

A CARING CALENDAR

Fairfax County Public Schools
Office of Communication and Community Relations

8115 Gatehouse Road, Falls Church, VA 22042
571-423-1655 | occr@fcps.edu | www.fcps.edu

Type of School/Organization

PreK-12 School District: 180,000 students

Number of Communication Staff: 26

2022 NSPRA
Gold Medallion Award Entry
Special Communication
Projects/Campaigns



CARING
CULTURE

COUNTING OUR VALUE INSTEAD OF DAYS

A CARING CALENDAR

Counting Our Value Instead of Days

SYNOPSIS

The development of FCPS' 2021-22 School Year Calendar was contentious and damaging to the school division's brand. The Fairfax County School Board was divided over religious differences at a time when they needed to be seen as working together to navigate the changes and challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Board member disputes played out publicly – on the dais and on social media – creating additional concerns in the community regarding FCPS' ability to make well-thought out decisions. Additionally, the adoption of the 2021-22 School Year Calendar appeared to abandon FCPS' strategic plan goal of [Caring Culture](#), making its stance on being "centered in equity" appear hollow. This erosion of trust in the community gained more traction after a public spat from two Board members over issues in the Middle East in late spring 2021. When FCPS began developing its 2022-23 School Year Calendar in October 2021, it was clear that a new approach was needed. The school division needed to own the process by designing a framework within which all decisions would be made and enacted. This was a fine balancing act between the legal requirements and cultural responsiveness on one hand, and engaging the community while still retaining ownership of the process and the outcome on the other. The process also needed to be expanded to engage and win the endorsement of the whole community, including students who had never been included before, a community who had lost faith in FCPS' ability to do the right thing by them, and staff who were tired and disengaged at the end of a long pandemic. To be successful, the campaign – though deliberately not branded – needed to not only achieve its objectives, but also reestablish transparency and trust in FCPS' decision-making across the entire community. This required showing not only that we genuinely cared, but that we were ready to listen. By the end of the campaign, trust in FCPS had transformed. Moreover, equity was back where it belonged – at the heart of our caring culture.

RESEARCH/BACKGROUND

Assessment of 2021-22 Calendar Development Process

While the development of FCPS' school year calendar has anecdotally always been cited as a contentious process, the process used in the development of the 2021-22 calendar took it to a new level.

There was no framework regarding equity, priorities, or a calendar policy. Consequently, the process for 2021-22 lasted nine months – 6 months longer than usual – due to a lack of agreement within the Board regarding the decision-making process. On [June 18, 2020](#), the School Board asked for [four religious holidays to be added to the calendar](#), then [rejected the two calendars presented by staff on February 2, 2021](#), and required two more work sessions to develop their own calendars on [March 2, 2021](#) and [March 4, 2021](#), before finally approving – in a very split vote – a compromise that worked for no one during the [March 18, 2021, Board Meeting](#).

The [2021-22 School Year Calendar Survey](#) offered no limitations. It asked parents and staff what they wanted from a calendar but not what they were willing to give up for it. The implication was that FCPS would deliver on all requests. Students and the wider community were not surveyed at all.

Representatives from 14 religious groups participated in a committee called the FCPS Religious Observance Task Force (ROTF). However, the selection process was undefined, many groups felt excluded, and those that were involved felt the task force's role was not outlined in advance. Participants believed they had the power to make adjustments to the calendar, and had the power to vote, when neither assumption was correct. This became a [contentious topic during School Board public comment](#) and a source of disagreement for the Board at the dais. The task force recommended and expected that four religious observances (Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Eid-al-Fitr, and Diwali) would become student holidays and were [publicly upset](#) when they were not included in the final draft.

The religious groups involved in the task force – including the All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS), the Durga Temple of Virginia, Hindu American Foundation, McLean Islamic Center, Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation, Sikh Foundation of Virginia, and the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) – expressed “deep disappointment” in the process [in a letter](#), excerpted below, sent to the School Board on February 9, 2021. Without advance notice to the ROTF, the Board added a third calendar which did not include the four religious holidays.

“We are troubled that FCPS’ natural progression to a more inclusive understanding of equity and diversity now stands to be thwarted,” the groups said. “We urge you not to obstruct or delay progress, but rather to move forward with confidence and conviction.”

The ROTF:

- Disputed the idea that closing schools on four extra days would significantly affect FCPS' ability to address learning loss.
- Criticized the Board for not notifying them or the public about the new proposed draft calendar.
- Noted that other jurisdictions in Northern Virginia, including Arlington, Prince William, and Loudoun counties, already recognize some or all of the holidays in question.

While staff originally presented two calendar options to the Board, both including the four religious observances (noted above) as student holidays, in February 2021, the Board postponed voting on the calendar as they could not agree on a version. The Board questioned why staff had not provided data to support why these religious days had been included.

Feelings ran so high among Board members whose beliefs aligned with the Jewish and Muslim communities, that Board members became publicly pitted against each other both at the dais and on social media around these religious days.

On March 2, 2021, the superintendent opened the School Board meeting by [“apologizing for any pain”](#) the calendar controversy had caused students, parents, and staff, and for a “divisive” calendar process. [The School Board voted to](#) direct the superintendent to develop a new calendar option with a long list of specific requirements they wished to see included (legal considerations; instructional concerns and disruption; student wellness, both socio-emotional and academic; support staff pay; absenteeism data; operational disruption; staff days off and planning time; survey

preferences; transparency and community climate; any and all equity considerations; inclusiveness; consider use of two floating holidays that could be used for religious observances or cultural celebrations). While this was intended to be a framework, it ended up being a “wish-list” which was practically impossible to fulfill.

Ahead of voting on the calendar, the Board received [16,000 emails and a petition signed by nearly 500 students](#).

The third version of the [2021-22 School Year Calendar](#) was finally approved at nearly 2 a.m., on March 18, 2021. Their vote was not aligned with the views supported in the petition. The calendar included 15 “Observance” days, which [limited new instruction, tests, athletic events, field trips](#), and other key activities. Neither the final outcome, nor the way it was approved, left the target audience groups – families, staff, students, or the broader religious community – feeling satisfied.

Community Reaction and Fall-Out

- Multiple groups across a spectrum of religions [openly](#) declared their opposition to the approved calendar, particularly those of Muslim and [Jewish](#) faiths. In a joint statement, they noted that the School Board sought to further divide the groups.
- [Members of the ROTF](#) made it publicly known that not designating “O” days as student holidays was directly against the committee’s recommendations.
- Several Board members publicly [expressed disappointment with the calendar](#).
- The lack of inclusion of students in the development process led them to feel alienated.
 - 431 [FCPS students signed a petition](#) requesting the Board [adopt a calendar option which included Jewish and Muslim holidays](#), which was ultimately rejected.
 - Students felt “O” days left students of minority faiths stigmatized if they were absent.
- In October 2021, The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of Greater Washington surveyed their community about FCPS’ 2021-22 School Year Calendar. [Informal survey results](#) highlighted the consequences of what they saw as the “refusal to adopt an equitable, inclusive calendar.”

