

2008 MISSOURI YMCA YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES

DEPARTMENT: Elementary and Secondary Education
DIVISION: School Laws
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1. Should Missouri public school districts be allowed to operate four days a week instead of the standard five days a week?

Representative Gayle Kingery (R-Poplar Bluff) has filed a bill (HB 1534) that would allow public school districts to operate on a four-day week instead of the traditional five-day week.

Currently 10 states allow school districts to schedule four-day school weeks as opposed to the traditional five-day school week. Some states require school districts to receive a waiver from their state education department to do this; other states allow local school boards to decide. Missouri's current proposal allows local boards of education to make this decision. Districts electing to do this would still have to offer 1,044 hours of instruction time, but the required minimum number of school days held would drop from 174 to 142.

States allowing districts to adopt a four-day school week have argued that it makes economic sense as well as practical sense. Many of these states have a large rural student population who travel long distances to school. Some of these states also have fairly severe winter weather, but not all. A few states, such as Arkansas, are experimenting with four-day school weeks believing that a shorter school week is not only more economical, but that it can actually boost student achievement.

Questions for your consideration:

Should Missouri give greater flexibility to school districts in the number of days they attend school?

If so, what are the benefits of a four-day school week? What are the drawbacks?

What evidence can you produce that a four-day school week is more economical?

What evidence exists that a four-day week improves student achievement?

Should this decision be determined locally or by department of elementary and secondary education waiver?

Should a four-day school week be limited to certain days of the week?

What impact will this have on the scheduling of classes? What about it's impact on extracurricular activities?

A four-day week means longer school days. How will a longer day impact students? Teachers? Parents?

Which districts might benefit most from a four-day school week and why?

Sources:

Proposed legislation/HB 1534:

<http://www.house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills081/bills/hb1534.htm>

You may want to consider contacting Rep. Kingery's office for input.

National Conference of State Legislatures:

<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/educ/4DaySchWeek.htm>

This site has links to sites and information including a summary of the issue, legislation, research and reports, state-specific news articles and national news articles.

National School Boards Association article from 2002:

http://www.nsba.org/site/doc_sbn.asp?TRACKID=&VID=58&CID=313&DID=8209

American Association of School Administrators article from 1999:

<http://www.aasa.org/publications/saarticledetail.cfm?ItemNumber=3382&snItemNumber=&tnItemNumber=>

Letter with sample questions to consider:

<http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/approve/memos/4dayweek.pdf> Not everything here may apply to Missouri, but it's still useful.

Saratoga, AR article: http://www.education-world.com/a_issues/issues038.shtml

Arkansas neighbors Missouri and the two states have some things in common.

Dr. Bert Schulte, Deputy Commissioner of Education/Legislative Liaison, DESE

Mr. Tom Quinn, Interim Assistant Commissioner, Career Education/Director of School Governance, DESE

Dr. John Weber, Director, School Improvement Technical Assistance, DESE

Dr. Roger Dorson, Director of School Finance, DESE

Ms. Shari LePage, Chief Budget Officer, DESE

2. Should public school districts be allowed to provide stipends or bonuses to attract and retain teachers in areas of critical need such as math and science?

The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) requires all teachers in core content areas to be highly qualified. Schools without highly qualified teachers risk the loss of federal funding. Core content areas where teachers are hardest to find are math and science. School districts in other states have begun offering bonuses to teachers in these critical core areas. The U.S. Department of Education has expressed concern that Missouri has not followed suit.

Unlike other states, Missouri has had some legal obstacles to overcome in offering stipends and bonuses. In 2001 the Sherwood-Cass R-VIII Board of Education attempted to offer select teachers a commitment fee in an effort to retain them. The Sherwood NEA sued arguing that commitment fees violated the law. In 2005, the Missouri Western District Court of Appeals held that “commitment fee” contracts offered to certain teachers exceeded the scope of the school district’s authority under the Teacher Tenure Act.

Sen. Matt Bartle’s (R-Lee’s Summit) bill would allow public school boards to offer stipends or bonuses to teachers in the areas of math and science. Sen. Bartle’s bill doesn’t modify the Teacher Tenure Act, but instead creates new law.

Questions for your consideration:

How do Missouri students fare in the areas of math and science? How do they compare with other states?

Recruiting and retaining highly qualified math and science teachers has proven most difficult in inner city and rural school districts. Why?

How have other states addressed this issue? How have stipends/bonuses helped?

Why are some teacher associations opposed to stipends/bonuses for some, or if not opposed, then not enamored with this idea? Is this fair to teachers who teach in other core content areas?

Sources:

Proposed legislation/SB 833:

http://www.senate.mo.gov/08info/BTS_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=R&BillID=177

See Sherwood National Education Association v. Sherwood-Cass R-VIII School District.
[http://www.courts.mo.gov/courts/pubopinions.nsf/ccd96539c3fb13ce8625661f004bc7da/9d07c77322a5e0586256fd2006c8055?OpenDocument&Highlight=0,sherwood.](http://www.courts.mo.gov/courts/pubopinions.nsf/ccd96539c3fb13ce8625661f004bc7da/9d07c77322a5e0586256fd2006c8055?OpenDocument&Highlight=0,sherwood)

Recruitment and Retention of Teachers in Missouri Public Schools: “A Report to the Missouri General Assembly”:

http://www.dese.mo.gov/divteachqual/teachrecruit/Recruit_report.pdf

This report includes critical teacher shortage areas.

Education Week: “Effort to Recruit Math, Science Teachers Urged” (October 4, 2000):

www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=05glenn.h20 (Ed Week allows access to a couple of articles a week to those who don't subscribe.)

Teacher Quality site:

<https://www.teacherquality.us/Public/PromisingPractices.asp?PPCategoryID=3>

Learn what other states are doing to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers.

Education Commission of the States, Teacher Quality, Recruitment and Retention:

<http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/IssueCollapse.asp>

Articles in this area re: other states

CA: <http://smi.ucr.edu/pdf/recruitmentbonuses.pdf> and

http://notebook.lausd.net/pls/ptl/docs/PAGE/CA_LAUSD/FLDR_LAUSD_NEWS/FLDR_ANNOUNCEMENTS/TEACHERRECRUITMENT42452.PDF

CO: <http://www.dpsk12.org/news/press/2002/02/15.shtml>

WV: http://www.register-herald.com/statenews/cnhinsall_story_017223907.html

PBS program on topic of recruiting math and science teachers:

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/jan-june06/math_03-07.html

MNEA Legislative Platform: <http://www.mnea.org/capitol/pdfs/LegislativePlatform.pdf>

MSTA Legislative Issues: http://www.msta.org/legislation/action_bulletins/

Dr. Bert Schulte, Deputy Commissioner/Legislative Liaison, DESE

Ms. Rusty Rosenkoetter, Coordinator, Educator Certification, DESE

Rosalyn Wieberg, Assistant Director, Educator Recruitment and Retention, DESE

Dr. Andrea Wood, Director, Missouri Assessment Program, DESE