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City of Heppner and the
County of Morrow

**Heppner
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**Morrow County four-day week
Setting the record straight**

by
Chuck Starr, Morrow County School District Superintendent

In recent months local newspapers have printed a number of letters to the editor regarding the four-day student week in the Morrow County School District. Many of these letters have expressed negative opinions about the continuation of this instructional calendar. Those letters, along with a guest editorial printed in the "Hermiston Herald" (2/4/97) and an editorial printed in the "East Oregonian" (2/12/97) have contained a number of statements that are not supported by facts. I am writing this letter to set the record straight and provide the facts on our experience with the four-day student week these past three years.

**Some have said that the four-day student week was an experiment based solely on the need to address an emergency financial problem.*

In fact, financial pressures caused us to examine the four-day student week as an educational option in the spring of 1994. In our examination, we did research on all of the school districts in Oregon and several in Colorado, who had multiple years of experience with this instructional calendar. In virtually every case, we found concrete evidence of educational success, as well as financial savings for districts using the four day student week. Districts with up to 10 years of experience with this schedule confirmed improving achievement test scores and continuing parental support for the four-day week.

**Some have said that we should have conducted a survey of staff and students, as well as parents, to determine support for continuing the four-day week.*

In fact, the board's decision not to survey staff and students this year was based on two years of data showing overwhelming support from these groups for continuing the four-day week.

Percentage Favoring Continuing 4 Day Week: 1995-Students (grades six-11)-90 percent, Teachers (all grades)-82 percent, Classified Employees-70 percent; 1996-Students (grades six-11)-93 percent, Teachers (all grades)-85 percent, Classified Employees-83 percent.

**Some have claimed that we can't possibly be providing the same amount of instructional time with a four-day week as we did with a five-day week.*

In fact, the total instructional hours scheduled now district-wide is 1,039 more than in 1993-94 (five-day week). If we factor out our increased time for kindergarten, where we went from half-time to full time starting in 1995-96, we find an overall decrease of 571 hours spread over 41 grade sites. That is a decrease of 13.9 hours per year per grade site in scheduled instructional time.

State standards allow schools to close for inservice and parent-teacher conferences and still count that time as instructional time. With the four-day week, we have scheduled inservice and conferences so that we don't have a loss of instructional time. On the five-day week schedule, we would be closing up to five full days for inservice and up to four full days for conferences (our survey of schools around the state confirms this pattern for five day week districts).

Therefore, our actual student-teacher contact time is equal to or exceeds what we were having with a five day week schedule. In addition, we have reduced significantly the loss of instructional time to athletic activities.

**Some have said that our test scores show that the four-day student week is bad for kids.*

To the contrary, the facts show that our test scores are improving. Specifically, our reading and math test scores on the nationally normed Stanford Achievement Test have shown improvement over scores on the same tests the last year we were running a five-day week. And although our scores on some of the Oregon State Tests, in some schools, and in some grades are below the state average, we are showing improvement and find our students scoring as well as other students in similar social economic conditions.

**Some have said that having students go to school only four days per week contributes to a poor work ethic.*

In fact, the number of days or hours a person goes to school or works a job is not a factor in establishing a true work ethic. A good work ethic is an attitude of getting the job done and doing what is expected, no matter how many hours or days it takes. We teach it at home, at school, in church, and in the workplace by example, respect, and support for appropriate behavior, not by adding more hours or days of school or work.

**Some have said that the four-day week is bad for younger children because child development specialists believe that their short attention span prevents them from learning in a longer day.*

The facts don't support that theory. Our three years of experience with the four-day week and the last two years with full day, every day kindergarten confirm what other districts had found in this schedule. Young children can learn in longer days and they are not damaged by the experience.

**Some have said that our claim of saving \$150,000 per year is "questionable".*

In fact, we are saving over \$150,000 per year. In addition, a return to the five-day week would cost us over \$200,000 the first year.

**Some have said that since we are the only district our size or larger in Oregon using the four-day student week, it can't be a good thing.*

The facts support our continuation of the four-day week from an educational as well as financial perspective. Rather than worrying about who else is doing it, we should focus on our own results. They are positive. It is working, and until the state provides adequate funding to add additional days without cutting other programs, we should continue this schedule.

Park District slates meeting

will meet on Wednesday, March 5,
at 7 p.m. at the lone City Hall.
The Willow Creek Park District

Letters to the Editor

Editor's note: Letters to the editor must be signed. The Gazette-Times will not publish unsigned letters. Please include your address and phone number on all letters for use by the G-T office. The G-T reserves the right to edit.

Write in Kilkenny on school board

To the Editor:
At their February meeting, the Morrow County School Board was presented a petition with 387 signatures of people, many of them parents, who want a five-day week for our students.

John Kilkenny, a speaker at the meeting who favors our children going to school five days a week, asked some important questions about composition and distribution of the surveys sent to parents from the school. He asked other relevant and trenchant questions.

Since this meeting John, who has children in our schools, has been asked and has agreed to let his name be used as a write-in on the ballot for Zone 6 as a school board member. He will be opposing Barney Lindsay, a recent teacher at

Heppner High School. Barney Lindsay favors our children going to school four days a week.

This will give an opportunity for those who want a five-day school to vote for John Kilkenny, or those who want a four-day school to vote for Mr. Lindsay.

Another way to show stance is to come to the board meeting in Lexington next Monday, March 3 at 7:30 p.m. At this time the tie vote taken by the board will be broken by Gary Frederickson, Boardman. Mr. Frederickson was absent at the February meeting.

If you can't attend the meeting on the third you may wish to call Mr. Frederickson with your views. His phone number is 481-6225.