“Rather than adopt an equitable, inclusive calendar that would alleviate administrative, academic, and emotional burdens on Jewish students, families and teachers, and therefore on the school district overall, the School Board created a system that clearly caused even greater stress for Jews, burdening them with the responsibility to enforce compliance and defend their own rights, regardless of the personal cost.”

– Guilda Franklin Siegel, JCRC Associate Director

Escalated Religious Tension: Two months after the calendar was finally approved, the two Board members who were diametrically opposed during the calendar debate had another public battle, further pitting Jews and Muslims against each other. The Board member of Muslim faith posted on her School Board social media accounts that [“Israel kills Palestinians & desecrates the Holy Land right now.”](#) This was followed by calls for her to resign. The Board member of Jewish faith spoke out against her colleague on [Twitter](#).

Media Sentiment Analysis: [Media sentiment](#) was overwhelmingly (95%) negative. Both the School Board and the school division were portrayed as untrustworthy, uncaring, out of touch with the community, and out of line with its own “commitment” to equity.

FCPS Demographics

FCPS is the largest and [third most diverse school district in Virginia](#) with 180,000 students speaking over 200 languages.

- 27% are economically disadvantaged.
- 14.4% are reported as students with disabilities.
- More than 26% of students are English learners.
- 36.8% White; 27.1% Hispanic; 19.8% Asian; 10% Black; 5.9% two or more races; 0.3% American Indian; 0.1% Native Hawaiian.

FCPS Strategic Plan

The [FCPS Strategic Plan](#) has four goals, one of which is to develop a [Caring Culture](#). The plan states that FCPS is committed to fostering a responsive, caring, and inclusive culture where all feel valued, supported, and hopeful. The goal is to see:

- 86% of students, staff, and families in 2020, and 100% in 2024 will report that they feel respected and included at school/work; and staff will view student behavior through a culturally responsive lens.

FCPS' Equity Focus

Starting in 2020, FCPS refocused its work around [equity](#), hiring its first chief equity officer, developing equity training across the district, and declaring that equity should be at the heart of all decision-making. The superintendent was known for his mantra of taking care of every student "by name and by need."

Staff Residency Data

- 66% of staff live in Fairfax County.
- 33% live in 32 different surrounding counties of cities.
- 6.4% live in Loudoun County, which adopted a calendar for 2021-22 with four religious holidays.
- 4% live in Arlington County, which adopted a calendar for 2021-22 with four religious holidays.
- 3% live in Alexandria City, which adopted a calendar for 2021-22 with four religious holidays.

[See full report on staff residency.](#)

PLANNING/ANALYSIS

To avoid a repeat of the 2021-22 process, it was critical to establish a [new, on-going calendar development process](#) with a clear framework that embraces FCPS and community values. This requires:

A **clear secular, legal framework**, while being sensitive to the cultural and religious needs of the community. This involved applying the "**agenda-setting**" theory and "**second level agenda setting**," which assume media not only tell us what to think about, but also how to think and eventually what to think of a decision. This also ensures clearly delineated parameters for community/committee involvement.

Use of the **coorientation model** that finds commonality in messaging among all key stakeholders (students, staff, families, and key community groups). Research shows that this commonality could be found in the equity and caring culture messaging, along with accommodation of diverse community needs and thoughtfulness regarding timing of messaging and engagement to avoid conflicts with major issues/cultural events or sensitivities.

Community engagement via a [Calendar Feedback Committee](#) as framed by the state with broad representation of internal and external stakeholders, and set parameters of the work and role of this committee, in line with the **diffusion of innovation theory** that identifies key opinion leaders as key components to gaining acceptance of new ideas.

Increased transparency, with engagement results reflected back to the community and key decisions/votes made at times when the community is able to watch to help build trust. The campaign was deliberately left unbranded to avoid the appearance of pushing an agenda or campaigning and to reflect the genuine nature of the public engagement.

GOAL

Reestablish FCPS as a Caring Culture and rebuild community trust.

AUDIENCE:

Primary Audience

- Religious groups who were disappointed/angry about the 2021-22 calendar process and outcome.
- School Board which has the ability to reflect unity in their approach and inspire that in the wider FCPS community.

Secondary Audience

- Parents disappointed/angry about the last calendar adoption process and who have the ability to influence the School Board.
- Staff who found last year's calendar "unworkable" and impracticable and have the ear of the School Board.
- Teachers' associations who represent staff views (leave/paid holidays).
- High school students who have reached out in the past about not having their voices heard on the calendar as well as other important issues impacting them, and have the ear of staff, principals, religious community groups, and the Board.

KEY MESSAGING:

- FCPS cares.
- We are a Caring Culture.
- Through engagement and collaboration, we can create a calendar that stakeholders will appreciate or at a minimum, understand and accept.

TIMELINE:

September 2021-January 2022

OBJECTIVES

Objective #1

The calendar will be approved on schedule by a strong majority of the 12 School Board members, with little public disagreement.

Evaluation: *Board approval of the calendar on January 27, 2022.*

Objective #2

By February 15, 2022, 2022-23 SY Calendar process and adoption will be reflected in a positive light in the majority (70%) of media articles.

Evaluation: *Analysis of media articles between the Board vote and February 15.*

Objective #3

By February 15, 2022, 2022-23 SY Calendar process and adoption will be reflected in a positive light in the broader FCPS community, including among diverse religious groups.

Evaluation: *Positive public feedback on the approved calendar and the process from the Jewish, Muslim and secular community groups.*

IMPLEMENTATION: STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1: Education/Information Strategy

- Develop a [framework](#) within which to work and share that framework in every communication.
- Clear [communications](#) to the community and Board about why the changes to the process are needed.
- Clearly outlined [Board and superintendent priorities](#).
- [Role](#) of the Calendar Feedback Committee established up front.
- [Proactive communications with clear messaging](#) around the timeline and ahead of any decision point/discussion.
- [Clear messaging about the level of engagement and the impacts of decisions](#) following any decision.
- School Board 2x2s to set parameters, goals and limitations up front
- [Talking points that reflect this framework](#) and highlight the aspect of the process that is being discussed in each set of talking points.
- Feedback within each aspect of the engagement around what can/cannot be done; the impact of certain decisions; who those decisions benefit:
 - [Community and staff webinars](#).
 - [Webinar live polling](#).
 - [Survey results](#).
 - Documented [views and recommendations](#) of the Calendar Feedback Committee.
- Attorney present at the first Calendar Feedback Committee meeting to establish the legal secular framework.
- Add [language to the survey](#) to explain that this is a survey to give feedback on possible alternative options, and not to establish a wish-list for next year's calendar.

