' appointments, or other personal events allowing them to dedicate weekend time to their families. Second, Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 cited increased student and teacher attendance. The additional noninstructional day provides a weekday for scheduling doctors' appointments and other personal events that would normally require a personal day or for students to miss. In addition, participants noted that students were less likely to miss a shortened week since they had an extended weekend. Third, Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15 noted an increase in teacher and student morale within the four-day school system. The main concern within the four-day school system was in the potential academic impact of the extended weekend, allowing for potential learning loss from an "academic slide" by Participants 1, 2, 4, 8, and 12. However, P12 was the only

participant who did not support the four-day school system and preferred a traditional school schedule.

The support for the four-day school system with administrative focus group members was in three main areas: student and teacher attendance, staff and student morale, and school finance. First, administrative focus group discussion participants (FG1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) noted that teacher and student attendance are remarkably higher in a four-day school system compared to a traditional school system. This is attributed to the additional noninstructional day to accomplish personal tasks. Second, staff and student morale are higher. Focus group discussion participants (FG1, 2, 3, and 4) all associated the increased student morale with decreased discipline issues and increased staff morale with increased retention rates. All focus group discussion participants preferred the four-day modified school system compared to the traditional school system.

Subquestion 3: How do Teachers and Administrators Perceive the Impact of the Four-Day School System on Students' Academic Performance? The overall perception of the academic impact on student performance from teacher interview participants was that the four-day school system showed no significant decrease or increase in student learning. Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 stated that the increase in student morale positively impacted student performance. However, Participants 1, 2, 4, 8, and 12 noted that the potential for “academic slide” with extended breaks each week was cause for concern with academic performance. Participants 2, 3, 4, and 5 stated that longer class periods increased the ability for students to complete assignments in class with teacher assistance, decreasing potential zeros and increasing grades. Participants 4, 5, 9, and 10 said the four-day system provided the ability for more in-depth instruction with the increased class lengths. Participant 12 was assertive that student performance was negatively impacted by the four-day week.

Administrative focus group discussion participants (FG1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) all cited increased teacher and student morale as positively impacting students' performance. If teachers are happy in the classroom, more learning takes place. If students are less disruptive and more attentive, increased learning takes place. There was concern with the "academic slide," but administrative participants stated more information was needed to state accurately if that takes place or not.

Subquestion 4: What Suggestions do Teachers and Administrators Have for Districts Considering the Implementation of the Four-Day School Week? Suggestions from teacher interview participants for districts considering implementing the four-day school week were two-fold. First, multiple participants stated that planning was essential for the positive implementation of the four-day school week. Participants noted that teachers must plan ahead and understand that increased class time must be used wisely. Second, ensuring that staff and students were taking advantage of the additional noninstructional day to schedule appointments and other personal business to increase overall attendance.

Administrative focus group discussion participants cited financial gain or sustainability as the primary consideration for implementation. While some schools did not see a decrease in spending, participants noted the ability to retain staff with the transition to the four-day model with cost savings in other areas. In the area of sustainability, focus group discussion participants stated that the ability to retain and recruit new staff members was a major consideration for implementing the four-day school system.

Discussion of Findings

The data were collected from the structured teacher interviews. Additional data were collected through an administrator focus group discussion. General themes were determined

from common responses from the participants. After further analyses, emergent themes were determined to understand better the teacher and administrator perceptions of the four-day modified school system. Two emergent themes connected teacher and administrator perceptions.

Significant Emergent Themes From the Interviews

Significant Emergent Theme 1: Increased Teacher and Student Attendance

The first significant emergent theme for the interview group showed the advantages of the four-day school system. Thirteen out of 15 participants (P1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15) believed that increased teacher and student attendance was a benefit to the four-day school system. Participant 1 explained that the four-day school week allowed teachers an extra day during the week to take care of personal and professional needs to avoid causing stressors in their personal lives. Increasing teacher attendance was important because it also allowed for increased educational opportunities for students. In addition to the teacher's attendance, P1 believed that parents could use the day to schedule a variety of appointments for their students, which allowed students to miss less school. The increase in student attendance was emphasized by P9, saying that the "positive side comes in students being present more often."

Significant Emergent Theme 2: Increased Student Morale and Decreased Discipline Issues

The second significant theme showed another advantage of the four-day school system. Twelve participants (P1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15) stated that increased student morale and decreased discipline issues positively affected the four-day modified school system. Participant 3 described that students were more cooperative and receptive to four days of presentation than they were to the five-day school system. Participants 5, 6, 7, and 9 had similar thoughts; they believed that students were more likely to participate and take the school week seriously, knowing they had four days instead of the five-day school. Participant 4 explained that

it seemed students would do more of their assignments because there was more time in the extended class hours for them to do it. Participant 5 also pointed out that students traditionally had issues being attentive in class and doing better than students who had trouble remaining “buckled down.” They seemed to have an easier time remaining attentive. Twelve teachers perceived a decrease in overall student discipline associated with increased morale, and it was a direct result of the four-day modified school week.

Significant Emergent Theme 3: More Time for Family and Personal Business

Thirteen out of 15 participants (P1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15) identified the benefit to the four-day school system as an increase in time for family and personal business. Participant 1 addressed that it provided one extra day to do personal or professional needs during the week. Participant 2 echoed this sentiment and noted, “Teachers have that extra day for things and do not have to take days off for personal business.” Additionally, 11 participants agreed that the additional time off relieved the stress of needing to request a day off for appointments and personal business. The additional day provided teachers with more family time to accomplish other tasks.

