THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

2025-26 and 2026-27 Academic Calendar Feedback Survey Results

In September of 2024, the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) opened a public survey for stakeholders to provide input on the Academic Calendars for 2025-26 and 2026-27. This report summarizes responses to the 16,485 survey responses received, including preferences for each calendar year and key themes that emerged from comments on open-ended questions.

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Key Findings

- Over 16,000 students, parents/guardians, staff, and external partners responded to the survey, more than four times the number of people who responded when the survey was last administered in 2022.

- Calendar options that prioritized longer breaks and more frequent holidays during the school year were consistently the most popular among students, staff, and external partners who responded to the survey, even when these options required an earlier start to the school year.

- Parents/guardians were the only respondent group that expressed a stronger preference for calendar options that prioritized a later start to the school year over more days off during the school year. However, calendar versions that prioritized religious and cultural holidays were the most popular among Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx parents, who were under-represented in the survey.

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About the Survey

According to School District of Philadelphia (SDP) Board of Education Policy 803, the District is authorized to prepare and adopt annual Academic Calendars, and must incorporate stakeholder input and feedback in its decision-making process.[1] To inform the development of the 2025-26 and 2026-27 Academic Calendars, the SDP Academic Calendar Oversight Committee (ACOC) conducted a publicly accessible online survey that aimed to gather responses from District parents and guardians, students, staff, and external partners.

The 2025-26 and 2026-27 Academic Calendar Feedback Survey was posted on the SDP website on September 26, 2024 and closed on October 10, 2024. The survey was hosted on the SurveyMonkey platform, with a drop-down menu allowing respondents to select to take the survey in one of 13 languages: English, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, Arabic, Russian, Uzbek, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, Khmer, Bengali, Albanian, and French. In total, there were 16,485 valid responses to the survey,[2] more than four times the number of responses received when a similar survey was last conducted in 2022.[3]

Table 1. Number and percentage of survey responses, by survey language

Language	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
English	15,297	92.79%
Spanish	507	3.08%
Chinese (Mandarin)	205	1.24%
Russian	184	1.12%
Portuguese	124	0.75%
Arabic	40	0.24%
French	39	0.24%
Uzbek	28	0.17%
Haitian Creole	23	0.14%
Albanian	19	0.12%
Vietnamese	15	0.09%
Khmer	3	0.02%
Bengali	1	0.01%
Total	16,485	100.00%

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[1] For more information, see Board Policy 804 (https://www.philasd.org/schoolboard/wp-content/uploads/sites/892/2022/07/Policy_803_School-Calendar-6.23.22.pdf) and the attached Administrative Procedures (https://www.philasd.org/schoolboard/wp-content/uploads/sites/892/2022/07/Procedures_803_School-Calendar-6.23.22.pdf).

[2] Any survey wherein the respondent identified an association with an SDP school or wrote in a description of another kind of relationship with the School District, and that included a response to at least one substantive survey question (i.e., a question about the Academic Calendar) was considered valid.

[3] A report summarizing the results of the 2023-24 and 2024-25 Academic Calendar Survey conducted in 2022 is available online: https://www.philasd.org/research/2023/08/25/2023-24-and-2024-25-academic-calendar-survey-results/

About the Survey Respondents

The Academic Calendar Survey was administered anonymously, but all respondents were required to state their role in the District,[4] and were invited to respond to optional demographic questions to evaluate how well the sample of respondents resembles the broader SDP community. Most survey responses were from parents and guardians (47%) and school-based staff (43%) (Table 2). Parents/guardians, school-based staff, and students who responded to the survey were associated with at least 243 different schools across the District, representing 98% of District and alternative schools serving grades K-12.[5]

Table 2. Number and percentage of survey responses, by self-identified role

Self-identified role	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Parent/guardian of an SDP student	7,764	47%
Teacher	4,796	29%
Principal/Assistant Principal	275	2%
Other school-based staff	2,027	12%
Central Office or non-school-based staff	502	3%
SDP Student	965	6%
External partner (e.g., community organization, government official, education provider)	156	1%
Total	16,485	100%

Results from the optional demographic questions suggest that survey respondents were diverse with respect to race/ethnicity, though not proportional to the racial and ethnic composition of District families, staff, or students (Figure 1). About 61% of student respondents and 68% of parent/guardian respondents answered the race/ethnicity question at the end of the survey. While 43% of District students in 2024-25 are Black/African American and 28% are Hispanic/Latinx,[6] only 26% of student survey respondents who answered the race/ethnicity question were Black/African American and only 18% were Hispanic/Latinx. This pattern was also evident in the parent/guardian survey responses. The student survey sample also included a much larger percentage of students identifying as Asian/Asian American (28%) compared to the broader SDP student population (10%).

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[4] Many SDP stakeholders hold multiple roles (e.g., teacher and parent). Respondents were asked to select one role for the purpose of this survey.
[5] About 51% of respondents did not answer this question.
[6] Source: QlikBAM Enrollment – Oct 1 Snapshot, 2024-25, for District and alternative schools

Figure 1. Student and parent/guardian survey sample by race/ethnicity, compared to the 2024-25 SDP student population
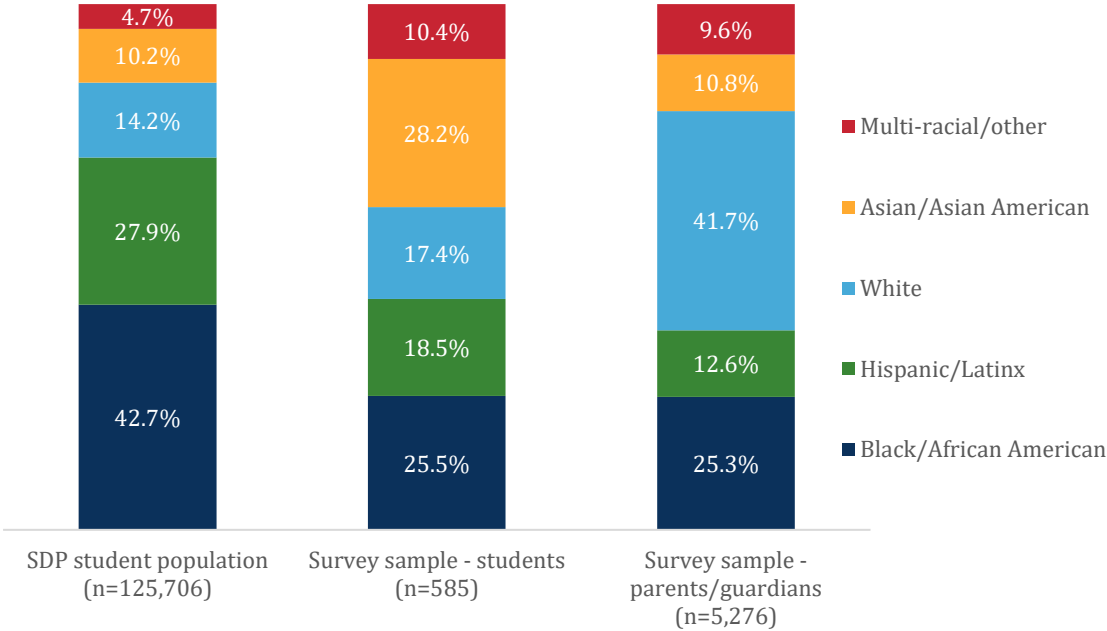
Notes: 39% of student respondents and 32% of parent respondents declined to respond to the optional race/ethnicity question on the survey and are excluded from these figures. SDP student population statistics are from the QlikBAM Enrollment – Oct 1 Snapshot app, 2024-25, for District and alternative schools.

Among employee respondents, 68% of teachers, 69% of support staff, and 71% of principals/assistant principals responded to the optional race/ethnicity question. Black/African American staff were under-represented in the survey sample, compared to the population of teachers, principals, and other school support staff. Hispanic/Latinx staff were underrepresented in the support staff survey sample (Figure 2).

For more details about the racial/ethnic composition of all respondent groups, see Appendix 1.

Figure 2. School-based staff survey sample by race/ethnicity, compared to staff population in 2022-23

	Multi-racial/other
	White
	Hispanic/Latinx
	Black/African American

Teachers: SDP population (n=9,112): 5.3%, 63.2%, 4.8%, 26.7%. Survey sample (n=3,280): 12.3%, 66.3%, 4.8%, 16.6%.

