

SHERIDAN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #1

ALTERNATIVE SCHEDULE

OVERVIEW

When it began...

- ❑ During the 1981-1982 school year, the district investigated a 4-day week alternative schedule.
- ❑ Administrators, staff, parents, and community members visited districts operating on alternative schedules.
- ❑ Community meetings were held to discuss the plan.
- ❑ During the 1982-1983 school year the district implemented the four-day school week alternative schedule.
- ❑ The district returned to a traditional five-day schedule for the last few months of the first year and for the 1983-1984 school year while the alternative scheduling issue was debated by the legislature
- ❑ With the passing of Senate Act 49 in 1985 the district resumed the four-day school week during the 1985-86 school year.
- ❑ Minor modifications to the original plan were made in 1986-1987 and 1987-1988.

Why we adopted the plan ...

- ❑ The main goal was to provide a quality education for all students in our district.
- ❑ We wanted to enhance the quality of education for students by intensifying efforts district-wide on a regular basis, in the areas of curriculum development and staff development.
- ❑ We sought to develop a schedule that would allow for fewer disruptions of the instructional day.

Student contact time...

- ❑ Each school operates on a slightly different daily schedule because of location (the Big Horn schools are all on one campus while the Tongue River schools are at three different sites in two different towns) and grade levels.
- ❑ All school schedules exceed the minimum number of hours required by the state.
- ❑ Students attend school 148 days per year
- ❑ Except for culminating events that are outside our control, students do not miss school for activities such as athletics, music, and art. Activities are scheduled for Thursday evenings, Fridays, and Saturdays. Field trips and cultural events occasionally occur during the school day, but are kept to a minimum.

Teacher contract time...

- ❑ Teachers are contracted for 148 student contact days and 16 educational days for a total of 164 days
- ❑ Educational Days include 9 District Days, 2 Parent – Teacher Conference days, and 5 Flexible Days.
 - District Days include 2 or 3 inservice days before students arrive, 5 or 6 Fridays scheduled during the school year, and 1 teacher check-out day after the year is over. The days are determined depending on curriculum and inservice needs.

- All instructional staff members are required to work 5 Flexible Days (40 total hours). These hours may be worked on Fridays or weekends (with administrator approval) and can be done in increments of 1 hour periods. They can include attendance at workshops, working with students at school, working in the room, taking students on field trips, participating on district committees, etc.

Friday activities for students ...

- Both elementary and middle schools have Friday Activity Coordinators who organize a variety of events and activities for students
- Staff members sponsor special Friday times for students working on Science Fair Projects, Young Authors stories, technology projects, Destination Imagination, Math Counts, Spelling Bee, Jump Rope for Heart, and Community Service.
- Friday School is available in most of the schools. In some schools it is a remedial program for students needing additional time and assistance. In some schools it is a disciplinary time instead of ISS during the regular day (when students would miss even more instruction), it is held on Fridays. In some schools students are required to attend if their grades during the previous quarter were not satisfactory. Friday School is evolving into a very effective means of delivering remediation and we hope, enrichment opportunities.
- High school and middle school athletics and clubs are held on Fridays.

Friday activities for staff ...

- The CHAOS (Cohorts Helping Analyze and Organize Staff) Committee works with staff to develop standards, units, and assessments to meet state mandates
- Building staff meetings are held on district days
- The Technology Department offers classes for staff and community members
- Teachers work in their rooms doing grading and planning,
- Staff members attend workshops and take classes

The impact on other areas ...

- The district did not implement the alternative schedule to save money, however minor savings were initially felt.
 - Support staff who had been on 40 hour work weeks were cut back to fewer hours per week. In the first few years the district insured that those staff members who had been with the district full time were allowed to keep their benefits even though they were not needed full time.
 - Building secretaries, custodians, and central office personnel were still required to work 40 hour weeks, but were able to have flexibility in scheduling those hours. Some work 4 ten hour days, some work 4 nine hour days and 4 hours on Friday, and some work other schedules.
 - Aides, cooks, bus drivers had their hours cut because of having only 4 days of student contact time.
 - Substitute teacher costs were drastically reduced in the first few years, but have increased since we have actively encouraged staff members to participate in staff development opportunities.
 - Hot lunch costs declined during the first years but inflation and other factors are now impacting the costs.

- Bussing costs did not decline because there is double bussing on the Tongue River side of the district.
- Student attendance levels have not increased or decreased. Attendance levels have remained relatively high. Parents are encouraged to make doctor and dentist appointments on Fridays.
- Staff attendance levels have remained steady.
- Data indicate that there is little disruption to high school classes due to teacher or student absences.

Student achievement on the alternative schedule ...

- Students in District #1 score at or above the state average on WyCAS, with 8th and 11th grade results being significantly above the state levels.
- National median percentile scores (Terra Nova Total Battery) ranged from a low of 56 (4th graders) to a high of 77 (5th graders).
- ACT test scores meet or exceed the Wyoming and national averages

The benefits of an alternative schedule ...

- Uninterrupted instructional time during the 4 days
- Extended opportunities for students to receive remediation or enrichment
- Time for district wide staff initiatives
- Time for teachers to work in their rooms
- Time for staff members to take classes or attend training sessions
- Alternative time for discipline consequences
- Opportunity for families to have more time together

The problems of an alternative schedule ...

- Families new to the community face an adjustment
- Some parents would suggest that the days are too long for elementary students
- Some parents would question whether we need more time for students due to the state mandates
- Some staff would say that they work harder on a 4 day week because of the longer day
- Substitutes get paid more money in Sheridan #2 for a shorter day and could be hired for 5 days a week in that district, therefore making finding substitutes a difficult process.
- Scheduling of activities on Fridays means coordination among all district schools and cooperation with other schools outside the district.