



## **Constructing the Annual School Calendar**

**Summary:** When building the annual district calendar, the district is limited in our flexibility as we must:

1. meet several state requirements including when the first day of school is scheduled, the total number of student days, the total hours of instruction, grades 3-8 and Regents testing schedules, and legally-required holidays; and
2. meet local requirements established in our employee contracts including the structure of the school day, the number of hours each day, and certain dismissal times.

Once these requirements are met, the district can then address our local preferences including how we schedule superintendent conference days, half days, and non-required religious holidays.

The result is a calendar that addresses all of these factors while keeping our focus on teaching and learning.

### **Background:**

#### **1. State Requirements:**

- a. *Required number of days:* New York State requires that public schools provide a minimum of 180 days of instruction each academic year between September 1 and June 30. This includes up to four superintendent conference days. The district typically schedules 184 to 185 days each year.
- b. *Required number of instructional hours:* The state requires that elementary students receive 900 hours of instruction, excluding lunch and recess, and that secondary students receive 990 hours of instruction, excluding lunch, recess, and passing time between classes. The district schedules hours that are well above the state minimums.
- c. *Start Date:* The school year starts in early September, typically following Labor Day. When Labor Day is early in the first week of September, the district has additional flexibility with our local preferences. (See below.) Because of shared student programming (e.g., career and technical education courses at BOCES and special education classes at BOCES and regional districts) and shared services, we align our start dates and vacation periods with Southern Westchester BOCES and the other regional school districts.
- d. *Testing Schedules:* New York State (grades 3-8 and Regents), International Baccalaureate, and Advanced Placement testing are held on specific dates each year as determined by each organization. We schedule our instructional days to ensure students are in session on those dates.
- e. *Holiday Closures:* The following are legally required holidays\*:
  - i. Labor Day
  - ii. Indigenous Peoples' Day/Columbus Day
  - iii. Veteran's Day
  - iv. Thanksgiving
  - v. Christmas and New Year's Day
  - vi. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

- vii. Presidents' Day
- viii. Memorial Day
- ix. Lunar New Year
- x. Juneteenth

*\*Diwali is a legal holiday in New York City but is not required for other districts.*

- f. *Emergency Plan for Early Dismissal:* New York State requires school districts to organize one early dismissal day each year and follow emergency planning rules.

## 2. Local Requirements:

### a. *Early Dismissals:*

- i. Wednesdays: Based on the teachers' contract, students are released one hour early each Wednesday for faculty and staff meetings, professional learning timer, or parent-teacher conferences at Springhurst. On three of these Wednesdays, students are dismissed before lunch.

***Beginning in the 2025-26 school year, students are released one hour early on only one Wednesday*** each month for faculty meetings and professional development. Students will be dismissed before lunch on two Wednesdays.

- ii. Day before Thanksgiving: Based on the teachers' contract, students are dismissed before lunch on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.

- b. *Election Day*: Schools are closed for students on Election Day as schools in Westchester County are used as polling places. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled on this day.

## 3. Local Preferences:

- a. *Scheduling superintendent conference days and half-day professional learning days*: The district schedules two days at the beginning of the year and one to two additional days in the fall and spring. Occasionally, we schedule additional half days for teacher training.
- b. *Emergency and weather-related closures*: Occasionally we need to delay the start of school, call for an early dismissal, or close schools based on power outages, loss of water, specific health and safety issues within the building(s), or weather-related issues. To avoid falling below the required 180 days, we typically build four days into the calendar each year in anticipation of such events. If these days are not used, the district has flexibility in determining how the days will be used.
- c. *Additional religious observances*: The Dobbs Ferry community is increasingly diverse and we strive to respect and accommodate various cultural and religious observances that are not legally required. However, given the wide range of observances within our community, it is not feasible to include all religious holidays within the school calendar and meet the requirements detailed above. To support our diverse community, however, we encourage families to inform us of their specific observances. We will work with you to provide reasonable accommodations, such as excused absences for students who need to observe religious holidays not included in the school calendar.

**Communication:** Once the calendar is developed by the superintendent and team, the board of education reviews and approves it in February or March. The approved calendar is distributed to all families and is posted on our school website. Principals then establish their building calendars and communicate with families accordingly.