Principals/APs: SDP population (n=510): 3.9%, 38.0%, 4.9%, 53.1%. Survey sample (n=196): 9.7%, 41.3%, 10.7%, 38.3%.

Other school staff: SDP population (n=8,007): 5.2%, 15.3%, 17.8%, 61.6%. Survey sample (n=1,405): 12.7%, 34.3%, 9.2%, 43.8%.
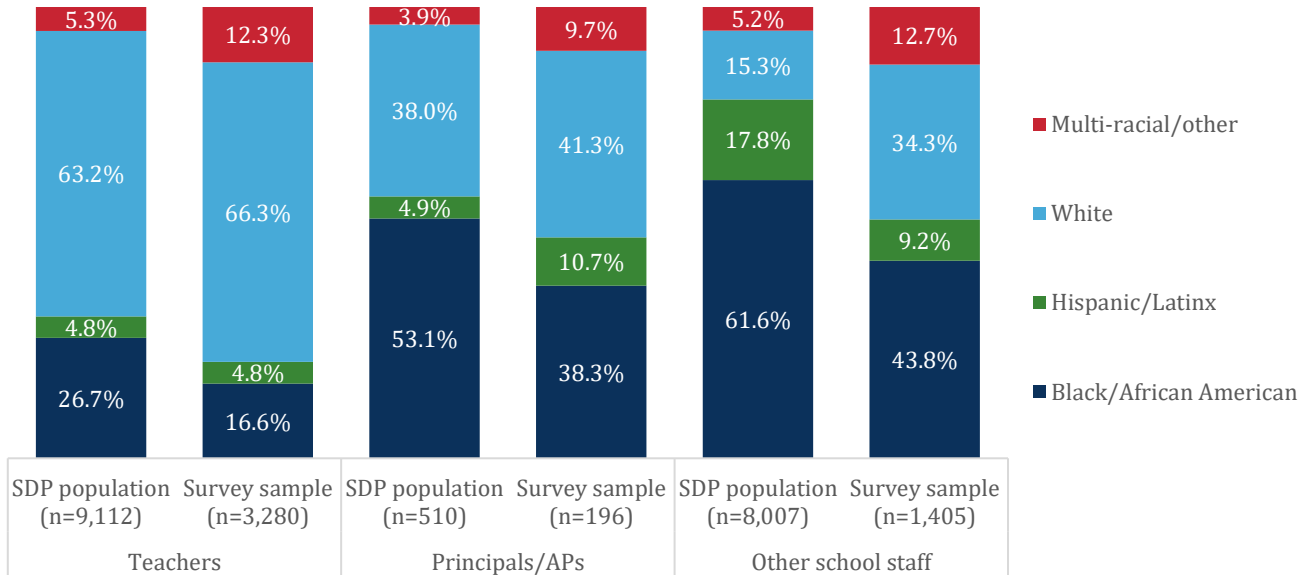
Notes: 32% of teacher respondents, 29% of principals/APs, and 31% of support staff respondents declined to respond to the optional race/ethnicity question on the survey. Staff population statistics are from the QlikBAM Employee Information app, 2024-25. Asian and Asian American staff are included in the "Multi-racial/other" category due to small sample sizes. Staff categorized in the app as "ethnicity not listed" are excluded from the statistics presented here.

While survey respondents reported a wide range of household income levels, lower-income stakeholders were under-represented in the survey sample (Table 3). While the 2023 American Community Survey indicates that 24% of Philadelphia households earn less than $24,999 per year, only 12% of respondents to the Academic Calendar Feedback Survey who answered the income question fell into this income bracket. Forty-three percent of respondents said their household income was $100,000 or more, compared to 28% of Philadelphia households.

Table 3. Survey respondents by household income, compared to Philadelphia residents

| Reported household income	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents	Percentage of Philadelphia Households*
Less than $24,999	1,299	12%	24%
Between $25,000 and $49,999	1,809	17%	19%
Between $50,000 and $99,999	2,951	28%	29%
Between $100,000 and $149,999	2,187	21%	14%
Over $150,000	2,392	22%	15%
Total	10,638	100%	100%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. "Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2023 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)." American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1901, 2023, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2023.S1901?q=income%20philadelphia. Accessed on November 19, 2024.

Survey Results by Section

Section 1: Awareness of Constraints

At the beginning of the survey, respondents were required to review a list of the main constraints the District faces in setting the Academic Calendar and rate their previous level of awareness of these constraints. Respondents reported the greatest level of awareness of the five federal holidays that SDP must observe through days off for students and staff, with nearly 8 in 10 respondents saying they were "very aware" of this constraint. About half of respondents said they were "very aware" that the number of historically observed holidays that fall on weekdays changes from year to year, a feature which makes some years more challenging than others. There was a similar degree of awareness that students must have 181 learning days and school staff must have 188 work days within the Academic Calendar. Respondents were least aware of the requirements for teacher PD and the fact that the school year must start and end between August 16 and June 15 to align with the current District payroll system.

Figure 3. Distribution of responses to "Before today, how aware were you of the following constraints on the Academic Calendar?" (n=16,485)
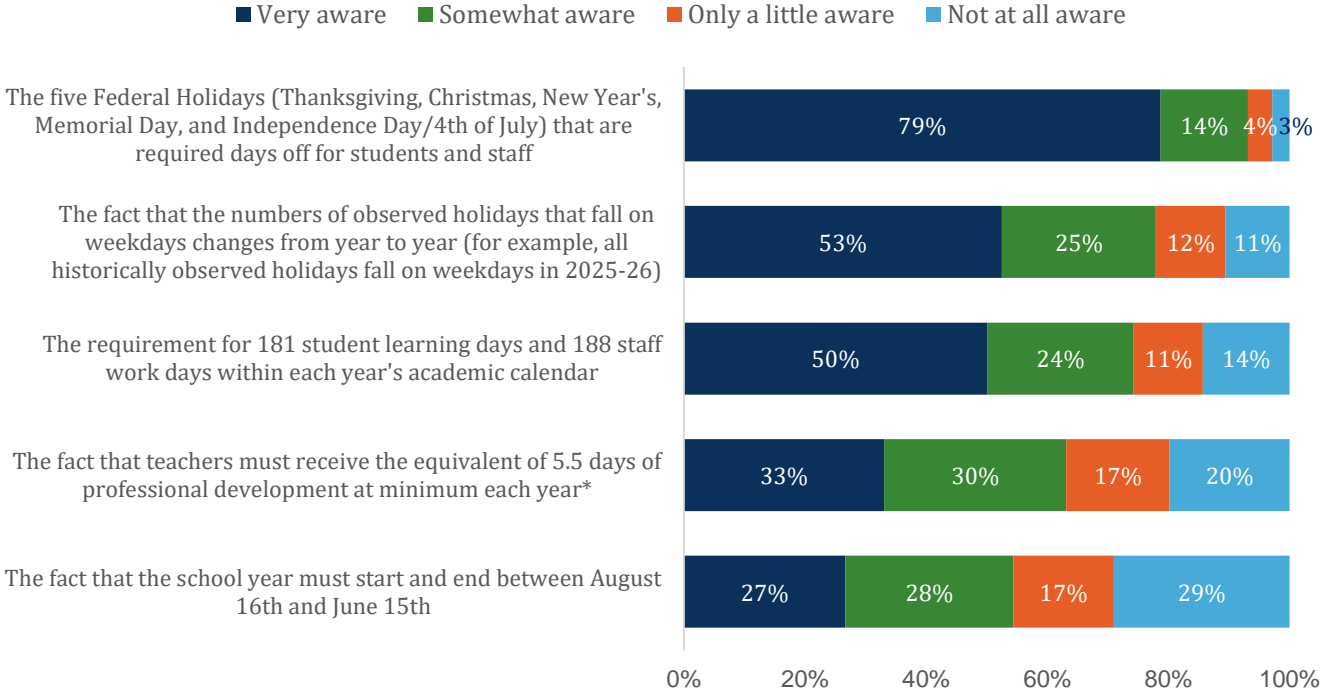
Section 2: 2025-26 Academic Calendar Feedback

In contrast to the Academic Calendar survey conducted in 2022, which gathered information on stakeholders' perceptions about general calendar-related issues (e.g., preference for starting before or after Labor Day, preference for half days or full days for teacher professional development), the 2024 survey was designed to allow stakeholders to express their preferences in the context of fully-articulated calendar options, allowing them to engage with the tradeoffs between issues such as calendar start and end dates and the number of holidays. To do this, respondents were presented with 2-3 different calendar options for each of the two academic years covered in the survey (2025-26 and 2026-27), with a table comparing the start/end dates and days off in each version of the calendar and a link to documents showing each version in more detail (see Appendices 1 and 2). These options were accompanied by a note that they were just example calendars designed to gather feedback, and that survey results would be used to develop a final version that might differ from all of the options presented.