Significant Emergent Theme 4: Increased Teacher Morale and Retention

Ten out of 15 participants (P1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15) believed that increased teacher morale and retention was a positive to the four-day school system. Participant 13 described the benefit of the four-day school system on teacher retention.

The primary reason I have stayed at my current school is that we have extended weekends. I would have moved across the border to Arkansas and made \$10,000 more a year; however, I like having more time for myself and my family.

Ten participants identified their continuation as educators being directly linked to the modified school week. Ten participants cited that the four-day school system was the primary reason they stayed with their current district when they could move to another district or state to make more money.

Significant Emergent Themes for the Focus Group Discussion

Significant Emergent Theme 1: Increased Teacher and Student Attendance

Five participants (FG1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) agreed that increased teacher and student attendance was preferential for implementing a four-day school system. Focus group discussion participants (FG1) related that some of the advantages of the four-day week for the school district helped reduce lost instructional time since all stakeholders could schedule necessary appointments on their day off. Focus Group Participant 3 noted that the four-day school week appeared to increase attendance for both students and teachers. All five focus group discussion participants agreed that the four-day school week positively affected teacher and student attendance.

Significant Emergent Theme 2: Increased Student Morale and Decreased Discipline Issues

Four focus group discussion participants (FG1, 2, 3, and 4) agreed that the four-day modified school system positively affected student morale and decreased discipline issues. Focus Group Participant 1 mentioned that there appeared to be an increase in morale and climate boost for their school population. He stated that they did not seem to experience the “burnout among our students and faculty as much as our five-day week counterparts.” Focus Group Participant 2 identified a “decrease in disciplinary issues” as a major benefit to the four-day school system. This sentiment was echoed by FG3, who stated, “We still discipline problems that every school

runs into, but the shortened week seems to help some of the students.” Focus group members also associated the increased staff morale with increased staff retention rates.

Significant Emergent Theme 3: School Finance

Six focus group discussion participants (FG1, 2, 3, and 4) identified school finance as a benefit to the four-day modified school system. Focus Group Participant 1 stated:

I personally have noticed a marginal difference financially. Generally, our budget has remained constant in comparison to the budget that was in place when our district was in a five-day schedule pattern, but we were able to retain staff that we may have ended up releasing had we remained a five-day school system.

Focus Group Participant 3 pointed out that the financial benefit was the cost savings in transportation for the school. “We save on fuel and a bus driver. This would be the largest single savings area. There are savings in utilities as well.” Focus Group Participant 4 emphasized that there were huge cost savings in transportation and utilities. Four administrative focus group discussion participants felt that the four-day school system provided financial benefit.

Implications

This section compared the findings from the literature review in Chapter 2 and the study findings in Chapter 4. The majority of four-day school week districts, nationally, are in rural locations (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020). This study looked specifically at rural school districts in Southeast Oklahoma. Each district shared similarities in schedule name alone and the primary rationale of financial need but operated differently, with attention to individual community needs as stated in previous research by Donis-Keller and Silvernail (2009). Many districts differ in the four-day week schedule and philosophy regarding the day of the week they take off. Hewitt and Denny (2021) stated that the majority of four-day modified

school systems placed the additional noninstructional day on a Monday or Friday. Research conducted in this study found that all school systems that participated used Friday for the additional noninstructional day (P1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 and FG1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). Participants (P1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, and 15) and focus group discussion participants (FG1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) all preferred the four-day school system to the five-day traditional system, with Participant 12 as the only outlier.

According to the national cost savings analysis provided by Griffith (2011), the then annual savings for rural districts was a maximum of 5.43%, with the average being 2.5%. By adopting the four-day school week, schools were able to decrease spending on transportation. Focus group discussion participants identified transportation savings as a piece of the four-day financial benefit. Focus Group Participants 18, 19, and 20 all identified savings in transportation from reduced bus routes in the form of operational costs for driver pay, fuel, and general bus maintenance. Sheehy (2012) found that rural school districts in the 1970s had roughly a 20% savings in transportation by switching to a four-day school system. Farris (2013) stated that four-day school weeks allowed school districts to avoid instructional cuts, allowing for increased elective possibilities. Focus Group Participant 18 noted that cost savings might not be directly reflected in the overall budget report, but costs absorbed in transportation allowed for retaining staff members.

Another aspect of the four-day school system proposed was the benefit of decreased absenteeism rates for teachers and students (Venosa, 2015). Teacher participants and administrator participants identified teacher and student absenteeism as positives within the four-day school system. Participants noted a significant increase in student attendance and a significant decrease in teacher absenteeism. In addition to students being present more often,

Long (2016) found that teachers reported students being more engaged and not having the Friday slump. Study participants upheld this finding. Participants noted that the increase in noninstructional days by shortening the school week increased student attendance and time on task in the classroom. The ability for students to pay attention and increased attendance rates allowed teachers to increase academic rigor and the depth of lessons. Cummings (2015) stated that four-day school systems allowed for teachers to teach “more in-depth” and provided time for “valuable training on Fridays” (para. 6). Teacher Participants 2, 3, 4, 10, and 13 all noted that increased class length provided the opportunity for more in-depth instruction.

