

The Effects of the Four-Day School Week on Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Andrew M. Camp, J. Cameron Anglum, ***Cory Koedel***, Se Woong Lee, Tuan D. Nguyen

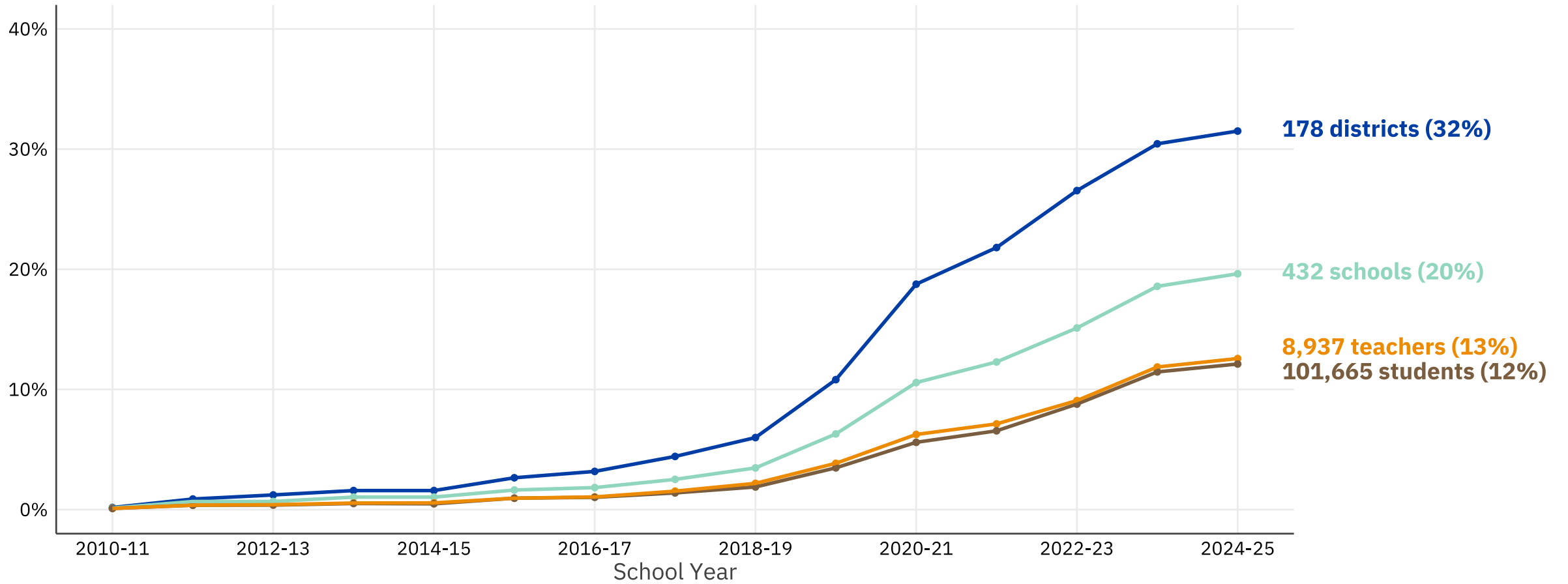
Motivation

- The four-day school week (4DSW) is increasingly popular.
- There are several reasons districts typically give for adopting the 4DSW; by far the most common is to improve teacher recruitment and retention (post-COVID).
- Does the 4DSW improve teacher recruitment and retention?

Preview of findings

- We study the 4DSW in Missouri.
- Despite a strong belief among educators that the 4DSW improves teacher recruitment and retention, we find no evidence that this is the case.
 - This does not mean teachers do not like the 4DSW.
 - It does mean that the 4DSW does not meaningfully affect their career decisions, on average.
- Our findings are aligned with similar evidence in other states including Arkansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Oregon.
 - An exception is in Texas, where there is evidence of positive workforce effects of the 4DSW.

The 4DSW in Missouri



The 4DSW in Missouri

- State policymakers are actively trying to dissuade 4DSW adoption.
 - Modest funding increases for MO districts on a 5DSW.
 - Voter-approval required to adopt/maintain a 4DSW for districts in larger communities.

What do Missouri educators think?

- Why do districts adopt a 4DSW?
 - Semi-structured interviews with 36 Missouri educators in 22 4DSW districts: Superintendents, principals, and teachers.
 - The interview sample included early (2015-16) and more recent (2021-22) adopters of the 4DSW.
- The bottom line: Perceived teacher recruitment and retention benefits are the main reason districts adopt the 4DSW.