For the 2025-26 Academic Calendar, two options were presented. Calendar **Version 1** included a school year starting before Labor Day, days off for nearly all historically observed religious/cultural holidays, an eight-day Winter Break and a five-day Spring Break. Calendar **Version 2** included a school year starting after Labor Day, omitted two historically observed holidays as days off from school (Veterans Day and Lunar New Year), and included an eight-day Winter Break, but just two days for Spring Break. To see how these options were presented in the survey, see Appendix 1.

Preferences for 2025-26

Overall, the majority (55%) of respondents preferred Version 1, although preferences varied by role. Most students and staff (between 60-69%, depending on the specific role) preferred Version 1, as did the majority (54%) of external partners who responded to the question. However, parent/guardian respondents stood out as the only respondent group with a slight preference for Version 2, with 54% of parents/guardians selecting this option (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Distribution of responses to "Which version of the 2025-26 Academic Calendar do you most prefer?", by SDP role
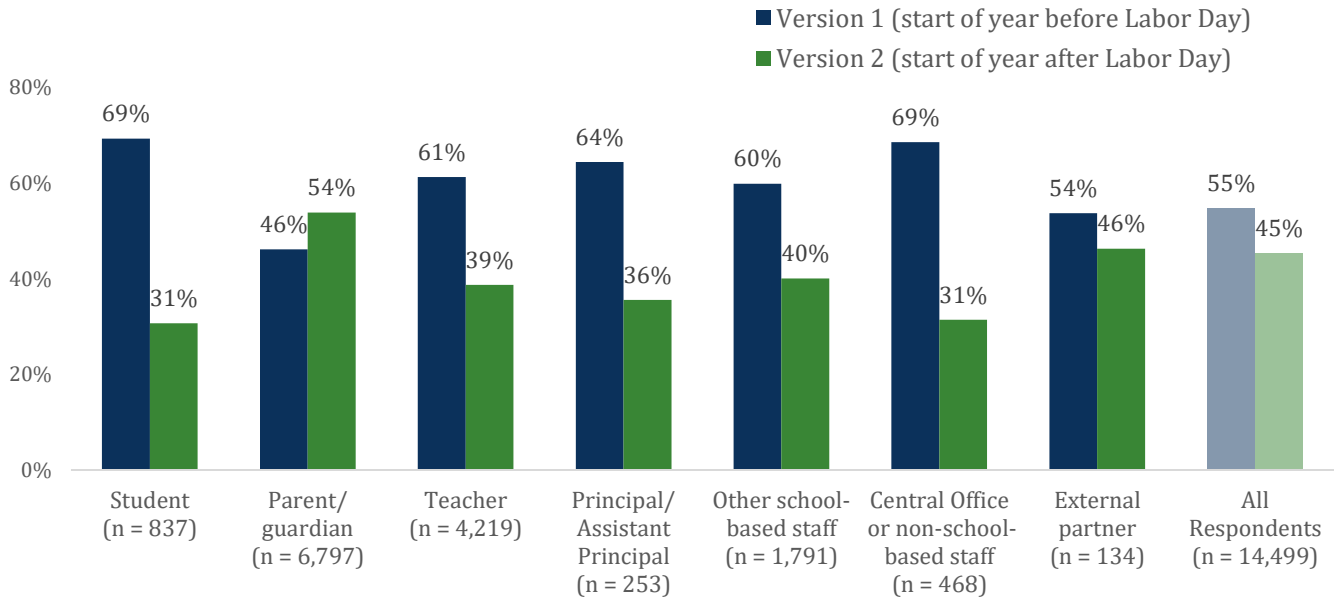
There were some differences in preferences for the 2025-26 calendar version options by race/ethnicity (Figure 4). The preference for Version 1 of the calendar was most pronounced among Asian/Asian American and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander respondents (64% for Version 1 compared to 36% for Version 2), followed by Black/African American respondents (57% for Version 1 compared to 43% for Version 2). Among racial/ethnic groups, the largest proportion of respondents preferring Version 2 were those who indicated their race/ethnicity was not listed, with 58% of these respondents preferring Version 2, followed by Multi-racial respondents (49%) and White respondents (46%).

> While the majority of parent/guardian respondents preferred Version 2, this was not true for parents and guardians of all race/ethnicity groups. Fifty-nine percent of Asian/Asian American parents/guardians preferred Version 1.

Figure 4. Distribution of Responses to "Which version of the 2025-26 Academic Calendar do you most prefer?", by race/ethnicity

Legend:
- ■ Version 1 (start of year before Labor Day)
- ■ Version 2 (start of year after Labor Day)

Race/Ethnicity	Version 1	Version 2
American Indian or Alaska Native (n = 22)	55%	45%
Asian or Asian American (n = 890)	64%	36%
Black/African American (n = 2,829)	57%	43%
Hispanic/Latinx (n = 1,096)	55%	45%
Multi-racial (n = 584)	51%	49%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (n = 14)	64%	36%
Not listed (n = 438)	42%	58%
White (n = 5,251)	54%	46%
All Respondents (n = 14,499)	55%	45%
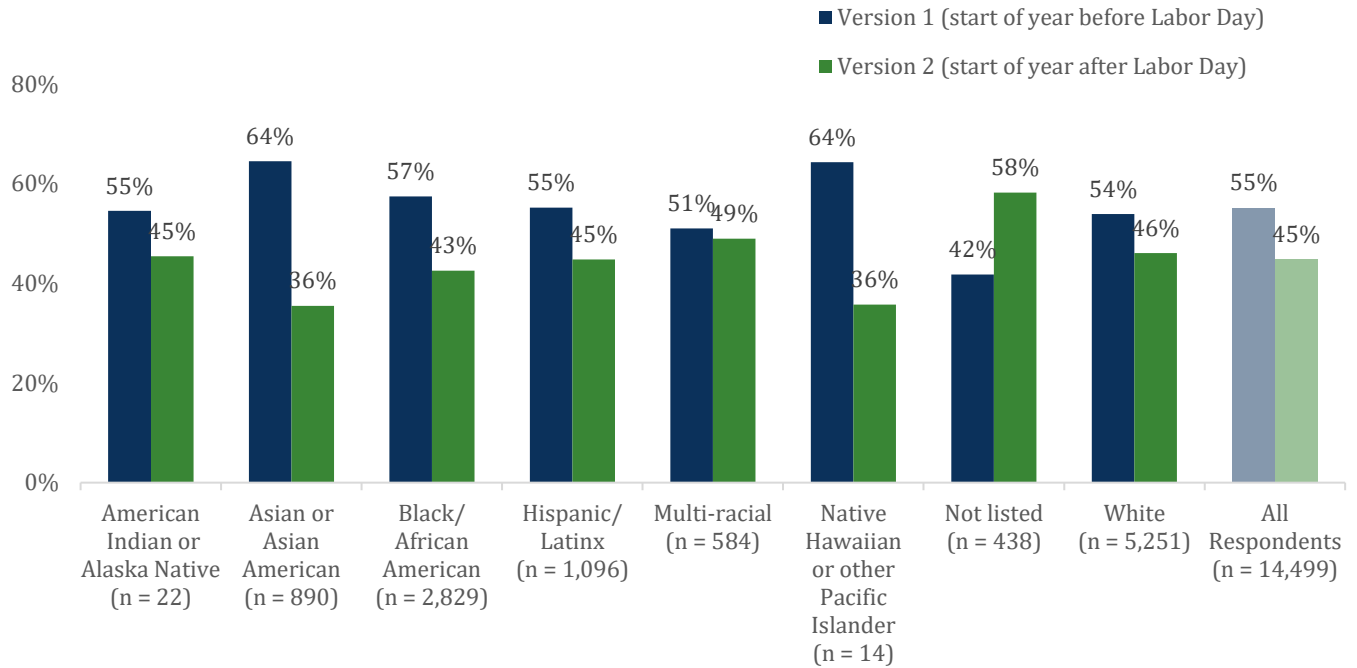
Note: The "All Respondents" number in this figure is larger than the sum of each racial/ethnic group because not all respondents provided information about their race/ethnicity. "Not listed" was a race/ethnicity category provided in case any respondents did not identify with the other options provided.