The No Child Left Behind Act emphasized hiring highly qualified teachers in an effort to increase student achievement (Jimerson, 2005). The ability to retain and higher highly qualified teachers is an increasing problem in rural schools. Focus group discussion participants identified the four-day modified school system as being a recruitment and retention tool. DeNisco (2013) described rural Oklahoma school districts’ rationale for transitioning to a four-day school week as being due to the inability to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers and was reaffirmed by administrator participants in this study.

The change to the traditional school week and shortening it by a day brings about concerns with stakeholders regarding academic achievement (Cline, 2017; Tharp et al., 2016). Participant 12 asserted this perception by stating a negative perception of the four-day school week. Participant 12 noted the potential for academic decline and learning loss with additional noninstructional time. Maxey and Bass (2019) identified that four-day school systems in Oklahoma had negative standardized test scores when compared to traditional school systems at the elementary level. Focus group discussion participants identified a need for further longitudinal studies to accurately determine if there is a negative academic impact on student

learning. Participants noted that the constant change in state testing did not allow for the ability to compare student performance accurately.

Limitations

There were three limitations in this study. The first limitation was the time constraints. Due to the timing of the study, COVID-19 was a demanding national crisis, and many of the research participants were focused on adapting schools to address the crisis. Recruitment emails were sent out via school district websites. However, many participants took weeks to a month to respond to the study.

The second limitation was due to the study's small sample size. There were 15 teacher participants recruited for the interview process and five administrator participants recruited for the focus group discussion. Participants had to meet a certain requirement to participate in the study. A small sample size population may limit the generalization to the larger public audience and only show a targeted perception.

The third limitation was the possibility of the lack of honesty from the participants. Participants were encouraged to speak openly and honestly to all questions and given ample time to respond. All participant responses were recorded and member-checked for accuracy. It would not be possible for the research to determine if all participants were being honest during the study.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, there were recommendations for school leaders and teachers to consider when and if they implement the four-day modified school system. There were three recommendations for school leaders and three recommendations for teachers. Information was gathered based on teachers' interview responses and school leaders' focus

group discussion questions. The study findings corroborated the following recommendations for school leaders and teachers.

Recommendation for School Leaders

School leaders include the superintendents of school districts and site-based administrators working within the school district. Decisions regarding school schedules were determined by site and district level administration. School leaders should understand the various scheduling abilities within various educational models to determine the best possible educational model for their school district. Traditional school scheduling may be the primary scheduling model for the majority of public schools; it is not the only model. The four-day model can be a promising tool for rural school districts and districts looking for cost-saving measures, increasing teacher recruitment and retention, and increasing schoolwide morale.

When implementing the four-day traditional model, school leaders must determine the level of support from all stakeholders within their community. Successful implementation of the four-day school system is based on staff, student, and parent agreement. Without the support of the school, the schedule will fail, no matter the justification. Areas of impact are childcare for noninstructional days, school length and time, student transportation, and teacher recruitment and retention.

School leaders must understand that the additional noninstructional day required parents to obtain another level of childcare. School leaders should ensure that community members are a part of the implementation decision process to help alleviate this issue. Some communities utilize local churches or other organizations to provide childcare resources for parents. Focus group discussion participants noted that their communities were rural and that childcare was not a

major issue. Most families had grandparents or other members that could provide childcare on noninstructional days.

School leaders should consider the length of the school day and the impact on student transportation. Many states require a minimum number of hours in the classroom when considering a modified school schedule in lieu of a standard day count. School districts that operate on a modified school schedule lengthen the school day to meet the requirement. Starting the school day earlier to meet instructional time required by various states impacted all parts of student transportation, from student wake-up times to driver availability. School leaders should consider extending school times by adding on at the end of the school day rather than starting school earlier.

The implementation of the four-day modified schedule has the potential to have a large impact on school districts. School districts facing increased financial strains can use the modified school schedule to reduce costs, allowing for staff member retention. In addition, multiple participants within the study cited the four-day school system as playing a big part in their decision to apply to certain school districts in rural areas. School leaders understand that larger school districts can offer increased pay, incentives, and other attractive offers to new staff members. Four-day models can help provide a recruitment tool for potential teacher applicants and retain teachers.

Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers are the key to student success. Teachers considering working for or helping implement the four-day modified school should be aware of the impact of the modified schedule and areas of focus for success. There are three areas teachers must be aware of for successful implementation of the four-day modified system: attendance, morale, and preparation.

Teachers understand that classroom preparation is key to running a successful classroom. Teachers must understand that initial implementation takes careful preparation when considering the modified school system. Teachers need to understand that shortening the week increases the school day length. Increasing the length of the instructional day increases classroom seat time. Increased class time requires detailed lesson planning. Successful implementation means teachers must prepare for the extended time by including various instructional strategies. Teacher participants noted that brain breaks, more in-depth research, and classroom time for practical application of lessons (homework) are needed when planning.

Student and teacher morale are positively impacted by the four-day school week. Participants noted that this is due to the extended weekend to decompress from the school week. Teachers should be aware that students need time to decompress and avoid feeling the impulse to increase homework due to the extended noninstructional time. This can have an adverse effect on student morale. In addition, teachers should use the noninstructional day wisely to complete lesson planning, grading, or other personal business, allowing for uninterrupted family or personal time on the weekends.

