



In New York, both Eids officially recognized as school holidays

For the first time in the city's history, public schools will observe two Muslim holidays.

New York City is now the largest school district in the country to recognize two Muslim holidays on its official calendar.

Mayor Bill de Blasio announced on Wednesday the addition of Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr to the calendar, calling it a “change that respects the 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,” de Blasio said in a statement. “This is a common sense change, and one that recognizes our growing Muslim community and honors its contributions to our City.”

The two holidays will be added to the calendar for the 2015-16 school year, which includes several Jewish and Christian holidays, such as Christmas, Easter, Passover and Rosh Hashanah.

The mayor's office said schools will close Sept. 24, 2015, for Eid al-Adha, a festival honoring Abraham's sacrifice of his son to God — a story also found in the Old Testament of the Bible and in the Jewish torah.

Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan, will fall over summer break in 2016. The mayor's office said it will be designated a holiday for students attending summer school.

Wednesday's announcement fulfills a campaign pledge by de Blasio to include a more diverse set of holidays in the school calendar. The mayor has said he supports adding the Lunar New Year to the calendar, but that he hasn't made up his mind on adding the Hindu holiday of Diwali.

His predecessor, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, was opposed to including more holidays, saying in 2008 that "when you have a city as diverse as we do, with virtually every religion known to man practiced, if we closed school for every single day there wouldn't be any school."

There are 600,000 to 1 million Muslim New Yorkers, according to official estimates, and a 2008 Columbia University study found that roughly 10 percent of the New York City public school students are Muslim.

Linda Sarsour, director of the Arab-American Association of New York, applauded the de Blasio administration on Wednesday.

"Muslim children will never again have to choose between their faith and their education," she wrote in a Facebook post. "Today is a day that will go down in history. We did this for our children and the generations to come. Thank you New York City for making me even more proud to be a New Yorker. I thank Allah for allowing me and my colleagues to see the fruits of our labor."

Mona Davids, president of the New York City Parents Union, an advocacy group for public school students, said in a statement that she was "elated" at the news.

"As a New York City public school student, I was marked absent when observing Muslim Holidays," she said. "As the parent of two public school students, my children have been

marked absent for observing our Muslim Holidays. This has been a long fight that I and many others have advocated for many years and am happy the day has come that parents do not have to choose between their child marked absent from school or their religious observance.”

“Now,” Davids continued, “we will continue our campaign to provide Halal lunches to students because too many Muslim students are going hungry in our schools.”

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source: <http://muslimvillage.com/2015/03/07/72124/new-york-eids-officially-recognized-school-holidays/>