

RESOLUTION 2122R-015

By Director Aisha Carr

WHEREAS, While the COVID-19 pandemic has presented many new challenges and has widened the pre-existing academic disparities that have significantly impacted historically disadvantaged students the hardest, the pandemic simultaneously has presented opportunities to design and implement rigorous strategies of evidence-based initiatives, including the piloting and monitoring of new and innovative approaches to delivering quality academic and enrichment services; and

WHEREAS, Although many of the challenges facing our educational system predate the COVID-19 pandemic, the opportunities for innovative and transformational reform remain missed opportunities. Milwaukee Public Schools is strongly positioned to reimagine and to restructure educational theories and practices to strategically design a holistic approach to redefining quality and equity within our district; and

WHEREAS, Even before the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted learning and deprived students of critical in-person instruction time, special education services, social and emotional learning opportunities, and college-and-career-readiness planning and preparation, many MPS students were already at a severe disadvantage with disproportionate representation in the lowest percentile of academic achievement in mathematics, reading and science, struggling to maintain focus and to demonstrate success because of the digital divide, absence of academic interventions and special education services, social deprivation, and persistent mental health crises; and

WHEREAS, Today, there are more than 1,600 schools in more than 600 school districts across 26 states that have adopted four-day school weeks to reimagine public education and to use innovative approaches to address economic woes of school budgets, to provide high-quality professional development for educators, and to use as strategies to recruit and to retain educators;^[1] and

WHEREAS, Many of the districts that have adopted the four-day model use the fifth day of the week to prioritize professional development for teachers and to encourage students and youth service providers opportunities to deliver extended-learning opportunities for the purpose of skill advancement and the pursuit of college and career readiness skills; and

WHEREAS, A study conducted in 2008 suggests that four-day school weeks can result in higher student attendance, which, in turn, can result in better performance on standardized test scores. In addition, four-day school weeks can also help students focus, build morale, and improve behavioral outcomes;^[2] and

WHEREAS, Anderson and Walker (2015), using school-level data about 4th- and 5th grade students in Colorado, have shown that the percentage of students scoring above the proficiency threshold in Math and English language Arts on the state test has increased by 4-7 percentage points as result of the four-day school week;^[3] and

WHEREAS, Much anecdotal evidence suggests that the four-day school week improves students' morale and behavior, indicating that four-day school weeks increases students' willingness to attend school and reduces disciplinary incidents at school;^[4] and

WHEREAS, A survey administered to parents across the US to assess the impact of the pandemic on dropout rates suggests that chronic absenteeism for students in 8th through 12th grade has increased by 12 percentage points, while 42 percent of the students who are engaging in chronic absenteeism for the first time are not attending school at all. Scaled up to a national level, this suggests that 2.3 million to 4.6 million additional students in 8th through 12th grade were chronically absent from school in 2020, in addition to the 3.1 million who were chronically absent in pre-pandemic years;^[5] and

WHEREAS, In a study conducted in early 2021 of about 16,370 parents across every state in America, 35 percent of the parents expressed significant concerns about their child's mental health and social and emotional wellbeing, with about 80 percent of parents expressing some level of concern about their child's mental health and social and emotional health and development since the start of the pandemic. In addition, of the parents surveyed, a significant percentage reported increases in clinical mental health conditions among their children, with a five percentage-point increase in anxiety and a six percentage-point increase in depression. Inadvertently, about 80% of children with mental health disorders receive services from a specialized mental health service provider;^[6] and

WHEREAS, The 2019 Wisconsin Behavioral Health Systems Gaps report suggest two of the top populations facing the greatest mental health disparities are: Opportunity Youth ages 18-25 and adolescents aged 12-17, with workforce shortages and shortage of culturally appropriate community-based services being amongst the top reasons cited for the increase in severe mental health problems;^[7] and

WHEREAS, It has been estimated that, lacking immediate and sustained innovative interventions, disparities engendered by the pandemic could result in lifetime earnings of K-12 students being reduced by an average of \$49,000 to \$61,000, especially for those students who have suffered greater loss of learning. Educational achievement and attainment have been linked not only to higher earnings, but also to better health and reduced incarceration rates and greater civic engagement;^[8] and

