



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 4, 2015  
N-33, 2014-15

# MAYOR DE BLASIO AND CHANCELLOR FARIÑA DESIGNATE EID AL-FITR AND EID AL-ADHA OFFICIAL SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

*For the first time in the 2015-16 school year, all public schools will close on September 24 in observance of Eid al-Adha*

*For summer school starting in summer 2016, schools will close in observance of Eid al-Fitr*

*The DOE calendar for the 2015-16 school year can be viewed [HERE](#)*

NEW YORK – New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña today announced that New York City will become the largest school district in the nation to recognize Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha as holidays on the official school calendar. In the coming 2015-16 school year, schools will close on September 24 for the Eid al-Adha, ensuring hundreds of thousands of Muslim families can observe the day. Eid al-Fitr, which falls over the summer in 2016, will be designated a holiday for those attending summer school. New York City schools will not lose any instructional days as part of this change to the calendar.

The Mayor and Chancellor made this announcement at PS/IS 30 in Brooklyn, where 36 percent of students were absent the last time Eid al-Adha fell on an instructional day.

“We made a pledge to families that we would change our school calendar to reflect the strength and diversity of our city. Hundreds of thousands of Muslim families will no longer have to choose between honoring the most sacred days on their calendar or attending school. This is a common sense change, and one that recognizes our growing Muslim community and honors its contributions to our City,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

“We are committed to having a school calendar that reflects and honors the extraordinary diversity of our students,” said **Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña**. “Muslim students and their families who observe Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha shouldn’t have to choose between an instructional day and their religious obligations. This new addition will also enable a teachable moment in the classroom for our students to learn about religious tolerance and the societal contributions of various cultures.”

The DOE joins other school districts in states such as Vermont, Massachusetts, and New Jersey that close its public schools in observance of Muslim holidays. The addition of the religious holidays Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha is a critical step toward ensuring that the school calendar reflects the diversity of our City’s schools.

Under the Chancellor’s Regulations, students are allowed an excused absence from school for their religious and cultural observances. However, that excused absence can still come at the expense of missing critical classroom instruction, exams or projects. The DOE will continue to closely monitor spikes in absenteeism over holidays as it works toward its commitment to serve the needs of all students

to ensure equality and respect for families and children of all faiths.

“Muslim New Yorkers are a vital part of this City. With almost 1 million Muslims across the five boroughs, New York City is home to a strong, vibrant and fast-growing Muslim community. Today, we have taken bold steps to advance our values of diversity and inclusion. By adding two Muslim holidays to the DOE school calendar, New York City is affirming that all students, including Muslim youth, are an integral and accepted part of our City,” said **City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**.

“Our City works best when we're working together, and nothing says inclusion and respect like today's announcement that New York will officially recognize the two most important Muslim holidays,” said **Public Advocate Letitia James**. “By establishing Eid as an official school holiday, Muslim families will no longer have to reconcile their faith with the drive to educate their children. Official recognition of Muslim holidays is a clear message to Muslim New Yorkers – and particularly young people – that they are accepted as part of our society and that their faith and traditions are respected by a City that counts on them as responsible citizens. I commend Mayor de Blasio for his leadership on this issue and all the advocates who worked with courage, passion, and commitment to help make this day possible.”

“Brooklyn has a proud and growing Muslim community, enriching neighborhoods from Bay Ridge to Boerum Hill,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**. “Their culture and traditions are woven into the beautiful patchwork quilt that is our borough, where we know that celebrating our diversity makes us stronger. The decision by Mayor de Blasio and DOE Chancellor Fariña to make Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha school holidays is not only a significant sign of respect to Muslim families that want to meet their religious and educational duties without conflict, but it is an incredible opportunity to bring all of our City's students closer together through cultural appreciation. Efforts such as these make me even prouder to be a New Yorker.”

“Recognizing Eid as a holiday in our public schools is an important educational tool and an important step towards acknowledging New York City's diverse student body,” said **City Council Education Committee Chairperson Daniel Dromm**. “It has been a long struggle to get Eid into the school calendar. When I was a teacher, I often used holidays as a way to instruct students about tolerance and acceptance. Designating Eid as an official holiday will allow families to celebrate together without the stress of missing school. I thank Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña for this important decision.”

