
Fwd: Flexible Fridays

1 message

From: Samaya Faber <fabesam@students.cordovasd.org>
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To: Barb Jewell <bjewell@cordovasd.org>
Subject: Flexible Fridays

Dear School Board Members,

Thank you for taking the time to hear student opinions, and for all you do for our school.

Flexible Fridays allow students to have autonomy in our education, and stimulates intrinsic learning. Some classes are more rigorous than others. For example, I don't need extra time on Fridays for classes that are strongly discussion-based, like Marine Science. However, my more challenging classes like AP Government and Politics and AP Literature and Composition benefit immensely from optional instruction time. It gives students the opportunity to enrich their learning with activities, such as mock trials and mock exams, without cutting into the allotted fifty-five minutes of class time. It also gives me time out of class to connect with my teachers one on one. It provides an alternate environment to the rigid structure of the school day, and gives students an undisturbed and independent environment. The ability to choose what we need to prioritize and learning to manage our own time are valuable life skills that students don't often get to practice in strict school hours.

Friday tutorials also give students who aren't where they need to be in class the chance to catch up. It's difficult for teachers to work one on one with students during class, but if the struggling students are never given the opportunity to catch up, they will fall more behind. They won't be gaining anything in the future. It improves classroom advancement as a whole, because it keeps students on the same learning level. After school travel, it also makes it significantly easier to stay on top of work. This is especially beneficial for student athletes who struggle in school. It allows them to do what they are passionate about without sacrificing their academics. To further elaborate, students who travel for sports do not have to worry about missing instructional time on Fridays. One student athlete, Austin Schandel, has noticed the improvement Friday tutorials have made in the balance of his involvement in sports and academics. He claims that, "It has made making up tests simpler, because I don't have to take more class time out to complete them. I don't have to stress about getting to school early on Fridays when we return late on a Thursday, and because of the unstructured time I'm more motivated to go in and work on the things I'm passionate about." Some trips can go for two or three weeks straight—especially when trips for different activities overlap—and having a designated day for catching up before returning to school is useful to students who may have not been able to complete assignments when

traveling. For many students, athletics is their main incentive to try in class and Fridays make it possible for them to keep their grades up and participate.

We know that one of your main concerns is that test scores are low in the high school. We believe this is not because of the four day week that has been implemented, but rather because high school students are not aware of the importance of the standardized test, and don't put our full effort into it. We are not given a motivator to try on the tests, because we are told by our teachers that it does not directly impact our grades. The seventh and eighth grade adhere to the same schedule as the high school, but in spite of that, their average test scores are in line with the projected growth. Furthermore, in a vast majority of instructional areas tested within the AKSTAR tests—measured by “RIT” scoring—students tested *higher* than the state mean, in both English Language Arts and Mathematics. Lower scores compared to earlier years in our own high school may have been for many reasons, unrelated to the four day week. It would be more productive to compare our scores to current data from the state as a whole, as that would account for problems affecting our entire age group, such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, using test scores to determine the success of the four day week, and students as a whole, is not a productive method. In an article from the Economic Policy Institute, experts say “...it is important for the public to recognize that the standardized tests now in use are not perfect, and do not provide unerring measurements of student achievement. Not only are they subject to errors of various kinds...but they are narrow measures of what students know and can do, relying largely on multiple-choice items that do not evaluate students’ communication skills, depth of knowledge and understanding, or critical thinking and performance abilities.”([Economic Policy Institute](#))

The student body and the majority of high school teachers in the school support the four day week. We've seen improvements in all students and teacher-student relationships. Almost 90% of students come in on Fridays, for academics and extracurriculars. This is proof of the use Flexible Fridays pose and how students are using it to their full advantage. Valdez is transitioning to four day weeks after observing our system and seeing its benefits. Every year, the school board questions the validity of our argument. This is frustrating because a vast majority of teachers and every student I know has personally expressed how Fridays have been indescribably beneficial to them. If teachers who teach core curriculum classes feel that they can fit all the content into a four day week, their judgment should be trusted. To reiterate our point, Flexible Fridays benefit students in various ways—adding to their value and use—providing opportunities for students to enrich their education and pursue extracurricular activities without falling behind or missing instructional time.

Thank you for your consideration and all your effort in this matter,

Samaya Faber, Student Council President
Morgan Saiget, School Board Representative