WHEREAS, About 88% of the victims of both non-fatal shootings and homicides are black people, with about 10.6% of the victims of homicide being minors who were 18 years of age and younger. Already in 2022, Milwaukee Public Schools has lost students because of fatal shootings, reckless (fatal) car accidents. Also, there has been multiple incidents in schools warranting greater policies and practices to provide extensive training opportunities to School Safety personnel;^[9] and

WHEREAS, Black students continue to be disproportionately represented in school disciplinary/suspension data, accounting for almost 80% of the District’s suspensions resulting from fighting, chronic disruptions/disorderly conduct, and violation of school rules and policies;^[10] and

WHEREAS, The 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Management survey showed that nearly one in two students reported anxiety (49.0%) which reflected about 9% growth from 2017 to 2019. More than two out of three girls in the 10th and 11th grades reported anxiety;^[11] and

WHEREAS, A survey administered to parents, students, educators, and taxpayers in the Milwaukee Board of School Directors’ fourth district showed that about 87% were completely dissatisfied with the current data reflecting academic achievement, school culture and climate, leadership, and community-engagement efforts, citing ineffective communication practices, ineffective school safety policies and practices, limited funding accountability and transparency, outdated curriculum and instruction, ineffective efforts to recruit and retain black and brown teachers, and racial inequities. Each person surveyed expressed a desire to be involved with the District 4 Task Force to learn more about district-wide policies and procedures and determine ways to get involved in their local schools; and

WHEREAS, Milwaukee Public ‘Mission Aligned Partners’ initiative supports the training and development of parents, students, teachers and industry leaders to: gain access to career exploration opportunities, align academic instructional plans to workforce labor market demands, and provide increased flexibility for students to earn credit beyond the traditional school day;^[12] and

WHEREAS, “Automation” exposure is defined as the use of electronics and computer-controlled devices to ultimately advance new technology, and increase efficiency and reliability. Inadvertently, automation exposure can cause a significant disruption to young workers between the ages of 16 and 24 and historically underrepresented communities of color who have the lowest educational credentials reflecting overrepresentation in automatable jobs associated with food preparation and serving;^[13] and

WHEREAS, According to a 2019 Brookings Institute report on *Automation and Artificial Intelligence*, Milwaukee is ranked number sixty-two among the top 100 Metropolitan cities (State of Wisconsin ranking number ten), with the average automation percentage being 45.5%. This is critical because educational attainment will prove decisive in shaping the impact AI-aged technological developments will have on the local labor markets. The impacts of automation in the coming decades will be variable across occupations, and will be visible especially among lower wage, lower-education roles in occupations characterized by rote work;^[14] and

WHEREAS, Manufacturing and office administration heavy regions like Wisconsin, with the greatest concentrations of routine employment are amongst some of the places that has seen the largest shift to low-wage service employment in the automation/IT era;^[15] and

WHEREAS, in Milwaukee County, there are over 22,000 youth and young adults between ages 16 to 24 who are out-of-school and/or out of life-sustaining work. It is estimated that about 91% of the 16 to 24 year olds out-of-school and out-of-work were educated through our public school systems. In Wisconsin, students who identify as black and brown make up about 95% of high school students who don’t graduate on time. Further, it is concluded that youth who don’t earn their high school diplomas have limited employment options and often struggle with lower income representing a significant percentage of families living in poverty;^[16] and

WHEREAS, Decreases in teacher absenteeism have resulted in financial savings from a reduction in the need for substitute teachers serving as one of the most research proven benefits of four-day school weeks;^[17] and

WHEREAS, Community organizations, small minority-owned businesses, and leaders in youth development have all expressed a desire to collaborate with MPS to provide additional educational and youth-development services, including restorative practices, financial literacy, career pathways and college readiness, and other life-skills training and development opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Countries like China, Canada, Estonia and Singapore (to name a few) have intentionally and creatively shifted policies and practices to prioritize the opportunities and demands of a future workforce during the COVID-19 global pandemic and beyond. Specifically, the changes implemented in those countries to promote lifelong learning, quality train and ultimately align with an evolving innovative workforce; [18] [19] and

WHEREAS, Now, more than ever, is the time to intentionally develop opportunities to address the barriers facing our students including those of the labor market thus equipping teacher leaders to drive quality instruction that will develop the skills and abilities of globally competitive, creative problem solvers, and mentally sound student leaders; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Milwaukee Board of School Directors hereby directs the Administration to explore the feasibility of implementing a four-day school week, with a fifth day devoted to teacher professional development, student mental health services, extended learning opportunities, and intentional and effective school community, and employer partnerships; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that this exploration is to include, but not be limited to, analyses of

