

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE
JANUARY 26, 2026
3:32 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Löki Tobin, Chair
Senator Jesse Bjorkman
Senator Jesse Kiehl

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair
Senator Robert Yundt

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION(S) : THE FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

SEAN GRANT, Associate Research Professor
HEDCO Institute
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave the presentation The Four-Day School Week Outcomes and Impacts.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:32:02 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:32 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Bjorkman, Kiehl, and Chair Tobin.

PRESENTATION(S) : THE FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

[3:33:03 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced the committee would hear a presentation by the University of Oregon, The Four-Day School Week Outcomes and Impacts, presented by Mr. Grant. She explained that the Harold

and Ester Dornsife (and Company) HEDCO Institute works to inform decision-making for K-12 education leaders through research and evidence-based recommendations. She noted that the topic gained attention as school boards across Alaska search for cost-saving measures amid significant budget shortfalls. She acknowledged that the Anchorage School District has considered moving to a four-day school week.

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SEAN GRANT, Associate Research Professor, HEDCO Institute, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, gave the presentation The Four-Day School Week Outcomes and Impacts. He stated that he would present joint research that he conducted with Elizabeth Day on the four-day school week. He explained that the four-day school week shortens the weekly schedule by eliminating one day, usually Friday or sometimes Monday, while extending the remaining four school days to meet minimum annual instructional time requirements.

MR. GRANT described the HEDCO Institute's role in conducting systematic reviews of research evidence. He explained that the institute compiles and analyzes all published academic research on a topic to identify trends and summarize findings, and that researchers collaborate with K-12 educators during the process. He reported that Ms. Day conducted interviews with four superintendents who had switched or considered switching to a four-day school week to incorporate perspectives from education leaders.

MR. GRANT explained that the HEDCO Institute receives funding from the HEDCO Foundation based in California but that the funder does not participate in research activities or decision-making. He emphasized that the institute operates as a nonpartisan organization that presents research findings to policymakers without advocating for specific policy decisions. He stated that the goal involves summarizing the full body of research evidence so policymakers can make informed decisions.

MR. GRANT reported that researchers found no empirical studies specifically examining the four-day school week in Alaska. He explained that the research team instead reviewed studies addressing related topics relevant to the committee, including rural school districts, Indigenous education, and school finances, to identify evidence that most closely resembles Alaska's context. He stated that research on the four-day school week in Indigenous education remains extremely limited. He reported that the team identified only one empirical study involving interviews with families and schools on an American

Indian reservation. He explained that the study examined physical activity and found that schedule changes associated with the four-day school week reduced the duration and frequency of recess, increased homework and testing pressure, and limited participation in after-school activities due to longer school days. He added that the findings provide indirect insights into potential consequences of extended school days even though the study does not directly reflect Alaska's Indigenous communities.

[3:35:24 PM](#)
MR. GRANT moved to slide 2, About Us, and described the HEDCO Institute's role in conducting systematic reviews of research evidence:

[Original punctuation provided.]

At the HEDCO Institute we conduct systematic reviews of education research, working alongside K-12 educators to empower them with research that works.

- Funded by the HEDCO Foundation
- Follow rigorous standards for best practices in synthesis research
- Strictly non-partisan educational approach

MR. GRANT explained that the institute compiles and analyzes all published academic research on a topic to identify trends and summarize findings, and that researchers collaborate with K-12 educators during the process. He reported that Ms. Day conducted interviews with four superintendents who had switched or considered switching to a four-day school week to incorporate perspectives from education leaders.

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MR. GRANT moved to slide 3, The 4DSW in Alaska, and reported that researchers found no empirical studies specifically examining the four-day school week in Alaska. He explained that the research team instead reviewed studies addressing related topics relevant to the committee, including rural school

districts, Indigenous education, and school finances, to identify evidence that most closely resembles Alaska's context:

[Original punctuation provided.]

The 4DSW in Alaska

No studies of schools only in Alaska

- Rural districts have been studied more rigorously than non-rural overall.
- Most areas of Alaska would be considered 'rural' by these studies.

[3:37:19 PM](#)

MR. GRANT moved to slide 4, The 4DSW in Tribal Communities, and stated that research on the four-day school week in Indigenous education remains extremely limited:

[Original punctuation provided.]

The 4DSW in Tribal Communities

No studies of Alaska Native communities, but one study gathered perspectives of the 4DSW from an American Indian reservation, specific to physical activity:

"Participants in our study discussed how the 4DSW lengthened each school day, decreased the duration and frequency of recess, intensified academic requirements (homework and tests), and prevented many children from participating in after school activities."

