



**TO:** School Board Members

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

**DATE:** November 24, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Approval of FY 2026-2027 and Draft 2027-2028 District Academic Calendars

## **BACKGROUND**

Each fall, the School Board reviews two academic calendars: the upcoming year for *final approval* and the following year as a *draft*. This two-year review process, developed in collaboration with the Meet and Confer Committee, provides predictability for families and staff while allowing time for refinement before final adoption the following year.

Calendar development follows School Board Policy 602 and all Minnesota statutory requirements for instructional days and hours. Draft calendars are reviewed with the Meet and Confer Committee before being brought to the School Board in November. This timeline ensures that high school registration and other systems can be updated in a timely manner.

Both the 2026-27 and 2027-28 calendars reflect continued attention to balancing instructional consistency, professional learning needs, and inclusion of the district's diverse community.

## **Meet and Confer Committee Input**

As part of the calendar development process, the Meet and Confer Committee - which includes representatives from the teachers' federation, principals, and district administration - met to review the draft 2026-27 and 2027-28 calendars. The committee reviewed proposed start and end dates, placement of professional development days, and considerations related to religious observances and instructional balance.

The committee reached consensus on adjustments for the 2026-2027 calendar, including moving the November professional development day from November 9 to November 2 and shifting the January professional development days from January 25-26 to January 28-29 to improve semester balance. Committee members also supported maintaining a post-Labor Day start for both years.

The committee's conversation also included broader reflection on start dates, holiday observances, and flexibility within the calendar framework.

## Discussion Summary

During the Meet and Confer discussion, committee members explored both the advantages and disadvantages of starting the school year before versus after Labor Day. Some participants favored an earlier start, noting that students tend to be more engaged in late August than in mid-June, and that an earlier end to the year can reduce scheduling conflicts for families. Others preferred maintaining a post-Labor Day start for the sake of consistency with family schedules, the Minnesota State Fair, and alignment with neighboring districts. After discussion, the consensus was to continue starting the school year after Labor Day for both the 2026–27 and 2027–28 calendars.

The committee also discussed potential adjustments to include additional religious observances as non-student days. While there was agreement that further recognition of major religious holidays would reflect the district's values of inclusion and equity, the group was unable to reach consensus on which days to exchange, given statutory requirements, contractual parameters, and the need to preserve instructional continuity. Members acknowledged that greater flexibility for staff absences on such observances could potentially be addressed through future contractual language negotiations.

Finally, the discussion tied into the district's ongoing work to support religious inclusivity through policy and practice. While the calendars themselves do not add new non-school days for observances, the district continues to strengthen guidance for excused absences and classroom practices through its School Events and Religious Holidays expectations. This ensures that students and families who observe religious holidays can do so without academic penalty or disadvantage, reflecting a broader and equally important form of inclusion.

### 2026-2027 Calendar (Final Approval)

The 2026-27 calendar was approved last year in draft form and is now presented for final approval. It continues the use of transition days for Kindergarten, grade 5, and grade 9 students on the first day of school, with all other grades starting the following day.

A key change since the draft version is the implementation of the new teacher contract, which converted quarterly *grading days* to *professional collaboration days*. This shift removed the need to strictly balance quarters within each semester, allowing more flexibility in scheduling professional development and work time.

Specifically:

- The professional development day originally scheduled for November 9 has been moved to November 2, eliminating a one-day school week and improving calendar flow.
- The January end-of-quarter/professional development days were moved from January 25-26 to January 28-29 to balance the number of days in each semester.
- A professional development day remains on Election Day (November 3) to reduce building access concerns and avoid safety protocol changes when community members are voting.
- The calendar maintains a post-Labor Day start (September 8) and a last student day of June 10, 2027, with 169–170 student days and 185 teacher days.

## **2027-2028 Calendar (Draft Approval)**

The 2027-28 calendar continues the district's pattern of starting after Labor Day, with transition days for early grades. It includes 169-170 student days and 185 teacher days and maintains the emphasis on consistency, balance, and inclusion.

Highlights include:

- Rosh Hashanah and Eid al-Adha are considered through the placement of professional development days on October 1 and May 5, respectively.
- Collaboration with the College Board ensures that AP testing is adjusted to avoid conflicts with religious observances on May 5.
- Winter Break runs from December 22-31, preventing the school year from extending into mid-June.
- Professional development days are again aligned with Election Day and related Mondays to avoid security adjustments for public access to school buildings.
- These adjustments reflect the district's continued practice of aligning non-student days with both operational and community considerations.

## **Religious and Cultural Observances**

The district continues to refine its administrative guidance for accommodating religious observances. Staff are reminded that absences for religious holidays must be excused, that make-up work should allow reasonable completion time, and that tests and events should be avoided on major observances when possible.

The District's *Religious Holidays and School Events* guidance document is updated annually to help staff plan thoughtfully. In addition, the district continues to use professional development and non-student days strategically to reduce potential conflicts with religious observances of the religions observed by a significant portion of our population.

## **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, these calendars provide a stable foundation for planning while maintaining flexibility and sensitivity to community needs.

## **RESOLUTION**

***BE IT RESOLVED*** by the School Board of School District 197 to approve the proposed 2026-2027 and draft 2027-2028 district academic calendars as presented.