

# SHOULD SCHOOL WEEKS BE FOUR DAYS INSTEAD OF FIVE?

***THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.***

## INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

### WHAT THIS SCHOOL DISTRICT LEARNED FROM A 4-DAY WEEK

PBS Newshour | August 28, 2018 | Video

7:41 minutes

A clip from PBS NewsHour that talks about the impact of the 4-day school week on students in one New Mexico district.

- 25 states have at least one district on a 4-day school week. More than half of all districts in Colorado and 40% in New Mexico follow the 4-day school week to save money. But Georgia Hayward says there's little savings – only about 2% of a district's budget.
- Even though the week is shorter, the school days are longer and students have shortened breaks. But even with those changes to the day, students lose 22 days of school through a shortened school week.
- The 4-day week helps students in large districts who ride the bus for almost 3 hours a day to get back and forth to school. It also helps boost attendance and adds time for extracurricular activities and sports.
- Two 6th grade students, Michael and Alexis, have different opinions. Alexis was excited to move to a short week, whereas Michael is worried about missing out on learning things.
- 90% of parents agreed with the change at Cobre Consolidated School District in New Mexico, and many teachers are attracted to the shortened week as well – a good thing to help end the teacher shortage in the state.

### BUDGET BATTLE FORCES OKLAHOMA SCHOOLS TO TRY 4-DAY WEEKS

Here & Now | June 2, 2017 | Audio

5:33 minutes

An interview with Oklahoma school superintendent Randy Harris that talks about why his district and many others in Oklahoma have moved to a 4-day week to deal with underfunding and budget issues.

- By moving to a 4-day week, Harris's district saves money on busing, utilities, janitorial services, and substitute staff while not losing teachers or support staff.
- 9 of 16 Oklahoma districts studied ended up spending more money than in years previous, but Harris says that the 4-day school week helps boost teacher morale and it helps retain and recruit teachers.
- Harris says he doesn't know if the 4-day week helps or hinders student performance, but says it does help battle the problems of underfunded schools in Oklahoma.

*Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.*

- Nonprofit organizations offer childcare for families who need it on Mondays, but critics of the 4-day week bring up problems of transportation, children going hungry, and relying on those nonprofits to pick up the slack.
- Harris says with the money they're saving on the new schedule, his district can make sure that the schools can hire art teachers and librarians again

## WHEN A 4-DAY SCHOOL WEEK MIGHT COST MORE THAN IT SAVES

NPR | November 27, 2015 | Audio

11:47 minutes

A story from KJZZ in Arizona that focuses on one family's schedule on the day where students don't have school.

- The Florences aren't happy with the 4-day week, saying they pay more than \$100 a month in childcare for their kids.
- Apache Junction School District joined 41 other Arizona school districts in the 4-day schedule, which helps teachers coordinate lesson plans and helps with teacher retention and morale.
- Some students have moved to private schools or other school districts that have a traditional school week – a problem for districts that are funded based on student enrollment.
- At Apache Junction, the district estimates that the short week will only save 1% of the budget – about \$33 per student per year.

## KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your classroom and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- School District
- Budget
- Funding
- Morale

## CONTEMPLATE

Learners will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

*Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.*

## DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.