DIVIDE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
106 1ST St. NE
Crosby, ND 58730
"Home of the Maroons"

From the Desk of the Superintendent

For Immediate Release

March 2026

Parent/Community Letter: Exploration of a Four-Day School Week

Dear Parents and Community Members,

Divide County School District is committed to providing a high-quality, student-centered education while ensuring our schools remain strong, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of our community. As part of that commitment, the district has begun an exploratory conversation regarding the possibility of a four-day student week**.** At this time, it is important to emphasize that *no* decision has been made. This process is strictly in the information-gathering and research phase**.**

Similar to many rural districts across the region and nation, Divide County faces a number of realities that require thoughtful evaluation. These include staffing challenges, transportation logistics associated with long rural routes, the need to protect instructional time from disruptions, and the importance of maintaining a sustainable work environment for educators and staff. Exploring a four-day model is one-way districts across the country are studying how to address these challenges while maintaining strong academic outcomes for students.

Over the past several weeks, the district, in collaboration with the Teacher Advisory Cabinet to the Superintendent, has gathered initial feedback from staff. This input has highlighted both potential benefits—such as fewer early dismissals, improved flexibility for appointments, and opportunities for professional collaboration or targeted student support—and important concerns, including childcare availability, student supervision, nutrition access, transportation schedules, longer school days, and the potential impact on classified staff wages and benefits. These perspectives are essential as we carefully consider all implications of a potential change.

It is also important to clarify that any four-day model would still be required to meet state instructional time requirements**.** In districts that operate on a four-day schedule, instructional minutes are typically redistributed across longer school days rather than reduced overall. However, the district recognizes that the effectiveness of any schedule depends not only on minutes but also on how instructional time is structured and used. Protecting strong curriculum implementation and maintaining academic expectations would remain a non-negotiable priority.

Based on our initial data collection and staff feedback, it appears that continuing to gather additional information and stakeholder perspectives would be beneficial as we explore this topic

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further. As a result, the district will be expanding opportunities for parents and community members to share their feedback and perspectives as part of the next phase of this conversation.

In the coming months, families and community stakeholders will be invited to participate through community surveys, informational meetings, and additional opportunities for input. Transparency and open communication will remain central to this process. In addition, the Student Advisory Cabinet to the Superintendent will develop and administer a similar survey designed specifically to gather student voice and feedback**,** ensuring that the perspectives of those most directly impacted by the school schedule are included in the discussion.

Before any recommendation could ever be presented to the School Board, the district would provide the community with a clear and comprehensive model outlining what a potential four-day schedule could look like. This would include a sample calendar, proposed daily schedules, comparisons of instructional minutes, and analysis of potential impacts on students, families, staff, transportation, and student services**.**

This exploration is intentionally being approached slowly, carefully, and with thoughtful analysis. Even if the district determines that continued exploration is warranted, any possible implementation would not occur until the ***2027–2028*** school year**,** allowing ample time for planning, community engagement, and collaboration with stakeholders.

We appreciate the thoughtful and passionate feedback from staff, families, and community members. This exploration will remain deliberate, transparent, and student-centered. Our responsibility is to study the facts, learn from other districts, identify risks and safeguards, and ensure that any future recommendation—if one is ever made—reflects what is best for Divide County students and our community.

The TAC team is developing the survey and it ***will be available on March 24, 2026*** through all our district communication platforms as well as QR codes at Parent/Teacher Conferences. In the meantime, the district has provided a frequently asked question (FAQ) document for your review on our website.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anthony Vandal

Dr. Anthony Vandal**;** Superintendent

Divide County School District #1