**English II Regular Essay #1 Argumentative Four Day Week Education**

**Directions: Read the following sources and analyze the video and write an argumentative paper proving your perspective on whether the four day academic week will benefit students and staff or provide negative end results. You must incorporate at least two quotes from any of the three sources somewhere throughout the essay.**

**Source 1:**

**What a difference a day makes: the argument for a four-day school week**

*A study suggests giving students an extra day off improves learning. It could also be a step in the right direction for teacher workloads*

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Sun 13 Sep 2015 03.00 EDT-Last modified on Wed 21 Oct 2015 05.09 EDT

 Results in Colorado schools rose when pupils had an extra free day every week. Photograph: Alamy

The call for a four-day working week is not new. At a time when more and more people say they feel overworked, and increasing numbers are making the switch to part-time hours, the idea has been [proposed as a means of tackling both stress and unemployment](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jul/01/uk-four-day-week-combat-stress-top-doctor).

But schools have largely been left out of the debate so far. The idea of students only coming in four days a week rings alarm bells for many who fear a drop in academic performance.

As a former teacher, I was intrigued by a [study](http://www.sciencealert.com/four-day-school-week-linked-to-better-academic-performance-study-finds) published this summer, which suggests that pupils’ grades could actually improve with a shorter school week.

The research, conducted by D Mark Anderson of Montana State University and Mary Beth Walker of Georgia State University, [looks at the reading and maths results of students in the fourth and fifth grade](http://news.gsu.edu/2015/08/27/four-day-school-week-can-improve-academic-performance-policy-study-finds/?hootPostID=121c7ac5d086fb1b62b5ff191e246361) (years 5 and 6). The schools in question rearranged the week by cutting one day – typically a Monday or Friday – and adding the extra hours to the other four. Teachers’ total working time (and salaries) remained the same.

The four-day school week for students in Colorado was introduced as a cost-saving measure, and the improvements in academic results were the opposite of what had been anticipated, Walker explains.

“We thought that especially for the younger, elementary school kids, longer days on a shorter school week would hurt their academic performance because their attention spans are shorter,” she says.

“We also thought a longer weekend would give them more of an opportunity to forget what they had learned.”

But the results show that, even for these young students, a four-day school week had a statistically significant positive impact on maths scores (around 7% extra on average), and a possible positive impact on reading scores (although this was not deemed statistically significant by the study’s testing standards).

Walker offers a number of possible explanations, including the idea that longer days might give teachers an opportunity to explore different instructional processes. The study also speculates that a four-day week could lower absenteeism, so thatstudents who have dental appointments, for example, might be able to put them off until Friday and not miss school.

The study’s results are yet to be replicated and critics have raised concerns – particularly about how much subject knowledge students will be able to retain and how well they will be able to concentrate over longer days.

But as someone who taught for 10 years, I can certainly see the potential benefits. It would give young people some much-needed breathing space and, in schools where the fifth day was used for extracurricular activities, students wouldn’t have to choosebetween academic study and other pursuits.

There is one clear drawback, however: the increased difficulty for parents dealing with the logistics and costs of childcare. This would need to be taken into consideration, but if working weeks were shortened for everyone, then families would actually get to spend more time together.

The benefits for teachers should not be overlooked either. Those who took part in the study reported greater efficiency and better collaboration when they used the fifth day to plan together, with some schools even finding that staff turnover was reduced.

As a teacher who worked part-time (three and four days a week) and full-time, I can see the advantages of having a day free from student contact. Having greater flexibility for personal appointments and meetings would certainly have made my life as a middle manager much easier.

Perhaps most exciting is the potential to use the fifth day to provide good-quality continued professional development and support for teachers where it is (sometimes desperately) needed. Of course, schools would need to be careful that the fifth day didn’t simply become filled with bureaucracy, but it should be possible to prevent that through open discussion with senior management.

The current education system is made up of long stretches of intense work, interspersed with periods of what is laughingly called holiday. A shortened week could improve teachers’ work-life balance by allowing more time for marking, planning and preparation, meaning that holidays and weekends could be times of real rest.

Although workload still needs to be given serious thought, a four-day week could be a step in the right direction for teachers and, the evidence suggests, for their students too.

Source 2: Debate.org Site

<http://www.debate.org/opinions/should-there-be-four-day-school-weeks>

Source 3: CBS Video News

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/four-day-school-week-oklahoma-cut-costs/>