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May 9, 2025

Dr. Beth Barfield, Superintendent
Glades County School District
400 10th Street
Moore Haven, Florida 33471

Dear Superintendent Barfield:

It has come to my attention that Glades County School District is considering implementing a four-day school week.

I have many questions and concerns regarding this consideration and the impact that it would have on the students of Glades County. In 2020, Florida led the nation in ensuring that students and families were able to send their children to school five days a week because the data show that this is best for our students and their academic outcomes. That decision has played a large role in Florida's educational success, leading to Florida's ranking as the #1 state in the nation for Education by U.S. News & World Report.

It is my understanding that this proposal was initially brought forward by teachers. While we appreciate the input of Florida's educators, as leaders we must put the needs of our students and families first, with no exceptions. Our schools exist for our primary customers, the students and families. Not only am I concerned with the potentially detrimental impacts to student achievement as a result of a four-day school week, but I also have great concerns about how students will receive the services and support that they rely on at school such as meals and the structure of attending class. As educators, we are all acutely aware of the struggles that many of our students face outside of the classroom, and how those struggles greatly impact their academic trajectory.

In a recent article, you stated, "We have approximately 60% or more of our parents were in agreeance for the four-day work week." This statement leaves me extremely concerned for the nearly 40% who are wondering how this will impact their children and families. This is even more concerning for our families who rely on school as a safe place for their children while they are at work five days a week.

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Research cited in an Education Next article authored by Matthew A. Kraft and Sarah Novicoff states, "However, in looking at four-day weeks, research shows that they rarely improve academic outcomes and often lead to decreases in performance."¹

A 2024 post by Jeanette Luna of The Fordham Institute concludes, "In short, the findings provide even more reasons to be skeptical of the four-day school week. Combined with tons of research showing that these shorter schedules negatively impact student achievement, it's hard for anyone to make a case for the policy. In a time of unprecedented learning loss and widespread chronic absenteeism, it's indefensible."²

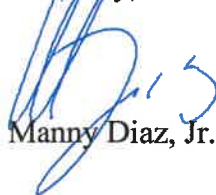
I strongly encourage you, as the Superintendent and the person responsible for the success of the students of Glades County, to heed the research that heavily disputes the decision to switch to a four-day school week. Strong leadership matters for our students; I am calling on you to be a strong leader on this issue, because our children depend on it.

If you persist in this effort to implement a four-day school week, I will convene an emergency meeting of the State Board of Education in order for you to explain, in detail, how you plan to implement your experiment on students and just how you will ensure and guarantee the students and parents of your district, and the citizens of this state, that you are acting in the best interests of children and their families.

As Commissioner of Education, I am requesting that you reconsider this proposal that would no doubt negatively impact student achievement levels in Glades County.

I expect a written response from you within five business days of the date of this letter. Govern yourself accordingly.

Sincerely,



Manny Diaz, Jr.

¹ Education Next, Winter 2025, "Time for School," by Matthew A. Kraft, Associate Professor, Brown University, and Sarah Novicoff, Doctoral Candidate, Stanford University. <https://www.educationnext.org/time-for-school-assessing-inequality-access-instructional-time-united-states/>

² October 2024, "How are four-day school weeks impacting student attendance and teacher retention?" by Jeanette Luna, Research and Operations Associate, The Fordham Institute. <https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/how-are-four-day-school-weeks-impacting-student-attendance-and-teacher>