

June 9, 2023

David C. Banks
Chancellor, New York City Dept. of Education
52 Chambers Street – Room 320
New York, New York 10007

Dear Chancellor Banks:

We write to you regarding the upcoming 2023-2024 school year calendar and its impact on the Jewish community. Historically, the NYC Public Schools have closed for the duration of Passover. The proposed DOE calendar removes the last two days of Passover as days off, and adds a Friday evening for parent teacher conferences, which is the Jewish Sabbath. These changes will bar many Jewish students and faculty from attending school and conferences on those days.

Passover and Shabbat are deeply meaningful to the Jewish community. They are a time for Jewish families and communities to come together and celebrate our rich culture and history. During these celebrations, many Jews refrain from work, which includes attending school, work, or even checking email and text messages.

We request that the last two days of Passover be restored as days off, and that parent teacher conferences be rescheduled to an evening that is not the Sabbath.

Furthermore, we ask that you communicate with faculty their rights and responsibilities regarding religious accommodations. Our offices continue to receive numerous complaints about teachers being denied accommodations for Jewish holidays or not knowing their rights. Teachers, administrators, and staff should be explicitly and proactively made aware of their rights, and principals must know to comply with the chancellor's regulations, and more importantly, respect a person's observance of their faith. To ensure that this information is known, we ask that these communications not be sent as part of a broader email or as one of many items in a teacher's handbook or p-weekly, but rather as a separate and specific communication.

At a time when Jewish values are under attack, hate crimes are on the rise, and Jewish New Yorkers are experiencing a significant rise in implicit and explicit bias, the NYC Public Schools must do everything it can to uplift our Jewish brothers and sisters. That includes respecting the Jewish traditions both in word and in deed. Restoring the days off, moving parent teacher conferences off of the Sabbath, and ensuring NYC Public School employees know their rights and responsibilities will go a long way in ensuring that the voices of Jewish New Yorkers are heard and uplifted.

We thank you for your attention to this, and look forward to an updated 2023-2024 NYC Public Schools calendar.

Sincerely,

Eric Dinowitz <i>NYC Council</i>	Nily Rozic <i>Member of Assembly</i>
Julie Menin <i>NYC Council</i>	Jeffrey Dinowitz Member of Assembly
Ari Kagan <i>NYC Council</i>	<i>Simcha Eichenstein</i> <i>Member of Assembly</i>
Lincoln Restler <i>NYC Council</i>	<i>Harvey Epstein</i> <i>Member of Assembly</i>
Lynn Schulman <i>NYC Council</i>	<i>Deborah Glick</i> <i>Member of Assembly</i>
Marjorie Velázquez <i>NYC Council</i>	<i>Charles Lavine</i> <i>Member of Assembly</i>
Gale Brewer <i>NYC Council</i>	Stacey Pheffer Amato <i>Member of Assembly</i>
David Carr <i>NYC Council</i>	Daniel Rosenthal <i>Member of Assembly</i>
Keith Powers <i>NYC Council</i>	Linda Rosenthal <i>Member of Assembly</i>
Jim Gennaro <i>NYC Council</i>	Helene Weinstein Member of Assembly
Shekar Krishnan <i>NYC Council</i>	David Weprin Member of Assembly
Shaun Abreu <i>NYC Council</i>	Kamilah Hanks <i>NYC Council</i>
Sandra Ung <i>NYC Council</i>	Kalman Yeger NYC Council
Inna Vernikov <i>NYC Council</i>	

###