

April 2020

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inside

2020-21 key dates for school calendars

The annual list of key dates for the school year includes interesting and important events to help you plan your school calendar for 2020-21.

Please note that some groups/states celebrate appreciation days or weeks on different dates, particularly those for classified school employees and teachers.

Helping your homeless students

Almost every community is dealing with a growing homeless population, and the challenge is to respond to the needs of this population and the community in general. Homeless students are a vulnerable population that needs special attention and have specific rights to education under federal law. How do districts reach homeless students and communicate sensitively with homeless families. Fine tips for helping unhoused students succeed in school.

Review and update your crisis communications plan

The coronavirus health crisis is testing districts' crisis communications skills. Parents' fear, rapidly developing information, and the need to communicate carefully and regularly are causing districts to polish off their crisis communications plans. For now, work with your partners, share information and do your best. When this crisis dies down, review what worked and what should be revised for next time.

Tips for effective bond communications

Is your district seeking approval for a capital bond proposal? The campaign — both the information and the advocacy — are simple, but they are not easy. You can make the job easier if you set the stage and plan the work well. Read about recommended tactics to help ensure success on Election Day.

What can you say? Guidelines for talking about politics

Election season can be a challenging balance of tempering your opinions and encouraging a free exchange of ideas. In schools, staff must be careful not to offend and not to censor students. Start with clear policies, consistent enforcement of rules and good communication.

INSIGHTS FOR PARENTS: What can you do about the coronavirus?

The coronavirus is a new and scary infectious health event. It is a global health crisis that is spreading quickly and instilling fear. And there are a lot of unknowns. Here are some guidelines for keeping kids healthy, and some resources for finding more information.

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Tips for effective bond communications

Communication with district patrons needs to happen all year long, but it's never more important than when your district is asking voters to approve a money measure.

Seeking approval of a bond measure is a big ask because you are hoping to reach into your patrons' pocketbooks. Voters deserve to know why you want the money and how you will use it and, bottom line, how much it will cost them.

Districts are wise to be straight-forward and clear in their requests to voters and quick to provide all of the information they need to make their decision. Districts are bound by law to provide only factual, unbiased information about any bond measure. While it's tempting to talk about how much you need the bond and what a great value it is, districts must stick to the facts. Your citizen political action committee (PAC) can advocate and use persuasive words and arguments, but the district must remain neutral.

The tools you use to communicate depends on your district and how your voters like to receive their information. Some of your stakeholders read every word of the mailers you send out; others toss them out with the junk mail. Some spend considerable time pouring over your website while others never go there. Some shape their opinions on Facebook and social media; others never use it. The challenge is to identify a few effective communication tools that you can implement quickly, are easy to use and reach the widest audiences.

Then take your message, and repeat, repeat, repeat.

Recommended bond communication tactics

It's not good enough to just create a mailer with bond information and call it good. Communication is a continuous process, so you need to deliver your message over and over again throughout your campaign, offering patrons different ways to access your information.

Start early. A priority should be a straight-forward bond mailer that is sent to all voters in your district. This should go out within the first few weeks of your campaign, so people have all the facts upfront. It helps them to make a decision early and counters any misinformation that opponents might spread.

Print and mail information. While more tech savvy voters prefer electronic communications, there are still many voters who don't have access to computers or smartphones and who like receiving important information in a printed format. Depending on your resources, you may want to produce a mailer early in your campaign and a second mailer to send out closer to the election date.

Post reference material. Many districts create bond websites that include all the details of

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the proposed measure, including architectural renderings, financial calculators and PowerPoint presentations. Any printed materials they produce can refer to the website for more detailed information.

Produce a video. Videos are becoming a favorite tool for communicating about bond measures. Districts can visually show why a bond may be needed — crowded classrooms, deteriorating roofs and other issues. The videos can be shared in many places, from email to website to social media.

Be social. Facebook and other social media can also be effective ways to communicate about a bond, but districts need to closely monitor the comments to make sure they don't become a forum for negativity. Especially in districts where there's organized opposition to a bond, it can be better to leave social media to your citizen political action committee.

