

SY23-24 School Calendar Update

Dr. Elizabeth Homan, Superintendent



Agenda



Arlington Public Schools
Education That Empowers

-
- Calendar Committee Overview and Context
 - Survey Results: Staff and Families
 - Recommendations for SY 23-24
 - Next Steps for Future Calendars

APS Calendar Committee



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- All families and educators invited to join/express interest in Fall 2022
- Members:
 - Julianna Keyes - AEA President
 - Paul Schlichtman - School Committee
 - Bill Hayner - School Committee
 - Lori Pescatori - Staff Member
 - Janine Duffy - Staff Member
 - Ellie Adair - APS Parent
 - Carmen Lopez - APS Parent
 - Nandana Mewada - APS Parent
- Met 6 times November-January

Three topics:

- Religious Holidays
- Conferences (timing, format, frequency)
- Format / readability

Why these topics?

- Inquiries from staff and families about why certain days are “off” and others are not;
- Ongoing discussions about role of religious conversations and celebrations in schools;
- Ability to address these topics in a non-bargaining year.

Survey Results: Staff



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“Please choose the option that applies to you: I will / will not work on this day if school is open.”
The following number of staff (410 responses total) reported that they “would not work” on the following days:

- **Rosh Hashanah: 48**
- **Yom Kippur: 47**
- **Christmas: 330**
- **Good Friday: 127**

Having established the Jewish High Holy Days as no-school days for years now, and with the increased incidences of anti-semitism in our schools and nation at large, deciding now to reverse course and have school on those days feels tone deaf.

I would prefer fewer days off, especially in the fall since, it makes it difficult to schedule all of the students I have to see weekly/monthly per their IEPs. I would rather fewer days off and a shorter school year.

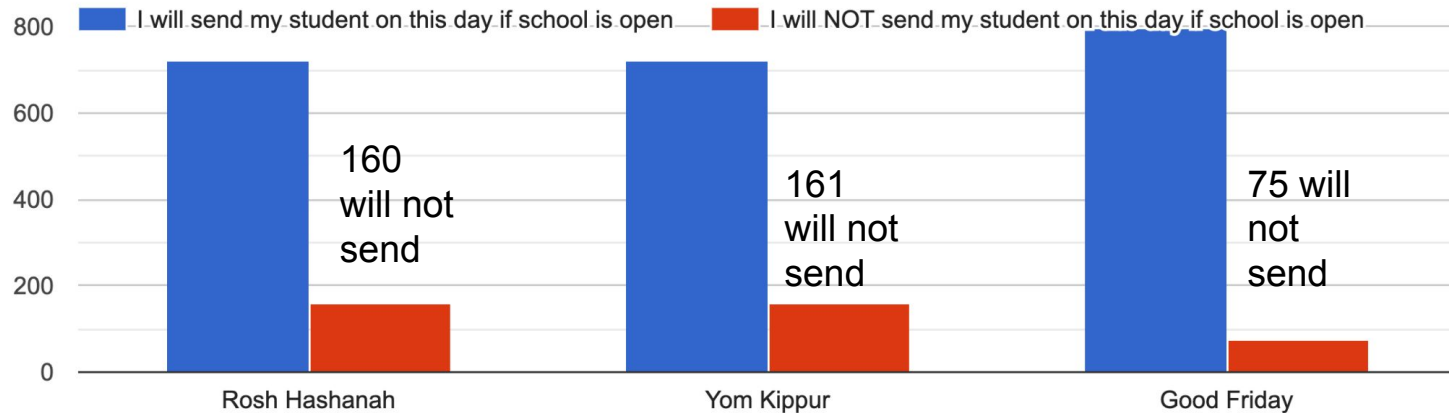
Survey Results: Families



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Please indicate whether you will send your student on the days listed below if APS Schools are open.

