

## 2026-2027 School Calendar Q&A

### **Q: Why do we have to maintain 180 instructional days or 990 hours?**

A: There are certain non-negotiables due to Virginia law. The law requires school divisions to provide **180 instructional days or 990 instructional hours**. PCPS builds a 180-day instructional calendar (which also includes well over 990 instructional hours) to ensure this requirement is consistently met.

### **Q: Do half days count toward the 180 days required?**

A: Yes. Half days **do count** toward the 180 instructional days and 990 hours requirement. If a half day were to be turned into a full day for professional development, it would **not** count towards the 180 instructional days.

### **Q: Why do we use half days for collaboration or professional development instead of more full days?**

A: PCPS could implement more full days for collaboration or professional development; however, staff feedback has consistently indicated that half days are more desired due to maintaining the school year ending during the first week in June. Half days provide **more frequent opportunities** for collaboration without adding additional days to the calendar.

Each day students do not report requires one additional instructional day to be added to the calendar, which would push the last day of school further into June. Using half days allows PCPS to support staff collaboration and professional development **without extending the school year**.

### **Q: Why are half days on Thursdays? Can they be moved to Fridays?**

A: Originally, half days were scheduled on Wednesdays because they fell mid-week. Based on staff feedback, the schedule was adjusted to Thursdays.

Moving half days to Fridays raises serious attendance concerns. Attendance is a critical accountability measure tied to state accreditation. Fridays already present a higher risk for absences, and half days on Fridays would increase the likelihood of both students and staff missing school. For this reason, Thursdays remain the most appropriate option.

**Q: Are we starting school earlier this year?**

A: No. PCPS has started school on the **last Monday of August** for the past several school years. Although Labor Day falls later in September for the 2026–2027 school year, making it appear as though school starts two weeks earlier instead of one, the **start and end dates remain consistent** with previous years.

This does **not impact the length of summer break** or reduce the number of days students are off during the summer.

**Q: Why is homecoming so early in this calendar?**

A: Homecoming is scheduled early due to the availability of home football games for the 2026–2027 season. The **September 18** game was the best option to avoid conflicts with:

- The Seafood Festival
- Halloween
- Senior night
- Dates that would be too early or too late in the season

For the 26/27 SY, the high school attempted to switch home and away games with other schools, but no schools were willing to agree to a change.

**Q: Why are there two half days in October?**

A: One October half day is designated for **division-wide collaborative work time** for all staff. The second half day is an **early release** to help accommodate the Seafood Festival.

Each year, PCPS partners with the City to support the Seafood Festival by allowing parking at two campuses. Releasing students early helps ensure the campuses are cleared in time to support the event's kickoff.

**Q: How are the dates for Spring Break decided?**

A: PCPS participates annually in a **regional calendar committee** with surrounding school divisions. This committee establishes a standard spring break week each year to avoid disruptions to:

- Regional programs
- Athletic events
- Other shared student activities

Aligning spring break ensures continuity and minimizes conflicts across divisions.

**Q: What impact do regional programs have on the calendar?**

A: PCPS works closely with the regional calendar committee to align schedules across the region. Regional programs, such as **New Horizons**, base their calendars on this alignment to support:

- Governor's School programs
- Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- The Center for Autism

This collaboration ensures students enrolled in regional programs experience minimal scheduling conflicts and consistent instructional time.