

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Religious Observances for School Year 2022-2023
(Revision of Circular No. 34, in Series 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 will 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 that significantly impacts the operation of a school or the school district, may warrant closure of all schools.

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. Students who are absent due to a religious holiday observance will be given an equal number of days to complete classwork as their peers who were not absent for a religious holiday observance.

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 includes:

- Locally mandated tests and examinations
- Schoolwide activities, including field trips for an entire grade
- HCPSS athletic contests, school concerts/plays (MPSSAA state events might be scheduled)

However, HCPSS athletic practices, school concerts/play rehearsals can be scheduled, but will not be mandatory.

The following Religious Observances charts are intended to guide HCPSS leaders in planning for the 2022-2023 school year. It is important that administrators and supervisors share this information with teachers and all staff members who plan student and school activities.

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Religious Observances July 2022 – June 2023

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 holidays that are in ***bold italics*** are included on the HCPSS Academic Calendar.

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
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>July 8</i>	<i>Eid Al-Adha**</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	Beginning at sundown; No events after 5:30pm
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>July 9</i>	<i>Eid Al-Adha**</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	No events
Day	Mon	Aug 8	Ashura	Muslim	Begins evening before and ends evening of 8 th
Day	Thurs	Aug 11	Raksha Bandhan	Hindu	Date may vary
Day	Fri	Aug 12	Ullambana	Hindu	Date may vary
Day	Thurs	Aug 18	Krishna Janmashtami	Hindu	Date may vary
Day	Wed	Aug 31	Ganesh Chaturthi	Hindu	
Day & Evening	Sat	Sept 10	Mid-Autumn Festival	Chinese	Equivalent to Thanksgiving
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Sept 25</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Beginning at sundown; no events after 5:30pm</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Sept 26</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Two day observance; Schools & Offices Closed 1st day; No events</i>
Day	Mon	Sept 26	Navratri	Hindu	Dates may vary Nine-day observance
<i>Day</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Sept 27</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	Ending at sundown; Events after 5:30pm allowed
<i>Afternoon & Evening</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Oct 4</i>	<i>Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre) *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	Preparations for evening observance begin during afternoon; No events after 5:30 pm.
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Oct 5</i>	<i>Yom Kippur *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	Ending after sundown; Schools & Offices Closed; No events
Day	Wed	Oct 5	Dussehra	Hindu	Dates may vary
Evening	Fri	Oct 7	Mawlid-al-Nabi	Muslim	Subject to moon sighting Ends evening of 8 th

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion	Notes
Evening	Sun	Oct 9	Sukkot *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day & Evening	Mon	Oct 10	Sukkot *	Jewish	Two day observance
Day/Evening	Mon	Oct 10	Indigenous Peoples' Day	Varied	
Day	Sun	Oct 16	Sukkot *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Evening	Sun	Oct 16	Shemini Atzeret *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Evening	Tues	Oct 18	Shemini Atzeret *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Evening	Mon	Oct 17	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Tues	Oct 18	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Thurs	Oct 20	Installation of Guru Granth Sahib	Sikh	
Day & Evening	Mon	Oct 24	Diwali	Hindu	Five-day observance; third day/night is main observance; No events
Evening	Tues	Oct 25	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Wed	Oct 26	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Evening	Wed	Oct 26	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Thurs	Oct 27	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Day	Tues	Nov 1	All Saints' Day	Christian	
Day	Tues	Nov 8	Guru nanak Devji Gurburab	Sikh	
Day	Thurs	Dec 8	Bodhi Day	Buddhist	
Evening	Sun	Dec 18	Hanukkah 1 st night	Jewish	Eight-day observance
Day & Evening	Sat	Dec 24	Christmas Eve	Christian	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Day & Evening	Sun	Dec 25	Christmas Day	Christian	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Day	Mon	Dec 26	Kwanzaa	African American	Seven-day observance
Day	Thurs	Jan 5	Guru Gobind Singh's Gurburab	Sikh	
Day	Fri	Jan 6	Epiphany/Orthodox Christmas Eve	Christian	
Day	Sat	Jan 7	Feast of Nativity/Orthodox Christmas	Christian	

