

August 25, 2021

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Religious Observances for
School Year 2021-2022

To: All Staff

From: Kevin F. Gilbert, Ed.D.
Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

HCPSS respects the value of all religious observances for students, staff, and families in Howard County. The HCPSS Academic Calendar lists many dates of interest, including religious and cultural observances. The annual academic calendar supports the instructional program and must comply with regulations in Maryland law (COMAR and the Annotated Code of MD). State law mandates days when schools must be closed. The Board of Education of Howard County (Board) may determine that schools should be closed at other times in furtherance of other educational interests or operational needs. To close school system-wide on any day other than those mandated by Maryland law, the district must establish that a school closure furthers a secular purpose, such as an operational need or educational interest.

While each case must be evaluated independently, the likelihood of high absentee rates on any given day for staff and/or students, either system-wide or at a substantial portion of schools, may warrant closure of all schools if necessary to secure educational resources, promote safe school environments when it would otherwise be difficult and costly to identify and hire a sufficient number of substitute teachers, and/or avoid disruption to the delivery of effective and meaningful instruction.

A student's observance of a religious holiday is an excused absence under Maryland law. Policy 3000 Religious Observances details the legal and policy provisions concerning the exercise and expression of religion by students and staff in the HCPSS. Policy 9010 Attendance describes the requirements for student attendance and the procedures for receiving make-up work for lawful/excused absences. A student may make up and receive a recorded grade for homework not completed due to the observance of a religious holiday. Students returning from a religious holiday observance will have an equal number of days to complete make-up work.

It is important that we remain sensitive to our community members who are observing religious holidays. HCPSS is unable to accommodate system-wide closures for every religious observance. However, school staff should accommodate those observing the holidays. Therefore, school-wide event programming should not be scheduled on the days/evenings of major religious holy day observances, this will include:

- Locally mandated tests and examinations will not be scheduled
- Schoolwide activities, including field trips for an entire grade, will not be scheduled
- HCPSS athletic contests, school concerts/plays will not be scheduled (MPSSA state events might be scheduled)
- HCPSS athletic practices, school concerts/play rehearsals will not be mandatory.

The following Religious Observances charts are intended to guide HCPSS leaders in planning for the 2021-2022 school year. It is important that administrators and supervisors share this information with teachers and all staff members who plan student and school activities.

Religious Observances – Major Holy Days July 2021– July 2022

HCPSS respects the value of all religious observances for students, staff, and families in Howard County. However, because the school system is unable to accommodate system-wide closures for every observance, it is important that we remain sensitive to our community members who are observing religious holidays. The following holidays are included on the HCPSS Academic Calendar pages. It is important that administrators and supervisors share this list with teachers and all staff members who plan student and school activities.

Schoolwide event programming, including locally mandated testing and field trips, should **not be scheduled** on the following days/evenings of religious holy day observances. Note – this Major Holy Days list is provided as a programming reference guide and is a subset of the Religious Observances list. Additionally, **Please note that students observing the holidays in bold italics should be excused from homework during their observance of these days and will have an equal number of days to complete make-up work.**

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes
Evening	Mon	July 19	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	Muslim	<i>Beginning at sundown; Three day observance; No events after 5:30 pm</i>
Day & Evening	Tues	July 20	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	Muslim	<i>No events</i>
Evening	Mon	Sept 6	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	Jewish	<i>Beginning at sundown; no events after 5:30 pm</i>
Day & Evening	Tue	Sept 7	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	Jewish	<i>Two day observance; Schools & Offices Closed 1st day; No events</i>
Day	Wed	Sept 8	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	Jewish	<i>Ending at sundown; Events after 5:30 pm allowed</i>
Afternoon & Evening	Wed	Sept 15	<i>Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre)*</i>	Jewish	<i>Preparations for evening observance begin during afternoon; No events after 5:30 pm</i>
Day & Evening	Thurs	Sept 16	<i>Yom Kippur</i>	Jewish	<i>Ending after sundown; Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
Day & Evening	Thurs	Nov 4	<i>Diwali</i>	Hindu	<i>Five day observance; Third day/night is main observance; No events</i>
Day & Evening	Fri	Dec 24	<i>Christmas Eve</i>	Christian	<i>Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
Day & Evening	Sat	Dec 25	<i>Christmas Day</i>	Christian	<i>Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
Day	Tue	Feb 1	<i>Lunar New Year</i>	Chinese/Korean	<i>No events</i>
Day & Evening	Fri	Apr 1	<i>Hindu New Year</i>	Hindu	<i>No events</i>
Evening	Sat	Apr 2	<i>1st night of Ramadan †</i>	Muslim	<i>Beginning at sundown; No events after 5:30 pm.</i>
Day & Evening	Sun	Apr 3	<i>1st day of Ramadan †</i>	Muslim	<i>No events 1st day; Lasts for 30 days; No food events; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month, ends evening of May 2nd.</i>

