

SY 25/26 & SY 26/27 Academic Calendars: Executive Summary and Decision Rationale

Executive Summary

[Policy 803 - School Calendar](#) and the related [Administrative Procedures](#) guide how to adopt an annual school calendar that reflects the District's commitment to our core beliefs and goals, including our commitment to equity. Two committees lead the biannual development of the academic calendar: (1) The Academic Calendar Oversight Committee, which provides oversight to the development of the calendar in preparation for it to be presented to the Superintendent and Board of Education; and (2) The Academic Calendar Stakeholder Engagement Committee, which engages stakeholders through feedback sessions and develops a district-wide academic calendar survey in partnership with the Office of Evaluation, Research and Accountability (ERA).

Outlined below is a summary of decisions based on the research and feedback, and the corresponding rationale. Our primary goal is to create calendars that support student learning and meet the needs of students, families and staff, as well as adhere to calendar requirements mandated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and Collective Bargaining Units.

Stakeholder Engagement and Research Completed to Date

- 20 feedback sessions from multiple stakeholder groups – 271 participants
 - Stakeholder Groups: Families/Community, Teachers, Principals, Office of Teaching and Learning Staff and Academic Coaches, Partner Organizations, Early Childhood Providers, Religious Leaders, Government Officials
- District Wide Academic Calendar Survey (translated in 12 languages) – 16,485 responses
- Collective Bargaining Agreements Review
- Data Analysis of Student and Staff Attendance of Staff during Holidays, Spring and Winter Recesses, and early in the School Year

Academic Calendar Contract and Policy Requirements

The academic calendar must include the following:

- Five national holidays: Independence Day, Christmas, Thanksgiving, New Year's Day, Memorial Day ([24 P.S. § 1502](#))
 - 10 month employees under the PFT contract must have at least 12 paid holidays including the five holidays required by the State (*Article XXV, Section A, Collective Bargaining Agreement*)
- 181 student days and 188 teacher work days within July 1st and June 30th (*Article XVII, Section A, Collective Bargaining Agreement*)
- 180 student days OR 900 instructional hours for elementary and middle school students; 990 instructional hours for high school students ([24 P.S. §15-1504](#))
- Five (5) interview half days for all Kindergarten teachers during the first five (5) days of the student school year. (*Article XVIII, Section D, Collective Bargaining Agreement*)
- Minimum of 28 professional development hours (*Article X, Section B, Collective Bargaining Agreement*)
- Two (2) evening meetings per year and, provided there is joint agreement by the Principal, the Building Representative, and the President of the Home & School Association (if there is one), a third evening meeting per year. (*Article XII, Section B, Collective Bargaining Agreement*)
- Payroll Contract Year runs from August 16th-June 15th of a given school year. The payroll contract year drives how the payroll system pays 10-month employees who are paid over 12 months. All school days must fall within this period of time.

2025/26 and 2026/27 Academic Calendar Decisions and Rationale

Listed below is a summary of decisions made based on the data and research, and rationale for what is included in the 2025/26 and 2026/27 academic calendars.

First Day of School for Students	
Decision	Rationale
Staff Return by or after August 16th	The SDP payroll contract year is August 16th to June 15th for any given year. Therefore, the first day that staff return to school buildings cannot be before August 16th. Staff attend professional development days before students return to school buildings.
Students Return before Labor Day	<p>There must be 181 school days for students and 188 work days for school staff within the SDP payroll contract year that runs from August 16th to June 15th. Given these constraints, it is not always possible to have an after Labor Day start while maintaining all of our holidays historically observed as days off as well as Winter and Spring Recesses within the payroll contract year.</p> <p>Many stakeholders expressed concern over an earlier start to the school year (i.e., August versus September) given heat and risk of early dismissals. However, all stakeholder groups expressed their preference to maintain days off and full-length breaks for students and staff throughout the year, even if it required a before Labor Day start.</p>
Last Day of School for Students	
Decision	Rationale
School Ends by or before June 15th	The SDP payroll contract year is August 16th to June 15th for any given year. Therefore, the last day for students or staff cannot be after June 15th.
Religious/Cultural Celebrations	
Decision	Rationale
Holidays/Cultural celebrations that fall on weekends will not be observed as days off, except when mandated by the State of Pennsylvania	There must be 181 school days for students that fall within our payroll contract year that runs from August 16th-June 15th. In order to meet these requirements, we will only be able to observe religious holidays that fall on weekdays.
Indigenous Peoples Day will be celebrated as a day off for students and staff (schools and Administrative Offices)	<p>In School Years 2023-24 and 2024-25, Indigenous Peoples' Day was observed as an in-school day of learning about the history of our Country, State and City and Indigenous Peoples' contributions to society.</p> <p>In development of the School Year 2025-26 and 2026-27 calendars, stakeholders expressed a desire for Indigenous Peoples' Day to be re-added to the academic calendar as an observed day off for students and staff to properly acknowledge and respect the holiday and Indigenous Peoples across our District.</p>