Reasons for 2025-26 Preferences: Results from Analysis of Open-Ended Comments

After respondents indicated which of the calendar versions they preferred, they were given the opportunity to share their comments on what they liked about that version, as well as what they would change about that version of the calendar. This section provides a summary of the method used to analyze the comments and the common themes that were present in the responses.

Analytic Method for Coding Open-Ended Responses

Given the large volume of comments received across 10 different open-ended questions, a stratified random sample of responses were randomly selected for qualitative analysis. For each question, 200 parent/guardian comments, 100 comments each from the teacher, student, and other school-based staff respondent groups, and 50 Central Office/non-school based staff comments were selected. Given the relatively smaller number of respondents who identified as principals/assistant principals and external partners, all comments from these

groups were included for analysis. To ensure the experiences of under-represented groups were considered, all comments from respondents of racial/ethnic or language groups with fewer than 10 responses to a given question were also included in the analytic sample of open-ended responses.

To analyze the responses, high-level themes were identified for each survey question by the lead researcher, and four coders were trained on how to read responses and assign them to the themes available. Each response could be assigned to multiple themes, as relevant, and coders were trained to flag any new themes not previously identified. All coding was reviewed by the lead researcher, and new themes identified by the coders were incorporated into the coding scheme where relevant. To identify the relevant frequency of each theme, the number of mentions of each theme was tallied for each question,

Themes from Respondents Who Preferred the 2025-26 Calendar Version 1

Six primary themes emerged from respondents' comments about why they preferred Version 1. The four most frequent of these themes were the longer Spring Break, the greater number of breaks and days off in general, the long Winter Break, and more inclusive holidays.

The most common reason respondents cited for preferring Version 1 was the longer Spring Break. Most comments were general, but some mentioned the need for family vacation and the need for staff and students to recharge. There were also many generally positive reactions to having more breaks and days off, some specifically highlighting the need for rest and mental health. Winter Break was also highlighted, with somewhat less frequency than Spring Break. Many respondents appreciated that this calendar honored the holidays of many cultures and religious backgrounds, and some respondents mentioned particular holidays such as Veterans Day, Lunar New, and Jewish and Muslim holidays. Although many respondents said they wished the start date was later, some respondents said they liked how starting before Labor Day allows students to ease into the school year gradually, decreases summer learning loss, and gives more room for holidays and breaks during the year (Table 4).

Table 4. What respondents liked about Academic Calendar 2025-26 Version 1: Themes and sample comments

Theme (in order of frequency)	Sample Comments
Long Spring Break	I believe that my child's teachers deserve breaks and time to recoup. They do excellent work and they are so patient with my kids and I cannot imagine how having a two-day Spring Break would help them at all in terms of stamina. [parent/guardian] 5 days off for Spring Break in case parents want to schedule a vacation. Also more days off for the kids in general. [parent/guardian]

Theme (in order of frequency)	Sample Comments
	I need the 5 days of Spring Break. I'm always exhausted from school around that time of the year and need a full week off. [student] We need Spring Break! Not having it is a horrible idea </3 I would rather start before Labor Day and have Spring Break than have an extended summer and not have Spring Break. [teacher] Longer Spring Break [principal/AP]
More breaks and days off	I like the fact that we would have longer holiday time off which allows for travel to see family members afar. [other school staff] I like that we have a lot of days off [student] The school district talks about work/life balance and taking care of emotional health, this calendar actually respects that balance and the need for days to recharge mentally and emotionally. [teacher]
Long Winter Break	I like version one because it's a full 2 weeks off for Winter Break and a full week off for Spring Break. This is much better for everyone's mental health. [other school staff] I like the half day before Thanksgiving and the extended Winter Break. The kids and teachers have a solid two weeks off from school. The teachers should be able to enjoy their break as well and version 2 has them going back for 2 in service days. [parent/guardian] It preserves a longer winter and Spring Break and aligns with my past summer work, vacation and custody schedules. [parent/guardian] I love the calendar with an 8-day Winter Break because it gives me ample time to unwind, enjoy holiday festivities, and spend quality time with family. [student]
More inclusive holidays	It is inclusive of various cultures and religions [parent/guardian] It starts too early, but it offers a slightly more equitable recognition of holidays for different groups, and has a longer Spring Break. [parent/guardian] The holidays that are observed taking in consideration of religious, cultural and patriotic observances. [teacher]
Specific holidays mentioned	Just having Veterans day off [other school staff] Chinese New Year is off so my child can celebrate it with family. [parent/guardian] I like the fact that it is acknowledging a Muslim holiday [parent/guardian]
Starting before Labor Day	I like the longer school year. The longer the better for my kids to lose less academic progress, and for childcare and finding summer activities. [parent/guardian] I think the first week is going to be plagued with challenges like AC no matter when we start. But a before Labor Day start gives the kids a week to adjust and then a new start after Labor Day. [parent/guardian] I would like to start before Labor Day [other school staff]

KEY: Parent/guardian | Student | Teacher | Principal or Assistant Principal | Other school staff | Central Office or non-school-based staff | External Partner

When asked what they would change about Version 1, respondents were most likely to indicate that no changes were needed. After "no changes," the most commonly requested change was a later start date to the year – many specifically calling for a start after Labor Day. School facility capacity for air conditioning was highlighted as a challenge with the earlier start date, with respondents predicting early dismissals for many schools. A few suggested half days in the first week of school to mitigate this issue. Some respondents requested additional holidays off within calendar Version 1, such as Veterans Day, Indigenous Peoples' Day, Three Kings, Day, Diwali, and Easter Monday, while others suggested dropping a few holidays or shortening breaks to be able to end the school year earlier or start the school year later (specific suggestions varied).

Themes from Respondents Who Preferred the 2025-26 Calendar Version 2

Three primary themes emerged from respondents' comments about why they preferred Version 2: starting after Labor Day, having a longer Summer Break, and not too many holidays.

When respondents commented on why they preferred Version 2, the most common reason by far was that it started after Labor Day. Most comments were general, but some noted specific reasons, such as lack of air conditioning (which leads to poor learning conditions and early dismissals that are disruptive for families), the perceived likelihood of higher attendance in the first week of school, the need for a longer break between summer school and the school year start, and alignment with other Districts/institutions (especially for staff who would need to find childcare). A second and related theme was the longer Summer Break facilitated by the late start date. Some respondents commented that many families travel mainly over the summer rather than Winter and Spring Breaks, and that the long summer provides more time for enriching activities and additional rest for staff who work over the summer (Table 5).

Table 5. What respondents liked about Academic Calendar 2025-26 Version 2: Themes and sample comments

Theme (in order of frequency)	Sample Comments
Starting after Labor Day	Less of a risk of early dismissal for excessive heat which ALWAYS happens when school opens before Labor Day. [parent/guardian]
	I'd prefer a later start and shorter in between breaks for the logistics of my work schedule. Summer camps will accommodate the later start and finding care for two days is easier and cheaper than finding it for 5 days for Spring Break. Also I'd rather her be in school for holidays that aren't recognized by my job so parenting during the school will be slightly less stressful. [parent/guardian]
	Families historically expect school to begin after Labor Day and, for this reason, many schedule trips away for last week of August. This makes enrollment data unreliable the first week if it is in August, so starting in Sept gives schools more accurate enrollment date for any enrollment driven resource allocation that is needed. Teachers also take summer jobs

