

MEMORANDUM

**To: Northborough School Committee
Southborough School Committee
Northborough-Southborough Regional School Committee**

From: Gregory L. Martineau, Superintendent of Schools

Date: December 4, 2024

RE: 2025-2026 School Calendar

Over the course of eight meetings, the Working Group has worked to answer the question “What NSboro 2025-2026 School Calendar best represents the District’s core values, mission, and vision?” The information included in this memo is a culmination of eight meetings.

As a result of its efforts, the Working Group developed four calendar options and for each option, discussed and noted the advantages and disadvantages of each calendar. Again, the goal of this memo is to provide each school committee member with an overview of the work in preparation for the December 4, 2024, Combined Open Meeting.

| <u>Calendar 1 (2026-2027) (2027-2028)</u> | |
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| Advantages | Disadvantages |
| By giving full days off for various religious observances, the calendar shows respect for the diverse religious practices within the community. | Frequent no-school days may interrupt the continuity of learning and can be challenging for families needing consistent school schedules. |
| Ensures students and staff observing these holidays can fully participate in religious events without missing schoolwork or taking personal time. | With additional days off, learning can be challenging when you get into the depths of June. |
| The calendar has defined days off, providing clarity for families planning around religious holidays. | No school days are clustered, especially heavily in the fall, which creates additional challenges early in the year. |
| More religions are acknowledged. | Who are we missing? |
| Many of our neighboring towns are already observing multiple religious holidays. | (Reply to- Who are we missing?) Orthodox Christian holidays may be different than traditional “Christian” holidays. Orthodox |

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| <p>Provides time off for high school students who report high levels of stress at the beginning of the year (the Wellness aspect).</p> | <p>Christmas is celebrated each year on January 7th.</p> <p>How do we handle new requests for holidays we are not acknowledging? What are the criteria for adding another day off?</p> |
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| <p>2025-2026 Number of five-day weeks: 25 Number of four-day weeks: 11 Number of four-day weeks (Mon. or Fri. Off): 8 Number of four-day weeks (Mid-week Day off): 3 Number of weeks <4 Days: 3 Number of half-days: 3</p> <p>2026-2027 Number of five-day weeks: 27 Number of four-day weeks: 9 Number of four-day weeks (Mon. or Fri. Off): 7 Number of four-day weeks (Mid-week Day off): 2 Number of weeks <4 Days: 4 Number of half-days: 3</p> <p>2027-2028 Number of five-day weeks: 26 Number of four-day weeks: 10 Number of four-day weeks (Mon. or Fri. Off): 7 Number of four-day weeks (Mid-week Day off): 3 Number of weeks <4 Days: 4 Number of half-days: 3</p> |
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| <p>Calendar 2 (2026-2027) (2027-2028)</p> | |
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| <p>Advantages</p> | <p>Disadvantages</p> |
| <p>Offers partial accommodation by recognizing religious observances while maintaining some instructional time.</p> <p>If no tests or homework are given on the half-days, it is easier to miss for those who observe the holiday.</p> <p>Half-days minimize the impact on the overall school schedule compared to full no-school days, allowing for better continuity in learning.</p> <p>Students and staff who do not observe the</p> | <p>Half-days can be challenging for parents needing to adjust childcare or transportation schedules.</p> <p>Those observing religious holidays may still feel rushed, as half a day may not be sufficient for full participation in their practices.</p> <p>Who are we missing?</p> <p>Half-days might make scheduling and consistency more complex for the school administration and families. - would need to</p> |