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes
Evening	Fri	Apr 15	<i>1st Night of Passover</i> ◇	Jewish	<i>1st Seder in evening; First two days holy; No events after 5:30 pm; Dietary restrictions until sundown April 22</i>
Day & Evening	Fri	Apr 15	<i>Good Friday</i>	Christian	<i>Schools & Offices closed</i>
Day & Evening	Sat	Apr 16	<i>Passover</i>	Jewish	<i>2nd Seder in evening; No events Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 23; No food events</i>
Day & Evening	Sun	Apr 17	<i>Easter</i>	Christian	<i>No events</i>
Day & Evening	Mon	Apr 18	<i>Easter Monday</i>	Christian	<i>Schools & Offices closed; No events State</i>
Day & Evening	Tue	May 3	<i>Eid Al-Fitr</i> **	Muslim	<i>Begins Mon evening; No events; Subject to moon sighting</i>
Evening	Sat	June 4	<i>Shavuot</i> *	Jewish	<i>Beginning sundown; No events after 5:30 pm; no events first full day</i>
Day & Evening	Sun	June 5	<i>Shavuot</i> *	Jewish	<i>Two day observance; No events 1st full day</i>
Day	Mon	June 6	<i>Shavuot</i> *	Jewish	<i>Events after 5:30 p.m. allowed</i>
Evening	Sat	July 9	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	Muslim	<i>Beginning at sundown; Three day observance; No events after 5:30 pm</i>
Day & Evening	Sun	July 10	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	Muslim	<i>No events</i>

◇ Avoid food all week ‡Daytime fasting all month **Subject to moon sighting (actual date may vary) *Jewish Holy Days on Board of Rabbis' Avoidance list

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Religious Observances July 2021 – August 2022

HCPSS respects the value of all religious observances for students, staff, and families in Howard County. However, because the school system is unable to accommodate system-wide closures for every observance, it is important that we remain sensitive to our community members who are observing religious holidays. The following holidays are included on the HCPSS Academic Calendar pages. It is important that administrators and supervisors share this list with teachers and all staff members who plan student and school activities.

Schoolwide event programming, including locally mandated testing and field trips, should not be scheduled on the following days/evenings of religious observances **listed in *bold italics***. **Please note that students observing the holidays in bold italics should be excused from homework during their observance of the days and will have an equal number of days to complete make-up work. Any student observing the holidays not in bold italic shall work with staff to make arrangements for making up work.**

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion	Notes
Day	Sun	July 18	Hajj	Muslim	Begins the evening before
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>July 19</i>	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Beginning at sundown; Three day observance; No events after 5:30pm</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>July 20</i>	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>No events</i>
Day	Wed	Aug 18	Ashura	Muslim	Begins evening and ends evening of 19 th
Day	Sun	Aug 22	Ullambana	Buddhist	
Day	Sun	Aug 22	Raksha Bandhan	Hindu	Date may vary
Day	Mon	Aug 30	Krishna Janmashtami	Hindu	
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Sept 6</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Beginning at sundown; no events after 5:30pm</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Sept 7</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Two day observance; Schools & Offices Closed 1st day; No events</i>
<i>Day</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Sept 8</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Ending at sundown; Events after 5:30pm allowed</i>
Day	Fri	Sept 10	Ganesh Chaturthi	Hindu	
<i>Afternoon & Evening</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Sept 15</i>	<i>Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre) *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Preparations for evening observance begin during afternoon; No events after 5:30 pm.</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Sept 16</i>	<i>Yom Kippur *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Ending after sundown; Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
Evening	Mon	Sept 20	Sukkot *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day & Evening	Tues	Sept 21	Mid-Autumn Festival	Chinese	Equivalent to Thanksgiving

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion	Notes
Day & Evening	Tues	Sept 21	Sukkot *	Jewish	Two day observance
Day	Mon	Sept 27	Sukkot *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Evening	Mon	Sept 27	Shemini Atzeret *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Evening	Tues	Sept 28	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Evening	Wed	Sept 29	Shemini Atzeret	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Wed	Sept 29	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Thurs	Oct 7	Navratri	Hindu	Dates may vary Nine-day observance
Day	Fri	Oct 15	Dussehra	Hindu	
Evening	Mon	Oct 18	Mawlid-al-Nabi	Muslim	Subject to moon sighting Ends evening of 19th
Day	Wed	Oct 20	Installation of Guru Granth Sahib	Sikh	
Day	Mon	Nov 1	All Saints' Day	Christian	
Day & Evening	Thurs	Nov 4	Diwali	Hindu	Five-day observance; third day/night is main observance; No events
Evening	Sat	Nov 6	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Evening	Sat	Nov 6	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Sun	Nov 7	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Day	Sun	Nov 7	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Day	Fri	Nov 19	Guru nanak Devji Gurburab	Sikh	
Evening	Sun	Nov 28	Hanukkah 1 st night	Jewish	Eight-day observance
Day & Evening	Fri	Dec 24	Christmas Eve	Christian	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Day & Evening	Sat	Dec 25	Christmas Day	Christian	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Day	Sun	Dec 26	Kwanzaa	African American	Seven-day observance
Day	Thurs	Jan 6	Epiphany/Orthodox Christmas Eve	Christian	

