

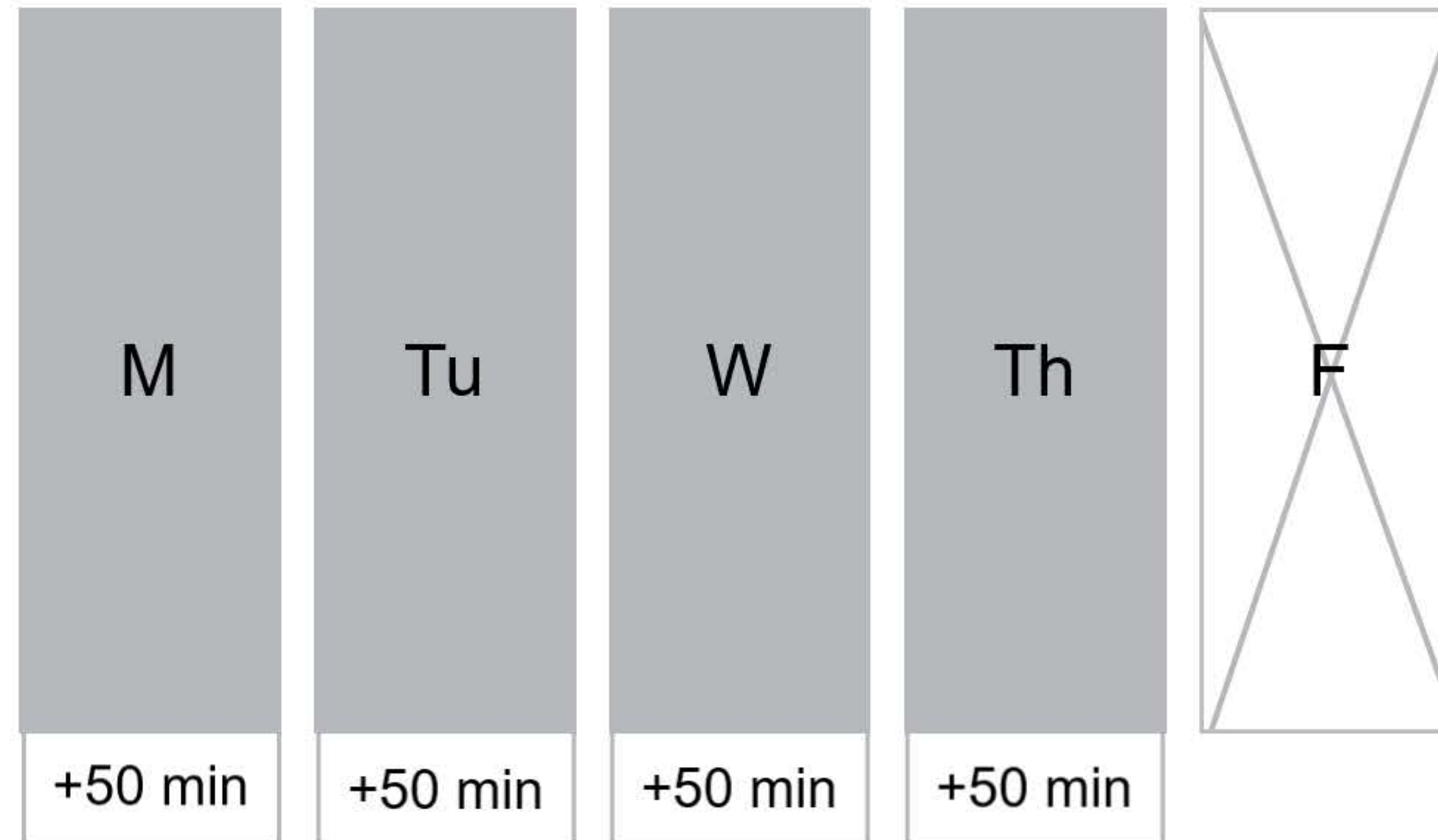
Evidence on Four-Day School Weeks (4DSWs)

