

MEMORANDUM

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

From: Gregory L. Martineau, Superintendent of Schools

Date: March 12, 2025

RE: 2025-2026 School Calendar

A key responsibility of the school committee is to approve the upcoming academic year's school calendar. The superintendent prepares and submits a school calendar to the school committee for consideration. The number of days and instructional hours scheduled for the school year are determined in accordance with the Massachusetts Elementary and Secondary Education Code of Regulations 603 27.02. Northborough, Southborough, and Northborough-Southborough Regional School Committees each have a School Calendar Policy, which outlines the process and school closings.

The balance between instructional continuity and providing space for religious observances is crucial in developing the school calendar. Additionally, ensuring that 180 school days are scheduled between the contractually required start date and June 30 is essential.

Over the course of ten months, the Working Group has diligently explored the question: "Which NSboro 2025-2026 School Calendar best reflects the District's core values, mission, and vision?"

As a result of its efforts, the Working Group developed four calendar options for the committees' consideration. For each option, I have documented the Working Group's analysis and the level of support among its members. The voting results indicate that Calendar One has the highest support at 87.5%, followed by Calendar Two at 75%, Calendar Four at 50%, and Calendar Three at 12.5%.

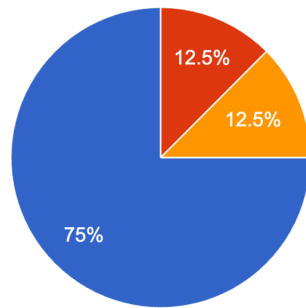
As superintendent, I recommend that the committees approve Calendar One. I commend the Working Group for its thoughtful and thorough approach. While no calendar is perfect, I believe Calendar One best aligns with the District's priorities.

Calendar 1 (2026-2027) (2027-2028) 14/16 Support

Rosh Hashanah (Sat. 09/12), Yom Kippur, Diwali (Sun. 11/08), Lunar New Year (Sat. 2/6), Eid al-Fitr, and Good Friday (No School)

Calendar 1 (2026-2027) (2027-2028)

16 responses



- Calendar One is my first choice
- Calendar One is not my first choice but I can support Calendar One
- I do not support Calendar One

Advantages

By giving full days off for various religious observances, the calendar shows respect for the diverse religious practices within the community.

Ensures students and staff observing these holidays can fully participate in religious events without missing schoolwork or taking personal time.

The calendar has defined days off, providing clarity for families planning around religious holidays.

More religions are acknowledged.

Many of our neighboring towns are already observing multiple religious holidays.

Provides time off for high school students who report high levels of stress at the beginning of the year (the Wellness aspect).

Disadvantages

Frequent no-school days may interrupt the continuity of learning and can be challenging for families needing consistent school schedules.

With additional days off, learning can be challenging when you get into the depths of June.

No school days are clustered, especially heavily in the fall, which creates additional challenges early in the year.

Who are we missing?

How do we handle new requests for holidays we are not acknowledging? What are the criteria for adding another day off?

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

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

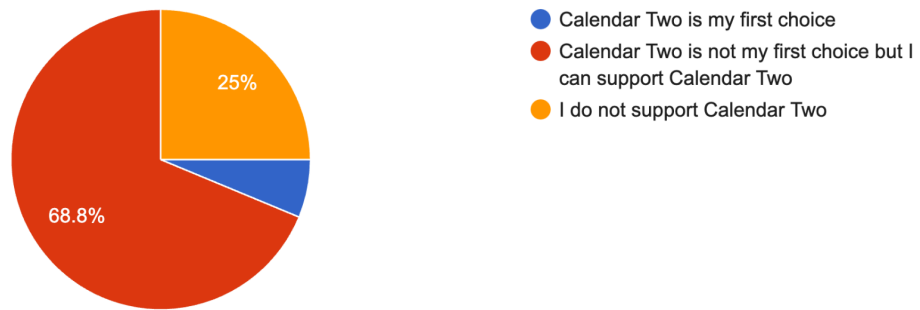
2027-2028

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

Calendar 2 (2026-2027) (2027-2028) 12/16 Support

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Diwali, Lunar New Year, Good Friday, and Eid al-Fitr (Half Days for Students)
 Lunar New Year falls on 02/17/26 during February break.

Calendar 2 (2026-2027) (2027-2028)
 16 responses



Advantages

Offers partial accommodation by recognizing religious observances while maintaining some instructional time.

Disadvantages

Half-days can be challenging for parents needing to adjust childcare or transportation schedules.

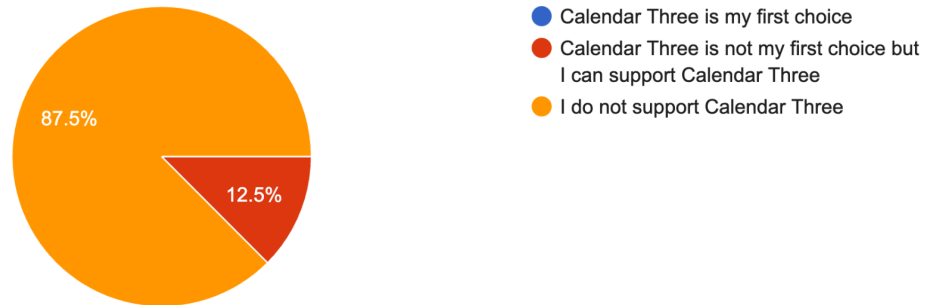
<p>If no tests or homework are given on the half-days, it is easier to miss for those who observe the holiday.</p> <p>Half-days minimize the impact on the overall school schedule compared to full no-school days, allowing for better continuity in learning.</p> <p>Students and staff who do not observe the 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>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 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>
<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</p>	

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

Calendar 3 (2026-2027) (2027-2028) 2/16 Support

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur (No School) - Diwali, Lunar New Year, Good Friday, and Eid al-Fitr (Half Days for Students) Lunar New Year falls 02/17/26 during February break.

Calendar 3 (2026-2027) (2027-2028)
 16 responses



Advantages

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.

By reducing the number of full no-school days, the calendar aims to minimize disruptions while still acknowledging religious diversity.

This model respects many religious events with full days off, showing sensitivity to cultural practices.

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

Disadvantages

The combination of full- and half-days may create confusion for families and staff, complicating planning and consistency.

Half-days can be challenging for parents needing to adjust childcare or transportation schedules.

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.

The PR and communication of this approach are 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).

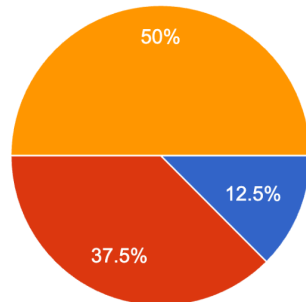
<p>rather than a sense of obligation to do the same thing for everyone, irrespective of need.</p>	<p>Those observing religious holidays may still feel rushed, as half a day may not be sufficient for full participation in their practices. Or half day may be the wrong part of the day, so it is not really responding to the obligation for everyone. E.g., Eid prayers are in the morning, so half a day does not help.</p> <p>The half days provide possible PD but not when we need it, as it is based on observances.</p>
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<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 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</p>
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<p>Calendar 4 (2026-2027) (2027-2028) 8/16 Support</p> <p>No Religious Observances</p>
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Calendar 4 (2026-2027) (2027-2028)

16 responses



- Calendar Four is my first choice
- Calendar Four is not my first choice but I can support Calendar Four
- I do not support Calendar Four

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>The calendar offers a predictable schedule without interruptions for religious holidays, making it easier for families and staff to plan their time.</p> <p>This secular approach ensures no religious group is favored except 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 Jewish faith members 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