STRATEGY 2: Student Voice Strategy

- Survey of 87,000 [middle and high school students](#) with direct email links.
- Communication and engagement of principals around the importance of student voice.
- The [student School Board representative](#) in the work sessions to give feedback.
- Establish the strategic plan goal of [Caring Culture](#) - from the [Portrait of a Graduate](#) - as central to the process.

STRATEGY 3: Third Party Endorsement Strategy

- Carefully review those invited to participate on the [Calendar Feedback Committee](#) to ensure inclusivity rather than exclusivity.
- Cite the state requirement/outline for engagement/community feedback in every communication.
- Seek public endorsement by the Jewish and Muslim communities who had been publicly opposed to FCPS' 2021-22 calendar in the media and on social media.
- School Board [conversations](#) to reflect the impact of their actions on community endorsement.
- [Proactive communications with clear messaging](#) to set parameters, goals and limitations for community participation/involvement up front.
- Adjust the title of Calendar Committee to Calendar Feedback Committee to clarify its role.

STRATEGY 4: Media Strategy

- Proactively [cultivate media](#) throughout the process to ensure they understand the parameters, the process and how we are responding to the feedback we are receiving.
- Build out media lists that ensure the message is getting to all who need to receive it in the broader community.
- Support media interviews to ensure the media has the full picture of the updated process.

EVALUATION

The [School Year Calendar for 2022-23 was approved](#) as presented, with little dissent, and on schedule, by 11 School Board members with one abstention, easily meeting Objective #1. Board members who are personally connected with the Muslim and Jewish religions both voted for the calendar. Prior to the vote, one Board member who had been part of the conflict the previous year sent a message saying she understood that although the calendar might not work perfectly for all, it was a good compromise, culturally responsible, and reflected our values of a caring culture.

Just prior to the Board meeting, the superintendent called our communications team. He was clearly nervous that religion would be raised at the dais, asking for the words “equity-focused” to be removed from the headline of the [final draft of the news release](#). This was disappointing, as it left out our core message. However, not only was the [media coverage](#) overwhelmingly positive (78%) helping us meet Objective #2, but 78% of all coverage led with “equity” and a “caring culture” as the top line, indicating that the messaging throughout the campaign had been so strong, it did not matter that the final communication did not mention equity per se. It was an indicator that the message had already been delivered to and received by the media, who carried it for us into the broader community and helped us meet Objective #3.

The approved calendar was welcomed by staff, [students](#), [families](#), [media](#), and the broader community. The [Jewish Council of Greater Washington](#), [Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council](#), and [Hindu American Foundation](#) publicly communicated their support of both the final calendar and the process, meeting Objective #3.

Trust increased year-on-year from February 2021 to February 2022 when measured through:

- Media coverage went from a [80% negativity rate](#) to a [78% positivity rate](#)
- [Facebook](#) sentiment (positive vs. negative) went from a ratio of 2:1 to 18:1

When equity is also added to this mix, trust in the school division appears to completely flip from a [95% negativity rate](#) to a [89% positivity rate](#) over the course of the process, reflecting a nearly 94% change in the perception of FCPS’ caring culture value.

NEXT STEPS

The approval of the 2022-23 School Year Calendar resulted in the need for a second [communication plan](#) to ensure all staff understand the changes to the Observance and Cultural days. This included a detailed package of content providing information and ideas for honoring and teaching awareness of other cultural observances that were not part of this year’s approved calendar.

The 2021-22 calendar development process implied families, staff and the community had an unlimited "wish list" and could change the calendar without impacting other days they had traditionally had as holidays.

2021-22 School Year Calendar Family & Staff Survey (excluded students)

When would you prefer the school year to begin?						
Responses	Combined Count	%	Employees	%	Families	%
Begin two weeks before Labor Day	12,708	21%	3,767	20%	8,941	21%
Begin one week before Labor Day	28,600	46%	10,368	56%	18,232	42%
No preference	13,955	23%	3,332	15%	10,623	25%
Other (Please specify)	6,443	10%	1,204	6%	5,239	12%
Total Responses	61,706		18,671		43,035	

When would you prefer the school year to end?						
Responses	Combined Count	%	Employees	%	Families	%
First week of June	22,078	36%	7,800	42%	13,595	32%
Second week of June	20,702	34%	7,300	39%	13,398	31%
Third week of June	3,896	6%	1,384	7%	3,278	8%
Fourth week of June	3,321	5%	1,141	6%	3,073	7%
No preference	10,992	18%	3,095	17%	9,157	21%
Other (Please specify)	716	1%	149	1%	534	1%
Total Responses	61,705		18,669		43,035	

What is your preference for Winter Break?						
Responses	Combined Count	%	Employees	%	Families	%
Winter Break should be two weeks long	45,995	74%	15,995	86%	29,758	69%
Winter Break should be less than two weeks	1,384	2%	1,384	7%	7,411	17%
No preference	1,141	2%	1,141	6%	5,153	12%
Other (Please specify)	149	0%	149	1%	713	2%
Total Responses	48,669		18,669		43,035	

What is your preference for Spring Break?						
Responses	Combined Count	%*	Employees	%*	Families	%
Spring Break should continue to follow practice of a shifting week that occurs sometime during mid-March to mid-April	32,181	52%	10,405	56%	21,776	51%
Spring Break should be a fixed week at the end of March	15,159	25%	4,575	25%	10,584	25%
No preference	12,725	21%	3,095	17%	9,630	22%
Other (Please specify)	1,639	3%	594	3%	1,045	2%
Total Responses	61,704		18,669		43,035	

"Offered no limitations"



Fairfax County PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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News You Choose

Five Things to Know This Week - June 29, 2020
Fairfax County Public Schools sent this bulletin at 06/29/2020 10:16 AM EDT

Having trouble viewing this email? View it as a Web page.



2. Parent Feedback Wanted on the FCPS 2021-22 School Year Calendar

Want to weigh in on the development of the **FCPS 2021-22 School Year Calendar**? If so, you will have a chance beginning today, Monday, June 29. You will receive an email from fcpsurvey@fcps.edu with a link to the FCPS Calendar Survey. The survey will also be available in other languages later this week.

We encourage you to keep an eye out for the survey and complete it at your earliest convenience. Employees will be invited to take a similar survey as well. The survey results will be used to inform and support FCPS staff as well as FCPS' School Board as they work to adopt the **2021-22 calendar**. All responses are confidential. If you have any questions, please email FCPSsurvey@fcps.edu.