“Decades after Mayor David Dinkins first signed into law the Eid holidays as a part of our City's alternate side parking calendar, today we celebrate an even greater milestone for our community. Today, our children have earned the liberty to observe and celebrate the Eid holidays with accommodation from their school system,” said **Council Member I. Daneek Miller, the only Muslim member of the City Council**. “This is a campaign which began years ago with community advocates leading the charge. Today's announcement would have never come to fruition without the outstanding contributions of both pioneers and friends of our City's Muslim community including Linda Sarsour, Debbie Almontaser, Hesham El-Meligy, and La Fuente. Our dream to realize the Eid holidays for our children would have never been realized if not for the strength and perseverance of Muslim families and households throughout the five boroughs. At a time when the world seems so large and our children so innocent, the Eid holidays will serve to assure parents that our schools provide an understanding and safe environment

for their young learners.”

“Our City's strength has always been its diversity, a rich mix of people that ebbs and flows as waves of immigrants come here to seek a better life,” said **CSA President Ernest Logan**. “Our newcomers bring so much with them including their holidays, so it is right that our school calendar reflects these changes to our communities.”

“As a parent of three current New York City public school students, I am so proud of my city today for making history and incorporating Muslim holidays in the calendar of the largest public school system in the country. This is what New York City is all about – recognition, inclusion and respect. Mayor de Blasio promised 1 in 8 public school students that they wouldn't have to choose between their education and their faith – and he delivered,” said **Linda Sarsour, Coalition for Muslim School Holidays and Executive Director of the Arab American Association of New York**.

“Today, I am proud that New York City has demonstrated a respect for the religious diversity represented in our schools and that all children will have an opportunity to observe these special days,” said **Donald McCaffrey, founding member of La Fuente's Civic Participation Project, Coalition for Muslim School Holidays, and Executive Board member of 32BJ SEIU**. “Parents should not have to decide between sending their child to school and observing their faith. It has been nine years since I started in this struggle in solidarity with the Muslim community, and thanks to the work of our Coalition and the recognition by Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña, parents will never need to choose again.”

“With Muslim students representing nearly 10% of our overall public school enrollment, today's announcement is an important lesson in respecting and celebrating the great diversity of our City,” said **Henry Garrido, Executive Director of DC 37**. “The Mayor and the Chancellor are to be commended for their leadership in ensuring that all families, including the hardworking members of District Council 37, may worship their most holy of holidays without having to sacrifice their traditions or their children's education.”

“We applaud Mayor de Blasio for recognizing the vibrant diversity of New York City and the holidays we celebrate by adding two major Muslim school holidays to the calendar,” said **32BJ President Hector Figueroa**. “After speaking with many of our members, we started advocating for the addition of these two holidays about 9 years ago. Now tens of thousands of public school students, teachers, cleaners and other staff will be able to celebrate Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha with their families. This announcement also sends a clear message to Muslim children and families that New Yorkers value and acknowledge a wide range of religious beliefs and celebrations.”

“The Majlis Ash-Shura (Islamic Leadership Council) of Metropolitan New York welcomes this latest affirmation of the will and hope of Muslim New Yorkers, who continue during difficult times to claim our place in American society, by demanding equal rights and recognition for our faith community,” said **Imam Talib Abdur-Rashid, President of the Islamic Leadership Council of Metropolitan New York**. “This is now evidenced anew by the establishment of Muslim School Holidays on the NYC DOE calendar. Our children and all New Yorkers are the victors in this long struggle. We are grateful for all who worked with us in producing a more fair and equitable society for us all to live in as neighbors.”

“On February 19, 2006, the New York Times published an article entitled: ‘Wrestling With Faith



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 4, 2015  
N-33, 2014-15

While Making the Grade.’ At that time, Muslim students were forced to take state exams on their holiest day of the year. Nine years later, the Mayor of New York City is announcing the addition of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha to the school calendar. The incorporation of Muslim holidays in the public school system is a milestone and it is the result of the dedication of members of our community, the City Council and the present administration,” said **Omar Mohammedi, President of the Association of Muslim American Lawyers.**

“This is an important step in celebrating New York's diversity and reaffirming our commitment to inclusion,” said **Maf Uddin, President of the Alliance for South Asian American Labor.** “Mayor de Blasio has sent a strong message that New York's many Muslim students are an important part of the school system and the City.”

“I am truly happy and highly appreciate our Mayor that after a long time of waiting, finally our kids in public schools throughout five boroughs don’t have to choose again between their school and their religious practice. Today, I am a prouder New Yorker,” said **Imam Shamsi Ali, Spiritual Leader of Jamaica Muslim Center in Queens.**

“We applaud Chancellor Fariña for recognizing the diversity of New York City and making Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha official school holidays,” said **Javier H. Valdes, Co-Executive Director of Make the Road New York.**

###

Contact: Chancellor’s Press Office (212) 374-5141