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| <p>holidays can still attend part of the school day, providing some flexibility for families.</p> <p>Half-days provide increased professional development time for educators, which is always needed.</p> | <p>be strategic about scheduling time on learning</p> <p>The calendar is a reduction of student time on learning over the course of an academic year.</p> <p>Half-days may create learning and homework challenges to keep up with missed assignments.</p> <p>Certain religious observances are based on the Gregorian Calendar and therefore the days are not evenly distributed across the school calendar.</p> <p>Calling the half-days Wellness Days may cause confusion. Calling the half-days Religious Observance Days may make some feel uncomfortable or not included.</p> <p>Implications for families and for those observing</p> |
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| <p>2025-2026 Number of five-day weeks: 29 Number of four-day weeks: 6 Number of four-day weeks (Mon. or Fri. Off): 4 Number of four-day weeks (Mid-week Day off): 1 Number of weeks <4 Days: 3 Number of half-days: 8</p> <p>2026-2027 Number of five-day weeks: 29 Number of four-day weeks: 7 Number of four-day weeks (Mon. or Fri. Off): 6 Number of four-day weeks (Mid-week Day off): 1 Number of weeks <4 Days: 4 Number of half-days: 6</p> <p>2027-2028 Number of five-day weeks: 29 Number of four-day weeks: 7 Number of four-day weeks (Mon. or Fri. Off): 6 Number of four-day weeks (Mid-week Day off): 1 Number of weeks <4 Days: 3 Number of half-days: 6</p> |
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[Calendar 3 \(2026-2027\) \(2027-2028\)](#)

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|--|---|
| <p>This hybrid approach attempts to balance full-days off for significant holidays and half-days for others, aiming to accommodate a wide range of observances.</p> <p>By reducing the number of full no-school days, the calendar aims to minimize disruptions while still acknowledging religious diversity.</p> <p>This model respects many religious events with full days off, showing sensitivity to cultural practices.</p> <p>This approach represents the practice of equity, where the nature of religious obligations and observances of specific days drive whether a full or half day is granted rather than a sense of obligation to do the same thing for everyone, irrespective of need.</p> | <p>The combination of full- and half-days may create confusion for families and staff, complicating planning and consistency.</p> <p>Half-days can be challenging for parents needing to adjust childcare or transportation schedules.</p> <p>Deciding which holidays receive full days versus half days might be perceived as favoring certain religious groups over others, potentially leading to concerns about fairness.</p> <p>The PR and communication of this approach is more complex but it can be done (as in other school districts that have distinguished between holy days that are just no homework nights and those that are days off).</p> <p>Those observing religious holidays may still feel rushed, as half a day may not be sufficient for full participation in their practices. Or half day may be the wrong part of the day so it is not really responding to the obligation for everyone. Eg. Eid prayers are in the morning so half day does not help.</p> <p>The half days provide possible PD but not be when we need it as it is based on observances.</p> |
| <p>2025-2026 Number of five-day weeks: 28 Number of four-day weeks: 8 Number of four-day weeks (Mon. or Fri. Off): 5 Number of four-day weeks (Mid-week Day off): 3 Number of weeks <4 Days: 4 Number of half-days: 6</p> <p>2026-2027 Number of five-day weeks: 28 Number of four-day weeks: 8 Number of four-day weeks (Mon. or Fri. Off): 7 Number of four-day weeks (Mid-week Day off): 1 Number of weeks <4 Days: 3 Number of half-days: 5</p> <p>2027-2028</p> | |

Number of five-day weeks: 30
 Number of four-day weeks: 5
 Number of four-day weeks (Mon. or Fri. Off): 4
 Number of four-day weeks (Mid-week Day off): 1
 Number of weeks <4 Days: 4
 Number of half-days: 6

Calendar 4 (2026-2027) (2027-2028)