[More information on the 2021-22 school year calendar is available online.](#)

A new last minute option was added without community engagement.

VERSION C DRAFT

Fairfax County Public Schools 2021-22 Standard School Year Calendar

July 2021	August 2021	September 2021	October 2021	November 2021

Legend

- F First Day of School
- ER 2 Hour Student Early Release
- QE End of the Quarter
- YE Last Day for Regular Classes (189 days)
- PD Professional Development Day / Student Holiday
- TW Teacher Workday / Student Holiday
- H Student Holiday
- NT New Teacher Training

Quarter Duration

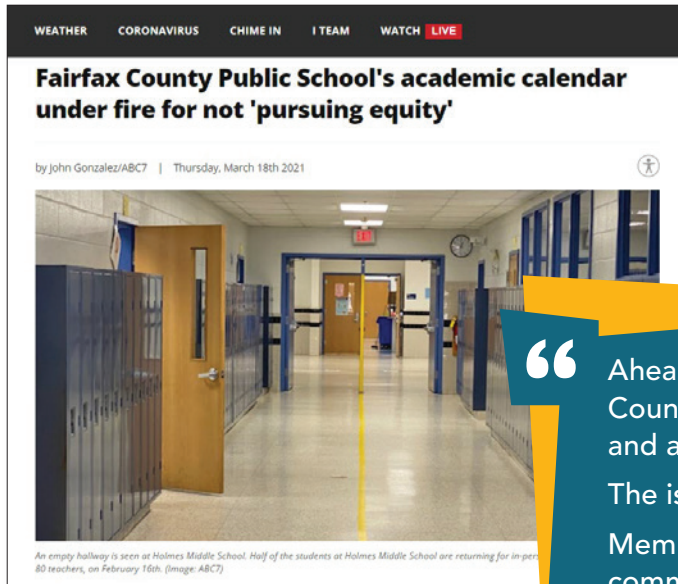
Quarter	End Date	Duration
1	October 29	47
2	January 20	43
3	April 7	46
4	June 16	44

For Employee Work Schedules, Reference Notice 4421

Updated 1/28/21

Nor was the communication around the process shared in any language other than English.

The process for the 2021-22 calendar did not engage students, nor include the student voice.

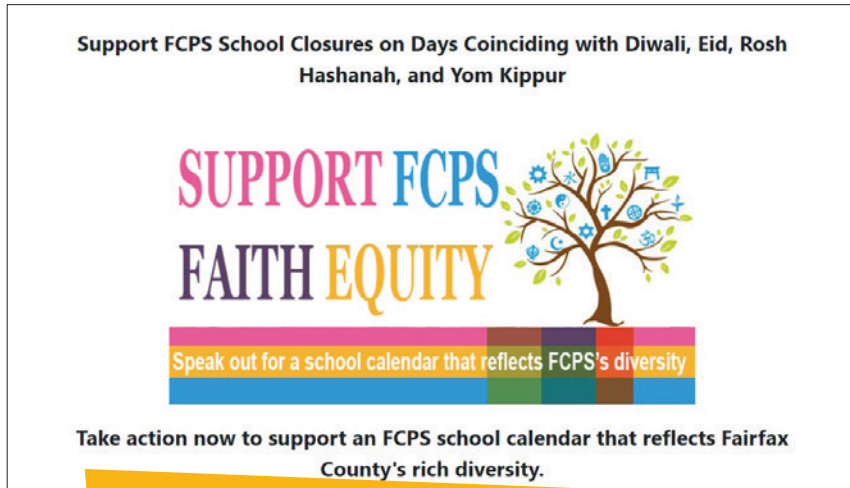


“ Ahead of Thursday’s critical vote, the Fairfax County School Board has received 16,000 emails and a petition signed by nearly 500 students. The issue? The school system’s academic calendar. Members of the Muslim, Hindu, and Jewish communities believe they are not being fairly represented and are being lied to. ”

“ Fairfax county remains a hold out in terms of adjusting its school calendar to reflect that diversity. ”



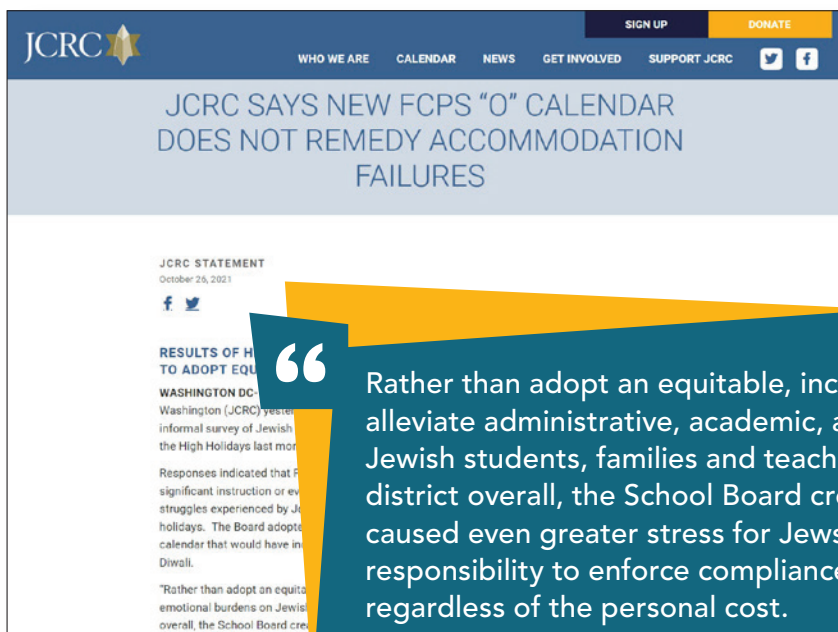
Research showed that the process ran contrary to FCPS' value of a Caring Culture and an environment that embraces all.



“

Several months ago FCPS released two proposed calendar options for the 2021-2022 academic year that for the first time included school closures on days coinciding with Diwali, Eid, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur (Calendar Option A and Calendar Option B). In early February, the School Board, without any meaningful advance notice, added a third calendar option for consideration (Calendar Option C), which does not include any of the four recommended closure days. On March 2nd the board directed FCPS staff to develop a 4th option for its consideration, which may or may not include these days off.

”



“

Rather than adopt an equitable, inclusive calendar that would alleviate administrative, academic, and emotional burdens on Jewish students, families and teachers, and therefore on the school district overall, the School Board created a system that clearly caused even greater stress for Jews, burdening them with the responsibility to enforce compliance and defend their own rights, regardless of the personal cost.

