

Opinion

— EDITORIAL —

We support the four-day school week

We were pleased with the 5J School District's decision to continue the current four-day school week, which has been in place for the past five or so years.

When it comes to education, quantity does not necessarily equal quality, and there is no good evidence that the longer a child sits in a classroom, the more academic benefits present themselves.

We realize declining test scores were cited at the last Board meeting, but also see no direct correlation between those and the four-day schedule. Changes in the tests themselves as well as the introduction of the confused and convoluted Smarter Balanced / Common Core teaching and testing may also be contributing factors, assuming the data is accurate.

We also don't believe that the public school system is the be all, end all of childhood development. Call us crazy, but the time children spend with their families at home, with friends doing various activities, in other community clubs, etc. is equally if not often more beneficial in the long run. This is the time children celebrate how they *don't* fit inside the box that is the organized public school system. It's the time for parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles to help shape their character, teach them family history, traditions, and skills they

won't learn elsewhere.

For individuals who want or need additional structured academic help, there are resources available here locally on Fridays, such as Friday Academy.

With sixteen hundred or so kids in our local school district, there's no way one schedule will ever fit everyone due to work, travel, and so forth. However, we grew up and/or raised kids within Baker County's 30J School District, which has adhered to a four-day week for decades now quite successfully, with again no evidence that the graduates from that school, Burnt River to be precise, suffered in any way as they went on to college or gainful employment.

We've heard the argument that what works in more rural areas doesn't work in Baker City due to the different demographic. We've heard more than one person say that having students out of school on Friday only results in them being unsupervised that day, and in some cases without the basics such as three square meals on that day. We've heard, again from more than one person, reference to the number of juvenile-related police calls on Fridays. We agree and can't dispute those facts—which is a sad commentary on our community.

However, our school system wasn't intended to be a combination daycare and homeless shelter, and when that's what we try to turn it into, the time well-cared-for children get inside families that are healthy can be infringed upon. The answer to those societal issues has to lie elsewhere, and the school system needs to focus on its purpose—education.

Four days achieves that goal just fine.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

— SPECIAL COLUMN —

So I was thinking ...

Things men shouldn't be in charge of

By Jimmy Ingram
Special to The Baker County Press

For the most part, grown men are a capable bunch. We've built pyramids, set foot on the moon, invented the internal combustion engine, and peanut butter. We're also a proud bunch that like to pretend we know the answer to nearly every question and can maneuver through the ins and outs of social situations with the greatest of ease. But despite our good traits there are lot of things men shouldn't be in charge of. Here are just a few.

Laundry. When I was a single man in my 20s I easily separated my laundry into one of two groups: things that were white, and things that weren't. Put detergent in machine, hit button, transfer clothes to dryer, done. It wasn't until I was married I found out there were all new categories of laundry, allegedly created only to confuse men like myself: Delicates, colors, hand wash, hang dry, tumble dry low, dry clean only. I was like a 12 year-old in an algebra class saying to myself, "I thought math was just adding and subtracting? This is way too complicated for me."

Now being a modern guy I do more than my share of laundry in our home. Much as I'd like to pat myself on the back for my contribution, there are times I've done far more harm than good. I've shrunk sweaters four sizes, turned white T-shirts pink, and overlooked "dry clean only" tags. I've shrugged off the need for stain remover, only to set spaghetti stains in my kids clothes permanently (my argument for them "adding character" to the kids' shirts didn't work). I've loaded 105 pounds of clothes in the washer and then wondered why the machine walked itself four feet away from the wall.

I'm sure there are many men like me who make a noble effort to do laundry, but ultimately end up wreaking havoc on their family's clothing. We're learning. We're capable. But maybe men are not yet qualified to be turned loose with the laundry.

Dinner Parties. Being asked to bring an entree or dessert dish to a social function is a frequent request. Most women seem to have a catalog full of specialty dishes to bring to almost any event—dips, casseroles, homemade desserts. Men, on the other hand, have the tact of a prehistoric caveman when presented with this formality. As far as we're concerned, two or three bags of Doritos and/or a 12-pack of beer are perfectly acceptable to bring to almost any occasion. Dessert social? We see no reason to waste time with pesky things like recipes, cookware, and ingredients. A container of Safeway cookies should fit the bill. Simple minds, simple



Submitted Photo

Jimmy Ingram is a local farmer and father of two who enjoys people watching within our wonderful community and beyond.

solutions.

Women may question our effort on this issue but we like to call it "efficient." The empty bags clearly show that the Doritos were a hit and as a bonus, we don't have to worry about our Tupperware being returned. I know, I know ... you're not buying it. We'll leave the "bring a dish" responsibility up to you ladies. A dinner party with 40 bags of Cool Ranch Doritos and 20 cases of beer doesn't sound more like camping than a formal dinner party. We probably shouldn't be in charge.

Christmas Shopping. Sometime around 6 a.m. on November 1, the women of America set their wheels in motion for holiday shopping. They search the internet and stroll feverishly through shopping malls, referring to year-in-the-making lists they've constructed for each person they need to shop for. Before the end of November, they have 99% of their Christmas shopping done, left only with a few small details to finish their holiday preparedness. The efficiency of women's holiday shopping is so high, they have time left over to do things like bake cookies and do holiday crafts.

Sometime around noon on December 23 men across America casually begin to consider setting foot in stores, realizing they have yet to fulfill any of their shopping obligations.

We wander like lost puppy dogs through the business districts and big box stores of every town in America, hoping to complete our mental shopping list before the bell tolls. Card selections for the wife are made easy, mostly because there are only two left to choose from in the entire county. One has a kitten in a Santa hat on the front and the other is a money holder that reads, "For you, Granddaughter." At last on the afternoon of December 24, the man's shopping duties are complete. Five gift cards, two scented candles, and a Santa Cat greeting card should do the trick. We tell ourselves, "I'll start shopping sooner next year," but we probably won't. We never learn.

When it comes to shopping for the holidays, men should not be in charge. It's not that we don't enjoy gift giving, we just aren't organized enough to navigate the holiday waters.

The completed list of things men shouldn't be in charge of could fill up a public library. We really do try, but in many ways we don't change. Now if you'll excuse me, I need to go pick up a couple bags of chips for a dinner party.



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