Focus on direct communication. **While there are many different communication tools available**, there's no substitute for good old-fashioned face-to-face conversations. These can take place in small coffee klatches — where a few neighbors gather to learn about the bond — or in larger settings, such as presentations to civic groups or parent clubs. People like hearing information first-hand and being able to ask questions and make comments, especially in smaller communities.

Go to the people. The key is to not just talk at people, but engage them in the conversation. Door-to-door canvassing is a wonderful tool for spreading information and also connecting with voters. The PAC needs to coordinate this if you want to use the opportunity to advocate for your bond, but the district can organize it if it's strictly an informative activity where volunteers hand out informational flyers about the proposal.

Invite them in. Open houses and tours of your schools are effective in getting voters inside your buildings so they can see areas of need that the bond would address first-hand. If overcrowding is an issue, invite one of your largest civic groups to hold its monthly lunch meeting at one of your schools so they can see what it looks like when students are there. If the drinking water is discolored because of old rusty pipes, take visitors on a tour that includes a stop at a drinking fountain so they see it for themselves.

Whatever tools you use, the key is to keep your bond communications simple, honest and clear, so voters have the facts they need to make well-informed decisions.

Contributed by Connie Potter, communications consultant

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Review and update your crisis communications plan

The coronavirus has put many districts squarely in the middle of a looming crisis situation. This illness is contagious and it is spreading fear in communities around the country. By the time you are in the middle of a crisis, it is too late to write a crisis communication plan.

Adding to the fear about what we know, is fear of what we don't know. Scientists are sharing new discoveries about this new sickness every day. And new cases are showing up with connections to schools via people who work there or have had contact with people who do.

Most districts are getting guidance on crisis communications for this event from state health or education agencies. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. This is a good time to borrow materials and plans to adapt and use in your district. Lean on your peers for tips and share information about what you are doing. This lightens the load for overworked staff and ensures consistent messaging about risks and prevention practices.

The key is to use a plan — have some guidelines ready to go when you need them. A good crisis response can build trust. Not having a plan can add to the stress and chaos of the situation.

Crisis communication planning

After this crisis subsides and you have time to assess, take a look at your crisis plan and revise it for the next event. Use your lessons learned and follow best practices to develop a plan that will help you manage a difficult situation with less stress and confusion.

Crisis communications have three distinct phases: before, during and after the crisis. Take care to plan for and implement your plans at each phase to build and maintain trust with your community.

Before

Preparation is key to a calm response to situations that arise. Set up your systems, define your audiences, and assign roles for crisis response. Include input from stakeholders and be clear about who does what.

Define what and how you will communicate:

- Set up communication channels for students, families, staff and the community. Establish trust by sharing information regularly and communicating where to find updates in the event of an emergency.

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- Inform parents about your safety protocols and how they will receive information during an incident. Assure them that student safety is the priority in any situation.
- Post information about safety plans and parent tips on the website.
- Develop a special button on the district home page— “In case of emergency” or “Safety News” — that you can activate with updates during a crisis.
- Create a checklist for communicating about the crisis. It will help you remember the plan during a high-stress situation. It will be useful for others to implement if you are absent.
- Define roles and assign primary and secondary staff as backup for very specific roles and tasks.
- Establish a regular social media presence and build your following.

During

When a crisis occurs, keeping parents up to speed is critical. Remember, the safety of their children is in your hands and out of their control. Regular communication reassures them of their children’s safety and makes them less likely to add to the chaos at the school.

Use an automated parent notification system to send out a mass communication to parents very quickly. Many of these systems allow districts to simultaneously send an email, text message and phone call. In addition, post the information to your district website’s home page and social media pages. If you have a mobile app, send out a push notification with details.

Once you have additional or updated information that can be released, make sure to update all of these communication portals. Determine who will communicate. Identify who to communicate with. Use local media to help get the information out.