Teacher and student attendance are noted as a positive within the four-day modified school system. Teachers need to understand the importance of being present in the classroom. Student and teacher absences are key indicators of poor academic success. Utilizing the additional noninstructional day to complete personal business or schedule doctors' appointments helped alleviate the majority of student and teacher absences. Increasing student and teacher attendance would increase student performance.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

A qualitative research design that included a case study approach was involved in this study. The study findings determined themes regarding teachers' perceptions of the four-day modified school system. Themes were determined through teacher interviews and an administrator focus group discussion. The limitation of a case study was that it could not be generalized to a larger population. Future researchers could use this information and the following recommendations to improve the research.

A quantitative study with varied designs could be conducted to identify a larger population of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the four-day modified school system. A longitudinal study could be conducted to determine the academic impact on student performance in four-day school systems. Researchers may choose to expand the study to include students' and parents' perceptions of the four-day modified school system. The study sites could be expanded to include other cities and states. A comparative study of the four-day school system and the five-day school systems is welcome. These studies could benefit the educational community by providing more research into the educational impact of the modified school system. Furthermore, a larger population size could provide more information on the correlation between school performance in a four-day school system and a traditional school system.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 discussed the findings of Chapter 4 and provided recommendations to school leaders, teachers, and school stakeholders. Chapter 5 included an introduction, the research questions, the central questions and subquestions, a discussion of the findings, the findings compared to previous research, limitations of the study, recommendations to school leaders and teachers, recommendations for future research, a conclusion, and the summary.

Chapter 5 discussed the major findings and the significant emergent themes identified in the study. The significant emergent themes for interviews were (a) increased teacher and student attendance, (b) increased student morale and decreased discipline issues, (c) increased teacher morale and retention, and (d) more time for family and personal business. The significant emergent themes for the focus group discussion consisted of (a) increased teacher and student attendance, (b) increased student morale and decreased discipline issues, and (c) school finance benefits. The significance of the study was to provide teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the four-day modified school system. The limitations of the study were discussed. Following the study's limitations, recommendations were made to school leaders, teachers, and future researchers. A summary ended Chapter 5.

The study's limitations included time constraints, a potential lack of participant interest, a potential lack of honesty of participants, and a small sample size. The timing of the research could contribute to the limitation of the research. The research was conducted during the fall semester, which may have decreased participant interest because of teachers' and administrators' schedules.

Recommendations to educational leaders at the district school level included considering scheduling options by including all stakeholders in the discussion. District leaders should consider the needs of individual school communities before determining the appropriate schedule. Understanding the importance of student and teacher attendance on the overall academic performance of students should be understood by all stakeholders. School leaders should understand that the four-day modified school system provides the opportunity for teachers and students to accomplish personal activities without impacting instructional time. Recommendations to administrators included providing professional development for teachers

regarding the implementation of instructional practices to improve classroom instruction during the extended class periods associated with an extended school day in the modified four-day modified school system. Recommendations for teachers included being aware of the extended class time, ability to and need to utilize noninstructional days wisely, and the importance of maximizing instructional effectiveness. Teachers should use the additional noninstructional day to lesson plan, grade, and conduct personal business. Teachers should impart the importance of attendance to peers and students within the four-day modified school model.

Based on this study's findings, teachers and administrators perceive the four-day modified school system as having positive impacts on the local educational system. Teachers perceived the positive impacts on decreasing burnout in the profession and increasing overall morale. Teachers and administrators identified positive impacts of the four-day modified school system on student and teacher attendance along with increased student and teacher morale. Administrators identified the positives within the four-day system on teacher retention and recruitment. While some teachers identified potential learning loss as a negative in the four-day system from the "academic slide" by lengthening noninstructional days with extended weekends, this impact can be negated through preparation and increased instructional effectiveness in lengthened class periods. Furthermore, participants perceived the importance of the four-day modified school system on overall morale within the school districts, increasing the general effectiveness of the educational institution.

Conclusion

School scheduling plays a vital role in student learning. Understanding varying approaches to school day and school length is important to providing the best possible education to various communities. School leaders, teachers, and stakeholders should take an active role in

deciding the most appropriate schedule for their communities. Working together to identify the most appropriate system that provides a high-quality education is essential to the sustainability of the local education system.

This study focused on the perception of teachers and administrators regarding the four-day modified school system. The purpose of this case study was to explore teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the four-day modified school system in rural Oklahoma school districts. The central question was to identify teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the four-day school system. The supporting research questions were How do teachers and administrators perceive the four-day school system in Oklahoma?, Why do teachers and administrators support or not support a four-day school system in Oklahoma?, How do teachers and administrators perceive the impact of the four-day school system on students' academic performance?, and What suggestions do teachers and administrators have for districts considering the implementation of the four-day school week?

The literature review provided a body of evidence that represented a collective body of knowledge regarding the modified school system. This research can contribute to educational decision-making by school leaders, teachers, and stakeholders regarding the equitability of the implementation of a modified school system. The significance of this study was to provide further insights into the teacher and administrator perceptions of the four-day modified school system.