Dr. Megan Kuhfeld, Director of Growth Modeling and Data Analytics at NWEA



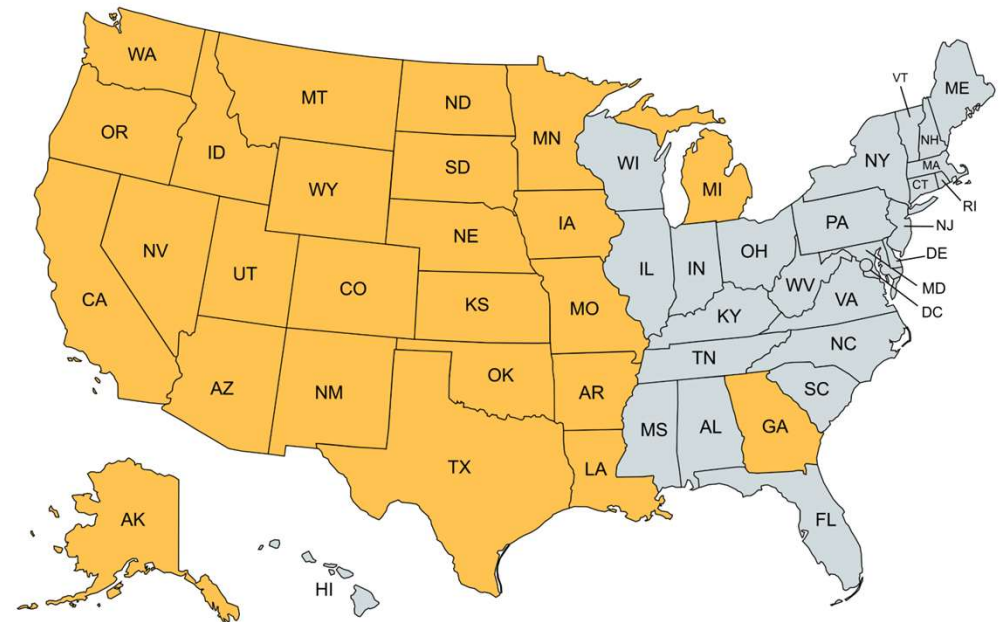
What is a 4DSW?

4DSW



4DSWs are growing in the U.S.

- + Grown >600% in past 20 years
- + State policy mandates minimum instruct. hours but not min days
- + Mostly in small, rural districts
- + Historically financially motivated, more recently staffing rationale
- + 5th day mostly closed, but some PD or enrichment/remediation; childcare “myth”
- + Recent and ongoing legislative debates in many states

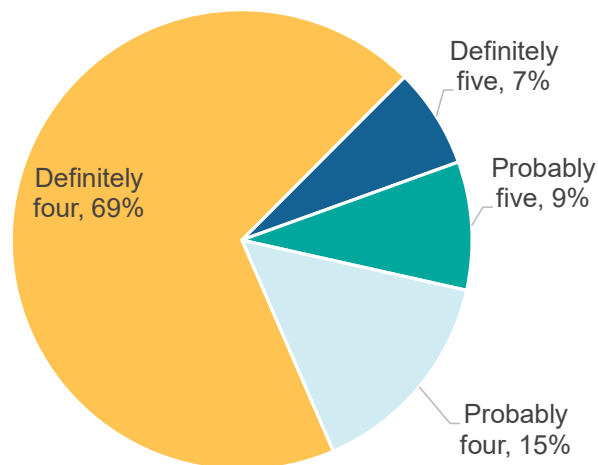


2022-23

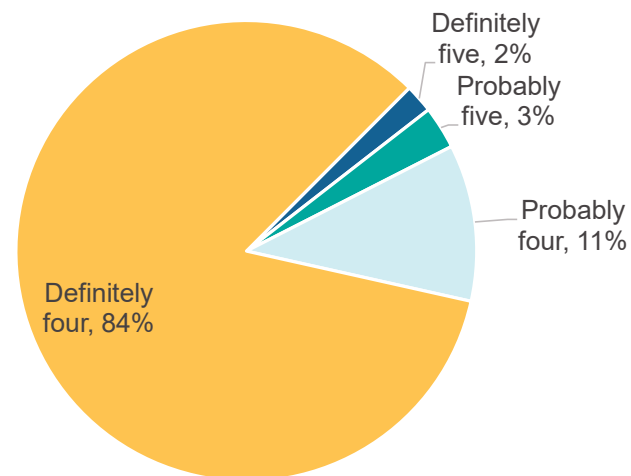
At 4DSW districts, parents and students like the 4DSW

Survey question: “If you were to have the choice between a four-day school week and a five-day school week, which would you choose?”