Theme (in order of frequency)	Sample Comments
	including teaching summer programs for SDP and reporting back so early in August will likely make it difficult if not impossible for them to commit to their usual summer job prospects. Heat in late August is also a concern, if SDP has not addressed the lack of a/c AND improperly functioning a/c in ALL schools by then. [Central Office or non-school-based staff] I think starting school after Labor Day makes the most sense. For families whose children DO NOT attend the district, it works out better to start after Labor Day. When we start school early, it's difficult to arrange for childcare. Starting as a staff any earlier than the last week of August poses a huge financial strain on families. [teacher] I prefer this version because usually in the latter part of the summer there is a heat wave and some schools have to close because of the lack of an Air Conditioning Unit. This sometimes affect parents/guardian schedules because plans were not in-place for the children to go to a Day Care or for a responsible adult to supervise until they are picked up by responsible adult. [other school staff] I like that students start school after Labor Day. We have found that due to the heat we have low attendance prior to Labor Day. [principal/AP] I like the school year starting in September, for OST providers who do after school programming then switch directly into summer programing our only break is that time between the summer program end and school start. Starting in August gives very little time for school year program preparations and enrollment while also allowing our staff some personal time to rest. [external partner]
Longer Summer Break	As someone that volunteers extensively in the school, I see how it directly affects staff, families and students when the summer break it's cut short. Every time we start before Labor Day our attendance numbers drop. [parent/guardian] I prefer more days off during the summer because that is when my family spends time with family and traveling outside the city. We do not typically leave for Spring Break. [parent/guardian] I wish I had more time during the summer so I could work more. [student] A lot of students participate in enriching summer programming and internships. They also obtain summer jobs to explore interests. Extending the summer would be essential to allow for this. [other school staff] Having the school year start in Sept lowers the potential number of days that schools would need to close/dismiss early due to heat. It also gives those who run summer programming enough time at the end of the 24-25SY and start of the 25-26SY to not have to rush summer PD set-up/execution in 3 days [Central Office or non-school-based staff]
Not too many holidays	Fewer one-day holidays that aren't holidays for my work. [parent/guardian] I prefer that my kids have less holidays off from school. [parent/guardian]

KEY: Parent/guardian | Student | Teacher | Principal or Assistant Principal | Other school staff | Central Office or non-school-based staff | External Partner

When respondents were asked what they would change about calendar Version 2, the most common response was that no changes were needed. That said, many respondents did highlight issues such as having a longer Spring Break or the inclusion of holidays such as Veterans Day, Easter Monday, Lunar New Year, Diwali, and Rosh Hashanah. In contrast, there were other respondents who commented that holidays and one-off days off could be reduced even further from what was presented in Version 2.

Section 3: 2026-27 Academic Calendar Feedback

The Academic Calendar Oversight Committee identified more calendar options for the 2026-27 Academic Calendar than for 2025-26 because only 12 of the 15 historically observed holidays fall on weekdays during the 2026-27 school year. To show stakeholders the wider range of options available, three different versions were presented in the survey. For 2026-27, calendar **Version 1** maintained the preferences for holidays observed, pre-Labor Day start (August 31 for students), and report card and professional development schedule that are present in the current school year calendar (2024-25). In calendar **Version 2**, cultural and religious holidays were prioritized, with the addition of days off for Veterans Day and Three Kings Day. The school year started even earlier in Version 2 than Version 1 (August 24 for students), and the school year also ended slightly earlier than the other versions (June 11). Version 3 prioritized starting after Labor Day for students (September 8), with staff starting the week before (September 1). **Version 3** included the fewest holidays (with no day off for Veterans Day, Three Kings Day, or Presidents' Day). For more details on the versions presented in the survey, see Appendix 3.
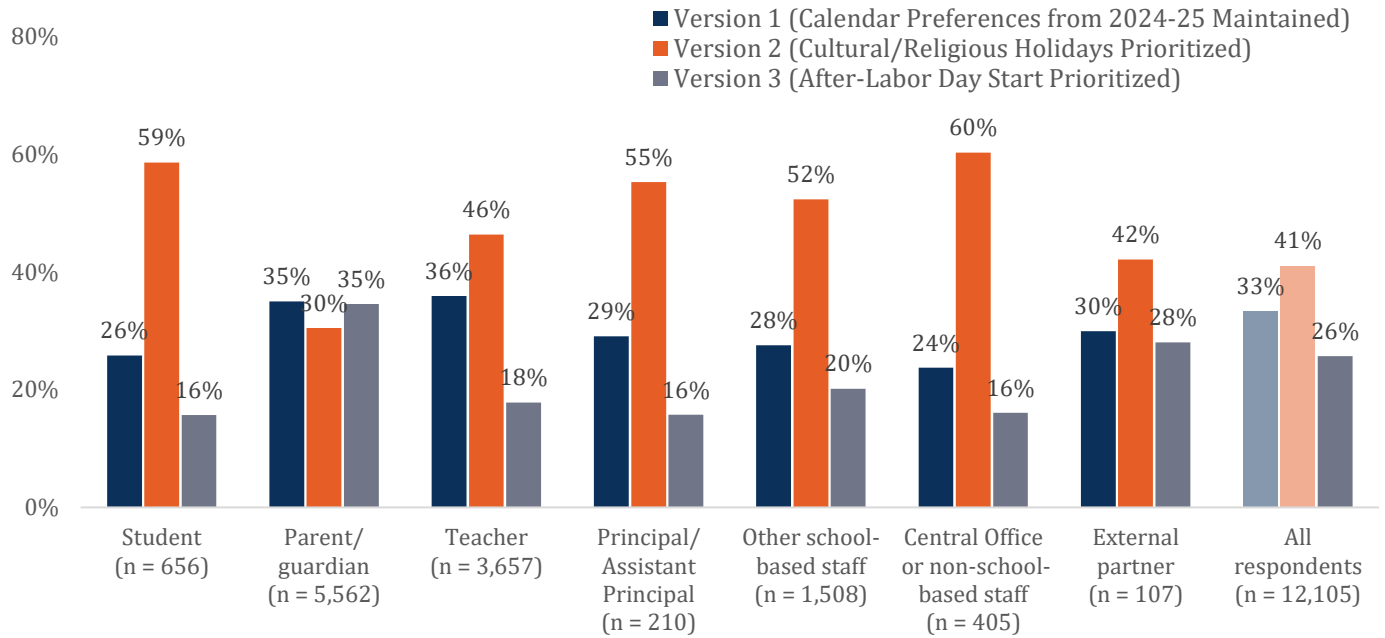
Preferences for 2026-27

The most popular version overall was Version 2, which prioritized religious and cultural holidays. Forty-one percent of all respondents selected Version 2, compared to 33% for Version 1 and 26% for Version 3 (Figure 5). Version 2 was particularly popular among students (59% of whom selected this option) and Central Office and non-school-based staff (60%). Version 2 was also the most popular option for all categories of school-based staff – more than half (55%) of principals and assistant principals selected Version 2 compared to 28% selecting Version 2 and 16% selecting Version 3.

Similar to results for the 2025-26 calendar, the response pattern from parents/guardians contrasted that of students and staff: Version 2 was actually slightly *less* popular than Versions 1 and 3, with just 30% of parents/guardians selecting Version 2. Parent/guardian preferences were evenly divided between Versions 1 and 3, which tied at 35%.

Figure 5. Distribution of responses to "Which version of the 2026-27 Academic Calendar do you most prefer?", by SDP role

Disaggregating results by race also revealed that parent/guardian preferences for Version 1 were not consistent across races/ethnicities. Version 2 was the most popular option among Black/African American (40%), Hispanic/Latinx (37%), and multi-racial parents (36%).

- ■ Version 1 (Calendar Preferences from 2024-25 Maintained)
- ■ Version 2 (Cultural/Religious Holidays Prioritized)
- ■ Version 3 (After-Labor Day Start Prioritized)

Note: There were fewer responses to questions about the 2026-27 calendar due to respondent attrition (the 2026-27 questions were later in the survey).

Version 2's popularity was consistent among most racial/ethnic groups: 52% of Black/African American, 45% of Hispanic/Latinx, and 43% of Asian/Asian American and Multi-racial respondents preferred the prioritization of religious and cultural holidays over maintaining historical preferences or starting after Labor Day (Figure 6). The only two racial/ethnic groups for whom Version 2 was *not* the most popular were White respondents, for whom the most popular calendar was Version 1.

Figure 6. Distribution of Responses to "Which version of the 2026-27 Academic Calendar do you most prefer?", by race/ethnicity

The preference for Version 2 held across all household income levels except for respondents with annual household income over $150,000, for whom the most popular version was Version 1 (42%). The preference for Version 2 was most predominant among respondents with annual household incomes between $25,000-50,000 (47% of whom preferred Version 2) and $50,000-99,000 (46% of whom preferred Version 2).