Forward the school phones to a central call center. Many parents (and nosy neighbors) will likely try to call the school and/or the district office during a crisis to find out information. This can tie up phone lines and burden staff. In addition, school staff likely won’t be able to answer phones during an emergency. Streamline the process by having all of that school’s phone lines rerouted temporarily to the district office. Then, staff several phones at the district office with staff members who have the latest information and a scripted response to provide to callers. If possible, have three to four staff members ready to help out in this situation so that all calls are answered quickly.

Communicate clearly. Don’t overshare — make sure your audiences, especially parents, have the information they need but don’t speculate about details. Be consistent with messages. Use social media wisely. Worried parents may react to inaccuracies or rumors they see on social media. A rush to the school to pick up children causes panic and can interfere with emergency response. Be sure to interact with users on social media. You can reduce misinformation by correcting errors in real time on social sites.

After

Plan a debrief meeting to discuss what went right – and what went wrong. Once a crisis has been resolved and the dust has settled, it’s time for the district to debrief and determine the lessons learned and what might change in the safety plan for the potential next time around — hoping, of course, that there isn’t a next time around.

Parents should be represented in the debrief process. Afterward, all parents should be told that the district has done this due diligence follow-up work. This is particularly important if the response to a crisis didn’t go as planned or as well as district staff would have hoped. Parents

will want to know what the district is doing to remedy the situation and make sure it doesn't happen again.

Be transparent. Reassure the public by continuing to communicate after things calm down. Communicate about the results of the after-crisis review and any corrections the district plans to take. Continue to engage your public on social media. Acknowledge and correct mistakes and then continue to share social media posts about your district.

Contributed by Jay Remy, communications consultant

For Families



What can you do about the coronavirus?



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INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

The coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, is a scary health event with a growing infection rate. So much is unknown about this global health crisis that started in China and has shown up in countries around the world. At the end of February, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported more than 85,000 diagnoses globally. Of the total number of cases, more than 2,000 people — roughly 2% have died.

The situation continues to change as new cases are reported. For the latest news, read the regularly updated situation reports by the WHO at www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/.

Should you worry?

This new virus outbreak is big news, and it can be scary. There is a lot we still don't know about it. And there is currently no vaccine to prevent it.

The impact from this virus has been widespread. To reduce the infection rate, manufacturing plants in China have closed down, which has affected the production of goods. This has impacted the stock market. And now news reports are announcing new cases in states that hadn't yet been affected.

How worried should we be about personal safety — our own and our families?

Concerns about coronavirus are rational, but they can be put into perspective with some comparisons to the flu. UC Berkeley epidemiologist Dr. Arthur Reingold said that the flu has infected 26 million Americans this year and killed 25,000. "Worldwide, I think the estimates are that half a million people may be killed by influenza."

"We in public health, who know something about influenza, do try to get people worried about flu, to get their flu shot, et cetera. If we were paying the same amount of attention — updating the story every two hours, updating the number of deaths and the spread every few hours — to another disease, like influenza, people might be alarmed by that, right? I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that this is new. There's a lot that's not known." <http://bit.ly/38enHf8>

Why you should worry

Perhaps worrying isn't the right approach, but being actively cautious is. As Dr. Reingold pointed out, concern or worry are effective ways to motivate people to take action. And there are plenty of recommendations from health professionals to minimize your risk of getting infected or seriously ill.

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Do I have coronavirus?

The coronavirus is infectious. The symptoms are similar to the flu: fever, cough, runny nose, muscle aches and pains, and diarrhea. So how do you know when to see a doctor? People who have been exposed to or diagnosed with the virus are isolated to prevent a spread to others.

If you have flu-like symptoms and have traveled out of the country, specifically to China or other high-risk countries recently, you should call your doctor. Due to the fear of this virus, and the need to respond quickly to treat potential new cases, medical providers are experiencing high patient volumes. They can advise you whether to come in for testing.