Three theories served as the foundation of the study: Maslow's hierarchy of needs, collective impact theory, and theory of education production function. The study was connected to Maslow's hierarchy of needs in that the pyramid established within the model started with psychological needs, safety and security, loving and belonging (social needs), esteem and

prestige (ego), and self-actualization. The psychological need was met by ensuring that teachers had the tools and resources needed. Safety and security were met by establishing a financial sense of security. The four-day system helped relieve the stress found on this level by ensuring that the district's financial needs were met to retain and maintain staff levels. Social needs were met within the four-day model by keeping social groups of teachers together and increasing retention rates. Esteem and prestige were met by increasing the staff members' success and morale. The four-day system within the study showed that decreasing student and teacher absenteeism increased student performance within the four-day model. The self-actualization peak of the pyramid was established when individuals were able to better themselves professionally. The four-day system identified an additional day within the week for staff members to work on professional development to meet this need that did not take away from family or personal time.

The collective impact theory was connected to the study in that the internal and external stakeholders in an organization were directly connected to the success of the organization. The study looked directly at the perspectives of teachers and administrators on four-day school systems and the impact it had on the larger stakeholder group. Specifically, the study looked at the collective impact on community work schedules, student achievement, student and teacher absenteeism, school finance, teacher retention and recruitment, and childcare.

The theory of education production (Thompson, 2019a) established that student achievement was equal to child, school, and parent input. What this established was the amount of time that the student was in class receiving instruction and the instruction being provided by a highly qualified staff member; those two pieces increased student achievement. The four-day

modified school system identified within this study indicated that student attendance and teacher attendance were increased within the modified school system.

There were 20 participants, which consisted of teachers and administrators. All participants had experience in a four-day modified school system and a traditional five-day school system. Participants reflected a population of teachers who worked with students in schools in rural Southeast Oklahoma. Fifteen interview participants were current Oklahoma teachers. Five administrator participants were recruited to participate in a focus group discussion. Participants for the focus group discussion consisted of administrators (superintendents and building-level principals) that had experience in both four-day modified school systems and traditional five-day school systems. Once data were collected and transcribed, a thorough manual data analysis was conducted. All data were manually coded to determine themes. Four significant emergent interview themes and three significant focus group emergent themes were found. There was overlap between the two groups within the emergent themes. Interview participants focused on increased teacher morale and retention, more time for family and personal business, increased student morale and decreased discipline issues, and increased teacher and student attendance. Administrator focus group emergent themes included increased teacher and student attendance, increased student morale and decreased discipline issues, and school finance. These combined to increase the emergent themes for the study as increased teacher morale and retention, increased student morale and decreased discipline issues, and increased teacher and student attendance.

Fourteen out of 15 teacher participants agreed that the four-day modified school system was beneficial to students and teachers. Teachers believed that the increased noninstructional day provided an avenue for teachers and students to schedule appointments and personal business,

thus increasing attendance. Increased attendance related to more time on task in the classroom with a potential increase in student learning. Teachers also acknowledged that the shortened week reduced teacher and student burnout. The teacher participants identified the four-day system as a significant factor in teacher retention and recruitment. However, the teacher participants also acknowledged the need to increase instructional practices to adapt to the lengthened school and classroom period. Teachers found the potential for student learning loss with increased noninstructional time, typically associated with longer breaks, which was called the “academic slide” by most of the participants. Participants noted that this could be alleviated by focusing on effective academic methods and increasing student attendance with the four-day modified system.

All five administrator focus group discussion participants had a positive perception of the four-day modified school system. Advantages identified by administrator participants correlated with areas identified by teacher participants. Increased student and teacher attendance was identified as a positive academic indicator in the four-day school system. Administrators also identified positive financial benefits. These benefits were in the form of cost savings in other areas that allowed for the retention of current staff. Administrator participants noted that the four-day modified school system acted as a recruiting tool when searching for qualified teaching applicants. Focus group discussion participants cited issues with recruiting when competing with larger school districts with more incentives, but using the four-day system as a recruiting tool helped attract qualified educators. Student morale and discipline issues were identified as having been favorably affected within the four-day school system. Focus group discussion participants noted a decrease in severe student discipline and general issues. This was associated with

decreased discipline issues brought about by improved student morale by implementing the four-day system.

The study findings from participant responses and the focus group discussion can be used to support implementing the four-day modified school system from the administrators' and teachers' perspectives. The findings within this qualitative study can be used to help inform the educational community with regard to the four-day modified school system. As a school principal, the researcher would like to implement policies for the four-day school system based on the findings to help students in the community.

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Appendix A: Previous Research Studies on Four-Day and Five-Day School Weeks

Previous Research Studies on the Dissertation Topic

Date	Author	Title of Paper or Dissertation	Research Purpose	Research Method	Results/ Findings
1984	Palmer, John	A Comparative Study of Transportation Costs for a Four-Day School Week and a Five-Day School Week for Dougherty County Schools	The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect the four-day school week had on the energy used and the cost of transporting students to and from school in Dougherty County.	Quantitative	Four-day school systems provide a solution to cost savings strategies, specifically with school transportation.
1985	Roeth, James	Implementing the Four-Day School Week into the Elementary and Secondary Public Schools	The purpose of the study was to provide school administrators information about implementation of the four-day school week.	Quantitative	Majority of schools that implement four-day school weeks are rural and supported by administration and teachers.
1995	Meadows, Martha	A Preliminary Program Review of the Four-Period Day as Implemented in Four High Schools	This study examined the four-period day high school schedule in terms of student performance, attitudes, behavior, teacher behavior, methods, and administrator perceptions.	Mixed-Methods	Study found that teachers, administrators, and students prefer the four-day schedule to a traditional schedule with no significant impact to academic achievement and truancy.
2007	Hale, Rebecca	A Case Study of the Four-Day School Week in	The purpose of this study was to describe the	Qualitative	School districts that spent more time in the