MR. GRANT reported that the team identified only one empirical study involving interviews with families and schools on an American Indian reservation. He explained that the study examined physical activity and found that schedule changes associated with the four-day school week reduced the duration and frequency of recess, increased homework and testing pressure, and limited participation in after-school activities due to longer school days. He added that the findings provide indirect insights into potential consequences of extended school days even though the study does not directly reflect Alaska's Indigenous communities. [3:38:15 PM](#)

MR. GRANT moved to slide 5, Impact on School Budgets:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Impact on School Budgets

Four studies:

1. 1999-2017 data from across the U.S.1 :
 - District budgets decreased 1 percent - 2 percent on average with the 4DSW adoption
2. 2004-2017 data from Oklahoma:
 - District budgets decreased 2 percent on average with the 4DSW adoption
3. 2003-2020 data from Colorado:
 - Adopting the 4DSW reduced (a) federal revenue and (b) support service, food service, and transportation expenditures
4. 2006-2023 data from Montana:
 - Total difference in instruction, maintenance, transportation, and food services was an increase of 1.5 percent above average inflation rate (8 percent increase in total budget)

Authors of all these studies caution that potential consequences for student outcomes may outweigh cost savings

MR. GRANT reported that policymakers often focus on the impact of a four-day school week on school budgets. He explained that three to four studies compared budgets in four-day school week districts with those in five-day school week districts and generally found small but potentially meaningful cost savings.

MR. GRANT described a national study using data from 1999 to 2017 that found district budgets decreased by about 1 to 2 percent on average after adopting a four-day school week. He stated that the savings primarily resulted from reduced support services expenditures due to decreased educational service provision. He also referenced a study in Oklahoma from 2004 to 2017 that found about a 2 percent average budget decrease, with reductions concentrated in operations, transportation, and food service expenditures.

MR. GRANT summarized a Colorado study covering 2003 to 2022 that also found decreased spending after districts adopted a four-day school week. He reported that the reductions mainly occurred in support services, particularly food services, and in salary expenditures tied to transportation staff. He added that the study also identified a decrease in federal revenue due to lower

reimbursements for free or reduced-price lunch meals when fewer meals were served.

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MR. GRANT discussed a Montana study from 2006 to 2023 that examined school budgets after 2021 and found increased budgets after adjusting for inflation. He explained that the study did not control for differences between four-day and five-day school week districts as rigorously as the other studies, which limited confidence in attributing the increased costs to the four-day school week itself. He noted that researchers included the study due to interest in post-COVID data but cautioned that other factors could have driven the cost increases.

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MR. GRANT stated that authors of the studies consistently cautioned states, districts, and schools to weigh potential negative impacts on student outcomes against the potential cost savings associated with a four-day school week.

[3:41:17 PM](#)

MR. GRANT moved to slide 6, Impact on Student Outcomes, and reported that the research literature showed no clear evidence of large positive effects on student outcomes from adopting a four-day school week.

[Original punctuation provided.]

Academic achievement	Math and reading test scores, proficiency, and gains
Academic attainment	Graduation rates, dropout rates, and on-time progression
Attendance	Average daily attendance, fraction of students absent, chronic absenteeism
Criminal activity	Frequency of crime at school, crime not at school, property crime, violent crime, and drug violations
Disciplinary incidents	Days missed for discipline, and frequency of substance use, vandalism, bullying, fighting, weapons, truancy, and school bus disciplinary instances

Our Study did not include financial outcomes.

MR. GRANT explained that most studies instead identified small but meaningful negative effects across several student outcome measures. He stated that five primary domains of student outcomes were examined: academic achievement such as test scores, academic attainment such as graduation rates, school attendance including chronic absenteeism, criminal activity among primarily among high school students, and disciplinary incidents on school grounds.

[3:42:02 PM](#)

MR. GRANT moved to slide 7, Rural K-8 Schools, which shows mathematics achievement, reading achievement and proficiency data for various years and tests from a Colorado study. He explained that findings varied somewhat by school level, so the research team first reviewed results for K-8 schools, particularly in rural districts. He reported that multiple multi-state studies consistently found decreased academic achievement in both math and reading among K-8 students in rural schools operating on a four-day school week.

MR. GRANT described one Colorado study that measured student performance by the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on standardized tests rather than average test scores. He reported that the study found increases in proficiency rates for Grade 5 math and Grade 4 reading.

