SCHOOL DISTRICT 197

West St. Paul + Mendota Heights + Eagan Area

TO: School Board Members

FROM: Cari Jo Drewitz, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

DATE: November 9, 2026

SUBJECT: Approval of 2027-2028 and Draft 2028-2029 District Academic Calendars

BACKGROUND

Each fall, the School Board reviews two academic calendars: the upcoming school year for final approval and the following year in draft form. This two-year cycle was developed with the Meet and Confer Committee. It gives families and staff predictability and leaves time to refine each calendar before final adoption.

Calendars are developed under School Board Policy 602 and Minnesota statutory requirements for instructional days and hours. Drafts are reviewed with the Meet and Confer Committee before they come to the School Board in November. This timeline lets high school registration and other systems be updated on time.

Both the 2027-28 and 2028-29 calendars continue to balance instructional consistency, professional learning needs, and inclusion of the district's diverse community.

Meet and Confer Committee Input

The Meet and Confer Committee includes representatives from the teachers' federation, principals, and district administration. The committee met to review the draft 2027-28 and 2028-29 calendars. It looked at proposed start and end dates, the placement of professional development days, religious observances, and overall instructional balance. The committee reached consensus on the changes described below. It also discussed broader questions about start dates, holiday observances, and flexibility within the calendar framework.

Discussion Summary

2027-28 calendar: District administration recommended moving the October professional development day from October 1 to October 11, and the committee agreed. Members noted that elementary sites will still need time to hold data meetings before that day. They suggested using collaborative team time or staff meeting time for those meetings.

2028-29 calendar: The committee reviewed the draft calendar recommended by district administration and focused on where to place the second professional collaboration day. A mid-semester date would put it immediately before or after spring break. The committee instead agreed to move it later in April and pair it with a professional development day so the two fall on consecutive days, April 23 and 24, 2029.

Conferences: The committee also discussed the late evenings that conferences require of teachers. Some districts reduce this burden by scheduling conference nights next to a professional development day or a day off. That approach is harder for our district, because we spread conferences out to serve families and to make sure interpreters are available.

Religious inclusion: The discussion also connected to the district's ongoing work to support religious inclusion through policy and practice. When the calendar allows, the district aligns professional development days with Yom Kippur and one of the two Eids, typically when these religious holidays fall next to a break or a weekend. The district does not incorporate religious holidays into the calendar when doing so would create isolated midweek days off. The district also continues to strengthen its School Events and Religious Holidays guidance on excused absences, tests and events, homework, and classroom practices, so students and families can observe religious holidays without academic penalty.

2027-28 Calendar (Final Approval)

The 2027-28 calendar was approved in draft form last year and is now presented for final approval. The only proposed change is moving the October 1 professional development day to October 11.

The calendar keeps the transition day on the first day of school for kindergarten, grade 5, and grade 9 students. All other grades start the following day. The calendar includes 169-170 student days, depending on grade level, and 185 teacher days.

Highlights include:

- Professional development days on October 11 and May 5 account for Yom Kippur and Eid al-Adha, respectively.
- The district worked with the College Board to adjust AP testing so it avoids conflicts with religious observances on May 5.
- Winter break runs December 22-31, which keeps the school year from extending into mid-June.
- Professional development days continue to align with Election Day and related Mondays. This avoids the security adjustments needed when the public has access to school buildings.

These choices reflect the district’s continued practice of scheduling non-student days around both operational and community needs.

2028-29 Calendar (Draft Approval)

The 2028-29 calendar continues the district's pattern of starting after Labor Day. It keeps the transition day on the first day of school for kindergarten, grade 5, and grade 9 students, with all other grades starting the following day. The calendar includes 169-170 student days, depending on grade level, and 185 teacher days.

Highlights include:

- Professional development days on September 29 and April 23 account for Yom Kippur and Eid al-Adha, respectively.
- Winter break runs December 22 through January 2, which keeps the school year from extending into mid-June.
- Professional development days continue to align with Election Day and related Mondays. This avoids the security adjustments needed when the public has access to school buildings.

These choices reflect the district's continued practice of scheduling non-student days around both operational and community needs.

Religious and Cultural Observances

The district continues to refine its administrative guidance for accommodating religious observances. Staff are reminded of three expectations:

- Absences for religious holidays must be excused.
- Students should get reasonable time to complete make-up work.
- Tests and events should be avoided on major observances whenever possible.

The School Events and Religious Holidays guidance document is updated each year to help staff plan thoughtfully. The district also continues to use professional development and other non-student days strategically to reduce conflicts with religious holidays observed by a significant portion of our community.

Summary

The calendars presented this year reflect ongoing collaboration through the Meet and Confer process and careful consideration of staff feedback, instructional needs, community diversity, and operational realities. Together, they provide a stable foundation for planning while keeping flexibility and sensitivity to community needs.

The calendars were discussed at the October 26 work session and no changes were suggested.

RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of School District 197 to approve the final 2027-2028 and draft 2028-2029 district academic calendars as presented.