– Guilda Franklin Siegel, JCRC Associate Director


”

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Education

Fairfax declines to add four Jewish, Muslim and Hindu holidays to calendar

By Hannah Natanson
March 19, 2021



A Diwali celebration at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir temple in Beltsville, Md., in 2018. (Evelyn Hockstein for The Washington Post)

The Fairfax County School Board declined Thursday night to add four Jewish, Muslim and Hindu holidays to the 2021-2022 calendar, voting instead to adopt 15 "Observance" days, on which students and staffers will not be penalized for taking time off.

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Fairfax Co. School Board approves academic calendar with additional days off for religious holidays

Scott Gelman | sgelman@wtop.com
January 28, 2022, 4:45 PM

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Virginia's largest school system has approved a calendar for the next academic school year that features more time off for religious holidays and includes Veterans Day as a student holiday.

Ten Fairfax County School Board members voted Thursday night to adopt the proposed calendar, with two abstaining.

The school system says the calendar aligns with [those surrounding districts use and includes more holiday observance days.](#)

The county's [calendar planning process has been contentious in the past](#), with community religious leaders expressing frustration that the 2021-2022 academic year includes days off for holidays such as Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Eid al-Fitr. The school board modified its process by seeking input from a feedback committee.

abc7 NEWS ON YOUR SIDE NEWS WEATHER CORONAVIRUS CHIME IN I TEAM WATCH LIVE

Fairfax County adds religious holidays to school calendar but denies time off from classes

by ABC7 News | Friday, March 19th 2021



Fairfax County Public Schools

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Letters to the Editor

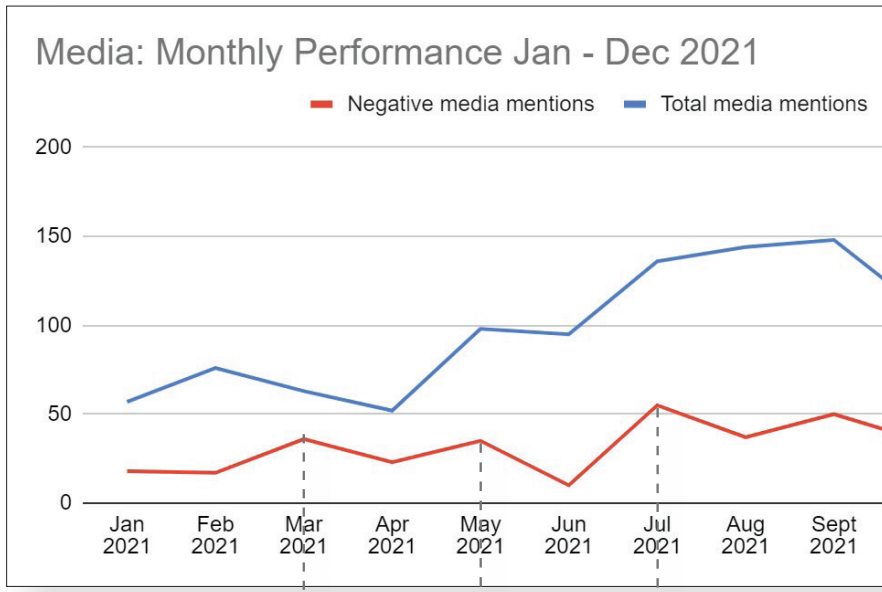
Opinion: Fairfax County was wrong to reject an inclusive calendar

March 24, 2021 at 4:30 p.m. EDT



Annandale High School, the oldest high school in Fairfax County. (Hyosub Shin/For The Washington Post)

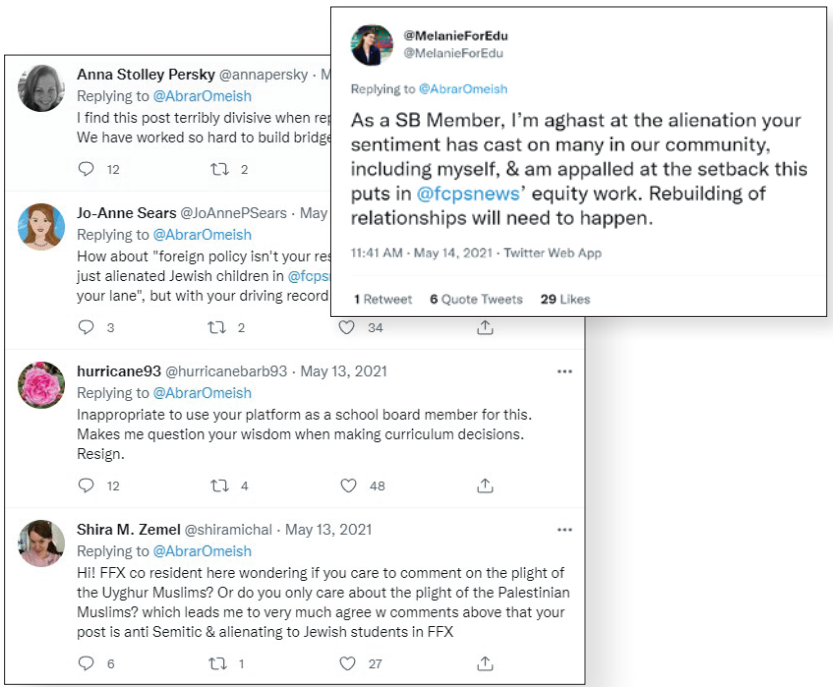
Instead of being diffused, cultural divisions that were exposed as a result of the development of the 2021-22 calendar continued; were exacerbated after the calendar was approved; and lasted throughout the remainder of the school year. Divisions between Board members and community groups that had been sparked in February exploded in May and again in June and July.



Calendar Disputes

Palestine/Israel conflict that erupted into social media and played out on Board members' social accounts.

Justice HS graduation where the Board members renewed their conflict after a student read the Pledge of Allegiance, changing it to "One Nation Under Allah". The Muslim Board member publicly supported this.



The superintendent made a public apology for the process and the "harm" it caused...



“

I'm sorry that our calendar process has been divisive," Brabrand said. "That's never been our intent, but sometimes even when you have good intentions, you can have an impact that provides hurt.

- Superintendent Scott S. Brabrand publicly apologizing for the 2020 calendar process.

”

...and drew up another option at short notice, without community engagement.



IMPLEMENTATION

When FCPS began developing its 2022-23 School Year Calendar in October 2021, it was clear that a new approach was needed. Implementation started by explaining the importance of a new process...



BRABRAND BRIEFING

FCPS Calendar Process

In its approval of the calendar for 2021-22, the School Board requested that FCPS establish a calendar development process before developing the calendar for 2022-23. This process should:

- Establish the roles of staff, Board, and community members
- Clarify the criteria and priorities used to establish annual calendars in the future, including recognition days for religious and cultural observances.