MR. GRANT explained that researchers believe the different results may relate to the time period of the Colorado data set, which covered 2000 to 2010 and largely preceded the 2008 Great Recession. He stated that many schools adopting the four-day school week before the recession aimed to improve attendance rather than reduce costs, particularly for high school students balancing sports, work, or family obligations. He noted that more recent adoptions often focus on cost savings, which may limit districts' ability to reinvest resources into strategies that support academic achievement.

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SENATOR KIEHL said he would like to understand the magnitude of the reports and noted that the top two charts measured outcomes in standard deviation (SD) units while the bottom chart used percentage point changes. He stated that he understood percentage point changes and asked for an explanation of what an SD unit represents in the context of the data.

MR. GRANT explained that a standard deviation (SD) measures variation in student test scores. He stated that an effect size

between 0.0 and 0.1 SD represents a relatively small change, which may translate to about a one to two percentage point difference in performance. He illustrated that a student performing at the 50th percentile in math or reading might drop to approximately the 48th or 47th percentile. He noted that although the changes appear modest, the decreases in achievement remain meaningful, particularly as education leaders focus on preventing learning loss and improving academic performance.

[3:45:06 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked if the numbers represent statistically significant declines in achievement or if the differences reflect rounding errors.

[3:45:49 PM](#)

At ease.

[3:49:36 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN reconvened the meeting and asked Mr. Grant to continue answering the question.

[3:49:47 PM](#)

MR. GRANT confirmed that the reported differences in the research are statistically significant and not the result of chance. He explained that the effects remain small in magnitude but still meaningful. He illustrated that the change would resemble an average student moving from the 50th percentile in academic achievement to about the 48th percentile. He noted that the shift represents a modest decline but still reflects a measurable decrease in achievement.

[3:50:39 PM](#)

MR. GRANT moved to slide 8, Rural High Schools, which shows academic attainment data from Oregon and Colorado. He reported that research on rural high school students came from studies conducted in Oregon and Colorado. He stated that those studies showed somewhat more positive academic outcomes compared to K-8 results, including small increases in math scores, little to no change in English language arts performance, higher graduation rates, and lower dropout rates.

[3:51:08 PM](#)

MR. GRANT noted that some studies also identified potential negative consequences for rural high school students. He explained that researchers observed increases in student absences and chronic absenteeism, as well as a decrease in on-time progression to the next grade level. There was also increased juvenile criminal activity in areas surrounding

schools. He added that incidents particularly increased on Thursday nights, which became the first night of the extended weekend when Friday served as the non-school day.

MR. GRANT discussed two possible explanations for the increase in absences. He stated that one explanation involves a real attendance difference because missing one day in a four-day school week equals 25 percent of the instructional week compared to 20 percent in a five-day school week. He added that another explanation may involve measurement differences, such as schools counting participation in activities like football games differently, which could cause attendance patterns to appear worse in the data even if student participation remains similar

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CHAIR TOBIN stated that during her own academic experience she participated in a work-study program during her senior year that took place on the fifth day of the school week. She asked whether the research on increased juvenile criminal activity examined how students spent the fifth day when school was not in session. She questioned whether students involved in the incidents simply did not attend school or whether they participated in supervised activities such as sports, work-study programs, or other structured responsibilities monitored by adults. She also asked whether the research included data about those types of supervised activities.

MR. GRANT responded that the study referenced regarding increased juvenile criminal activity did not account for how students spent the fifth day when school was not in session. He stated that the researchers did not have direct evidence identifying whether students participated in supervised activities such as work programs, sports, or other structured responsibilities during that time. He added that the study therefore could not determine how those activities may have influenced the observed outcomes.

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MR. GRANT stated that research suggests some negative consequences of a four-day school week may be mitigated by providing structured opportunities for students on the fifth day. He explained that schools and communities can reduce potential risks by offering supervised activities such as remedial classes, academic support, clubs, sports, or other educational programming.

MR. GRANT noted that districts could consider reinvesting some of the modest cost savings, typically about 1 to 2 percent, into

programming offered on the non-school day. He also emphasized the importance of partnerships with families and community organizations to expand opportunities available outside the school setting.

MR. GRANT added that opportunities for high school students could include work-study programs or employment experiences. He concluded that policymakers and school leaders should consider what structured and developmentally appropriate activities are available on the fifth day when evaluating whether to adopt a four-day school week, because stronger programming can help mitigate potential negative effects.

[3:54:41 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN asked whether any of the research addressed food security. She noted that many schools in Alaska qualify as Title I schools and provide free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch to students. She asked whether researchers examined how reducing the school week to four days might affect students' ability to access those meals.

