

NPS Lunar New Years Statement

Lunar New Year is one of the most important holidays in many Asian cultures, including China, Vietnam, Korea, and many more. Observed by more than 2 billion people worldwide, the holiday begins in late January or February and lasts as long as 15 days. The first day of Lunar New Year is the most important: families get together to celebrate, taking part in rituals requiring great preparation, such as cooking, cleaning, and decorating.

NPS currently acknowledges Lunar New Year as a **Recognized Observance Day**, which means students still have school, but homework and tests are not allowed.

The purpose of this statement is to fully disclose the importance of Lunar New Year being added as a Category 1 holiday (no-school holiday) to the 2023-2024 calendar and beyond.

1. People that identify as AAPI is the second-largest racial group in the NPS system, constituting 20.2% of the student body and 14.8% of the entire population of Newton. From 2015 to 2021, the Asian student makeup at Newton South High School stayed consistently at ~20%; however, this number reached a new high of 23.5% in 2022, increasing by 3.5% in 2 years and achieving a remarkable growth rate of 17.5%. Taking the AAPI faculty member (which also increased by 3% in the past year) into account, the total Asian percentage is 28.5% at just one high school. As one of the top choices that Asian families immigrate to for education, the NPS school committee should adapt a more holistic review of Lunar Newton Years (1)

2. The policy NPS currently adapts does not adhere to the values and goals in the school district's handbook. Although students' absences for this day can be excused, many families are hesitant to do so out of fear of missing a day of education. As a result, families in Newton must, unfortunately, push their full-scale celebrations aside, and students lose the chance to deepen their connection with their cultural roots and take pride in their Asian identity. This phenomenon does not adhere to the standards set in Educational Goal 3 under NPS Systematic Goals in the district handbook: "Support positive culture and climate, strong community, and belonging for all staff, students, and families."(2)

3. As one of the leading towns for education in Massachusetts, Newton should be at the forefront of cultivating a supportive environment for students from all backgrounds. On Jan. 9, 2020, the Brookline school committee passed Lunar New Year as an official Category I holiday, leaving a historical mark for AAPI cultural recognition. (3) In 2022, Hopkinton, Wayland, and Acton-Boxborough soon followed in their footsteps and included Lunar New Years as a no-school holiday as well. (4, 5). While NPS made some progress, we strongly believe it is time to act now to fully adapt Lunar New Years as a Category one holiday.

If you support our cause, please visit the link to the petition below and share it with your friends and families. For those who are interested in sitting in for the school committee meeting this fall/winter regarding this initiative, please email nps.lunar.new.year@gmail.com and we will notify you with further information.

Thank you for your time!

Petition Link: <https://www.change.org/p/lunar-new-year-as-a-category-1-holiday-for-nps>

Bibliography

- (1) “Enrollment Data (2021-22) - Newton South High (02070510).” *Mass.edu*, 2021, profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=02070510&orgtypecode=6. Accessed 7 Aug. 2022.
- (2) “NPS System Wide Goals 2021-2022” *Www.newton.k12.Ma.us*, www.newton.k12.ma.us/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=8423&dataid=15060&FileName=NPS%20Systemic%20Goals%2021-22.pdf. Accessed 7 Aug. 2022.
- (3) Patkin, Abby. “For the First Time, Brookline Students Get the Day off for Lunar New Year.” *Wicked Local*, *Wicked Local*, 9 Feb. 2021, www.wickedlocal.com/story/brookline-tab/2021/02/09/brookline-students-get-day-off-lunar-new-year-first-time/4457134001/. Accessed 7 Aug. 2022.
- (4) “WPS Recognizes Lunar New Year as a Holiday – WaylandNews.” *Waylandnews.com*, 2022, www.waylandnews.com/2022/05/26/wps-recognizes-lunar-new-year-as-a-holiday/. Accessed 7 Aug. 2022.
- (5) Razzaq, Zane. “Hopkinton Schools to Add Eid-Al-Fitr, Lunar New Year as No-School Holidays.” *MetroWest Daily News*, *MetroWest Daily News*, 5 Feb. 2022, www.metrowestdailynews.com/story/news/education/2022/02/05/hopkinton-schools-add-eid-lunar-new-year-no-school-holidays/6657230001/. Accessed 12 Aug. 2022.