

Religious holidays frequently intersect with important school events, fostering an immensely difficult choice for students and parents. In celebrating their faith's holiday, students lose valuable time in the classroom, potentially compromising their academic success. Optional school holidays eliminate the decision by anticipating absences when scheduling assessments and major school events. The result is stronger environments for students to learn and grow.

## What Is An Optional School Holiday?

- Classes are held according to their regular schedule on Optional School Holidays, with one important exception: graded assessments and major school events will not be held on these days.
- Multifaith Optional School Holidays do not have any involvement with the official process of determining the school calendar.

## Our Ask

- Eight holidays, including Eid ul-Fitr (*Islam*), Eid ul-Adha (*Islam*), Yom Kippur (*Judaism*), Rosh Hashanah (*Judaism*), Vaisakhi (*Sikh*), Diwali (*Hindu*), Immaculate Conception (*Catholic*), and All Saints Day (*Christian*) should be recognized as Optional School Holidays.
- Teachers should not schedule graded assessments on the day of the holiday or the day after. Additionally, the district should not organize field trips, school pictures, club competitions, dances, and similarly important events on these days.
- Presenting a note from their parent or guardian should be a valid excuse for the faith holiday. Absences should be excused, and students should not be penalized, including for all attendance awards.

## Precedent:

- Fairfax, Virginia, created optional school holidays for 15 religious and cultural observance observances, including Three Kings Day, Rosh Hashanah, and Día de Los Muertos.
- The School District of Philadelphia recognized Eid al-Adha, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Lunar New Year, Good Friday, and Eid-al-Fitr as school holidays in the 2022-23 school year.

The addition of optional holidays is essential to cultivating school environments that foster a strong sense of belonging. It removes the burden of choice from parents to decide between their faith and their child's academic success. Additionally, multifaith optional school holidays reduce educators' stress by limiting the number of make-up exams.