Keeping kids safe

The guidance for coronavirus is similar to other prevention tips:

- Wash your hands! This applies to anyone who has been in public or around someone who is sick. Use soap and water and wash for about 20 seconds (as long as it takes to sing the alphabet song).
- Keep your immune system strong by eating healthy, exercising and getting enough sleep.
- Get vaccinated. This is for the flu, not specifically the coronavirus, but it will minimize the risk of sickness.
- Teach kids not to touch their faces — mouths, eyes, noses. This can be tough. Model it for them by keeping your hands away from your face.
- Teach kids not to touch public surfaces if they don't have to. Germs live in all areas where people are. Avoid contact.
- Stay away from sick people if you can. Stay home when you are sick and avoid others who may be contagious.
- Carry hand sanitizer and spread all over kids' hands, including between their fingers.

<http://bit.ly/2VD9F42>

Read more: resources for parents

As health experts continue to learn more, additional resources will be available. Here are some resources to help you minimize worry and keep your children healthy.

Cleveland Clinic Health Essentials, The New Coronavirus: What Is It, and Should You Worry?

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/the-new-coronavirus-what-is-it-and-should-you-worry/>

Parents.com All About Coronavirus COVID-19: A Concerned Parent's Guide www.parents.com/health/all-about-coronavirus-a-concerned-parents-guide

What Parents Need to Know About Coronavirus

<https://parenting.nytimes.com/childrens-health/coronavirus-children-pregnant-women>

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Helping your homeless students

Homelessness is a growing problem around the country. The high number of homeless people in some communities has reached crisis proportions, and city leaders are struggling to respond to the needs of both unhoused people and the community at-large.

School districts are required to serve homeless students, but it is a challenge to meet the complex needs of this transient student population, which is estimated at more than 1.3 million. Districts must provide services under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and schools want to help these vulnerable students succeed and find stability in the structure of school.

The McKinney-Vento Act

Federal law — the McKinney Vento Act — defines homeless students as students living in emergency shelters or transitional living programs, those staying temporarily with friends or relatives due to inadequate housing, and those staying in motels, campgrounds, cars or other temporary housing. It aims to reduce barriers to school attendance and success by requiring access to transportation and the waiving of residency and documentation requirements. (<https://nche.ed.gov/mckinney-vento-definition>)

McKinney-Vento provides requirements, guidance and resources for states and local school districts. Advocacy organizations also distribute information to families about their rights under this law. See a fact sheet from the Family and Youth Services Bureau: “Practical Application of the McKinney-Vento Act”: <http://bit.ly/2xcMzHL>.

Reaching your homeless students

“The number of students in kindergarten through the twelfth grade who are homeless has increased by 70% over the last decade, according to new federal data that also suggests it shows no signs of slowing...Some school districts have as many as 10% or more of their students living in shelters, homes of relatives or friends, cars or on the streets.” <http://bit.ly/2Ihc2l8>

Education is the path out of poverty and homelessness, but students experiencing homelessness are far less likely to graduate than other students. To help these students, districts must first identify them and then find them. The following staff and resources will help with homeless student assistance:

Homeless liaison: Schools have homeless liaisons to help families enroll their children in new schools or arrange continued attendance at their old school — a right under McKinney-Vento.

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This staff member monitors district services and legal requirements for assisting homeless and other children. This includes sharing information about mandated programs, such as transportation from a shelter or other location to their home school, as well as other contacts and programs that make it easier for families to work with the school.

This staff member also works with schools to establish partnerships with local social service, health, religious, service clubs and other organizations to provide basic services that help children cope with difficult circumstances. These organizations furnish school supplies, shoes, clothes and other physical necessities. Some of them gather warm coats, gloves and mittens. Others provide caring, committed tutors and adult friends. Still others open their doors to before and after-school programs.

District communications: Districts should communicate information about homeless resources. Devote a section of the website to a homeless education page with links to parent resources and family assistance links. Include information for unaccompanied youth who are homeless and lacking support. Include translations in Spanish and other major languages in your district.

Produce a printed brochure with this information for families who do not have access to computers or need information they can carry with them.

A good example of this information is on the Orange County Public Schools website: <http://bit.ly/39tVClq>.

Community partners: Districts can work with organizations that specifically serve the homeless, and they can increase their reach by seeking support for families from churches, community centers and even supportive community volunteers.

