

# No School on Monday -- or Any Monday

By [Vince Crunk and Shawn Poynter](#)

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**Can putting five days' worth of instruction into four days of school help a district hold down costs? A rural school district in Missouri takes advantage of a state law giving it flexibility to rework its weekly schedule. A school-board member says the experiment is paying off.**

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*Photo by Vince Crunk*

Everton Elementary School in Everton, Missouri, gets a new roof. The school district covers five days' worth of instruction in four days as a way to contain transportation and utility costs.

As the new school year begins, students across the country are gathering their supplies and lining up for the bus.

But young people in the southwest Missouri town of Everton won't be in class this Monday. Or any Monday.

Two years ago, the Everton R-III school district's board voted to switch to a four-day-a-week schedule, as allowed by a change in Missouri law. Students get the same amount of instruction, but the time is scheduled into four school days instead of five.

The board reasoned that closing the school one extra day a week would save enough money in utilities and transportation costs to more than make up for disrupting the time-honored Monday-through-Friday schedule.

Cost savings is a big consideration for the small district, which has fewer than 200 students in

grades K-12, according to Education.com. With a tight budget that has been frozen for years, the change gave the district a little breathing room, said Vince Crunk, vice-president of the local school board.

With two kids in the Everton system, Crunk also knows what it's like to be a parent of children who are in class Tuesday through Friday each week.

We asked Crunk how the schedule is working for his rural district. He said the district made the change carefully, and the results have been good. In fact, nearby districts are switching to the four-day schedule this year, as well.

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### **Daily Yonder: How and why did Everton adopt the 4-day school week?**

Vince Crunk: In 2009 the school successfully passed an operating levy increase for the school. But as time and years passed, prior decisions made on major purchases and insurance, among other things, left the school with a squeaky tight budget. It should be noted that even though Everton R-3 is considered a "hold harmless" district, which protects funding levels from falling below those of the 2005-06 school year, the funding levels for this formula haven't increased above the 2005 levels.

By 2013, new Superintendent Dr. Karl Janson, who began with the 2012-13 school year, and the board began looking for other options to reduce costs.

In 2009 the Missouri Legislature passed SB 291, which among other things granted local school boards control of the school week format. As the Children's Education Alliance of Missouri's website notes, "This option is desired by many rural school districts that seek more flexibility, lower transportation costs and the ability to implement innovative ideas."

Superintendent Janson had been following Lathrop, Missouri, a northern suburb of Kansas City, which implemented a 4-day-week in 2009, the same year as the enabling legislation permitted.

Based on information from [Lathrop's website](#) they have seen some improvement in scores and testing but some areas of concern as well. Attendance figures have improved. From a dollars-and-cents perspective, they have seen actual savings of 1.3% of their budget.

After conducting surveys of staff, students and parents, in 2013 the Everton School Board voted to adopt a 4-day-week. As with any change, there were concerns but also some positive feedback as well. More than 80% of Everton parents supported the change. Student support was even higher; at least 95%. Concerns expressed included the expected question about daycare, with working parents now having to consider what to do with younger children when there is no school. Like a snow day every week.

At this stage, only two full years in, Everton has not compiled enough data to prove things one way or another. But anecdotal evidence indicates the experiment is successful. Days *are* longer. Discipline issues seem to be down somewhat. As Janson has noted, "Tuesdays do not feel like a Monday!"

**DY: How did you decide on which day to drop?**

VC: An important and much-discussed part of the change was which day to take off. Lathrop found Mondays to work best. And after discussion, Everton did too. There are typically more Monday Holidays than any other day of the week. It provides a real 3-day weekend. It allows for using Mondays once a month as professional development (PD) days. Students with dual enrollment taking off-campus courses, have an additional day to work on them. Perhaps under the “...ability to implement innovative ideas ...,” noted earlier in the legislation, the school created an internship program that uses Mondays.

**DY: What effects, if any, have you seen in the first two years of the schedule change?**

VC: Everton has seen a real drop in their expenses of almost 2%. This is real hard-dollar savings for a cash-strapped district. Everton’s annual budget is about \$1.9 million. The total savings realized in the first 4-day school year were slightly more than \$36,000.

Teachers have *not* born the financial brunt of this change, and in fact were given a raise in terms of time, by taking 20 days from their contracts, without a reduction in salary. Non-certified staff did lose one day a week of employment. In Everton’s case this was a small number of people. But 20% is a hard hit nonetheless in anyone’s paycheck.

**DY: Where do most of the savings come from?**

VC: Busses are notoriously expensive to run. Cutting out one day of hard gravel rural driving, reduces not only gas consumption but also wear and tear on those big and expensive yellow things. Utilities that run mostly 4 days a week, now, have produced some sizeable savings in both propane and electricity.

**DY: Are there other school systems looking to adopt the 4-day week?**

VC: Since Everton began its experiment, several other nearby districts have visited with the school’s administration and two have taken the plunge. Miller, a slightly larger town of 699 and, Pierce City, pop. of about 1,200 are both set to start their own 4-day-weeks this 2015-16 school year.

**DY: What does the Everton school system hope to see as it enters its 3<sup>rd</sup> year of this experiment?**

Fewer snow days to make up for one. Lower attendance on these Monday make-up days is an issue.

Everton is in the final stages of a major renovation project. These changes will no doubt improve morale for both teachers and students. This adds more variables to the equation of how to measure success of the 4-day week. But according to Janson, finances are under control and student achievement is heading in the right direction. “The 4-day has done what it was intended to do,” he concluded.

**DY: How has the change affected your family, personally?**

VC: Before the 4-day, doctors and dentists and such meant missing school. You had to remember to get a note to get an excused absence. With two teens in braces and an at home family of five, you can imagine how often those appointments occurred.

Did I mention we live about 45 minutes from the big city where all the doctors live?

Now with Mondays free from school, it opens up a much more convenient way to handle life's logistics.

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