Grades K-6 parents (N=766)



Grades 7-12 students (N=3,957)



(Kilburn et al., 2021)

Educators also report they prefer 4DSWs

- + 66% of educators said the 4dsw would make them **slightly or much more willing to accept a job offer**
- + District leaders adopt 4DSWs believing teachers find them attractive

“We can’t compete with salary, so we had to put things in place like the four-day to encourage them to stay.”

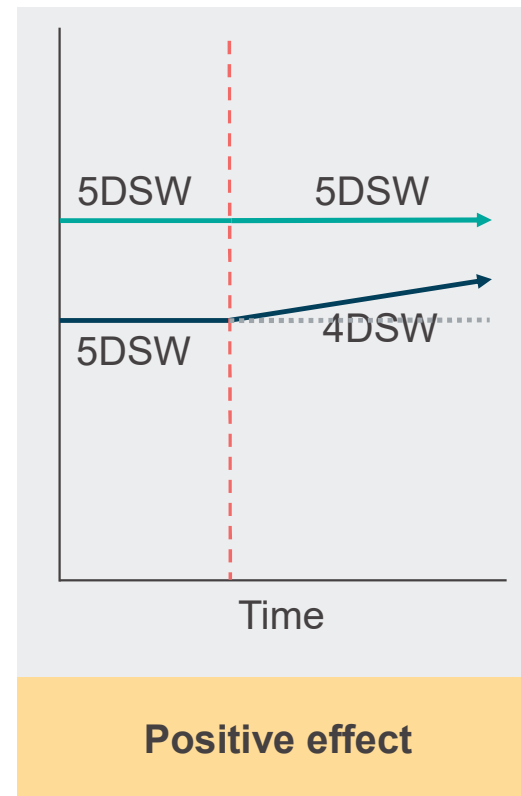
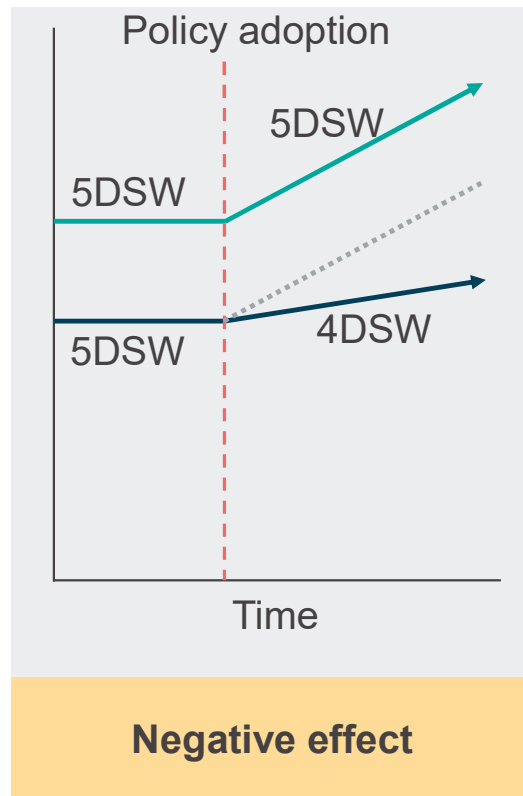
(Peetz Stephens, 2024; Barnes & McKenzie, 2023; Camp et al., 2026)