Social service and advocacy organizations that serve the homeless are essential partners in serving homeless students and families. Families who are experiencing homelessness require compassion and empathy. Homeless advocates can help train staff to communicate effectively and with sensitivity and connect them to resources and services. Understanding effective communication strategies can ensure positive, nonjudgmental communication that homeless audiences won't perceive as offensive or threatening.

Making individuals and groups in the community aware of student needs can open the door to partnerships that provide valuable services for students and engage community members in meaningful work with schools. Members of a nearby church or community center that provides homework help, food, and/or a safe place for kids to go before or after school gain a deep understanding of the problems faced by schools as they work to overcome obstacles to student learning.

Programs and services for homeless students and families are designed to meet the needs of students, but the ripple effect results in increased respect for schools and their dedication to helping students. Community members involved in these programs use the most powerful public relations tool in existence — word-of-mouth, third-party testimonials — to tell other community members about the deep caring for kids and dedication of school staff. Volunteers in this kind of effort often recruit others to help, thus increasing the number of supportive voices in the community.

National advocacy groups: Homelessness is a significant nationwide problem, and there are national advocacy organizations and agencies that focus on services to homeless families and students.

Education Leads Home “is a national campaign focused on improving educational outcomes for children and youth who experience homelessness. The campaign seeks to raise awareness of key challenges and increase implementation of proven practices and policies that improve educational outcomes, from early childhood through postsecondary, for one of the country’s most vulnerable student populations.” www.educationleadshome.org

National Center for Homeless Education operates the U.S. Department of Education’s technical assistance and information center for the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth. This site is a valuable resource for staff who work with homeless families. It has McKinney-Vento information, contact information for state coordinators, data, news, reports, training and a phone or email helpline.

Helping homeless students succeed

When students succeed in school, they experience confidence, a sense of stability, opportunities for self-sufficiency and a chance to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty. Homeless students are 87% more likely to drop out of school than other students and 4.5 times more likely to experience homelessness as adults. Districts must make efforts to serve these students. It’s the right thing to do for the students, the community and the district’s success.

Communicating sensitively

Homeless programs are one of the many non-instructional programs that schools offer to help students learn. Successful programs are district pride points and should be shared with the community. Communicating the vast number of ways districts meet student needs builds trust and support for the district’s taxpayer-funded programs. Districts should post information about the programs and include the highlights in the annual report. This topic could also be included in news highlights and staff recognition. But be sensitive to the students and families. It is a source of shame or embarrassment for many people. People may be dealing with mental health issues, addiction or domestic violence. Reach out to the experts to understand effective communication strategies for talking to homeless populations and to the public about serving the homeless population in your community. The right approach can help connect the right services with the right people to start reducing homeless.

Contributed by Marcia Latta, communications consultant

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What can you say? Guidelines for talking about politics

Election season is one of the most challenging periods for school communicators. The First Amendment right to free expression is not absolute, which can lead to misunderstandings about which political speech and activities are permissible and which can be regulated by school districts. School patrons sometimes get fired up and think some school employees are censoring speech, or alternatively, indoctrinating students with personal views.

Under the First Amendment, public schools face the same constitutional responsibility with political speech as with religion and many other civic issues: neutrality — to not exclude but neither to promote or encourage one belief or viewpoint over another. Many jurisdictions also have their own laws and regulations governing politically related conduct. For example, school district money can be used to explain a school levy or bond measure but not to promote, even subtly, passage of the measure.

School communicators have multiple roles in dealing with political speech. The most dramatic is crisis management when a school's handling of a situation draws public scrutiny. But if you've done your job well, you can help avert crises in the first place and handle them better if they do occur.

The following are paramount:

- Have clearly written, understandable, practical policies on political speech/activities by students, by teachers and other employees, and by school board members. Depending on the category of person involved — i.e., student or teacher or school board member — there are vast differences as to what is allowable under the First Amendment and other laws.
- Encourage district administrators, teacher representatives, and others to carefully review and discuss these policies, consider potential scenarios, and learn from past missteps, either locally or in other districts.
- Proactively explain these policies to teachers, principals, and other staff members through newsletters, briefings and other means; to the public through parent organizations, newsletters, and social media; and to the news media.
- Ensure you have immediate access to appropriate district decision-makers so you can get questions answered and respond regarding a situation before social media rumors take control of the narrative.

