

Dear Parent(s) and Guardian(s),

This Wednesday, March 8, 2023, the Northborough, Southborough, and Northborough-Southborough Regional School Committees will **discuss and vote on a 2023-2024 school calendar**. The meeting will take place at the P. Brent Trottier Middle School Library and will begin at 5:30 PM.

The Coalition for Equity formed a 2023-2024 School Calendar Working Group, which consisted of Coalition members, members of the clergy, and parents representing various faith groups dedicated to promoting equitable school calendars for all students. The Working Group met on January 10, 2023, January 26, 2023, and February 2, 2023. Through its work, the Working Group has identified several key findings that are steps toward achieving a more equitable school calendar. The ten recommendations are:

1. Strengthen the Religious Observance Policy - Make an educational resource with links to various religious observances and holidays.
2. Strengthen students, faculty, staff, and families education about the various religious observances and how they are observed.
3. Develop a calendar that supports students' well-being and creates District-wide no homework, tests, or quizzes days. If possible, align these days with various religious observances.
4. Continue education and conversation about the requirements of how a school calendar is created and the parameters that must be met (E.g., the number of required days in an academic year).
5. Set the criterion of faculty, staff, and student attendance for a religious observance as a non-school day (Establishment Clause).
6. Set continuity of learning as a high priority in calendar development. Maximize the number of five-day weeks in a calendar and more strategically place half days for parent-teacher conferences.
7. Work more closely with safety officials to ensure student, faculty, and staff safety when school is in session for local and state elections.
8. Don't hold school on national and presidential elections.
9. Don't consider removing Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Good Friday in the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school calendars.
10. Remove all religious observances from the school calendar in 2025-2026; once the District-wide no homework, tests, or quizzes days are institutionalized, the Religious Observance Policy will be strengthened, and education about the various religious observances and how they are observed will be strengthened.

As a result of the Coalition for Equity's School Calendar Working Group's recommendations, I am providing the school committees with two 2023-2024 School Calendar options. The first calendar, Draft Calendar One, has four Wellness Days built in, which are District-wide days where no homework, tests, or quizzes will be assigned. Furthermore, Draft Calendar One has no school on Yom Kippur and Good Friday. Regarding election days, Draft Calendar One has a Professional Development Day (no school for students) on March 5, 2024, which is the Presidential Primary. Lastly, Draft Calendar One has twenty-nine five-day school weeks and provides an 8% increase over 2022-2023 in five-day school weeks, a significant increase in the continuity of learning days.

Draft Calendar Two includes six Wellness Days, which are District-wide days where no homework, tests, or quizzes will be assigned. The significant difference between the two calendars is that Draft Calendar Two has school on Yom Kippur and Good Friday. Regarding election days, Draft Calendar Two also has a Professional Development Day (no school for students) on March 5, 2024, which is the Presidential Primary. Lastly, Draft Calendar Two has thirty-one school weeks and provides a 15% increase in five-day school weeks, again a significant increase in the continuity of learning days.

As required in the School Calendar Policy I-100, the superintendent must prepare the school calendar for the school committee's vote. I fully support the Coalition for Equity's School Calendar Working Group's ten recommendations and, as a result, support Draft Calendar One.

2023-2024 Draft School Calendar One

2023-2024 Draft School Calendar Two

Respectfully,

Gregory L. Martineau

Superintendent of Schools