892 Families Responded



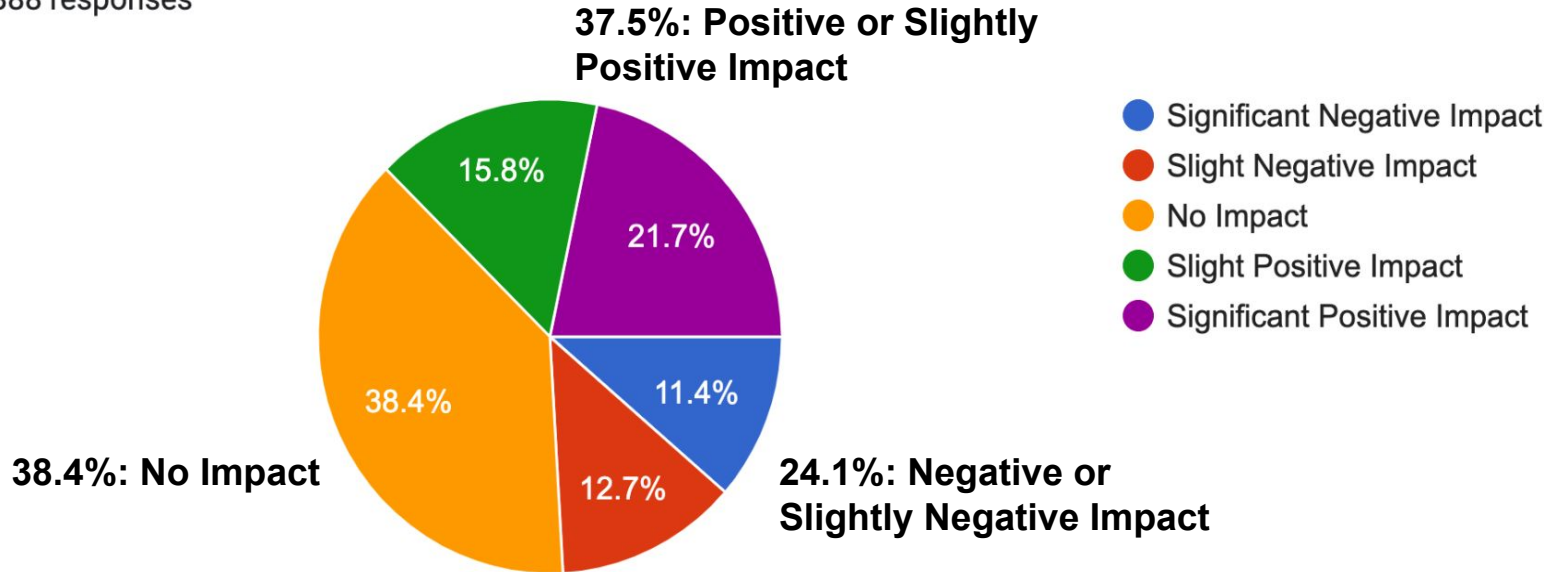
Survey Results: Families



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What impact would elimination of days off for the specific religious holidays named above have on your family, if any?

888 responses



Survey Results: Families



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My family is Jewish and we observe the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It means so much to us that our children are not further alienated from the majority of their peers by honoring the High Holy Days. All the students having those days off sends a signal to the larger community that diversity exists, that we exist, matter, and are welcome here.

We must either find and pay for childcare (not easy to find!), or a parent must take a vacation day so our child is cared for. Vacation days have a quantifiable monetary cost that is significant. Those days also reduce the time we can spend together as a family. These three holidays, in conjunction with other special school days, cost a lot of money!

I really appreciate APS's efforts to address the religious holiday issue, and hope whatever direction the district takes, it first and foremost acknowledges the growing diversity of our community... even if that means eliminating most religious holidays, so as not to leave others out.

As a rabbi with a student on an IEP in Arlington schools, it is very important to me that our family's religious practices be accommodated. My son would get extremely behind and have trouble getting caught up if he had to miss 3 days of school in the first month every year, just to observe our holy days.