		Five South Dakota Prekindergarten–12 Public Schools	processes followed in implementing a four-day week and the perceptions of stakeholders in five South Dakota school districts that have chosen to operate a four-day school week.		planning stages, engaging stakeholders in decisions and gathering support from community agencies would have better success in solving anticipated problems and implementing a successful four-day week schedule.
2008	Leiseth, Barbara	A Case Study of the Four-Day School Week: An Alternative Schedule for Public Schools	The purpose of this study was to examine and document a four-day school week project, which evolved as a district's response to decreasing enrollment, financial constraints, and an individual rural community's needs.	Qualitative	The analysis indicated that the overall impact from the change of schedules had been positive.
2010	Bronson, Elizabeth	Investigation of the Four-Day School Week	The focus of this research was to explore the general effects, both positive and negative, of operating a public school in rural Eastern Oregon on a	Qualitative	The researcher found that the overall majority of research participants agreed that the quality of education within the school district

			four-day school week.		had not been negatively affected by the four-day school week schedule.
2011	Duchscherer, Brian	A Case Study: Transitioning from a Five-Day School Week to a Four-Day School Week	The researcher studied the leaders' decision-making process to transition a school district to a four-day school week and identified their perceptions of the transition to a four-day school week.	Qualitative	The researcher found the main reason the North Central school district transitioned to a four-day school week was because of the need to reduce expenditures within the current budget.
2013	Carter, Suzanne; and Greer, Charles	Strategic leadership: Values, styles, and organizational performance	Is a four-day school week a viable option for districts in Missouri?	Quantitative	Before implementing a transition to a four-day school systems district, administrators need to understand the needs of the community, instructional strategies for teachers, and prepare for a possible increase in enrollment.
2013	Farris, Brandon	The Four-Day School Week: Teacher Perceptions in a Rural/Secondary Setting	The purpose of the study was to explore teacher perceptions about the four-versus five-day school week in	Mixed-Methods	The findings of the study were contrary to the literature in that the interviewees felt that the students were

			<p>terms of its impact on teacher/student attendance and student achievement; and to examine whether or not differences have been evidenced in teacher/student attendance and whether student achievement within a single district that previously employed a five-day school week and changed to a four-day school week.</p>		<p>able to adjust to the longer days, and the literature suggested that at least in some cases, the days were too long for the students, and their productivity suffered.</p>
2014	Hanson, Charles	<p>Superintendent Perceptions of Professional Development Quality in South Dakota School Districts Implementing a Four-Day School Calendar</p>	<p>The purpose of this research study was to examine perceptions regarding quality professional development from 10 South Dakota school district superintendents currently employed in a four-day week school calendar.</p>	Qualitative	<p>Study participants reported common professional development program vision and goal objectives accomplished within the four-day school week, which included teacher effectiveness, common core standards, curriculum development, implementation, technology integration, and</p>

					ongoing analysis of student achievement data.
2015	Kreyling, James	Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Implementation of a Four-Day School Week Regarding Academic Performance, Absenteeism, and Morale	The problem this study addressed was the idea that schools were not adequately using available resources to maximize student and staff morale, along with student and staff attendance.	Qualitative	The participants indicated that for many of their students, the four-day school week was far less stressful because the students knew they had an extra day to recover from the weekend.
2016	Amys, Ryan	The Four-Day School Week: Research on Extended Weekends	The purpose of this case study was to examine rural stakeholders' perceptions of four-day school weeks and extended weekends and to investigate the specific activities high school students participate in during three-day weekends.	Qualitative	The responses from the stakeholders primarily highlighted beneficial aspects of weekend activities, and that approval of the students' weekend choices was represented as a mere extension of what was already in place during a traditional five-day school schedule.
2017	Gower, Matthew	Interpreting the Impact of the Four-Day School Week:	This study included comparison of ACT results of	Mixed-Methods	Attendance rates increased from five-day to four-day

		An Examination of Performance Before and After Switching to the Four-Day School Week	four-day schools with ACT data compiled before the switch from a five-day school to determine whether there was a difference in academic outcomes.		schools, with mixed results regarding academic achievement, and that four-day schools did not increase student dropout rates, and school administration saw a net positive in four-day schools over five-day school systems.
2018	Savage, Rachel	A Case Study of the Influence of the Four-Day School Week on an Arizona School District	The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand how the implementation of the four-day school week calendar influenced a school district in Northern Arizona over the course of five years regarding adult stakeholder perception and overall district performance, including attendance, achievement, and budgetary savings.	Qualitative	No perceived significant impact on teacher attendance, negative perception on student achievement, and overall negative adult perceptions on four-day school weeks.
2019	Fay, Peter	The Four-Day School Week: Teacher	The purpose of this study was to investigate the	Mixed-Methods	When taking all of the information

		Retention and Recruitment, Perceptions, and Achievement	possible effects of the four-day school week model on teacher attraction and retention in rural school districts in Missouri.		gathered from this mixed-method study, the researcher believed the four-day school week did have positive implications because of its ability to increase the morale of the teaching staff.
2020	Barzee, Spencer	Academic Impact of Rural Idaho Schools on the Four-Day School Week: A Quantitative Research Study	The purpose of this study was to determine the academic impact of a four-day school week on student achievement in rural Idaho public schools.	Quantitative	No statistical impact on student achievement and no statistical impact on economically disadvantaged students.
2021	Daleske, Gordon	Comparing Student Achievement and School Climate in Four-Day and Five-Day Secondary Schools in Missouri	This study compared attendance rates, achievement level, and school climate between rural four-day school districts and rural five-day school districts.	Quantitative	No statistical difference in student attendance; no statistical difference in student achievement, but observed slightly higher achievement in five-day schools.

