



Shrewsbury Public Schools

Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.
Superintendent

June 14, 2023

To: School Committee

Re: Recommended “no homework” dates for the 2023-2024 school year

Over the past several years, a set of “no homework” dates had been developed and implemented for a variety of reasons, and this past year a consistent set of dates was established across the entire district in grades K-12. Based on the district’s experience with this approach, the implementation of a “no homework” calendar was formally included when [School Committee Policy #523: Homework Policy](#) was updated in late April. The rationale for doing so is captured in the policy’s “Guiding Principles”:

The school district recognizes and affirms that co-curricular activities and other commitments are important aspects of students’ lives that can significantly improve their physical and mental health and well-being. It is a shared responsibility between home and school to ensure that students have balance in their lives while pursuing educational excellence. This policy is intended to help our students achieve that. Further, the district recognizes that vacations, long weekends, and holidays are opportunities to enjoy family time and fun. In order to protect this time for students and staff, the district will implement a “no homework” calendar that specifies times when homework will not be assigned. In addition to promoting family time and recreation, “no homework” periods can provide a respite from new assignments that allows for a focus on other responsibilities or needs, such as religious observances for students with their families, performing community service, or completing college applications.

Further, the homework policy’s components section states:

To meet the guiding principle regarding “no homework” periods throughout the school year, the superintendent will annually present a recommended calendar of “no homework” dates for the following school year for the approval of the School Committee. The superintendent will base this recommendation on evolving educational practices and needs of the school community. Once the “no homework” calendar is approved, the district administration and school principals will communicate the specific dates and expectations for “no homework” periods to students, families, and educators, both in advance of each school year and periodically throughout the year.

For “no homework” periods, homework shall not be assigned on the school day prior to the “no homework” date(s), and no assignments will be due and no tests or other

assessments that require studying will occur on the school day following the “no homework” date(s).

In future years, the “no homework dates” will likely be devised as part of the process of setting the next year’s school district calendar, but since this is a newly adopted policy, my recommendation for next year’s “no homework” dates is being presented now so that it can be adopted by the School Committee in advance of the 2023-2024 school year.

This recommended “no homework” calendar is consistent with this past year’s approach. Given that students, families, and educators worked to adapt to this calendar over the past year, it seems fitting to continue with this approach in the coming year in an effort to align our practices with the guiding principles articulated by the homework policy. The leadership team reviewed the feedback that having multiple “no homework” dates over the course of the fall was perceived by some educators as an obstacle to building momentum in the implementation of the curriculum, but this is difficult to work around given the timing of various major religious holidays. There will be some changes compared to this past year, as major religious holidays that are included in the “no homework” calendar will shift from year to year (e.g., Eid al-Fitr occurred during the April school vacation this past year).

With regard to religious holidays, the approach used this year and recommended for next year is to include dates where students who observe a particular faith would otherwise need to be accommodated per [School Committee Policy #291](#) and Massachusetts law. By including major religious holidays in the “no homework” calendar for all students, it reduces anxiety that students who are not available to complete assignments or study due to their religious observance are missing work or falling behind, while at the same time providing some breathing room to catch up on work or to attend to other responsibilities, as noted in the guiding principles.

The recommended “no homework” calendar for 2023-2024 is provided as a separate document. I look forward to answering any questions and hearing any comments the School Committee has on this recommendation, and I request that you vote to approve these dates for the coming year.