



*Welcome to a Listening Session on the School Calendar,
School Work, and Religious Observances*



SCHOOL COMMITTEE - POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE

Thank you for coming! We will begin at 7:05 p.m.
As we wait for people to enter the zoom, please consider these prompts:

- What was your favorite Holiday as a child and why it was so?
- What was/is your experience of holidays attending school as a student? What do you/did you know of others' experiences?
- What is your current experience of holidays and NPS?



AGENDA FOR THE EVENING

7:05 - Introductions and Goal of the Night

7:10 - Overview & Summary of our work thus far

7:30 - Break Out Rooms & Small Group Discussion

7:50 - Large Group Reflection & Continued Discussion

8:20 - Next Steps



MAIN GOAL

Tonight, we invite you to REFLECT, SHARE, LISTEN and CONSIDER ideas to support the most inclusive and respectful approach to our school calendar, holidays and school work.



At the end of the night, we hope to have:

- 1) a better understanding of desires in the community
- 2) shared with you what we have learned from local leaders and example calendars from other districts



OVERVIEW

The Policy Subcommittee, with Dr. Nolin, met with Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Coptic, Christian, Catholic and Interfaith leaders in Natick and the metrowest area.

Please see the list of participants [here](#).

We met:

- To understand key religious observances for members of our school community, especially for minority groups*.
- To consider our current policy of religious observances and philosophy behind it.
- To explore options that committees and school boards across the country are enacting.

*If we missed your experience and please reach out.



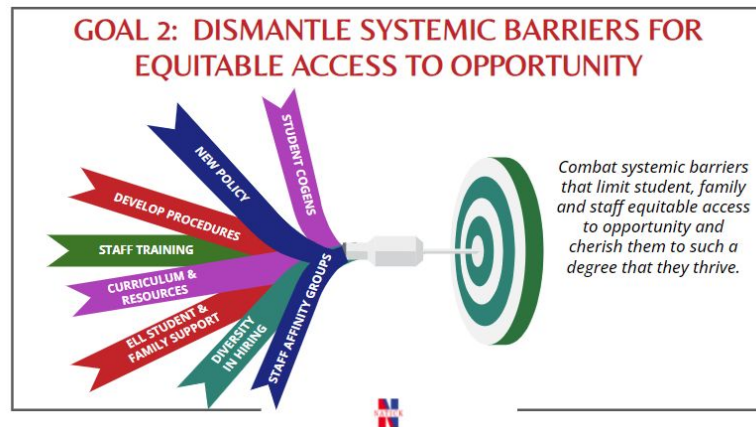
BELONGING AND NPS GOALS

Key areas:

Homework/Tests & Days off (e.g. Andover vs. Westborough)

Education about and for our full community: being seen/
representation/education

Changes for 2023-24 calendar





SPECIFICS IN THE CALENDAR

- We currently take 9 Federal and 1 State Holiday(s) off of school.
- We currently have 3 days off for Jewish, Catholic/Christian Holidays (that occur outside of winter break.)
- If we added Orthodox, Hinduism, Islamic Observances and Lunar New Year, we would add up to 6 more days off to our school calendar.

[A more complete list of observances*](#)

*In trying to compile a comprehensive list, we run the risk of leaving a group out unintentionally. We welcome your feedback and honesty!



OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

- 1) **Stay the Same and add recognition**- No change to current days off - Increase awareness of celebrations that are celebrated by smaller groups within our community, ensure that on those days, students are not penalized for taking time off to celebrate a holiday within their own tradition. (Natick Calendar Link [Here](#))
- 2) **More Inclusive** - “If it’s a major celebration for one group, we acknowledge it for all.” (Ashland Policy Link [Here](#))
- 3) **Observed Federal, State Holidays off and Winter Break Only** -- ensure that no tests or homework are due on religious holidays or the day after. (Andover Policy Link [Here](#))
- 4) Additional Ideas



BREAK OUT GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What is your favorite holiday and why?
2. Why did you come tonight?
3. What challenged you, surprised you, resonated with you in the presentation?
4. What else should we consider?



Please have one person in your group ready to share a few notes when we return





NEXT STEPS -

- Listening sessions with staff and students forthcoming
- Weigh Input
- Continue to receive stakeholder feedback
- Develop a DRAFT policy for public consideration to be vetted at a future, televised public meeting
- This will inform the development of the 2023-2024 school year

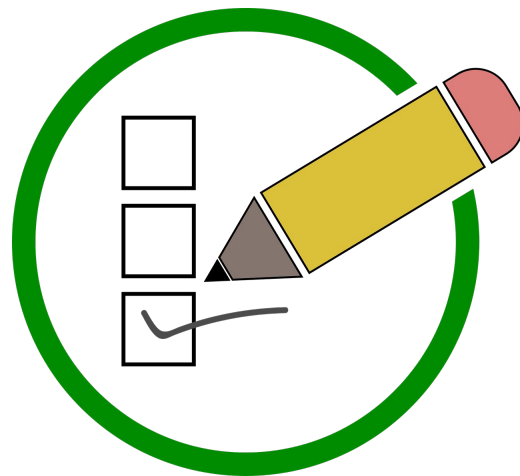


THANK YOU FOR COMING TONIGHT!

Click [here](#) for a 3 question survey

Three ways to reach the committee!

- [SPEAK Up](#), Natick,
- [Emails of the School Committee Members](#)
- Attend the School Committee's Virtual Coffee Hour on Tuesday May, 17th from 6:00 - 6:45 p.m.





ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO CONSIDER

Within the current legal framework, schools—their boards, administrators, teachers, parents and students—must make many practical decisions regarding religious holidays. This work can be done only by showing sensitivity to the needs of every student and indicating a willingness to steer between avoidance of all references to religion on the one hand and promotion of religion on the other.

- [from the Religious Freedom Center Pamphlet](#)

[Area District Calendar Summary](#)

[Westboro Policy and explanation of 3 categories of Holidays.](#)