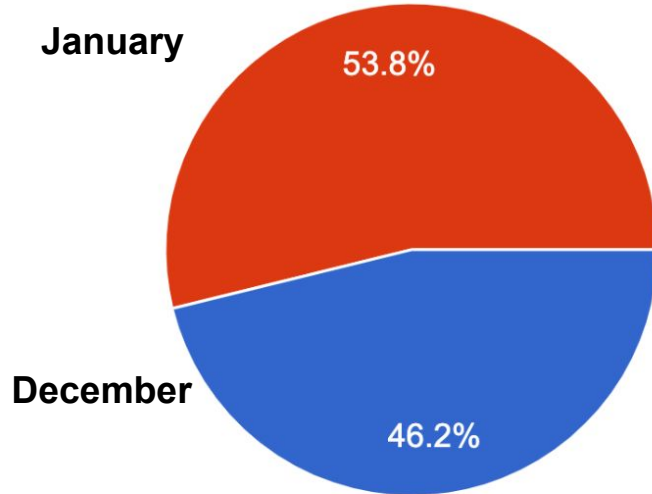
Our jobs do not give us these days off and we get limited PTO. Finding alternate childcare for 3 children for these days is extremely difficult and we don't have family around.

Survey Results: Families

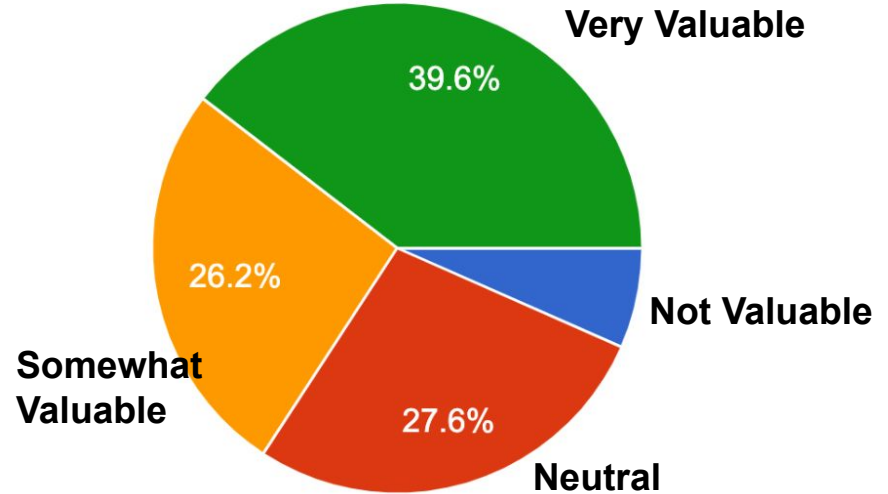


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Best Month for Elementary Conferences?



Potential Value of Additional Elementary Conferences?



Calendar Recommendation



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- No changes to existing holiday observances for the SY23-24 Calendar;
- Delay development of three years of school calendars at a time for another year to allow for further research and conversation on this topic;
- Introduce options for childcare for families during closure dates with the biggest impact on working families, beginning in SY23-24 with Rosh Hashanah and Good Friday (Yom Kippur falls on a Sunday), and assess cost implications of these options;
- Assess the connection between early-year absenteeism for low-income families and the impact of early days off on absenteeism; and
- Continue conversations in affinity-based focus groups with Arlington faith communities and working families this spring and summer.

Next Steps



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- Draft SY 23-24 Calendar available for Committee review and comment this evening (1st read);
- APS still needs to add conference dates and confirm early release dates;
- Discuss possibility and logistics of “vacation day” programming with after-school care providers and/or other partners;
- Explore tuition subsidies for vacation care for students from low-income families;
- Plan affinity-based focus groups with faith communities and working families, with an holistic approach to understanding and better supporting their experiences with APS.