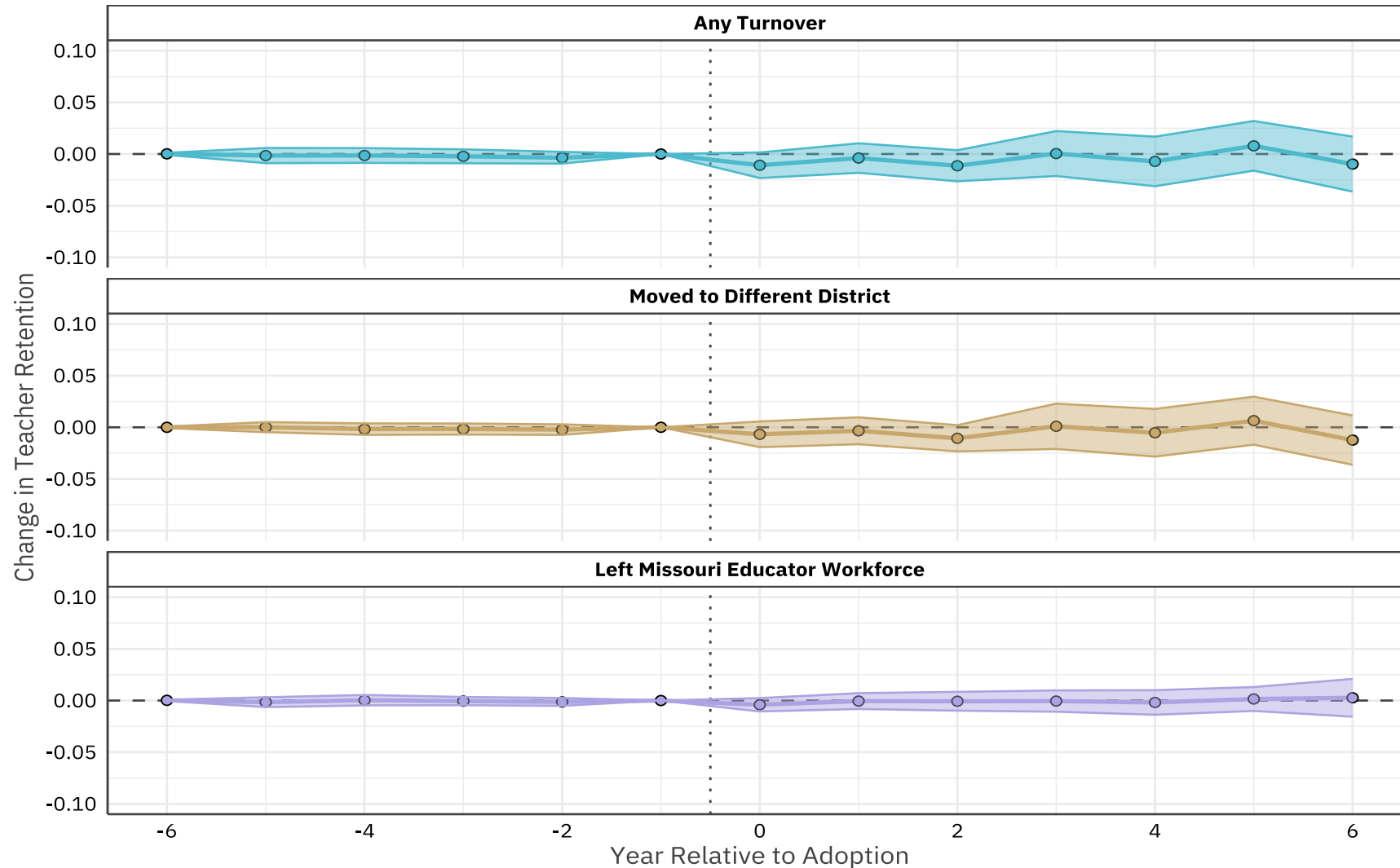
What do Missouri educators think?

- “We can’t compete with salary, so we had to put things in place like the four-day to encourage them to stay.”
- “We’re surrounded [by four-day districts] and if you're a teacher, you know, why would you pick us, right?...I know that we have lost some teachers to the four-day school weeks.”
- “It becomes an expectation, or at least a norm, when you’re trying to recruit teachers and you are competing for the same pool of people....”