Know your district policies well

Legal cases under the First Amendment provide general guidance, but school districts should have their own policies. In general — and I'm not a lawyer and this is not legal advice —

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school districts have the right to control what happens in the classroom, including curriculum and teaching. Again, the First Amendment right to free speech is not unlimited.

Teachers, for example, generally have the right to speak about matters of public concern as private citizens when on their own time.

Many education groups have shared this guidance from the American Civil Liberties Union to teachers: “However, if you are speaking as part of the duties of your job, your speech will not necessarily have the same protection. What you say or communicate inside the classroom is considered speech on behalf of the school district and therefore is not entitled to First Amendment protection. Certain types of speech outside the school might also not be protected if the school can show that your speech created a substantial adverse impact on school functioning or that your speech was made in accordance with your job duties.”

Students have a broader right to self-expression, including wearing armbands as symbols of protest. Their right to free speech may be limited only in instances when it would cause “substantial and material disruption.”

On the other hand, students can be counted absent if they stage a school walkout or skip classes to participate in political activities. But the district must be consistent, for example, being equally strict or lenient on walkouts regardless of the subject matter.

The time to work through these delineations is before a confrontation occurs.

Neutrality need not equal boring

Schools err if they avoid political discussions for fear of community uproar. An informed citizenry necessitates discussion of potentially controversial issues. Students contribute to a civil society by learning how to handle those discussions with thought and grace.

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts and many others have urged a greater focus on civics education, which is foundational to our democracy. The federal judiciary and states have a host of curriculum activities to engage students, teach them about the Bill of Rights and about landmark court cases, and promote civil discourse.

Political campaigns and elections can be embraced in the same way — so long as schools do not favor any candidate or campaign. As a school communicator, you can help ensure that the neutrality is maintained in how these activities and events are explained internally and externally. Thus, you need to refresh your understanding of district, state and federal policies long before a crisis occurs.

Educators sometimes run into trouble by making supposedly joking, sarcastic or teasing political comments toward students. Bad idea. It is never excusable to put a student down. There is a huge difference between saying, “I can’t believe you said that” and “Tell us how you came to that conclusion.”

Election season offers the opportunity for students to find political activities that pique their interest, such as holding panel discussions or forums with political candidates, preparing for mock presidential debates, or researching and debating election issues. Students might present their own presidential speeches or do fact-checking on political speeches, so long as the class assignment does not favor or disfavor one candidate or party over another. These activities should be encouraged. As a school communicator, you can help by explaining to the public how and why these activities happen and by inviting local media coverage that

includes interviews with the teacher(s) about why the class activity is not only legitimate but essential to understanding U.S. history, civics or whatever the course is.

Some students go as far as proposing legislation and testifying at city councils or state legislatures. (I've found that most public bodies are keenly interested in what youth have to say, often because the youth are better prepared, more focused and more interesting than some adults.)

By the way, education researchers say it is best when students are given the opportunity to tackle issues that have multiple points of view. Again, each person and each view must be treated with respect. Their views can be challenged instead of being taken for granted or ignored, but that should be done respectfully. Again, lifelong lessons in civil discourse can be a byproduct of these interactions.

Some teachers choose to insert their own opinions into the discussion. Some do not. Research also has shown that during their careers, many teachers change their minds about whether to do so. Again, teachers should know their district policies. Parents and students should be informed as well.

Can we do that?

No policy is perfect; none can cover every eventuality. But it behooves everyone — especially the communicators dealing with the public and the media — to understand why political buttons may be allowed for students but not teachers. Or what materials can be distributed by students at school or whether a political billboard is allowed on a car parked in a parking lot. Or ...

That is an excellent class assignment: What political speech is allowed in school and outside school?

School communicators should already know the answers.

Contributed by Dick Hughes, communications consultant. Contact him at TheHughesisms@gmail.com.