(s) Suzanne Jepsen
Heppner

Measure 47 an insult

To the Editor:

Measure 5 was bad enough. Measure 47 is an insult and a slap in the face to thinking people. It essentially says that since the average person is not smart enough to decide their local budgets, the enlightened city folk will save us from ourselves and put a cap and cut on our property taxes. But what if we are willing to spend what it takes to maintain our livability?

The citizens of Heppner have received a mail-in ballot for City Measure 25-26. This measure takes advantage of the opportunity in Measure 47 for local votes to override the limitations of Measure 47.

The Heppner City Council has authorized sending Measure 25-26 to the voters for two reasons:

1. Because 2/3 of Heppner voters rejected Measure 47 last fall;

2. Because implementation of Measure 47 as is would result in a loss of about 20 percent of our present services;

3. Passage of Measure 25-26 will result in exactly the same \$10/\$1,000 non-school tax rate as you paid this year.

I know from the time I spent on the city council that the present budget is as tight as it can be and still give us reasonable services. A 20 percent reduction would take a lot of the luster off our small-town livability.

One last point: it is imperative that everyone vote. We must have at least a 50 percent turnout for the election to be valid. I urge all of you to return your ballot and I ask that you vote "yes" for Measure 25-26.

Sincerely,
(s) Cliff Green
Heppner

Write in Padberg for park district

To the Editor:

On Tuesday, March 11 of this year, we will be holding a special election. One of the purposes of this election will be to choose two at-large positions for four year terms for the Willow Creek Park District. Only one candidate has filed for these positions. The Willow Creek Park District has the responsibility of directing our tax dollars and can do its best job only when it has a fully representative board. We need to fill the other position by adding the representative of our choice to the ballot when voting.

It is important that we write in a candidate for this position who will represent the interests of youth, adults and senior citizens alike. This candidate should be Archie Padberg. Archie has returned to Morrow County to retire from his professional life as a teacher and to give his time and energy back to this community where he lived as a boy.

Please join me in writing in Archie Padberg for one of the four year at-large positions on the Willow Creek Park District board.

(s) Gail Hughes
Heppner

Water pollution program to be aired

Heppner TV will air "We All Live Downstream", an Oregon State University educational video that examines nonpoint source water pollution (pollution found in runoff) on March 10, at 7 p.m. on channel 3.

Nonpoint source pollution is carried by rain, snowmelt and irrigation that moves across the landscape. It flows from a variety of sources including farms, forests, city streets, construction sites, mines and septic systems. According to Morrow County Extension agent Bill Broderick, experts say that America's growing population has made urban and rural runoff the most serious threat to our nation's

drinking water supplies. "We All Live Downstream" was taped primarily in Oregon's Tualatin River basin, but has applications for every watershed in the state, says Ron Miner, OSU Extension Water Quality specialist.

"The video's message is easy to understand and should interest anyone who is concerned about healthy watersheds and clean water supplies," said Miner. "It explores how Oregon residents and government officials are trying to reduce nonpoint source pollution, and offers a variety of tips that can help Oregonians protect their drinking water sources."

Vote "yes" on city measure

To The Editor

The Heppner Chamber of Commerce urges Heppner citizens to vote yes for the city tax levy Ballot Measure 25-26.

City Ballot Measure 25-26 gives Heppner voters the opportunity to decide locally to restore funding lost under Ballot Measure 47. If approved by voters, the current property tax rate of \$10/\$1000 for all "non school" governments would be maintained with a tax

rate no higher next year than the rate paid this year.

It is crucial that 50 percent of registered voters cast ballots and that the measure is approved by a majority of those voting. A yes vote would maintain the current level of law enforcement, fire protection, parks maintenance, debris clean-up and other public works functions.

(s) Claudia Hughes, Exec. Dir.
Heppner Chamber of Commerce

Decisions based on false assumptions

To the Editor:

Following is the list of schools and their enrollments that are currently on the four-day week:

School	Enrollment
Burnt River	84
Daya Creek	273
North Douglas	970
Oakland	822
Vernonia	427
Monument	88
Pine Creek	8
Butte Falls	262
Prineas	223
Palmyra	106
Morrow SD 1	2,022
Periwinkle	303
Cono	277
North Powder	228
Union	527
Fossil	121
Spray	81

County were used to encourage the John Day School District to join this questionably select group, which it has now done for next school year.

Actually only parents were asked to respond to the most recent "survey." Of the 2145 students listed for Morrow County, only 445 questionnaires were returned. There is no breakdown as to how many of these respondents were teachers or school employees.

Morrow County Superintendent Starr reported that 67 percent were in favor of four-day weeks. This totals 298 in favor. Petitions that have been signed (and turned in) against the four-day week numbered 387 signatures.

Our school district has been making decisions on very false assumptions and opposed to educationally sound practices and research.

Sincerely,
(s) Meg Murray
Ione

Morrow County schools make up a third of the enrollments. Grant County Press reported that a recent survey of Morrow County employees, students and parents chose the four-day week by 75 percent.

Statistics such as this "supposed" approval rate in Morrow

Four-day week jeopardizing kids

To the Editor,

Time to put our 20 cents worth in concerning the determination of some of the members of the Morrow County School Board to continue with the four day school week. If memory serves, money would be saved through transportation costs and school lunch programs. The target savings would be \$200,000. I just called the school office and was told that the 1996-97 budget is \$14,045,368. \$200,000 is just a

drop in the bucket--not worth jeopardizing the education of our children.

And that is what is happening, folks. Of course the teachers like a four day week. Of course the children love a four day week. But will these children thank us when they get into the real world? Few can learn in four days as much as can be learned in five days.

(s) Ken and Lucile Peck
Lexington

**VOTE JOHN KILKENNY
for a five-day week
Write-in for Zone 6 School Board**
Paid for by Committee to Elect John Kilkenny

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