

## Academic Calendar Survey FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

Q. What will be the start and stop times for each campus next year?

- A. Because of the new Intermediate school opening next year, we don't really know the bell schedules because they will be determined by the Transportation Department in coordination with the principals before the school year starts next year for all campuses. However, each calendar does have the number of minutes per day, and each calendar shows how many additional minutes it is for the elementary, as well as the secondary campuses.

Q. Why isn't there a straight 4 day calendar option (with every week being a 4 day week)?

- A. We are calling these two calendars a "4 day modified" because they are not truly all four day weeks, as you mentioned. It seemed from our feedback that most people did not want to see the school day lengthened by very much, so the Committee tried to extend the calendars by adding days to the academic year rather than time to the day. By doing that, it limited the number of Fridays or Mondays that we could place in the 4 Day calendars. This is why we are just calling them a "4-Day Modified".

Here are some examples. With a straight 4 Day calendar, Mineral Wells ISD's students attend school for 8 hours and 10 minutes a day. In Terrell ISD (a new 4 day district beginning next year), their students will attend for 8 hours and 15 minutes a day to accommodate the TRUE 4 Day calendar, but this is 50 minutes (almost an hour) longer than our elementary school students are going now (currently 7 hours and 25 mins – 445 mins daily). The Calendar Committee didn't feel that our community would support this much of an increase in daily minutes. The 4 Day Modified calendar would allow for an easier transition (only a 25 min increase for our Elementary campus and 15 additional minutes for our secondary students), and next year, we can assess the success and comfort level with the 4 Day week calendar as we plan for the following academic year.

Q. Why are there not as many Fridays blocked off on the 4 Day FRIDAY Modified calendar option?

- A. The challenge for the Friday calendar is that there are three Monday federal holidays to be kept (Labor Day, MLK Day, and Memorial Day) and the preference that has been expressed by many stakeholders for keeping the 3 full weeks at Christmas. We hope this helps explain.

Q. Why do we need full weeks at testing time? Has TEA released these as testing dates?

- A. Yes, TEA has released the Testing Windows for both End of Course (EOCs) exams and STAAR tests. Students need to be in attendance the day before testing starts so preparations can be made for testing locations and last minute testing tips/strategies. Students need to be in attendance on the Fridays of these testing weeks because those are the make-up days if a student is absent for a test earlier in the week.

Q. Why are we proposing a 4 Day Modified schedule? How does this benefit our students?

- A. Great question! Where do we start? The 4 Day Modified schedule would help Peaster ISD with retaining the wonderful teachers that we already have by allowing them time for preparation, lesson planning, grading, etc. that they are struggling to find time for now. By giving them time, these professionals will be able to really focus on their curriculum and design of their coursework. Students will benefit from this. As far as recruiting goes, our research has shown that 4 Day school districts are flooded with not just applicants, but highly qualified teachers.

There is a nation-wide teacher shortage; by implementing a 4 Day Modified calendar, Peaster ISD will have an advantage over surrounding districts competing for the same pool of certified teachers and even pulling highly qualified applicants from other industries/career fields. By putting the best and most highly qualified teachers in our classrooms, our students will greatly benefit.

Our research also shows that schools who have implemented the 4 day calendars are experiencing less discipline issues, higher attendance rates for both students and staff, and heightened morale at all campuses. Our students definitely benefit from each of these effects of the 4 Day calendar.

Q. How does this 4 Day Modified Calendar save the district money?

- A. The savings to a 4 Day Modified calendar are minimal. There will be some savings, but that is not the primary reason for the consideration. The primary considerations are educational excellence, increased morale, work life balance for students and staff, and recruitment and retention.

Q. Why do ALL the calendars extend the school day by some amount of time?

- A. The State of Texas requires that students be in school for 75,600 minutes. Today, PISD has a Staff Development waiver in place that allows our students to attend 2100 minutes less than the minimum requirement. The new calendars are built around the State required minimum PLUS a small cushion of minutes and 2 bad weather days.

Q. Will PISD experience any pay cuts or decreases due to the implementation of the 4 Day calendar options?

A. No, the Calendar Committee asked the Board if PISD could move forward based on 2 non-negotiables (1. No employee (hourly or otherwise) would receive a decrease in pay, and 2. All employees would work the same academic calendar). The Board agreed to these terms, and PISD is committed to working out issues as they may arise if the Board approves one of the 4 Day Modified academic calendar drafts.

Q. What do other 4 Day Districts say about Student Achievement?

A. Athens ISD was the first school district in Texas to begin the 4 Day week. They committed to a 3 year pilot program, which they just completed. In the article “Does the Four Day Week Work?” (see the full article here: [www.keranews.org/education/2022-10-06/does-the-four-day-school-week-work-in-texas](http://www.keranews.org/education/2022-10-06/does-the-four-day-school-week-work-in-texas)) the AISD “Superintendent Sims said polling revealed more than three quarters of school parents agreed the four-day week had a positive or mostly positive effect on students and families. What’s more, the latest state test scores were the best the district had *ever seen*. That’s despite constant disruptions caused by COVID-19.”

Q. Are these calendars FINAL?

A. The committee is asking for you (the PISD Staff) to rank your preferences and provide feedback on these calendar choices to help us move forward with making a presentation to the School Board.

**ONLY the School Board can approve the academic calendar.** All of these calendars will be subject to change depending on the State Legislature (which is in session now), any “tweaking” that might need to be done for compliance reasons, and/or possibly comments made in the survey that the Committee hadn’t discussed before.  
**Please remember, this is NOT a vote; it is a SURVEY.**

Your participation and feedback are so valuable to us, and we THANK YOU for all you do for our students EVERY DAY!