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion	Notes
Day	Sun	Jan 15	Makar Sankranti	Hindu	Date may vary
<i>Day</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Jan 22</i>	<i>Lunar New Year</i>	<i>Chinese Korean</i>	<i>No events</i>
Day	Wed	Feb 15	Nirvana Day	Buddhist	
Day	Sat	Feb 18	Maha Shivaratri	Hindu	
Day	Wed	Feb 22	Ash Wednesday	Christian	
Evening	Mon	Mar 6	Purim *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown ending evening of March 7 th
Evening	Wed	Mar 8	Holi	Hindu	Begins evening and ends evening of March 9 th .
Day	Tue	Mar 21	Naw-Ruz (New Year)	Baha'i Iranian	
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Mar 22</i>	<i>Hindu New Year</i>	<i>Hindu</i>	<i>No events</i>
<i>Month</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Mar 22</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>Thurs</i>	<i>Mar 23</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	Sun	Apr 2	Palm Sunday	Christian	
Day	Wed	Apr 5	Qingming	Chinese	Tomb Sweeping Day Festival: respect paid to deceased families/ ancestors
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Apr 5</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 13</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Apr 6</i>	<i>Passover</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>2nd Seder in evening; No events Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 13; No food events</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Apr 7</i>	<i>Good Friday</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Schools & Offices closed; No events</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Apr 9</i>	<i>Easter</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>No events:</i>
Day	Sun	Apr 9	Orthodox Palm Sunday	Orthodox Christian	
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Apr 10</i>	<i>Easter Monday</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Schools & Offices closed; No events- State</i>
Day	Thurs	Apr 13	Last day of Passover*	Jewish	Ending at sundown; Dietary restrictions until sundown; No food events

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion	Notes
Day	Fri	Apr 14	Vaisakhi	Sikh	Usually celebrated on April 13 or 14
Day	Fri	Apr 14	Orthodox Good Friday	Orthodox Christian	
Day	Sun	April 16	Orthodox Easter	Orthodox Christian	
Evening	Mon	Apr 17	Yom HaShoah *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Tues	Apr 18	Yom HaShoah *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day & Evening	Fri	Apr 21	Eid Al-Fitr **	Muslim	<i>Begins the evening before; No events; subject to moon sighting</i>
Evening	Fri	Apr 21	Ridvan	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown; twelve day observance; 1 st , 9 th , & 12 th days are holy
Day	Sun	Apr 30	Ridvan	Baha'i	9 th day holy
Day	Wed	May 3	Ridvan	Baha'i	12 th day holy
Day	Fri	May 5	Visakha Puja (Buddha Day)	Buddhist	Ends evening of May 6 th Dates may vary
Day	Thurs	May 18	Ascension Day	Christian	
Day	Wed	May 24	Declaration of the Bab	Baha'i	Date may vary: May 23 rd or 24 th
Evening	Thurs	May 25	Shavuot *	Jewish	<i>Beginning sundown; No events after 5:30 p.m.</i>
Day & Evening	Fri	May 26	Shavuot *	Jewish	<i>Two day observance; No events 1st day; Events after 5:30pm</i>
Day	Sat	May 27	Shavuot *	Jewish	<i>Ending at sundown</i>
Day	Sun	May 28	Pentecost	Christian	
Day	Mon	May 29	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Begins sundown day before
Day	Mon	June 19	Juneteenth		<i>Schools and offices closed</i>
Day	Thurs	June 22	Dragon Boat Festival	Chinese	
Day and Evening	Wed	June 28	Eid al-Adha **	Islam	<i>Subject to moon sighting</i>

◇ Avoid food ‡Daytime fasting all month **Subject to moon sighting (actual date may vary)

*Jewish Holy Days on Board of Rabbis' Avoidance list