Appendix B: Letter/Email to School Leaders for Participation in Research Study

Dear (*Insert School Name*),

This letter/email is in reference to participating in a research study conducted by Bryan Akins, a doctoral student at Abilene Christian University. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore principals' and teachers' perspectives on the four-day modified school system. This study will identify positive and negative attributes associated with the four-day modified school systems based on teachers' interviews and administrative dialogue. These attributes fall into three main categories: student achievement, teacher retention and recruitment (morale), and school finance. School finance is limited to administrative responses.

The overall benefit from this study is to provide teacher and administrative perspectives to school districts considering a modified school schedule. In addition, the researcher hopes the study results serve as a basis for legislatures regarding school scheduling in Oklahoma. Participants can opt out of the case study at any time. Research participants' confidentiality will be maintained at all costs. Pseudonyms will be used in place of all school and participant names.

Respectfully,

Bryan D. Akins

Doctoral Student

Abilene Christian University

Appendix C: Letter/Email to Participants in Research Study

Dear (*Insert Participant's Name*),

This letter/email is in reference to participating in a research study conducted by Bryan Akins, a doctoral student at Abilene Christian University. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore principals' and teachers' perspectives on the four-day modified school system. This study will identify positive and negative attributes associated with the four-day modified school systems based on teachers' interviews and administrative dialogue.

Research participants' confidentiality will be maintained at all costs. Pseudonyms will be used in place of all school and participant names. Participants can opt out of the case study at any time. The overall benefit from this study is to provide teacher and administrative perspectives to school districts considering a modified school schedule.

Respectfully,

Bryan D. Akins

Doctoral Student

Abilene Christian University

Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter**ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY***Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World*

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885



September 29, 2021

Bryan Akins
Department of Graduate and Professional Studies
Abilene Christian University

Dear Bryan,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Four-Day Modified School Systems in Oklahoma",

was approved by expedited review (Category 6 & 7) on 9/29/2021 (IRB # 21-107). Upon completion of this study, please submit the Inactivation Request Form within 30 days of study completion.

If you wish to make any changes to this study, including but not limited to changes in study personnel, number of participants recruited, changes to the consent form or process, and/or changes in overall methodology, please complete the Study Amendment Request Form.

If any problems develop with the study, including any unanticipated events that may change the risk profile of your study or if there were any unapproved changes in your protocol, please inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the IRB promptly using the Unanticipated Events/Noncompliance Form.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

Introduction: Four-Day Modified School Systems in Oklahoma

You may be able to take part in a research study. This form provides important information about that study, including the risks and benefits to you as a potential participant. Please read this form carefully and ask the researcher any questions that you may have about the study. You can ask about research activities and any risks or benefits you may experience. You may also wish to discuss your participation with other people, such as a family member.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop your participation at any time and for any reason without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION: The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore teachers' and administrators' perspectives on the four-day modified school system.

If selected for participation, you will be asked to participate in an interview. The teacher interview will last for 30 to 45 minutes. The teacher interview will consist of six interview questions. In the documentation, the principals have to respond to four questions by email. You will set your email with pseudonyms or participants codes so that the researcher does not know your name.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: As in every study, there is a slight risk of breach of confidentiality. However, I am taking measures to minimize this risk, as described in the following section.

There are potential benefits to participating in this study. Such benefits may include helping future Oklahoma school systems understand the perceptions and practices for implementation of a modified school system.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY: Any information you provide will be confidential to the extent allowable by law. Otherwise, your confidentiality will be protected by assigning a code to you such as P1, P2, through P20, instructions to sign into Zoom using your code, and safeguard data and audio on a password-protected device.

COLLECTION OF IDENTIFIABLE PRIVATE INFORMATION: No identifiable private information will be collected. All participants will be assigned a code (e.g., P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, ... and P20). All interview responses will be documented in files and stored in a private laptop with passwords protected. The data will be used in completing this study without any identifiable information.

CONTACTS: If you have questions about the research study, the lead researcher is Bryan Akins, a doctoral candidate. If you are unable to reach the lead researcher or wish to speak to someone other than the lead researcher, you may contact Dr. Libi Shen. If you have concerns about this study, believe you may have been injured because of this study, or have general questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact ACU's Chair of the Institutional Review Board and Executive Director of Research Megan Roth, Ph.D.

The expected number of participants to be enrolled in this study is 20.

Your participation may be ended early by the researchers for certain reasons. For example, we may end your participation if you no longer meet study requirements, the researchers believe it is no longer in your best interest to continue participating, you do not follow the instructions provided by the researchers, or the study is ended. You will be contacted by the researchers and given further instructions in the event that you are removed from the study.

