



January 20, 2012

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

RE: Lunar New Year

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

We are writing to urge you to make Lunar New Year, the Asian community's most important and greatest holiday, an official holiday for New York City public schools. The Lunar New Year is a traditional family celebration. According to Asian customs, all the members of a family gather together on the eve of the New Year to prepare a giant feast and perform certain rites. Because of these important customs, a school holiday would allow Asian American children to celebrate the holiday with their families.

As you are aware, under the New York City public school system's regulations, a student may notify a school in writing of an intended absence for a religious holiday. The absence will be marked as "excused," but it still remains an absence on the student's record and results in the student missing class.

As representatives of two of the City's largest Asian American communities, we believe that making Lunar New Year a school holiday would help recognize the important role that Asian Americans have played in our city and state. About 14 percent of school children in the NYC public school system are Asian American. Our City prides itself on its multiculturalism -- and designating the Lunar New Year as a school holiday would be an important gesture to Asian Americans that their customs and contributions to our City are appreciated. On a larger scale, it is a demonstration of the values that we claim, share, and celebrate as Americans, that we honor ethnic and religious holidays and celebrations of all cultural backgrounds.

We are the main sponsors of a bill in the New York State Legislature (A1883/S27) that would establish the day of the Asian Lunar New Year as a school holiday for New York City. However, the City may also designate the day as a school holiday or professional development day to allow students to celebrate with their families, and we urge you to do so.

Thank you for your administration's willingness to engage on this matter. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to your response and further discussion and progress on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Grace Meng".

Grace Meng  
Member of Assembly

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Daniel Squadron".

Daniel Squadron  
State Senator