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2020-21 Key Dates for School Calendars

Here are some special days you may want to note on your 2020-21 school year calendar or take into consideration as you establish programs for next year. They are from Resources for Planning the School Calendar, published and distributed by the National School Public Relations Association, 15948 Derwood Road, Rockville, MD 20855. Order online at nspra.org/products or call (301) 519-0496. The price is \$40 per copy plus shipping and handling.

2020

Date Observance/Holiday

| | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Sept. 1-30 | Library Card Sign-Up Month |
| Sept. 7 | Labor Day |
| Sept. 8 | International Literacy Day |
| Sept. 8-14 | National Arts in Education Week |
| Sept. 11 | Patriot Day |
| Sept. 13 | Grandparents' Day |
| Sept. 15- Oct. 15 | Hispanic Heritage Month |
| Sept. 15-16 | Mexican Independence Days |
| Sept. 16 | Mayflower Day |
| Sept. 17 | Citizenship/Constitution Day |
| Sept. 17-23 | Constitution Week |
| Sept. 18-20 | Rosh Hashanah* |
| Sept. 21 | International Day of Peace |
| Sept. 22 | First Day of Autumn |
| Sept. 27-28* | Yom Kippur |
| Sept. 28 | National Good Neighbor Day |
| Oct. 1 | Child Health Day |
| Oct. 1-31 | Crime Prevention Month |
| Oct. 1-31 | Czech Heritage Month |
| Oct. 1-31 | Italian Heritage Month |
| Oct. 1-31 | National Bullying Prevention Month |
| Oct. 1-31 | National Principals Month |
| Oct. 1-31 | Polish American Heritage Month |

Date Observance/Holiday

| | |
|------------|--|
| Oct. 1-31 | Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF Month |
| Oct. 5 | Child Health Day |
| Oct. 7 | International Walk to School Day |
| Oct. 4-10 | National Metric Week |
| Oct. 4-10 | Fire Prevention Week |
| Oct. 6 | German American Day |
| Oct. 6-12 | National Educational Office Professionals Week |
| Oct. 12 | Canadian Thanksgiving |
| Oct. 12 | Columbus Day |
| Oct. 12-16 | National School Lunch Week |
| Oct. 16 | World Food Day |
| Oct. 19-23 | National School Bus Safety Week |
| Oct. 20-26 | National Character Counts Week |
| Oct. 23-31 | Red Ribbon Week (Drug-Free America) |
| Oct. 24 | Make a Difference Day |
| Oct. 24 | United Nations Day |
| Oct. 31 | Halloween |
| Nov. 1-30 | Native American Heritage Month |
| Nov. 1 | Standard Time |
| Nov. 3 | Election Day |
| Nov. 11 | Veterans Day |

*Begins at sunset on the preceding day

For subscription information, contact WSSDA at (800) 562-8927 or (360) 493-9231.

For content questions, contact: Marcia Latta Communications Consultant (503) 580-2612.

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(Over)

Key Dates

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| Date Observance/Holiday | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Nov. 18 | Education Support Professionals Day |
| Nov. 18-22 | American Education Week |
| Nov. 19 | Gettysburg Address Anniversary |
| Nov. 19 | National Parental Involvement Day |
| Nov. 20 | Substitute Educators Day |
| Nov. 22-28 | National Family Week |
| Nov. 26 | Thanksgiving Day |
| Dec. 1 | World AIDS Day |
| Dec. 7 | Pearl Harbor Day |
| Dec. 10 | Human Rights Day |
| Dec. 10-18 | Hanukkah* |
| Dec. 15 | Bill of Rights Day |
| Dec. 21 | First Day of Winter |
| Dec. 25 | Christmas |
| Dec. 26- Jan. 1 | Kwanzaa |