Day	Fri	Jan 7	Feast of Nativity/Orthodox Christmas		
Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion	Notes
Day	Sun	Jan 9	Guru Gobind Singh's Gurpurab	Sikh	
Day	Mon	Jan 10	Bodhi Day	Buddhist	
Day	Fri	Jan 14	Makar Sankranti	Hindu	
<i>Day</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Feb 1</i>	<i>Lunar New Year</i>	<i>Chinese Korean</i>	<i>No events</i>
Day	Tues	Feb 15	Nirvana Day	Buddhist	
Day	Tues	Mar 1	Maha Shivaratri	Hindu	
Day	Wed	Mar 2	Ash Wednesday	Christian	
Evening	Wed	Mar 16	Purim *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown ending evening of March 17 th
Evening	Fri	Mar 18	Holi	Hindu	Begins evening and ends evening of March 19 th .
Day	Mon	Mar 21	Naw-Ruz (New Year)	Baha'I Iranian	
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Apr 1</i>	<i>Hindu New Year</i>	<i>Hindu</i>	<i>No events</i>
<i>Month</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Apr 2</i>	<i>1st night of Ramadan †</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Thirty-day observance; No events after 5:30pm. on first day; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Apr 3</i>	<i>1st day of Ramadan ‡</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>No events 1st day; Lasts for 30 days; No food events; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month</i>
Day	Tues	Apr 5	Qingming	Chinese	Tomb Sweeping Day Festival: respect paid to deceased families/ ancestors
Day	Sun	Apr 10	Palm Sunday	Christian	
Day	Thurs	Apr 14	Vaisakhi	Sikh	Usually celebrated on April 13 or 14
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Apr 15</i>	<i>1st Night of Passover ◊</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>1st Seder in evening; First two days holy; No events after 5:30pm; Dietary restrictions until sundown April 22</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Apr 15</i>	<i>Good Friday</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Schools & Offices closed; No events</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Apr 16</i>	<i>Passover</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>2nd Seder in evening; No events Dietary restrictions</i>

					<i>until sundown Apr 22; No food events</i>
Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion	Notes
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Apr 17</i>	<i>Easter</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>No events:</i>
Day	Sun	Apr 17	Orthodox Palm Sunday	Orthodox Christian	
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Apr 18</i>	<i>Easter Monday</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Schools & Offices closed; No events- State</i>
Evening	Thurs	Apr 21	Ridvan	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown; twelve day observance; 1 st , 9 th , & 12 th days are holy
Day	Fri	Apr 22	Orthodox Good Friday	Orthodox Christian	
Day	Sat	Apr 23	Last day of Passover*	Jewish	Ending at sundown; Dietary restrictions until sundown; No food events
Day	Sun	April 24	Orthodox Easter	Orthodox Christian	
Evening	Wed	Apr 27	Yom HaShoah *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Thurs	Apr 28	Yom HaShoah *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Fri	Apr 29	Ridvan	Baha'i	9 th day holy
Day	Mon	May 2	<i>Ramadan</i>	Muslim	<i>End of Ramadan</i>
Day	Mon	May 2	Ridvan	Baha'i	12 th day holy
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>May 3</i>	<i>Eid Al-Fitr **</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Begins the evening before; No events; subject to moon sighting</i>
Day	Mon	May 16	Visakha Puja (Buddha Day)	Buddhist	Ends evening of May 17 th Dates may vary
Day	Mon	May 23	Declaration of the Bab	Baha'i	Date may vary: May 23 rd or 24 th
Day	Thurs	May 26	Ascension Day	Christian	
Day	Sun	May 29	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Begins sundown day before
Day	Fri	June 3	Dragon Boat Festival	Chinese	
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>June 4</i>	<i>Shavuot *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Beginning sundown; No events after 5:30 p.m.</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>June 5</i>	<i>Shavuot *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Two day observance; No events 1st day; Events after 5:30pm</i>

Day	Sun	June 5	Pentecost	Christian	
Obsevnance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion	Notes
Day	Mon	June 6	Shavuot *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Sun	July 10	Martyrdom of The Bab	Baha'i	Begins evening of July 9
Day	Sun	July 24	Pioneer Day	Mormon	Observed on Mon, July 25
Day	Sun	Aug 7	Ashura	Muslim	Begins evening and ends evening of Aug. 8
Day	Thurs	Aug 11	Raksha Bandhan	Hindu	
Day	Fri	Aug 12	Ullambana	Buddhist	
Day	Fri	Aug 19	Krishna Janmashtami	Hindu	

◇ Avoid food all week ‡Daytime fasting all month **Subject to moon sighting (actual date may vary) *Jewish Holy Days on Board of Rabbis' Avoidance list