TALKING POINTS

TOPIC: 2022-23 School Year Calendar Development Process

DATE: October 20, 2021

Overview

FCPS is in the process of developing its 2022-23 School Year Calendar. We are committed to maintaining [a transparent process](#), as we work to build a calendar that is inclusive and equitable.

Framework

This year, the calendar development will be guided by a framework that clearly outlines **four** factors that FCPS has to consider when creating the school year calendar:

...and explaining the new process - and the need for a framework - to staff, families, the community and students.



How FCPS Develops Its School Year Calendar

In developing its 2022-23 School Year Calendar, FCPS gathers input from the community. Read more about the process for finalizing the calendar.

FCPS가 학년도 달력을 개발하는 방법

2022-23 학년도 달력

FCPS는 2022-23 학년도 달력을 개발 중입니다. 우리는 효율적이고 맞춤형 달력을 만들기 위해 노력하면서 투명성을 보장하기 위해 여러 달력안을 만들기 위한 프레젠테이션을 공유하고 있습니다.

مسترشدة بالقانون والسياسة والقيادة

سوف نتبع القانون.

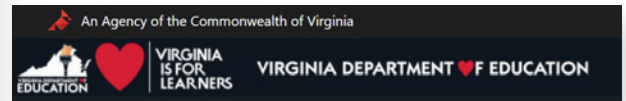
- يجب أن يحتوي التقويم على سبب علماني لإنشاء عطلة ، مثل وجود قدر كبير من حالات غياب الطلاب التي قد تؤثر على العمليات. عرض ملخص الغياب في الاحتفالات الدينية والأعياد .
- . يجب أن توفر جميع أقسام مدارس فيرجينيا 180 يوماً أو 990 ساعة تعليمية .

It required working within the framework for all messaging and communications.

Calendar Framework

Superintendent Priorities

- Focus on the school division's ability to deliver the high-quality instruction necessary for students to be successful.
- Ensure our schools are adequately staffed throughout the school year, and that teachers have opportunities to extend and deepen their learning (professional development).



Calendar Framework

School Board Priorities

- Each Board member shares what they believe are the most important considerations for the school calendar with FCPS leadership.
- The Board has final approval on the calendar.

Được hướng dẫn bởi Luật pháp

Chúng tôi sẽ tuân theo pháp luật.

- Lịch phải có một lý do riêng tư để thiết lập một ngày nghỉ đáng kể sinh viên sẽ ảnh hưởng đến hoạt động [lễ tôn giáo](#).
- Tất cả các hệ thống trường học Virginia [phải](#) tuân theo và hướng dẫn của Bộ Giáo dục Virginia (VDOE)

School Board Themes

Main Goals for Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity of instruction and learning • Emotional and mental health
Main Goals for Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased planning time and professional development • Consider the school day length & length of breaks • Minimize implications for operational employees
Main Goals for Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare burdens • Continuity • Communication of the 'why'
Top priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning time and professional development for teachers • Using data to make decisions about the calendar • Childcare/ family burdens
Religious/Cultural Observances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "O" days presented challenges. Consistency in understanding these days across the Division is important. • Additional understanding and resources in regards to religious and cultural observances

Đang rã.
 là lãnh đạo tôn giáo và Ấn Độ
 liên pháp lý và
[hỏi trên web về](#)

It also required framing the conversations.

Calendar Feedback Committee Priorities by Group - 12/1/21

Group	Priority 1
Group 1	Add Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Diwali, and Hanukkah into the calendar



Outcomes

- 01**
Understand the role of the members of the committee
- 02**
Understand the guidelines provided by the state and FCPS Regulations
- 03**
Identify priorities from each group the members represent
- 04**
Identify themes from the groups' priorities

with PD days. (2- or 3-hour early release is difficult for families.)
Aligning to other districts
Additional breaks
Additional well-being
Students, and
After marking

professional development, scheduled over 2 full days
Group 5
2 week winter break

Role of the Committee Members

- Share the priorities from each group whom you represent
- Review data from community and staff
- Provide considerations for the 2022-23 calendar development

The committee is not making decisions, rather providing input.



Do not add unpaid days off.	days to the calendar and make those days asynchronous to continue student learning. Leverage snow days to offer student holidays for O days and PD days.
-----------------------------	--

The Calendar Survey explained that adding days would also mean losing other days.

The remaining questions ask you

3. The beginning of the school year and the end of the school year. What is your preference?

- Begin two weeks before the first or second week
- Begin one week before the second or third week
- No preference
- Other (please specify)

4. The winter and spring break. Historically in FCPS, a long winter break has been a week. What is your preference?

- Long Winter and Spring breaks, allowing an earlier end to the school year
- Shorter Winter and Spring breaks, allowing an earlier end to the school year
- Shorter Winter Break only, allowing a slightly earlier end to the school year
- Shorter Spring Break only, allowing a slightly earlier end to the school year
- No preference
- Other (please describe): _____

5. What is your preference for the timing of Spring Break?



Middle and high school students were able to participate in the Calendar Survey for the first time.

A webinar ensured FCPS was listening to all voices - in eight languages and American Sign Language - and relayed feedback in real time.



Feedback Opportunity: Live Polling

- Look for the pop-up window.
- The moderator will read each question, along with the choices, and will pause to allow you time to respond.
- Select one poll option and submit.

Polls


Poll Question #1

Poll ended | 1 question | 0 of 0 (0%) participated

1. Poll Question #1 (Single Choice) *

0/0 (0%) answered

Choice 1	(0/0) 0%
Choice 2	(0/0) 0%
Choice 3	(0/0) 0%





Calendario del año escolar 2022-23



Data driven summaries of what we heard were reflected back to the community.

Other Jurisdictions' 2022-23 Calendars

Significant Dates	Loudoun County Public Schools (Adopted)	Prince William County Public Schools (Adopted)	Arlington Public Schools (Adopted)	Alexandria City Public Schools (Draft)	Montgomery County Public Schools (Approved)
First Day of School	8/25	8/22	8/29	8/22 or 8/26	8/29
Rosh Hashanah - Monday 9/26	Teacher Workday	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday
Yom Kippur - Wednesday 10/5	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday
Diwali - Thursday 10/24	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday	Teacher Workday

Survey Results Highlights

- Satisfaction with Calendar**
 - Employees and families were somewhat satisfied with the current year's calendar.
 - Students were somewhat happy with the current year's calendar.
- Start of School**
 - Employees and students preferred starting two weeks before Labor Day.
 - Families preferred starting one week before Labor Day.
- Breaks**
 - Employees, families and students preferred long winter and spring breaks.
- Timing of Spring Break**
 - Employees thought Spring Break should rotate to match the timing of Easter.
 - Parents thought Spring Break should be a fixed week.
 - Students were evenly split between a fixed and a rotating Spring Break.
- Alignment with Neighboring Counties**
 - Employees thought calendar alignment was extremely important.
 - Families thought calendar alignment was extremely unimportant.
 - Students thought calendar alignment was somewhat important.
- Teacher Workdays**
 - Employees and families preferred teacher work days be two full days, which would be designated a student holidays. (Students were not asked this question.)