■ Version 1 (Calendar Preferences from 2024-25 Maintained)
■ Version 2 (Cultural/Religious Holidays Prioritized)
■ Version 3 (After-Labor Day Start Prioritized)
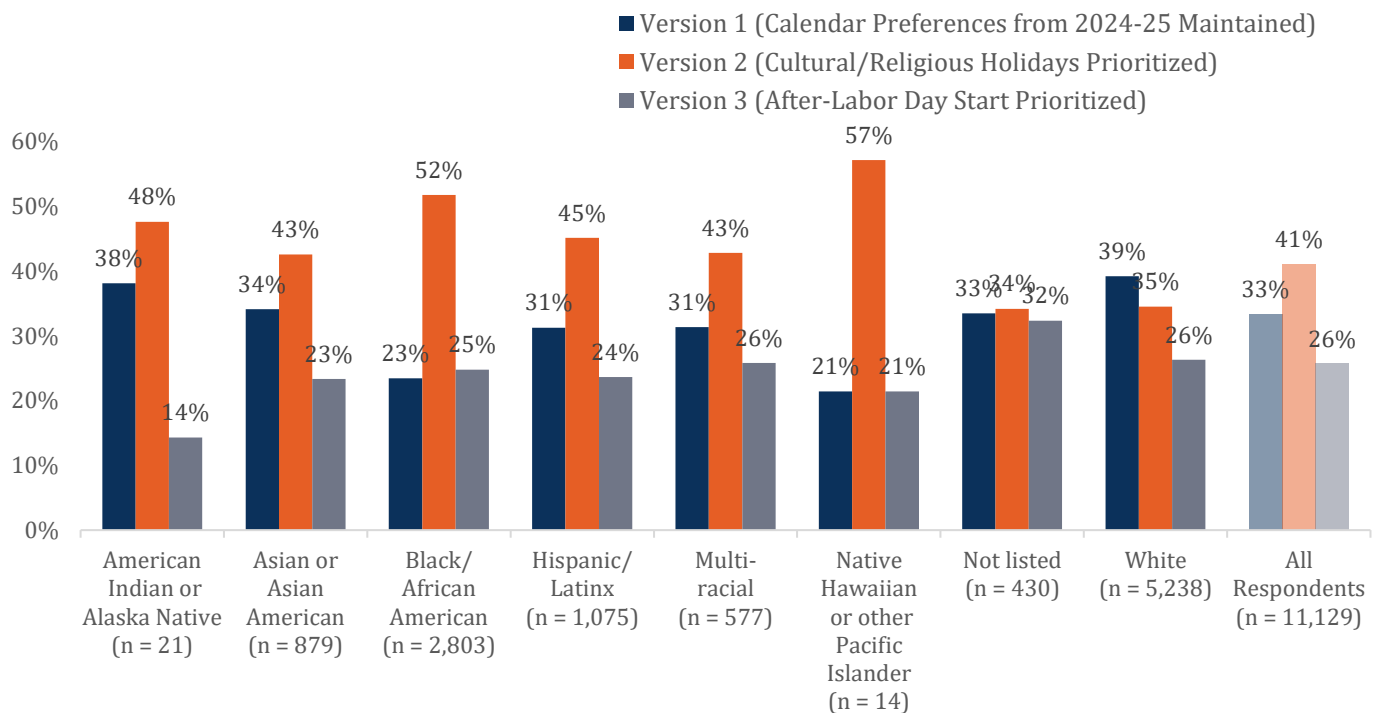
Note: The total number of respondents in this figure is larger than the sum of each race/ethnicity group because not all respondents provided race/ethnicity information. "Not listed" was a race/ethnicity category provided in case any respondents did not identify with the other options provided

Reasons for 2026-27 Preferences: Results from Analysis of Open-Ended Comments

Themes from Respondents Who Preferred the 2026-27 Calendar Version 1

Seven themes emerged from the responses about why Version 1 was preferred. The three most frequent were the reasonable start date, the long Spring Break, and the overall number of days off, which many proponents of Version 1 considered adequate.

Version 1 for 2026-27 was the option that maintained historical preferences rather than prioritizing a later start date or additional days off, and was the second most popular option for 2026-27. The most frequent positive comments were about the academic year start date, which many respondents called "reasonable" and "balanced" or noted it was "not too early." The five full days of Spring Break were appreciated by a large number of respondents. Many respondents were happy with the number of breaks and holidays in Version 1, noting there was sufficient time for staff and families to "recharge" and most cultural/religious holidays were maintained, and some noted the "solid" Winter Break with 8 days off. Some respondents commented that Version 1 was the "best balanced," with a reasonable number of days off and sufficiently long summer/later start date, and others appreciated the consistency of this calendar with previous years.

Table 6. What respondents liked about Academic Calendar 2026-27 Version 1: Themes and sample comments

Theme (in order of frequency)	Sample Comments
Reasonable start date	It starts later than the middle one, which feels way too early, but seems close enough to Labor Day (though I don't know the 2026 calendar well enough to know if it's the next Monday?) and it ends later than June 11 (which seems very early to end), and includes more Spring Break time and holidays [parent/guardian] School starts at reasonable date [student] Seems to maintain a good balance of start date and observed holidays. [Central Office or non-school-based staff] Later start, but not too late (I think Sept 8 start is too late). [other school staff] Start date is closer to my kids (in New Jersey). I can't start 3 weeks before they do! [teacher]
Spring Break	A full week of Spring Break is very much needed. I think the first version lends balance to various competing needs. [parent/guardian] We are able to start later in August and still get the 5 days for Spring Break [teacher] That we have a normal Spring Break. [student] I like the 5 days off for Spring Break. The additional days on the end were not a concern [principal/AP]

Theme (in order of frequency)	Sample Comments
Adequate number of breaks and days off	The days off are about the same as previous years. [parent/guardian] For Version 1, I like that again it includes a full Spring Break week but minimizes the additional singular weekdays off (Veterans Day, etc) which can be hard to plan for working parents. Having a week off all at once is easier to plan for as many local places will run a "Spring Break camp", whereas individual days are harder to plan for and are often not on a Monday or Friday and are thus harder to take off of work or work from home. [parent/guardian] it has a good amount of days off during the year and starts not too early. [student] Good start time, important holidays are celebrated. [teacher]
Winter Break	The 8 days Winter Break [parent/guardian] My family has enough time to recharge the energy during the school year. and enough time to prepare for the holidays break. [parent/guardian] balanced calendar for the most part maintains a solid Winter Break and a full week of Spring Break [principal/AP]
Balance between Summer Break and days off during the year	Good balance of extended summer and Spring Break. [parent/guardian] It is a good balance of when the school year begins and what days are closed throughout the year. [other school staff] It strikes a good balance between calendar 2 and 3. Provides reasonable amount of days off for winter and Spring Break. [Central Office or non-school-based staff]
Continuity with previous years	I just think we are kinda used to that schedule so it would be good. [student] its similar to calendars in the past. Families need consistency in start dates for when school begins [teacher] It's consistent with what we have done for years. [principal/AP]
Year end date	Some holidays preserved but still has a reasonable start and end to the school year [parent/guardian] Good start date. Good time off. Good end date. [parent/guardian] There are only 3 days that are now school days and students end the year mid June. [principal/AP]

KEY: Parent/guardian | Student | Teacher | Principal or Assistant Principal | Other school staff | Central Office or non-school-based staff | External Partner

When respondents were asked what they would change about 2026-27 Version 1, the most commonly requested change was for a later start date to the school year, with many specifically calling for starting after Labor Day. A large number of respondents called for Veterans Day to be a day off, and a somewhat smaller number highlighted the need for Indigenous Peoples' Day and Three Kings Day to be observed holidays. Some respondents liked the start and end dates, but wanted more days off in general. Others said they wished

the school year could end earlier (e.g., June 11), or said they did not like the school year ending on a Tuesday, as this does not align well with summer camps and child care needs.

Themes from Respondents Who Preferred the 2026-27 Calendar Version 2

Seven themes emerged from the analysis of respondents' comments about why they preferred Version 2. The four most frequent were the more inclusive holidays, higher frequency of breaks during the school year, and the earlier year end date.

