



WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Excellence, Shaping the Future

TO: School Committee

FROM: Caitlin Ahern, Assistant Superintendent

DATE: March 9, 2026

RE: 2026-2027 Early Release Dates

The Westwood School Committee has already approved the academic calendar for school year 2026-2027. [This calendar draft](#) now includes proposed early release dates for students, which are professional development opportunities for staff.

The early release afternoons are scheduled approximately twice per month, with a total of 19 early release afternoons for professional development. There are two additional “Special Early Release” dates, November 25, 2026 (Wednesday before Thanksgiving holiday) and June 18, 2027 (tentative last day of school), with earlier release times for students and no professional development activities for staff. This is in line with prior years’ calendars.

In developing this proposed calendar of dates, every effort was made to avoid early release afternoons in weeks where school was already closed for a holiday or observance date. In the last week of October and first week of November, you’ll notice early release afternoons in consecutive weeks; this is partly due to the complexity of scheduling early release times in both September and November (several school holidays in each month; in trying to minimize putting early releases in the same weeks as school holidays, it limits which weeks we can schedule early release afternoons in October), but this schedule also supports the timing of elementary parent/teacher conferences. It ensures we can conclude Fall benchmark assessments and have adequate student learning information heading into the conferences, while not pushing that important parent/teacher touchstone too far into November.

The June 18, 2027 Special Early Release date is tied to the last day of school; if snow days or other school closures require us to push the last day of school later, the new last day of school would be the Special Early Release.

What do teachers do during early release afternoons?

On early release afternoons, the teacher’s work day is slightly extended, per the WTA contract, to allow time for professional development, collaborative work, or other priorities for schools and the district. The WTA contract outlines the use of several of these early release times (about 8-10 early release dates, depending on the grade span) to ensure adequate time for report card writing, conducting conferences, and collaborating with colleagues. The remaining early release afternoons are used for professional development for staff.

- Some afternoons are designated as **Building-Based days**, where principals and teams at each school determine the agenda and facilitate professional development for the staff at the school. These afternoons advance the school's progress on their School Improvement Plan goals and towards district goals.
- Some afternoons are **Department Days**, where educators gather by department rather than by school (eg, K-12 Performing Arts Department, 6-8 Science Department, 9-12 Math Department, etc.). Elementary classroom teachers are usually pulled together by grades across the district, to focus on a content area (eg, Grade 4 teachers districtwide meet for PD in Social Studies, Grades 1-2 teachers meet for PD in Math, etc.). Departments may be looking at student work, collaborating on planning and assessments, implementing new curriculum programs, and more.
- Some afternoons, and the full-day professional development, are designated as **District Days**, with the focus and agenda determined by the district. This time is used in service of Strategic Plan goals and topics of critical importance for the district.