Complete survey results are attached to the agenda item (19,535 employees, 38,933 families and 14,103 students surveyed).

11



2022-23 School Year Calendar Survey Highlights

See what parents/guardians, staff, and middle and high school students had to say about the creation of FCPS' 2022-23 Calendar.

Calendar Survey results are one of several factors to be considered when developing the 2022-23 school year calendar.

Survey Participation

- 72,092 individuals participated.
 - 38,933 families; 23% family response rate.
 - 19,574 staff; 71% staff response rate.

Student Survey

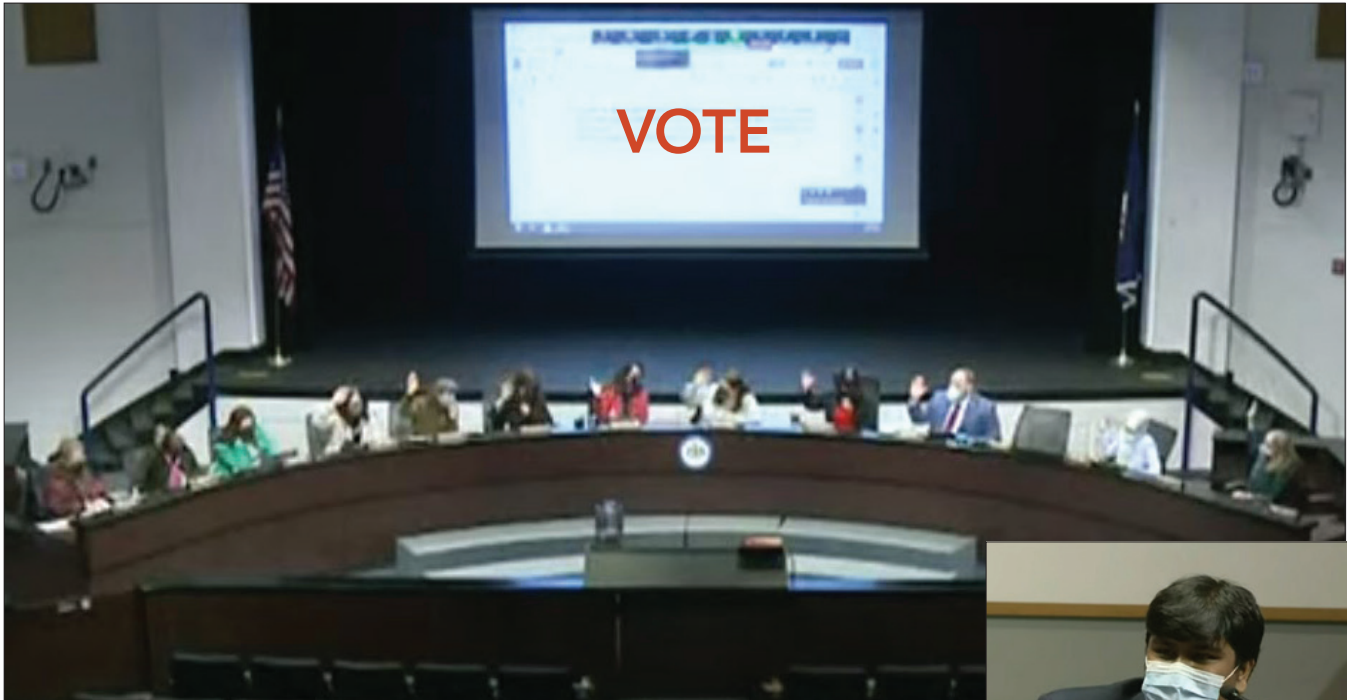
83% responded that they were somewhat or extremely happy with the current calendar.

Preference for the timing of Spring Break was inconclusive.

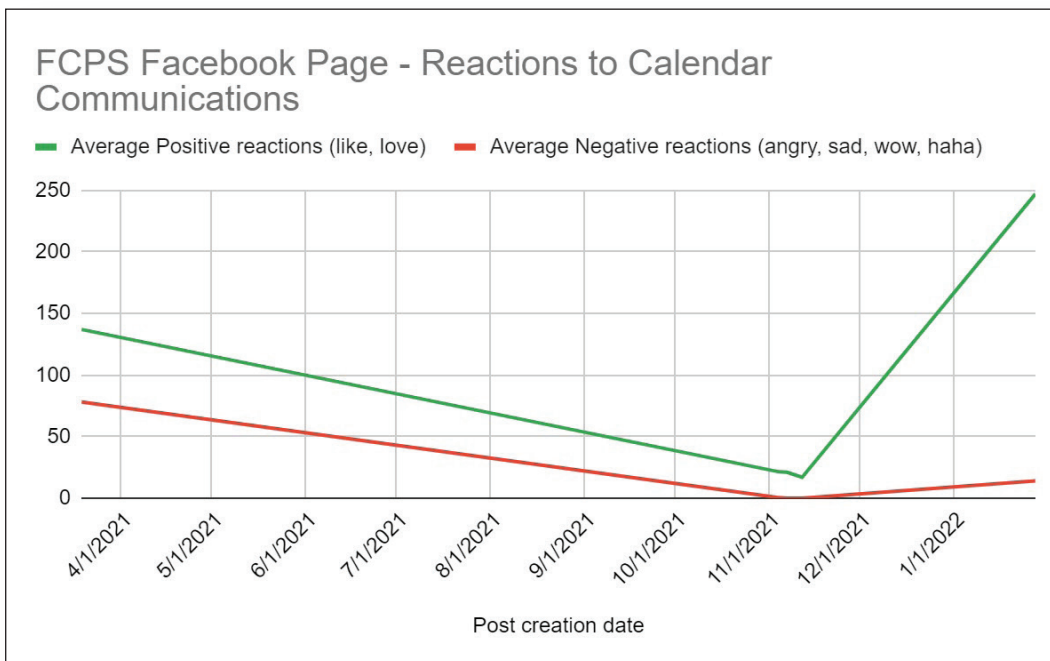
67% responded that it is extremely or somewhat important that student holidays align with neighboring counties.