- the processes and the outcomes - successes, challenges, costs, required restructuring, etc. --- of a representative sampling of those districts that are of comparable size with MPS which have implemented the four-day school week, including the impacts on students' achievement, student, mental health, school culture and climate, and on the recruitment and retention of teachers and staff, and any other extraordinary factors that may have been engendered by such implementation;
- the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's mandates for instructional time and structures, including the legality and enforceability of a four-day school operational and programmatic structure;
- the probability of community-based organizations, small businesses, funders, and other prospective community partners funding and supporting this initiative;
- the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development strategies and opportunities for increased support with student and parent workforce skills trainings and development opportunities;
- MPS's financial trajectory through a cost analysis;
- the support and resources for, and the feasibility of, employers and business partners supporting this effort with paid internships and apprenticeships and professional extended learning opportunities for students and families of the district;
- the legality and enforceability of extending limited-term employment (LTE) contracts to fill vacancies or delivery services in school settings to male personnel who are experiencing employment barriers in order to create employment and partnership opportunities for them;
- the feasibility of teachers and school leaders undergoing weekly mandatory professional development with educator- and school leader-centered evaluations, critical instructional planning and school-community building strategies to improve school culture and climate and teacher morale;
- the legality and practicality of using underutilized MPS buildings to support local, small minority-owned and -operated businesses with youth-specific service models and deliveries;
- the impact of a four-day school week on families' need for childcare, food and nutritional services, and transportation, and ways in which to address these needs;
- the feasibility of developing a Parent Engagement Institute where Parent Coordinators roles will expand to provide additional intentional supports to the parents and families of MPS students; and be it FURTHER RESOLVED, That a Four-day School-week Strategic Planning Committee be created to ensure the fidelity of the study, to collect and to analyze data, and to engage the community in this process through various listening sessions; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Administration and the Four-day School-week Strategic Planning Committee are to report their findings to the Board no later than the June 2022 board cycle.

Sample Four-day School Week Basic Schedules w/ 50-minute extensions for the Four-School Days and one day of other non-academic services

Monday		Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
TEACHERS	STUDENTS	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom
[1][2] Mandatory Instruction-aligned Professional Development; [2][3] [4] Mandatory Planning Time; [4] [5] School Culture/Climate Development	[1][2] Mandatory Mental Health & Social Emotional Learning; [2][3] [4] [5] [6] Extended Learning Opportunities (i.e. Apprenticeships/Essential Skills development, Student-Athletic training, Restorative Practices, etc.; [7] Community-based Service Day	Class	Class	Class	Class
		Class	Class	Class	Class
		Lunch/Class	Lunch/Class	Lunch/Class	Lunch/Class
		Class	Class	Class	Class
		Class	Class	Class	Class
		Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal

OR

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday		Thursday	Friday
Homeroom	Homeroom	TEACHERS	STUDENTS	Homeroom	Homeroom
Class	Class	[1][2] Mandatory Instruction-aligned Professional Development; [2][3] [4] Mandatory Planning Time; [4] [5] School Culture/Climate Development	[1][2] Mandatory Mental Health & Social Emotional Learning; [2][3] [4] [5] [6] Extended Learning Opportunities (i.e. Apprenticeships/Essential Skills development, Student-Athletic training, Restorative Practices, etc.; [7] Community-based Service Day	Class	Class
Class	Class			Class	Class
Lunch/Class	Lunch/Class			Lunch/Class	Lunch/Class
Class	Class			Class	Class
Class	Class			Class	Class
Dismissal	Dismissal			Dismissal	Dismissal

OR

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	TEACHERS	STUDENTS
Class	Class	Class	Class	[1][2] Mandatory Instruction-aligned Professional Development; [2][3] [4] Mandatory Planning Time; [4] [5] School Culture/Climate Development	[1][2] Mandatory Mental Health & Social Emotional Learning; [2][3] [4] [5] [6] Extended Learning Opportunities (i.e. Apprenticeships/Essential Skills development, Student-Athletic training, Restorative Practices, etc.; [7] Community-based Service Day
Class	Class	Class	Class		
Lunch/Class	Lunch/Class	Lunch/Class	Lunch/Class		
Class	Class	Class	Class		
Class	Class	Class	Class		
Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal		

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