Consent Indication Section

Please sign this form using your assigned participant codes. For the Printed Name section, PLEASE USE YOUR PARTICIPANT CODE. DO NOT SIGN OR PRINT WITH YOUR REAL NAME. If you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, only sign after you have read all of the information provided and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You should receive a copy of this signed consent form. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form.

Participant Code

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining
Consent

Signature of Person Obtaining
Consent

Date

Appendix F: Participants' Interview Questions

Directions: In a short three- to five-sentence paragraph, please answer the following questions. Follow-up questions may be asked.

IQ 1: How do you support a four-day school week?

IQ 2: Why do you support or not support a four-day school week?

IQ 3: How do you perceive the educational impact (negative or positive) within the four-day school week?

IQ 4: What educational impact do you perceive in the four-day school week?

IQ 5: What challenges do you have in a four-day school week?

IQ 6: What suggestions do you have to improve the four-day school system?

Appendix G: Focus Group Discussion Questions

D 1: How do you perceive the benefits or drawbacks of a four-day school week?

D 2: What impact do you see within the four-day school week?

D 3: Why do you prefer or not prefer the four-day school week?

D 4: How do the school districts support principals in running a four-day school system?

Appendix H: Interview Categories, General Themes, and Participants' Codes

Interview Categories	General Themes and Participants' Codes
1. Teachers' perspectives of four-day school week in Oklahoma	<p>Positive:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More time for family and personal business (P1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15) 2. Increased morale (P1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15) 3. Students can work outside school on nonschool days (P1, 2, 11, and 15) 4. Reduced discipline issues (P6, 12, and 13) <p>Negative:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Early start time (P4, 5, and 13) 2. Discourages work ethic (P12)
2. Reasons for the support or not support of the four-day school week	<p>Support</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More time for planning (P1, 3, 4, 9, 10, and 12) 2. Miss school less (P1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15) 3. Longer class periods (P2, 3, 4, 10, and 13) 4. Intervention time (P4) 5. Cost savings (P5) <p>Not Support</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Childcare can be hard on some parents (P2, 3, 6, and 10) 2. Academic performance (P8 and 12) 3. Lack of parent support at home (P8 and 12)
3. Positive or negative educational impact	<p>Positive</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased student attendance (P1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15) 2. Increased teacher attendance (P1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15) 3. Longer class periods (P2, 3, 4, and 5) 4. Shorter week avoids teacher/student burnout (P4, 5, 6, and 13) <p>Negative</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Three-day break provides time for academic slide for some students (P1, 2, 4, and 8) 2. More planning (P4 and 9) 3. Longer school day (P4) 4. Students do not learn (P12)

4. Educational impact perceived for the four-day school week	<p>Positive</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Increased morale for students and teachers (P1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15)2. More in-depth instruction (P4, 5, 9, and 10) <p>Negative</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Three-day breaks could lead to educational slide (P1, 2, 4, and 8)2. Students do not learn (P12)
5. Challenges for running a four-day school week	<p>Challenge</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Community support (P1, 5, 9, and 10)2. Extra-curricular activities (P2, 7, and 11)3. Modifying curriculum (P3 and 10)4. Start and end times (P4)5. Childcare (P6 and 10)
6. Suggestions for improving a four-day school system	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Use one noninstructional day a month for staff development (P1)2. Use fifth day as a noncontact virtual day (P3)3. Start later and end later. For example, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (P4)4. Split schedule. For example, five-days to Christmas and four days in the spring (P8)

Appendix I: Focus Group Discussion Categories, General Themes, and Participants' Codes

Focused Group Discussion Categories	General Themes and Participants' Codes
1. Benefits or drawbacks of four-day school week from principals' perspectives	<p>Benefits</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student attendance (P16, 17, 18, 19, and 20) 2. Teacher attendance (P16, 17, 18, 19, and 20) 3. Morale (P16, 17, 19, and 20) 4. Decrease in discipline issues (P17) 5. School finance (P18, 19, and 20) 6. Teacher recruitment and retention (P19 and 20) 7. Increased enrollment (P20) <p>Drawbacks</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Childcare (P16) 2. Potential increase in juvenile crime (P17) 3. Extracurricular activity coverage (P18) 4. Making sure you save money (P19)
2. Impact of four-day school week	<p>Positive</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student attendance (P16, 17, 18, 19, and 20) 2. Teacher attendance (P16, 17, 18, 19, and 20) 3. Morale (P16, 17, 19, and 20) 4. Decrease in discipline issues (P17, 18, and 20) 5. Increased enrollment (P20) <p>Negative</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Potential learning loss over breaks (P16 and 17)
3. Reasons for preference of the four-day school week	<p>Rationale</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student attendance (P16, 17, 18, 19, and 20) 2. Teacher attendance (P16, 17, 18, 19, and 20) 3. Morale (P16, 17, 19, and 20) 4. Decrease in discipline issues (P17, 18, and 20) 5. Fifth noncontact day allows for uninterrupted office time (P19) 6. Decrease in burnout (P17 and 20) 7. Fewer substitutes (P18)
4. Ways school districts support principals for running the four-day school system	<p>Support</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Budgeting (P16, 19, and 20) 2. Scheduling (P16, 19, and 20) 3. Community support (P19 and 20)