EVALUATION

On January 27, 2022, the Fairfax County School Board voted to adopt [FCPS' 2022-23 School Year Calendar](#). Of the 12 Board members, 11 voted to approve the calendar; one member abstained.

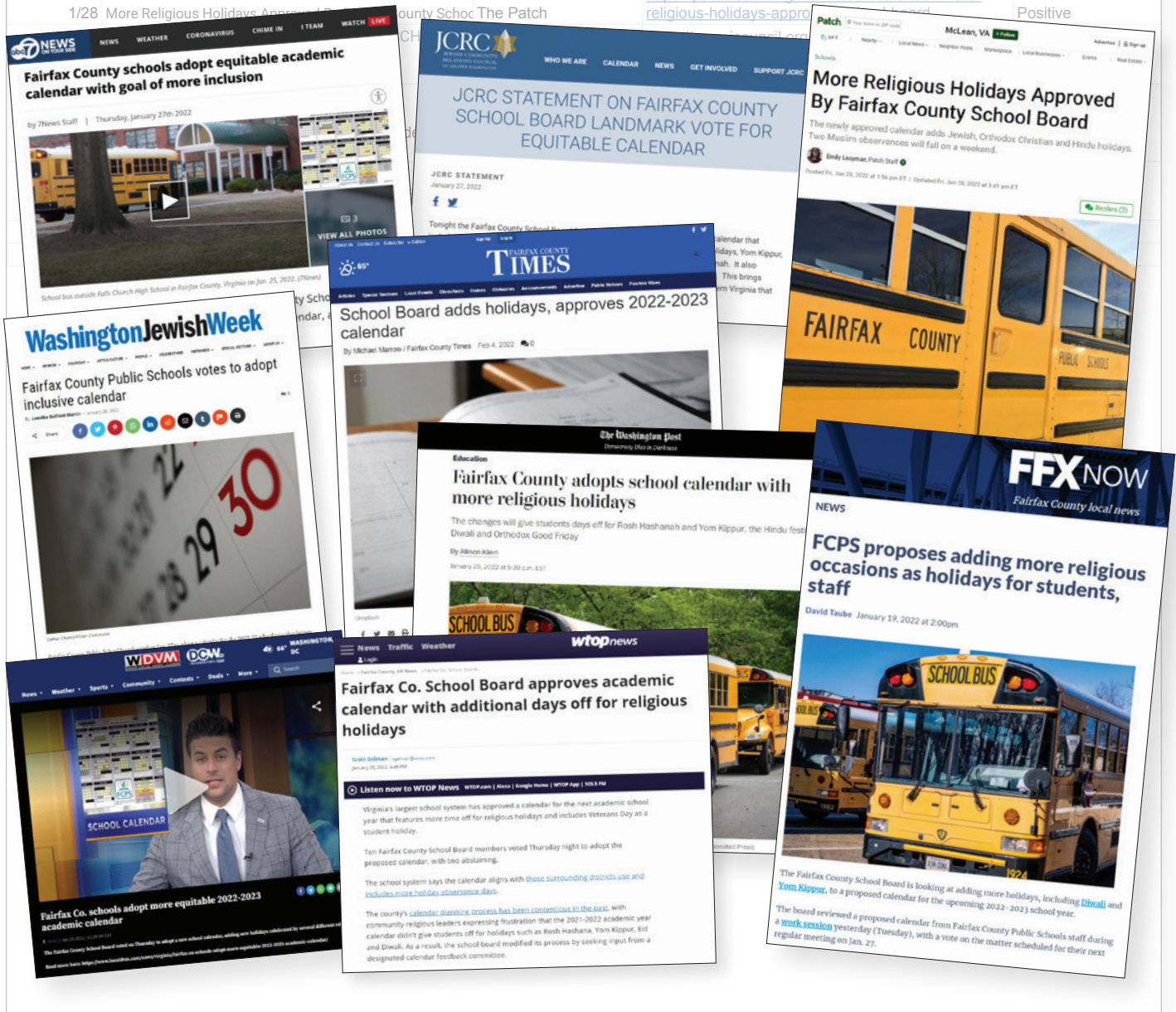


For the first time, the vote took student voice into account.



Media coverage called out the calendar process for its focus on equity and FCPS' Caring Culture.

Date	Title	Publication	Link	Comment
2022				
2/4	School Board adds holidays, approves 2022-2023 calendar	Fairfax Times	https://www.fairfaxtimes.com/articles/fairfax_county/school-board-adds-holidays-approves-2022-2023-calendar/article_06a06f48-851f-11ec-8374-bb6b0d7d00b4.html	Neutral
1/29	Fairfax County schools adopt equitable academic calendar with goal of more inclusion	WDVM	https://www.localdvm.com/video/fairfax-co-schools-adopt-more-equitable-2022-2023-academic-calendar/7404575/	Positive
1/29	Fairfax County adopts school calendar with more religious holidays	Washington Post	https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/01/29/fairfax-schools-calendar-religious-holidays/	Positive
1/28	Fairfax Co. School Board approves academic calendar with additional days off for religious holidays	WTOP	https://www.wtop.com/fairfax-county/2022/01/fairfax-co-school-board-approves-academic-calendar-with-additional-days-off-for-religious-holidays/	Positive
1/28	Fairfax County Public Schools votes to adopt inclusive calendar	Washington Jewish Week	https://www.washingtonjewishweek.com/fairfax-county-public-schools-votes-to-adapt-inclusive-calendar/	Positive
1/28	More Religious Holidays Approved by Fairfax County School Board	The Patch	https://patch.com/virginia/mclean/calendar-more-religious-holidays-approved-by-fairfax-county-school-board	Positive



The community groups who had called out the calendar process for being divisive the year before, celebrated it for its equitable focus and reflection of FCPS' Caring Culture.

“

We are elated that the Fairfax County School Board has taken this landmark, long overdue step to advance equity for minority-faith students,” Franklin Siegel said. “It will have an immediate, dramatic impact on FCPS’ Jewish students and employees, as well as those of other minority faiths, who for the first time will feel that they have been truly seen and heard.

- Guila Franklin Siegel, associate director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington

”

“

Our educational system and our country is best served when we accommodate students of all backgrounds.

- The Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council tweet

”

“

This calendar has been a collaborative effort between staff, students, families and our community, and it truly supports our strategic plan goals of Student Success, Caring Culture, Premier Workforce, and Resource Stewardship.

- School Board Chair Stella Pekarsky

”

“

We are incredibly grateful and relieved by this new calendar and the days off for everyone for our most sacred holidays. It has been such a battle to be seen and heard. It finally feels like most of the school board took a huge step to help their marginalized non-Christian communities feel part of the district’s caring culture.

- Anna Stolley Persky, a Jewish mother of three FCPS students

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**CARING
CULTURE**