



Brookfield Public Schools

"Create Your Tomorrow"



To: Board of Education
From: Dr. John W. Barile, Superintendent
Re: District Calendar/Religious Holidays follow up from the October 18, 2023 Board of Education Meeting
Date: November 15, 2023

Background:

At its regular meeting on October 18, 2023, the Board of Education was in the process of considering the approval of the proposed 2024-2025 district calendar, as recommended by the District Calendar Committee. During public comment, two members of the public spoke regarding recognizing two Muslim holidays (Eid-al-Adha and Eid-al-Fitr) as school holidays, requesting that these holidays be days off of school, therefore asking the Board of Education for its consideration.

Process & Actions:

In response to public comment made by Omar Nassar and Mariam Azeez, the Board of Education requested that the Superintendent look into the above-mentioned request and return with a recommendation to the Board regarding continuation of the traditional Brookfield 2024-2025 district calendar as already recommended, and/or, come back with additional recommendations regarding the recognition of Muslim holidays. The Superintendent engaged in data analysis and collaboration in five areas of review.

1. Attendance Review:

On October 23rd the Superintendent reviewed employee and student attendance data from last school year (2022-2023) to quantify the number of employees and students who took time off for religious observances above and beyond those included in the traditional district calendar.

Employees

- 2 employees took personal time to observe 1 religious holiday each

Students (these are excused absences for religious observance)

- CES - 5 students, 11 days off for observance in total
- HHES- 12 students, 17 days off for observance in total
- WMS - 15 students, 23 days off for observance in total
- BHS - 19 students - 20 days off for observance in total

2. Survey:

The Superintendent, in collaboration with CAPSS (Connecticut Association of School Superintendents), sent a survey on November 1st to all Superintendents in CT, asking for a response to the following questions:

- *"Does your district recognize any Muslim holidays on the calendar?"*
- *"Does your district close school for any of the Muslim holidays?"*
- *and*
- *"If yes, which holidays?"*

Survey Result: 86 of the 169 districts responded. 18 districts recognize Muslim holidays on their calendar. 8 of these 18 responding districts recognize Muslim holidays by closing schools. The Brookfield Schools have long permitted students excused absences from school for their religious holidays.

The sole reason for the existence of our profession is the student

3. **Legal Counsel Consultation:**

The Superintendent has also spoken to the Board of Education's legal counsel regarding implications of the above-mentioned requested additional school days off, as it relates to collective bargaining with the six Brookfield unions (nurses, teachers, custodians, secretaries, paraeducators and administrators). Changing the work year will necessitate negotiations. It is important to note that school is not permitted to be in session after June 30th. As more school closings are potentially scheduled, regardless of the reason, it shortens the window of meeting the legislative mandate of the completion of 180 school days in an academic year, and also to meet the days of employee contractual obligations.

4. **Calendar Committee Consultation:**

The Superintendent then convened the District Calendar Committee on November 6th to discuss the request to determine what additional recommendation, if any, would be made to the original 2024-2025 calendar proposal already put forth to the Board of Education. At this time, the district Calendar Committee **does not recommend taking any additional days off from school in recognition of religious holidays.** However, the committee does recommend two significant changes to the original calendar proposal in order to recognize all religious holidays (see below).

5. **District Leadership Team Consultation:**

At the District Leadership Team (principals and central office administration) meeting on November 14th, administrators discussed this same subject along with the recommendation of the District Calendar Committee. The District Leadership Team agrees with the recommendation from the District Calendar Committee.

Recommendations:

The Brookfield Public Schools must ensure that no student is singled out or placed at a disadvantage when observing their religious holidays.

To that end, we will assure students and families that:

- Homework will not be assigned on the evenings of significant religious holidays as some religious observance begin at sundown
- No tests will be scheduled on such religious holidays
- Appropriate adjustments will be made regarding deadlines
- Teachers will make adequate provision for students to make up any class assignments missed due to excused absence for religious holiday observance
- We will try our best not to schedule special activities during these periods

1. The District Calendar Committee recommends including a list of significant religious observances of the major faiths represented in the United States as an addendum to the 2024-2025 district calendar.
2. The District Calendar Committee recommends that beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, that no tests be scheduled on the day after or the day of religious holidays.

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