



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MAYOR DE BLASIO AND CHANCELLOR FARIÑA DESIGNATE LUNAR NEW YEAR AN OFFICIAL SCHOOL HOLIDAY

*For the first time in the 2015-16 school year, all public schools will close on February 8 on Lunar
New Year*

The holiday will be reflected in the updated DOE school calendar [HERE](#)

NEW YORK – New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña today announced that New York City will become the second major urban school district in the nation, after San Francisco, to close on Lunar New Year in the official school calendar. In the coming 2015-16 school year, schools will close on February 8 for the Lunar New Year. New York City schools will maintain the same number of State-reimbursable instructional days as part of this change to the calendar.

In recent months, the Department of Education has worked through long-term school calendar planning to accommodate Lunar New Year in the years ahead, while still ensuring New York City can meet its commitment to educating students and meeting the State-mandated 180 days of instruction. The DOE facilitated the addition of Lunar New Year to the school calendar by consolidating two half-days previously designated for staff administrative work, of which neither could count toward the 180-day minimum, into just a single full day. This allowed room for the insertion of the Lunar New Year without any net loss in State aidable days. The DOE added Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha as official school holidays earlier this spring.

“We pledged to families we would keep working until we made Lunar New Year an official school holiday, and today we are keeping that promise,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “We are proud to be the largest school district in the nation to recognize the heritage of our Asian-American community by recognizing Lunar New Year. We thank the legislators and community advocates who worked so hard to make this possible.”

“The addition of Lunar New Year to the public school calendar champions our continued commitment to respecting and honoring the extraordinary diversity of our students,” said **Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña**. “This new addition is also a welcome teachable moment in the classroom for our students to learn about the contributions of various cultures. I appreciate the partnership of legislators and community leaders on this effort.”

New York City joins San Francisco, California, and Tenafly, New Jersey school districts, which close its public schools on Lunar New Year. Under the Chancellor’s regulations, students are allowed an excused absence from school for their religious and cultural observances.



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“Parents should not have to choose between sending their children to school and honoring cultural heritage,” said **Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie**. “I applaud Mayor de Blasio for establishing the Lunar New Year as an official school holiday. This measure will give New York City students the opportunity to celebrate this important holiday with their families and without the fear that they will fall behind at school.”

“New York is a city of inclusion and acceptance and we must recognize all major faiths and cultures. By making the Lunar New Year an official school holiday, we are demonstrating that New York has respect for Eastern traditions. No longer will Asian students and families have to choose between their heritage and education,” said **Public Advocate Tish James**.

“I applaud the decision to make Lunar New Year an official school holiday in New York City,” said **Comptroller Scott Stringer**. “This is not only the right thing to do for our students, but is a way to honor our city’s longstanding values of diversity and inclusion. Asian-Americans are the fastest growing community in New York City, with nearly 175,000 students of Asian descent enrolled in our public schools. With this change, thousands of families will no longer have to choose between honoring their heritage and receiving a full education.”

“Brooklyn is home to one of the largest Asian populations outside the continent of Asia, a growing population with an abundance of cultural pride. Recognizing Lunar New Year as a citywide school holiday is a sign of respect for the families that make up this community, respecting their dual commitment to education and their heritage. From Sunset Park to Sheepshead Bay, next Lunar New Year will be particularly special because of the knowledge that our City honors their observance,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**.

“Asian-American students make up more than 12 percent of Manhattan’s public school population and nearly a quarter of Community School Districts 1 and 2, and these students should be allowed to celebrate this major holiday with their families,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “Moving forward, the Department of Education should institute flexible days off, so we can ensure students of all backgrounds can celebrate important holidays with their families, without lengthening the school year or eliminating total class days.”

“Lunar New Year is considered to be one of the most important holidays of the year by a significant number of our City’s families,” said **Queens Borough President Melinda Katz**. “It is appropriate that our public school calendar reflect the fact that Lunar New Year is a major holiday for a large part of our City’s diverse population. With this action today, children will not have to miss important instructional time in order to be able to properly celebrate Lunar New Year with family and friends.”

“It’s been a long road. But we finally made it. At long last, a school holiday for Lunar New Year will be a reality in New York City and I cannot be more excited. When I was growing-up in



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Queens, I often felt that my ethnicity was ignored or forgotten about when it came to school holidays. I always wondered why school was closed for my Jewish friends on their New Year – on Rosh Hashanah – but not for my New Year; and many kids and parents of Asian descent have continued to wonder why to this very day. When I first sponsored the bill, when I served in the State Assembly, there wasn't much support for it, outside the Asian American community. People even laughed at it and said over and over again that it would never happen. I urged the previous Mayor to close City schools for the holiday but he said no. But I knew deep down that momentum would eventually build for it, and that one day, with hard work, its time would finally come. And now, here we are. I could not be prouder to have led the charge on it, and I thank Mayor de Blasio for moving forward with it," said **Congresswoman Grace Meng**.

"This is wonderful news for many families living in our beautiful city, which is home to the largest Asian population in the United States. I thank Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña for making New York City a place where all people and cultures are welcomed and celebrated," said **Congressman Charlie Rangel**.

"I applaud Mayor de Blasio for recognizing Lunar New Year as a holiday on the official school calendar," said **Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney**. "This will allow thousands of New York families to celebrate the holiday without academic consequences. It sets a strong example of inclusion for the rest of the country and shows again that our city values its diversity."

"Granting the Lunar New Year the recognition it deserves as a central cultural occasion for so many New Yorkers is an important step in celebrating the diversity of our great City," said **Congressman Jerry Nadler**. "I am thrilled that Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña have announced that the Lunar New Year will now be an official school holiday, as I have long called for alongside my constituents and colleagues. Hundreds of thousands of families will now be able to celebrate this holiday without sacrificing their children's education."