Veterans Day will be celebrated as a day off for students and staff (schools and Administrative Offices)	<p>In School Year 2024-25, Veterans Day was observed as an in-school day of learning to honor and learn about our veterans.</p> <p>In development of the School Year 2025-26 and 2026-27 calendars, stakeholders expressed a desire for Veterans Day to be re-added to the academic calendar as an observed day off for students and staff to properly acknowledge and respect the holiday and veterans across our District.</p>
Days for Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha	The Islamic calendar is lunar; therefore, the date of Eid is unknown until the moon sighting. It is estimated every year and is subject to change. SDP will observe a date recommended by religious leaders for these holidays.
Professional Development	
Decision	Rationale
Four days for teacher/staff professional development before the first day of school (in addition to one Reorganization day)	Feedback from school leaders and teachers indicated that an additional day of school-led professional development before students return is critical to preparation for the school year and onboarding of new staff, which in turn will positively impact student learning and engagement early in the year. Therefore, we have decided to give school staff four full days for professional development before the first day of school (one more day than in School Years 2023-24 and 2024-25). One day for Reorganization will continue to be provided during the same week.
Two full days for teacher/staff professional development between first and last days of school	Given that 10-month staff members only work a total of 188 days (seven full days without students), providing school staff with five total days of professional development/Reorganization before the first day of school means that staff will have two full days without students between the first and last days of school for professional learning. These full days of professional learning will occur in October and January or February.
More regular placement of professional development days in each month	<p>Feedback from families indicated that full and half days off for students throughout the year can be a hardship for parents/guardians and create challenges for childcare, particularly when they are unpredictably placed within each month. To create more consistency and predictability in scheduling for families, students and staff, full and half days off for professional development are now placed on either the second or third Friday of each month.</p> <p>Additionally, professional development days are now “bundled” with days off for holidays where possible, which stakeholders shared would better support childcare and planning needs.</p>
Report Card Conferences	
Decision	Rationale
All Report Card Conferences will be half days (two half days at the end of each term)	Reporting of student progress to parents/guardians is critical to ensuring students are provided with every opportunity to succeed. In School Year 2024-25, one full day was used for Report Card Conferences at the end of Term 1, and two half-days were used at the ends of Terms 2 and 3. This decision was made to address previous feedback from families, who expressed a need for greater diversity in timing and ways to access conferences.

	<p>However, stakeholder feedback was mixed on the full day for Report Card Conferences. Many families stated that having only one day for Report Card Conferences created a challenge for those who have children in multiple schools and those who appreciate the more flexible option of two days to attend Conferences at the end of each Term. Additionally, feedback from school leaders and staff indicated that there was not a noticeable difference in parent attendance at Report Card Conferences between the full day and half days offered.</p> <p>Therefore, we have decided to return to a structure where all Terms end with two half days of Report Card Conferences. This will also allow us to use the full day formerly used for Conferences as an additional full day for staff professional development given that 10-month staff members only work a total of 188 days (seven full days without students). Professional Development will have a greater impact on teacher practice, which in turn will have a greater impact on student achievement.</p>
Winter Recess	
Decision	Rationale
8 days of Winter Recess will be prioritized for students	<p>Stakeholders consistently expressed the need for full Winter and Spring Recesses, which provide much needed breaks and reduce burnout for our students and staff. However, feedback from parents/guardians also indicated that a two week-long Winter Recess in previous school years often created childcare burdens for working families.</p> <p>In response to this feedback and given where the mandated days off for Christmas and New Year's Day fall during the week in School Years 2025-26 and 2026-27, we have decided to prioritize 8 days of Winter Recess for students.</p> <p><i>Please note:</i> In School Year 2025-26, Friday, January 2nd will be a virtual full day of professional development for school staff; school will be closed for students.</p>
Miscellaneous	
Decision	Rationale
Maintain half day for all students and staff the day before Thanksgiving	<p>Staff and community members consistently spoke to the desire for a half day before Thanksgiving to allow time to prepare and travel. Student attendance on this day has historically been low. In recognition of this, we have decided to have a half day for all students and staff the day before Thanksgiving.</p>