2021

| Date Observance/Holiday | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Jan. 1 | New Year's Day |
| Jan. 1 | Emancipation Proclamation Anniversary |
| Jan. 1-31 | School Board Recognition Month |
| Jan. 17 | World Religion Day |
| Jan. 18 | Martin Luther King Jr. Day |
| Feb. 1 | National Freedom Day |
| Feb. 1-28 | African American History Month |
| Feb. 1-28 | National Children's Dental Health Month |
| Feb. 2 | Groundhog Day |
| Feb. 8-12 | National School Counseling Week |
| Feb. 12 | Abraham Lincoln's Birthday |
| Feb. 12 | Chinese New Year |
| Feb. 14 | Valentine's Day |
| Feb. 16 | Mardi Gras |
| Feb. 17 | National PTA Founders Day |
| Feb. 15 | Presidents' Day |

| Date Observance/Holiday | |
|--|--|
| Feb. 20-27 | National FFA Week |
| Feb. 22 | George Washington's Birthday |
| Feb. 26 | Ash Wednesday |
| Feb. 26- April 11 | Lent |
| March 1-31 | American Red Cross Month |
| March 1-31 | Irish American Heritage Month |
| March 1-31 | Music in Our Schools Month |
| March 1-31 | National Middle Level Education Month |
| March 1-31 | National Nutrition Month® |
| March 1-31 | Social Work Month |
| March 1-31 | Women's History Month |
| March 1-31 | Youth Art Month |
| March 2 | NEA's Read Across America (Dr. Seuss's Birthday) |
| March 2-6 | Classified School Employees Week |
| *Dates differ by state. Usually scheduled for a full week in March. | |
| March 2-8 | National Foreign Language Week |
| March 8 | International Women's Day |
| March 8-12 | National School Breakfast Week |
| March 11 | Johnny Appleseed Day |
| March 14 | Daylight Saving Time |
| March 17 | St. Patrick's Day |
| March 18 | Absolutely Incredible Kid Day® |
| March 20 | First Day of Spring |
| March 20 | Bahá'í New Year's Day |
| March 21 | International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination |
| March 21-27 | National Poison Prevention Week March 27-28 |
| | Passover* (First Days) |

*Begins at sunset on the preceding day
(Over)

Key Dates

April 2020
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Date Observance/Holiday

April 1 April Fools' Day
April 1-30 National Poetry Month
April 1-30 National Autism Awareness Month
April 1-30 National Occupational Therapy Month
April 1-30 School Library Month
April 2 International Children's Book Day
April 2 Good Friday
April 4 Easter
April 3-4 Passover (Concluding Days)
April 5-9 National Library Week
April 7 World Health Day
April 8-9 Holocaust Remembrance Day*
April 13 First Day of Ramadan
April 18-24 National Volunteer Week
April 18-24 National Coin Week
April 18-24 Administrative Professionals Week
April 19-25 National Student Leadership Week
April 19 Patriot's Day
April 19-23 Public School Volunteer Week
April 21 Administrative Professionals Day
April 22 Earth Day
April 22 Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day™
April 30 National Arbor Day
May 1 Law Day
May 1 School Lunch Hero Day
May 1-7 National Physical Education and Sports Week
May 1-31 Asian Pacific American Heritage Month
May 1-31 Better Hearing and Speech Month
May 1-31 National Physical Fitness and Sports Month
May 1-31 Preservation Month
May 2-8 Be Kind to Animals Week

Date Observance/Holiday

May 2-9 National Music Week
May 3 World Press Freedom Day
May 4 Horace Mann's Birthday
May 4-8 Teacher Appreciation Week
May 4 National Teacher Day
May 5 Cinco de Mayo
May 5 National Bike to School Day
May 8 World Red Cross Day
May 9 Mother's Day
May 9-15 Food Allergy Action Week
May 12 National School Nurse Day
May 15 Armed Forces Day
May 24 Victoria Day (Canada)
May 31 Memorial Day
May 31 World No Tobacco Day
June – July Fireworks Safety Month
June 1-30 Caribbean-American Heritage Month
June 1-30 Great Outdoors Month
June 5 World Environment Day
June 13 Race Unity Day
June 14 Flag Day
June 16 International Day of the African Child
June 19 Juneteenth
June 20 First Day of Summer
June 20 Father's Day

*Begins at sunset on the preceding day

Please note: Some groups/states celebrate appreciation days or weeks on different dates, particularly those for classified school employees and teachers.