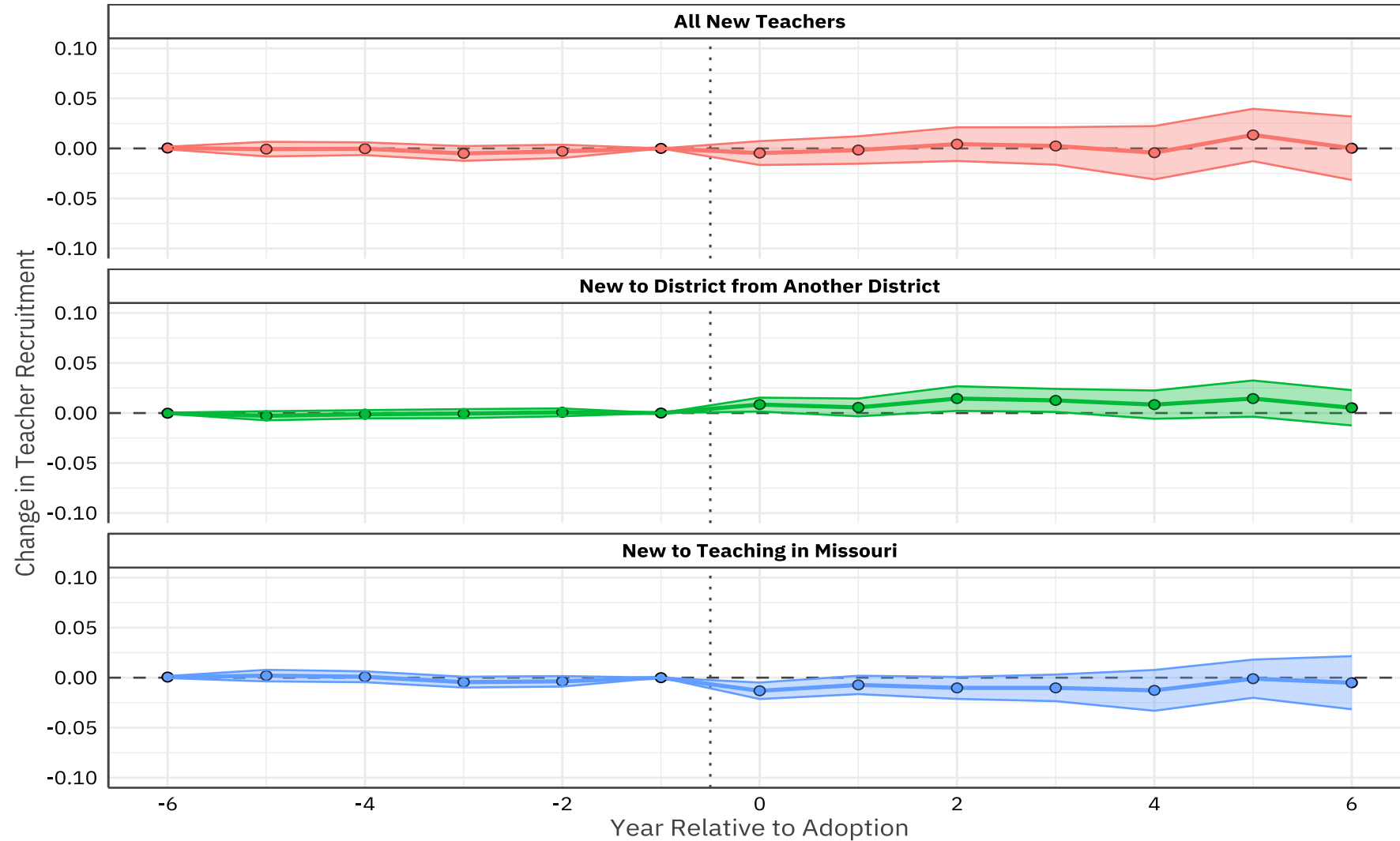
What do the data say?

- We study the 4DSW empirically using Missouri data from 2008-09 through 2023-24.
 - 1.1 million teacher-by-year observations.
- We use difference-in-differences models to estimate the effect of the 4DSW on teacher retention, then recruitment.
 - We ask whether districts that adopt a 4DSW shift their retention and recruitment trajectories when they make the switch.

The effect of the 4DSW on teacher retention



The effect of the 4DSW on teacher recruitment



Summary

- There is no evidence that the 4DSW improves teacher retention in Missouri.
- The 4DSW leads to a small substitution in recruitment away from teachers who are new to the profession and toward teachers with prior Missouri experience. This substitution effect is on the order of 1 teacher per 100.

Our results are robust

- They are upheld when we restrict our analysis to teachers in hard-to-staff areas, like special education and STEM.
- They are upheld when we adjust the econometric model, such as by allowing for spillover and saturation effects.
- They are upheld when we adjust the period of analysis. For example, if we:
 - Examine early and late adopters separately.
 - Restrict the analysis to pre-COVID years.

Why don't the survey results match the data?

- Teachers might like the 4DSW, but not enough to affect recruitment and retention.
- District leaders don't have enough information to know if the 4DSW is working or not.
- **Confirmation bias among adopters.**

Putting it all together

- Combining our findings from Missouri with the larger literature covered by Emily, we identify the following key takeaways from research on the 4DSW:
 - It saves a small amount of money (about 1-2 percent of district spending).
 - It does not meaningfully improve teacher recruitment or retention.
 - It lowers student achievement.
 - Researchers argue about whether the effects on achievement are large or small.
 - The negative achievement effects are smaller when total instructional time remains high.
 - It is popular.
- Caveat: Like with any rich research literature, the results from every study do not match these themes. But this is our read of what the preponderance of the evidence tells us.