Version 2, which prioritized religious and cultural holidays, was the most popular of the 3 versions of the 2026-27 calendar presented in the survey. The importance of observing a diverse range of religious and cultural holidays was by far the most common theme when respondents were asked what they liked about this version of the calendar, and some specifically highlighted the inclusion of Veterans Day, Indigenous Peoples' Day, and Three Kings Day as benefits to this calendar, among others. In addition to those commenting on the importance of cultural inclusions, others commented that they appreciated having additional days to rest and recharge over the course of the year, and some said they appreciated having a full week for Spring Break or a longer Winter Break. Many respondents also appreciated that the school year ended early (June 11), and others commented that they liked the earlier start date since it was better for continuity of student learning and a variety of other reasons.

Table 7. What respondents liked about Academic Calendar 2026-27 Version 2: Themes and sample comments

Theme (in order of frequency)	Sample Comments
More inclusive holidays	Let the kids find out about different cultural holidays. We like that. [parent/guardian]
	I don't celebrate all culture holidays but this is America and we should at least celebrate Veterans Day!! And should recognize the importance of other holidays from people of other cultures. [parent/guardian]
	I like it gives students of all backgrounds to celebrate their holiday instead of being forced to go to school. [student]
	The calendar is culturally competent and builds in Mental Health breaks for students and staff. [principal/AP]
	Religion plays an important part of the students' life and we should at least get them to be off so everyone feel equal. [other school staff]
	It shows SDP is recognizing various cultural identified The District is diverse. More breaks/ days off during the school year is appreciated. Even if the SY has to start earlier. [Central Office or non-school-based staff]
	The preferred Version 2 acknowledges the diversity of the student population and values diversity while providing opportunity for all to celebrate with loved ones and feel a sense of inclusivity. [external partner]

Theme (in order of frequency)	Sample Comments
More breaks during the school year	more days off spread throughout the year. [parent/guardian] All the Major holidays and the breaks in between to recharge. [principal/AP] All the days observed! It was amazing to see each month broken up with days sprinkled off throughout the year (except April). We need to minimize teacher burn out and this calendar is the best option for that. [other school staff] Days off are good for mental health and student behavior. [external partner]
Year end date	They get many days off and school ends closer to the beginning of June. [parent/guardian] We get out on the 11th of June and think that isn't too bad [student] Ending school as early as possible should be the priority. Students and staff typically begin to coast and learning fades quickly. [teacher]
Spring Break	Prioritizes holidays many parents also have off from work so time can be spent together. Spring break of five days instead of ridiculous 2 [parent/guardian] That we have included many cultural holidays and still receive 5 days for Spring Break. [teacher] I am OK with starting on August 18th, I want a full week of Spring Break, its needed after all the testing we do, or if the break is needed before PSSA testing... . [other school staff]
Year start date	I prefer they don't go back to school for one day then have off which would have happened with the first version and I feel like the third version was too late of a start. [parent/guardian] Mid-August start to shorten time without summer childcare (camps are typically closed in later August). [parent/guardian] Most school year holidays. Every other school district starts before Labor Day. [teacher] Earlier start to the school year is the most productive for student learning. [principal/AP] Early start, earlier paycheck (no summer pay) [other school staff]
Specific holidays included	This is the only Version that respected a day for veterans. The other two calendars are very distasteful [parent/guardian] Indigenous people day off [parent/guardian] Veteran's day and Three Kings day are observed. [Central Office or non-school-based staff] Having Three Kings Day off and being able to spend that day with my family celebrating like the old days. [teacher] Veteran's day is back. There are students and staff who observe this day in honor of their family members who have served voluntarily or by draft. They should not have to be penalized to observe this day. [principal/AP] More inclusive with Indigenous People day. School should have never removed Indigenous People day - despite the issue with Columbus…Veterans Day should always be present. As noted before, holidays should be maintained [other school staff]

Theme (in order of frequency)	Sample Comments
Winter Break	We get more breaks on cultural holidays and breaks, and we don't have a shorter holiday break [student] Observance of religious holidays, extended time for Christmas break. [principal/AP]

KEY: Parent/guardian | Student | Teacher | Principal or Assistant Principal | Other school staff | Central Office or non-school-based staff | External Partner

With respect to what they would change about Version 2 of the 2026-27 calendar, respondents' comments were similar to comments about Version 1. Many respondents said they would prefer for the school year to start later, or specifically requested that students start after Labor Day. As with Version 1, inadequate air conditioning to support the hot August weather was a source of concern for the start date, and a few suggested half days for the first week of school to mitigate this. Some respondents suggested dropping a few holidays or shortening breaks to be able to end the school year earlier or start the school year later, although specific suggestions varied, while others requested additional days off for Easter Monday, Election Day, Passover, Yom Kippur or Diwali. Some respondents suggested adjusting Spring Break to wrap around the Easter holiday weekend and include Easter Monday.

Themes from Respondents Who Preferred the 2026-27 Calendar Version 3

Four themes emerged from the responses about why Version 3 was the preferred version: the pre-Labor Day start, longer Summer Break, fewer holidays over the course of the school year, and the inclusion of what many respondents considered to be the "major" holidays.

Version 3, which prioritized starting after Labor Day, was the least popular of the 2026-27 calendar versions presented, but was favored by more than one third (35%) of parents/guardians who responded to the survey. Respondents who liked Version 3 most frequently cited August heat and lack of consistently available air conditioning in schools, attendance challenges related to the heat and family expectations that school should start after Labor Day, and childcare challenges for staff if they are required to start work earlier in August. Many respondents also appreciated having a longer Summer Break for enriching summer activities and family travel, for staff who work over the summer, and to give more time to prepare for school reopening (e.g., professional development and building maintenance). Many parents/guardians and staff liked the idea of having fewer "one-off" holidays, which require child care arrangements. Other stakeholders liked that "major" holidays were respected, and commented that holidays were "adequate" in Version 3.

Table 8. What respondents liked about Academic Calendar 2026-27 Version 3: Themes and sample comments

Theme (in order of frequency)	Sample Comments
Starting after Labor Day	Again, I like the later start because it allows a longer summer break. School is hot and not air conditioned in all areas. Even hotter for teachers starting mid-August. I would rather have a long summer and shave a few days elsewhere, instead of finding care for days throughout the year when my job does not observe the same holidays. [parent/guardian] After Labor Day start is always the most equitable choice until HVAC systems in District buildings are fully upgraded. [parent/guardian] I just want to start school in September again. [parent/guardian] Student typically return after Labor Day whatever the calendar says [teacher] after Labor Day is prioritized, so August vacation can happen. I am part of a summer program and only get two-three weeks in August to have a vacation. [teacher] Attendance rates suffer when students start before Labor Day [principal/AP] Each year the school starts after Labor seems to have most of the days half days because it's too hot in the 58 schools that don't have air conditioning. [Central Office or non-school-based staff] After Labor Day aligns more with my own child's calendar. [other school staff] Starting after Labor Day- we saw a huge decrease in attendance our first week of school this year compared to the year before when starting school before Labor Day. Families shared they were not ready, did not know or were still on vacation the last week of August. Additionally, as a school without air conditioning we were inequitably impacted by the earlier start because we had to take half days due to the heat. [other school staff]
Longer Summer Break	More summer play time for kids before school starts [parent/guardian] 2 week late start, more time for summer activities and working [student] Everyone has off in August. August is a big vacation month for families. [other school staff] the extended service time over the summer for buildings [Central Office or non-school-based staff] Version 3 provides a true summer vacation and more time for professional development. With the implementation of 3 core instructional recourses, teacher feedback is they do not have enough time to learn the programs. This schedule also provides more time for this to happen. [Central Office or non-school-based staff]
Fewer holidays	Minimizing holidays off is priority as most companies do not provide days off outside of the federal holidays. This makes childcare challenging for working families. [parent/guardian] Fewer days out of school so a more consistent learning experience for kids and scheduling for parents. Fewer days where kids are left alone or parents have to take off or pay for private childcare. [parent/guardian]

Theme (in order of frequency)	Sample Comments
Major holidays honored	MLK Day is still honored and the lesser holidays are not. [parent/guardian] It's prioritized belonging and recognition of all major religions holidays and also keeping kids and teachers in a good place for academic year and needed time off to keep balance. [parent/guardian] after Labor Day start, most holidays are off, some students may need to take additional days off, but it's not the majority [external partner]

KEY: Parent/guardian | Student | Teacher | Principal or Assistant Principal | Other school staff | Central Office or non-school-based staff | External Partner

When asked what they would change about Version 3 of the 2026-27 calendar, its proponents most frequently said they wished it could have a longer Spring Break to facilitate rest and travel. Many respondents commented that a two-day Spring Break was highly unusual, and predicted that many staff and families would take a full week off regardless of the calendar. Some respondents noted that if Spring Break were only two days long, it should span from Friday to Monday to include Easter Monday. Others who advocated for Easter Monday off wanted a longer Spring Break as well (e.g., 3-6 days off). Some respondents felt that a few holidays need to be added to this calendar, such as Veterans Day, Indigenous Peoples' Day (which a few respondents referred to as Columbus Day), Three Kings Day, or additional days for Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr. However, there were also a few respondents who said there were too many days off and highlighted religious or cultural holidays that should not be observed.