MR. GRANT stated that although he is not aware of research, professional literature discusses the issue, particularly following COVID-19 school closures. It encourages schools to continue food distribution arrangements developed during lockdown periods. He stated that districts could consider using any cost savings from a four-day school week to support health and social services, including meal access for students who rely on school-provided nutrition. He emphasized that policymakers may want to consider both academic and basic needs supports when evaluating programming on the fifth day.

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SENATOR KIEHL said reinvesting potential savings is not why many districts are considering a four-day school week, nor are they seeking to improve achievement from it. Rather, they are attempting to avoid increasing class sizes and closing schools due to budget pressures. He asked whether the researchers had any sense of how the magnitude of the educational outcome declines associated with a four-day school week compares with the effects of increasing class sizes, such as raising the pupil-teacher ratio by three to five additional students per classroom. He requested insight into how those impacts might compare in terms of educational attainment.

MR. GRANT stated that he did not have an immediate comparison translating the effects of a four-day school week into the

equivalent impact of increased class sizes. He said the research team could follow up.

MR. GRANT explained that, based on his recollection of the research, effect sizes associated with increases in the pupil-teacher ratio or larger class sizes generally appear larger than the effect sizes observed for the four-day school week. He noted that this suggests a potential tradeoff in which reducing the school week might produce smaller academic impacts than significantly increasing class sizes.

MR. GRANT cautioned that the comparison involves some assumptions because the studies examining four-day school weeks do not necessarily occur in the same context as studies examining class size increases. He added that the research team could provide additional information on effect sizes related to class size changes and their impact on academic achievement for further consideration.

[3:58:24 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN noted that the research showed increased graduation rates for rural high school students. She asked whether any studies examined college or career readiness outcomes, such as SAT or ACT completion, college admission, Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) participation, or involvement in career and technical education programs.

[3:59:03 PM](#)

MR. GRANT stated that the research team did not identify any studies examining the impact of the four-day school week on college or career readiness. He explained that existing research focuses mainly on academic achievement, standardized test scores, attendance, chronic absenteeism, grade progression, and graduation rates rather than outcomes such as college attendance, standardized college entrance exams, or technical career preparation.

[3:59:52 PM](#)

MR. GRANT moved to slide 9, Key Considerations, and stated that two main factors influence outcomes in a four-day school week:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Key Considerations

Loss of learning time risks a loss of learning.

Question to ask: How does a schedule switch impact overall instructional time?

Maintaining activities that foster healthy youth development on the fifth day is important for minimizing other negative impacts.

Question to ask: What's available at school, in the community, and at home for students on the fifth day?

MR. GRANT explained that maintaining total instructional time remains critical, noting that districts that only meet minimum time requirements tend to see the most negative academic outcomes, while those that maintain similar learning time to a five-day schedule see fewer negative effects.

MR. GRANT added that outcomes also depend on how students spend the fifth day. He emphasized that providing structured opportunities through schools, homes, and community programs helps reduce negative impacts and supports healthy student development.

[4:02:24 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN observed that the length of the school day varies widely among schools, with some Alaska schools operating just over six hours per day and others close to seven and a half hours in a five-day week. He asked whether the research or literature review considered how differences in daily instructional time affect the transition from a five-day to a four-day school week.

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MR. GRANT stated that he was not aware of a study directly examining differences in daily school length when transitioning from a five-day to a four-day school week. He explained that research generally shows schools with more instructional time tend to achieve better academic outcomes. He added that districts switching to a four-day school week while maintaining the same total instructional hours over the school year tend to avoid negative impacts on academic achievement, which is why researchers emphasize preserving instructional time.

[4:04:18 PM](#)

MR. GRANT moved to slide 10, Other HEDCO 4DSW Resources, and stated that the HEDCO Institute report on student outcomes related to the four-day school week is freely available on the institute's website and encouraged committee members to review and share it. He explained that the institute also maintains an

interactive database of studies on the four-day school week, updated with research published through 2025, which allows users to filter by topics, geography, and school level. He noted that the database helps identify research relevant to specific policy questions. He said he would follow up with answers to questions, including comparisons related to class size impacts.

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CHAIR TOBIN found no further questions. She said there is a two-page document available on BASIS from the HEDCO Institute that provides additional review of the systemic analysis done on the 12 highest quality studies on the four-day school week. She encouraged interested Alaskans to read the summary.

4:07:17 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Tobin adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 4:07 p.m.