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|
| <p>Without interruptions for religious holidays, the calendar offers a predictable schedule, making it easier for families and staff to plan their time.</p> <p>This secular approach ensures no religious group is favored, with the exception of the Christian community whose holiest days and seasons are baked into the federal holiday calendar, promoting equality across the school community.</p> <p>The absence of additional no-school days helps maximize the number of instructional days, potentially enhancing learning opportunities.</p> <p>This calendar offers the ability to gain traction at all levels, from elementary to high school.</p> <p>Routines and rigor can be predictable.</p> <p>Several surrounding towns adhere to this approach.</p> | <p>Families and staff who wish to observe religious holidays must take personal time off, which could lead to increased absenteeism. The lack of recognition for any religious observances might be seen as disregarding the diverse religious practices within the community, raising concerns about inclusivity.</p> <p>Despite aiming for continuity, unplanned absences on religious holidays could disrupt classroom dynamics, especially if many students or staff are absent simultaneously.</p> <p>Students may feel “penalized” for taking a religious holiday, and the workload will still be expected to be complete. While learning may be enhanced for some, it becomes more stressful for others who have to catch up.</p> <p>Federal holidays are based on a Christian normative calendar and by living by this we are not doing our part to reduce the impact of the dominant culture.</p> <p>Does not actively promote support of a diverse set of faiths and cultures.</p> <p>This is a loss for members of the Jewish faith and may be perceived as the result of others coming forward.</p> |

2025-2026
 Number of five-day weeks: 29
 Number of four-day weeks: 7
 Number of four-day weeks (Mon. or Fri. Off): 6
 Number of four-day weeks (Mid-week Day off): 1
 Number of weeks <4 Days: 3
 Number of half-days: 3

2026-2027

Number of five-day weeks: 29
 Number of four-day weeks: 6
 Number of four-day weeks (Mon. or Fri. Off): 5
 Number of four-day weeks (Mid-week Day off): 1
 Number of weeks <4 Days: 4
 Number of half-days: 3

2027-2028

Number of five-day weeks: 29
 Number of four-day weeks: 7
 Number of four-day weeks (Mon. or Fri. Off): 6
 Number of four-day weeks (Mid-week Day off): 1
 Number of weeks <4 Days: 3
 Number of half-days: 3

School Data Comparison with Lunar New, Diwali, Eid al-Fitr, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur

| Topic | 2022 | | | Enrollment (2023-24 school year) | | | | Grade 10 MCAS (2023) | | | Grades 3-8 MCAS (2023) | | | |
|------------------|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------|-----------|-------|----------------------|------------|-------------|------------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| Org Name | Region | \$/In-district per pupil | Relative District Wealth | Total Enrollment (2023-24) | EL % | Low Inc % | SWD % | ELA % M/E | Math % M/E | ELA Avg SGP | ELA % M/E | Math % M/E | ELA Avg SGP | Math Avg SGP |
| Acton-Boxborough | Gr Boston | 18,058 | 83.1% | 5,099 | 7.7 | 11.5 | 16.1 | 86.0 | 86.0 | 59.2 | 67.0 | 69.0 | 53.7 | 58.3 |
| Ashland | Gr Boston | 15,092 | 78.2% | 2,903 | 6.9 | 21.8 | 20.3 | 76.0 | 76.0 | 56.9 | 55.0 | 58.0 | 55.2 | 60.3 |
| Dover-Sherborn | Gr Boston | 22,842 | 209.8% | 1,105 | 0.9 | 7.1 | 16.9 | 86.0 | 88.0 | 53.2 | 72.0 | 70.0 | 56.4 | 45.6 |
| Hopkinton | Gr Boston | 15,652 | 84.1% | 4,187 | 5.1 | 7.0 | 14.2 | 88.0 | 87.0 | 58.1 | 75.0 | 78.0 | 52.2 | 59.0 |
| Northborough | Central | 19,881 | 95.7% | 1,634 | 6.1 | 19.6 | 21.7 | | | | 55.0 | 56.0 | 52.1 | 49.9 |
| Southborough | Central | 20,958 | 145.2% | 1,304 | 7.1 | 8.9 | 16.7 | | | | 74.0 | 76.0 | 56.2 | 48.3 |
| State | | 19,554 | | 914,959 | 13.1 | 42.2 | 20.2 | 58.0 | 50.0 | 49.5 | 42.0 | 41.0 | 49.7 | 49.8 |
| Westborough | Central | 18,625 | 75.8% | 3,887 | 12.0 | 15.8 | 15.9 | 87.0 | 86.0 | 54.8 | 65.0 | 66.0 | 56.3 | 56.6 |