Summary

This survey allowed a broad range of stakeholders to provide input on the 2025-26 and 2026-27 Academic Calendar. In particular, allowing respondents to choose between multiple possible versions of the calendar for each school year yielded critical information on how stakeholders would prefer that SDP navigate the tradeoffs between school year start and end dates, days off for religious and cultural holidays, and Winter and Spring Breaks.

Among the 16,485 stakeholders who submitted a valid response to the survey:

- Calendar options for both years (2025-26 and 2026-27) that prioritized longer breaks and more frequent holidays during the school year were consistently the most popular among students, staff, and external partners, even when these options required an earlier start to the school year.
- Survey respondents across different roles frequently highlighted the importance of inclusivity in the holidays observed, specifically mentioning Veterans Day, Indigenous Peoples' Day, Three Kings Day, Lunar New Year, and Muslim and Jewish holidays in their feedback for both the 2025-26 and 2026-27 calendars.

- Staff, students, and parents commented frequently about the importance of longer Winter and Spring Breaks as well as frequent days off over the course of the years for supporting student and staff mental health and reducing burnout for both the 2025-26 and 2026-27 calendars.
- Parents/guardians who responded to the survey were the most vocal of the respondent groups about the value of starting the school year after Labor Day, particularly given the lack of adequate air conditioning in many schools. However, calendar versions for both the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years that started before Labor Day to prioritize religious and cultural holidays were the most popular among Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx parents, who were under-represented in the survey.

The results of this survey were reviewed and discussed by the Academic Calendar Oversight Committee, which used both quantitative and qualitative insights to inform decisions about the calendars, and the rationale for key decisions will be made available on the District website. In particular, the Committee made the decisions to return Veterans Day and Indigenous Peoples' Day to the calendar as observed days off for students and staff, and to generally prioritize longer Spring and Winter Breaks and regular days off throughout the year over a later start to the school year.

Appendix 1. Percentage of survey responses by race/ethnicity and self-identified role

	Student	Parent/ guardian	Principal/ Assistant Principal	Teacher	Other school-based staff	Central Office or non-school-based staff	External partner	Total (%)	Total (n)
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.4%	0.5%	1.0%	0.2%	22
Asian or Asian American	28.2%	10.8%	2.0%	3.1%	2.9%	4.7%	4.0%	8.0%	903
Black/African American	25.5%	25.3%	38.3%	16.6%	43.8%	33.4%	22.8%	25.5%	2,869
Hispanic/Latino/ Latina/Latine/Latinx	18.5%	12.6%	10.7%	4.8%	9.2%	6.0%	8.9%	9.9%	1,115
Multi-racial	6.7%	5.9%	5.6%	4.2%	4.8%	3.9%	5.0%	5.2%	586
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.5%	0.0%	0.1%	14
White	17.4%	41.7%	41.3%	66.3%	34.3%	46.9%	51.5%	47.0%	5,276
Not listed	3.2%	3.5%	2.0%	4.7%	4.3%	4.1%	6.9%	4.0%	444
Total (%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100% n = 11,229	
Total (n)	585	5,276	196	3,280	1,405	386	101		

Note: The total number of respondents included in this table is less than the total number of respondents because many did not respond to the optional race/ethnicity question.

Appendix 2. Academic Calendar options for 2025-26, as presented in the survey

The table below compares two possible Academic Calendars for next school year, (2025-26).
They both meet SDP requirements, but they involve different trade-offs depending on when the school year starts. To see detailed versions of these calendars, click here**:**   Version 1   Version 2

	Version 1: Start of Year before Labor Day	**Version 2:** Start of Year after Labor Day
Key Calendar Factors		
First Day of School *for Staff*	Tuesday, August 19, 2025	Tuesday, August 26, 2025
First Day of School *for Students*	Monday, August 25, 2025	Tuesday, September 2, 2025
Last Day of School	Friday, June 12, 2026	Friday, June 12, 2026
Holidays Within School Year *Required Holidays: Thanksgiving (November); Christmas (December); New Year's Day (January); Memorial Day (May); Independence Day (July)*		
Labor Day off (September)	Yes	Yes
Rosh Hashanah off (September)	Yes	Yes
Yom Kippur off (October)	Yes	Yes
Indigenous Peoples' Day off (October)	No *(In-School Day of Learning)*	
Diwali off (October)	No	No
Veterans Day off (November)	Yes	No
Three Kings Day off (January)	No	No
Martin Luther King Day off (January)	Yes	Yes
Presidents' Day off (February)	Yes	Yes
Lunar New Year off (February)	Yes	No
Eid al-Fitr off (March)	Yes	Yes
Good Friday off (April)	Yes	Yes
Eid al-Adha off (May)	Yes	Yes
Winter and Spring Recess		
Winter Break (Dec.-Jan.)	8 days	8 days
Spring Break (March-April)	5 days	2 days

Please note that these are just example calendars designed to gather feedback on stakeholder priorities. Your responses to the questions below will be used to develop the final version of the 2025-26 Academic Calendar, which may be different from these examples.

Appendix 3. Academic Calendar options for 2026-27, as presented in the survey

Next we'd like to hear your feedback on three possible Academic Calendars for the school year after next (2026-27). They all meet SDP requirements, but each prioritize a different key factor.

The District has more flexibility for the 2026-27 Academic Calendar because only 12 of the 15 historically observed holidays fall on weekdays.

You can see these in calendar format here: Version 1   Version 2   Version 3

	Version 1: Calendar Preferences from 2024-25 Maintained	**Version 2:** Cultural/Religious Holidays Prioritized	**Version 3:** After-Labor Day Start Prioritized
Calendar Summary	All calendar preferences from School Year 2024-25 are maintained (holidays, before Labor Day start) Maintained report card and professional development schedule/structure from previous two academic calendars (6 full day PD days, 1 full day report card day)	Earliest start date and end date Additional cultural/religious holidays observed as days off Maintained report card and professional development schedule/structure from previous two academic calendars (6 full day PD days, 1 full day report card day)	Latest start date (after Labor Day) Fewer total holidays observed as days off; shortened winter and spring recesses 7 full day PD days; all report card conference days are half days (no full day report card conferences)
Key Calendar Factors			
First Day of School *for Staff*	Tuesday, August 25th, 2026	Tuesday, August 18th, 2026	Tuesday, September 1st, 2026
First Day of School *for Students*	Monday, August 31st, 2026	Monday, August 24th, 2026	Tuesday, September 8th, 2026
Last Day of School	Tuesday, June 15th, 2027	Friday, June 11th, 2027	Tuesday, June 15th, 2027
Holidays Within School Year *Required Holidays: Thanksgiving (November); Christmas (December); New Year's Day (January); Memorial Day (May); Independence Day (July)*			
Labor Day off (September)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rosh Hashanah off (September)	Falls on Weekend		
Yom Kippur off (October)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Indigenous Peoples' Day off (October)	No *(In-School Day of Learning)*	Yes	No *(In-School Day of Learning)*
Diwali off (October)	Falls on Weekend		
Veterans Day off (November)	No	Yes	No
Three Kings Day off (January)	No	Yes	No

Martin Luther King Day off (January)	Yes	Yes	Yes
President's Day off (February)	Yes	Yes	No
Lunar New Year off (February)	Falls on Weekend		
Eid al-Fitr off (March)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Good Friday off (April)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Eid al-Adha off (May)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Winter and Spring Recess			
Winter Break (Dec.-Jan.)	8 days	8 days	7 days
Spring Break (March-April)	5 days	5 days	2 days

Please note that these are just example calendars designed to gather feedback on stakeholder priorities. Your responses to the questions below will be used to develop the final version of the 2025-26 Academic Calendar, which may be different from these examples.