Estimating effects of the 4DSW

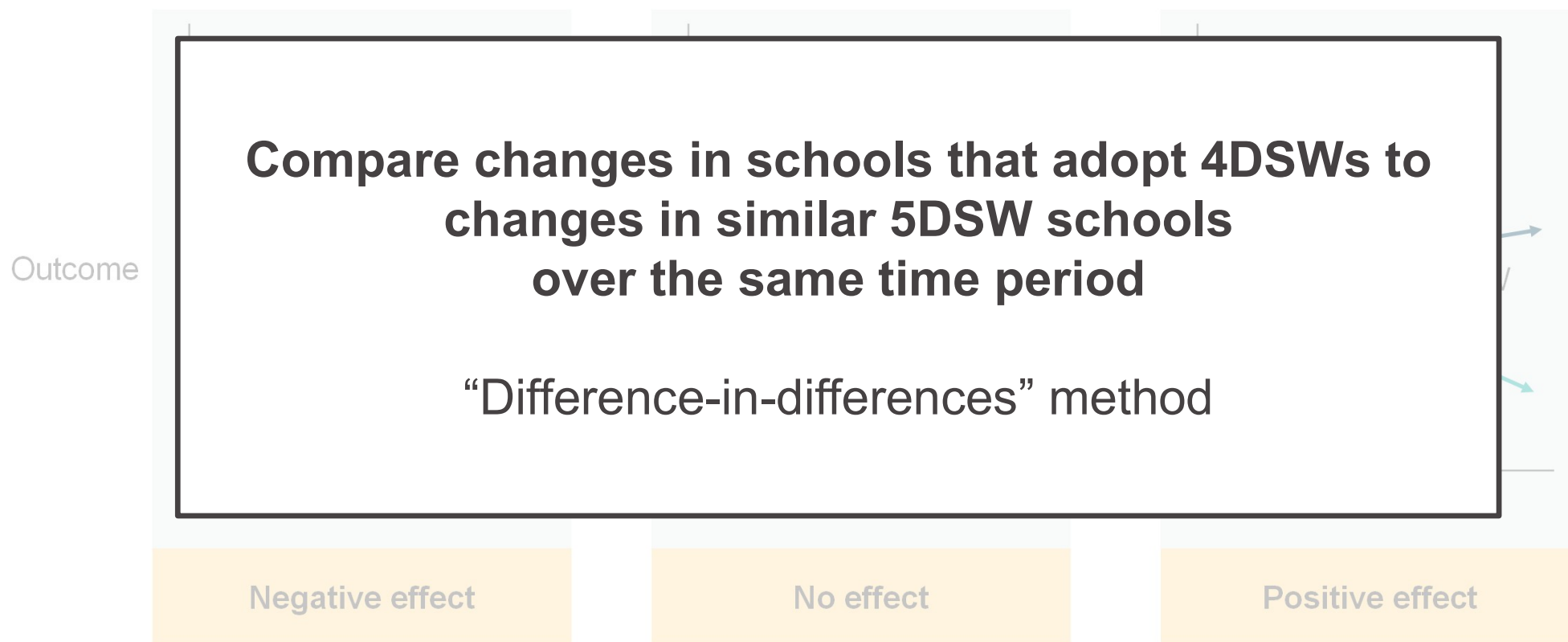
Improvement over time $\neq$
positive effect of 4DSW

Estimating effects of the 4DSW

Outcome
(test scores)



Estimating effects of the 4DSW



Negative average effects on achievement

- + Nearly all studies estimate **negative average effects on ELA and math test scores**, ranging from -0.02 to -0.09 SD (up to ~9 weeks learning)
- + Generally larger negative effects on math
- + But averages don't tell the whole story: **negative effects are much smaller or zero in districts with more instructional time (at least 32 hours/wk)** and in rural districts
- + Some evidence effects may grow more negative over time

(Morton et al., 2024; Thompson & Ward, 2022)

Little to no benefit on teacher recruitment & retention

- + **No significant impact on teacher turnover rates** in most studies
 - Small increases in Oregon (+2pp); small decreases in TX (-3pp)
- + Limited evidence that “quality” of hires improves
- + No effect on use of emergency/alternative licenses
- + Why no positive effect if teachers like it? **4DSWs don’t impact staffing outcomes *more than other factors***: salary, location, leadership, etc.

(Camp, 2024; Bowser, 2025; Morton & Dewil, 2024; Nowak et al., 2023; Camp et al., 2026; Thompson, 2025; Ainsworth et al., 2026; Khalid, 2025; Lawson, 2025)

Other research provides little support for 4DSWs

Benefits



- *Small* avg decreases in spending (~2%)
- Decreases in bullying (39%) and fighting (31%) incident rates
- Sleep (+~1.5 hrs/wk)

Neutral



- Little or no impact on attendance
- No difference in school climate ratings

Drawbacks



- Increases in juvenile crime
- Higher rates of food insecurity, marijuana use

Unknown: Employment outcomes? Family income/costs?

Policy considerations: guardrails for the 4DSW

- + **Implementation:** annual instructional time with audits, district rurality or size, require application and approval (CA)
- + **Accountability:** cost savings, attendance, achievement/growth, accountability ratings (OK, IN)
- + **Incentives?**

Key takeaways

1. 4DSWs have negative average effects on student test scores
2. Maximizing instructional time can help reduce negative effects
3. Other rationales for 4DSWs (cost savings, attendance, staffing) are not generally supported by research
4. Policy guardrail considerations: inputs, outputs, and incentives

Thank you

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