"The Lunar New Year is an important cultural tradition for New York's thriving Asian American community. I am delighted Asian students will now have time off to celebrate this holiday with their families," said **Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez**.

"I welcome Mayor de Blasio's decision to recognize the Lunar New Year as a NYC school holiday. In doing so, the rich culture and heritage of the Lunar New Year, celebrated the world over, can now be observed by all ages in New York City," said **Congressman Gregory Meeks**.

"I applaud Mayor de Blasio for adding Lunar New Year to the official school calendar. The rich cultural diversity that makes up the fabric of New York is what makes it such a wonderful place to live and I'm proud our schools will finally honor that diversity," said **Congressman Steve Israel**.

"Today, New York honors its longstanding legacy of cultural understanding by designating



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the Lunar New Year an official school holiday,” said **State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky**. “Together with my many colleagues and friends in government, in education, in business and in the community – many of whom are here today – we made our voices heard on this issue. On this historic day, we can finally say that Asian-American children can finally celebrate the upcoming Lunar New Year without worrying about the impact on their education.”

“I’m thrilled our hard work to include Lunar New Year as a school holiday led to Mayor de Blasio’s announcement today – and in time for next year’s celebration,” said **State Senator Daniel Squadron**. “For years, we pushed so that those who celebrate Lunar New Year are no longer forced to choose between class and their most important cultural holiday. The Mayor’s pledge to add Lunar New Year and today’s evolution of the school calendar send a strong and meaningful message. I thank Mayor de Blasio, Chancellor Fariña, bill sponsors Assembly Member Kim, Congress Member Meng, Senator Golden, and Council Member Chin, my colleagues and all the community leaders and advocates that joined our push for this change.”

“I am proud to stand with the Mayor of the City of New York and my colleagues at PS 20, the school that I attended 30 years ago, to officially recognize Lunar New Year as a school holiday,” said **Assembly Member Ron Kim**. “This holiday is not about kids just getting a day off from school. It’s about the City of New York telling hundreds of thousands of Asian Americans that their culture and heritage is part of the American fabric.”

“I am thrilled that Mayor de Blasio has agreed to make Lunar New Year an official school holiday. I want to thank the Mayor, Chancellor Fariña, and especially my colleagues for all the work they have done to promote this issue, and for making this holiday a reality for Asian students and families. Moving forward, this is great, not only for Asian Americans, but for everyone who is now able to celebrate Lunar New Year,” said **Assembly Member Edward C. Braunstein**.

“I am thrilled that the Mayor is keeping his commitment to put Lunar New Year in the school calendar for next year. Finally, students of Asian descent will not be forced to choose between observing the most important holiday of the year and missing important academic work. Lunar New Year is a deeply important cultural observance for some fifteen percent of public school students, and this designation gives Lunar New Year the respect and recognition it has long deserved,” said **Council Member Margaret Chin**.

“This is a historic day for thousands of New York City school children who celebrate Lunar New Year,” said **Council Member Peter Koo**. “For too long, families have been forced to choose between celebrating this important cultural holiday and sending their child to school. By including Lunar New Year in the school calendar, New York City shows that we are an ever-evolving city that takes pride in the cultural traditions of its diverse populations. Many thanks to Mayor de Blasio for making good on his promise to our community, and to the countless community advocates and government officials for their steadfast support of this effort.”



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“The commitment of our Mayor – and of our city – to the expansion of cultural awareness and respect sends a clear and powerful signal to New Yorkers, and to cities around the country: we care about culture. This announcement represents the work of many advocates who understand the importance of the Lunar New Year celebrations to so many in our city. Congratulations to all on this great achievement,” said **Council Member Carlos Menchaca**.

“New York City’s cultural diversity is a source of pride – and one of the City’s great strengths. Recognizing the Lunar New Year is a sign of respect for that diversity and sends an important message to our students and their families,” said **UFT President Michael Mulgrew**.

“In many countries around the globe, Lunar New Year is the most important holiday of the year. We are pleased to have our school calendar reflect this festive day so that children and families can celebrate together,” said **Ernest Logan, President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators**.

“On behalf of Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, I am pleased to join Mayor de Blasio in the announcement of this very significant event. For many of our families, they will no longer need to choose between the educational advancement of their children and celebrating their culture. Lunar New Year is a holiday that is celebrated across many Asian countries and cultures. Like most holidays, Lunar New Year developed based on historical and cultural milestones, which are important for our children to understand and learn about. We would like to thank Mayor de Blasio for keeping his promise to our community and our families,” said **Linda Lee, Executive Director of Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York**.

“We applaud Mayor de Blasio and Schools Chancellor Fariña for adding the Lunar New Year to the official NYC Department of Education School Holiday Calendar. It will give over 170,00 Asian Pacific American students enrolled in public schools, a chance to also observe the holiday with their family and loved ones without missing a day of school,” said **Sheelah A. Feinberg, Executive Director of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families**.

“The Asian American staff, Board, and our member agencies are grateful to our Mayor for fulfilling his promise to designate Lunar New Year a school holiday. No longer will parents and students have to worry about missing school to celebrate an important holiday. His leadership on this matter will be empowering to our kids, as it demonstrates that our cultural celebrations matter to this city. Thank you, Mayor!” said **Jo-ann Yoo, Executive Director of the Asian American Federation of New York**.

“We applaud the de Blasio administration and the Department of Education for recognizing the Lunar New Year as an official school holiday and embracing the broad spectrum of diversity in our city,” said **Hector J. Figueroa, President of SEIU 32BJ**. “As part of the coalition who for



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many years advocated to include Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha on the list of official school holidays, we know how important it is for children and their families to have their traditions and culture recognized by our educational institutions. We are proud to be part of a city leading the way on this issue.”

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