

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Religious/Cultural Observances for School Year 2023-2024

To: All Staff

From: Judith Jones
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 2023-2024 school year. It is important that administrators and supervisors share this information with teachers and all staff members who plan student and school activities.

JJ/vk

Religious/Cultural Observances June 2023 – June 2024

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/Culture	Notes
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>June 28</i>	<i>Eid Al-Adha**</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	Beginning at sundown; No events after 5:30pm
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>June 29</i>	<i>Eid Al-Adha**</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	No events
Day	Fri	July 28	Ashura	Muslim	Begins evening before and ends evening of 28 th
Day	Wed	Aug. 30	Raksha Bandhan	Hindu	Date may vary
Day	Wed	Aug 30	Ullambana	Hindu	Date may vary
Day	Thurs	Sept 7	Krishna Janmashtami	Hindu	Date may vary
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sept 15</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Beginning at sundown; no events after 5:30 pm Schools & Offices closed</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Sept 16</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Two day observance; 1st day; No events</i>
<i>Day</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Sept 17</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Ending at sundown; events after 5:30 pm allowed</i>
Day	Mon	Sept 18	Ganesh Chaturthi	Hindu	
<i>Afternoon & Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Sept 24</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>Mon</i>	<i>Sept 25</i>	<i>Yom Kippur *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Ending at sundown; Schools & Offices closed; No events</i>
Evening	Wed	Sept 27	Mawlid-al-Nabi	Muslim	Subject to moon sighting ends evening of 28 th
Evening	Fri	Sept 29	Sukkot*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion/Culture	Notes
Day & Evening	Fri	Sept 29	Mid-Autumn Festival	Chinese	Equivalent to Thanksgiving
Day & Evening	Sat	Sept 30	Sukkot *	Jewish	Two Day Observance
Day	Fri	Oct 6	Sukkot *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Evening	Fri	Oct 6	Shemini Atzeret *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day/Evening	Sat	Oct 7	Shemini Atzeret *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Evening	Sat	Oct 7	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Sun	Oct 8	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day & Evening	Mon	Oct 9	Indigenous Peoples' Day	Varied	
Day	Sun	Oct 15	Navratri	Hindu	Dates may vary, Nine-day observance
Evening	Mon	Oct 16	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Tues	Oct 17	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Evening	Tues	Oct 17	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Wed	Oct 18	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Day	Fri	Oct 20	Installation of Guru Granth Sahib	Sikh	
Day	Tues	Oct 24	Dussehra	Hindu	Dates may vary
Day	Wed	Nov 1	All Saints Day	Christian	
Day & Evening	Sun	Nov 12	Diwali	Hindu	Five-day observance; third day/night is main observance; No events
Day	Mon	Nov 27	Guru nanak Devji Gurburab	Sikh	
Evening	Thurs	Dec 7	Hanukkah 1 st night	Jewish	Eight-day observance
Day	Fri	Dec 8	Bodhi Day	Buddhist	
Day & Evening	Sun	Dec 24	Christmas Eve	Christian	no events
Day & Evening	Mon	Dec 25	Christmas Day	Christian	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Day	Tues	Dec 26	Kwanzaa	African American	Seven-day observance

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion/Culture	Notes
Day	Sat	Jan 6	Epiphany/Orthodox Christmas Eve	Christian	
Day	Sun	Jan 7	Feast of Nativity/Orthodox Christmas	Christian	
Day	Mon	Jan 15	Makar Sankranti	Hindu	Date may vary
Day	Wed	Jan 17	Guru Gobind Singh's Gurburab	Sikh	
<i>Day</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Feb 10</i>	<i>Lunar New Year</i>	<i>Chinese Korean</i>	<i>No events</i>
Day	Wed	Feb 14	Ash Wednesday	Christian	
Day	Thurs	Feb 15	Nirvana Day	Buddhist	
Day	Fri	Mar 8	Maha Shivaratri	Hindu	
<i>Month</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mar 10</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>Mon</i>	<i>Mar 11</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	Tue	Mar 19	Naw-Ruz (New Year)	Baha'i Iranian	
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Mar 20</i>	<i>Hindu New Year</i>	<i>Hindu</i>	<i>No events</i>
Evening	Sat	Mar 23	Purim*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown ending evening of March 24.
Day & Evening	Sun	Mar 24	Palm Sunday	Christian	
Day & Evening	Mon	Mar 25	Holi	Hindu	Begins evening of March 24 ends evening of March 25
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Mar 29</i>	<i>Good Friday</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Schools & Offices closed; No events</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mar 31</i>	<i>Easter</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>No events</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Apr 1</i>	<i>Easter Monday</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Schools & Offices closed; No events - state</i>
Day	Thurs	Apr 4	Qingming	Chinese	Tomb Sweeping Day Festival: respect paid to deceased families/ancestors

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion/Culture	Notes
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Apr 10</i>	<i>Eid Al-Fitr**</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Begins the evening before; No events; subject to moon sighting</i>
Day	Sun	Apr 14	Vaisakhi	Sikh	Usually celebrated on April 13 or 14
Day & Evening	Sat	Apr 20	Ridvan	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown; twelve day observance; 1 st , 9 th , 12 th days are holy
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Apr 22</i>	<i>1st Night of Passover</i> ◇	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>1st Seder in evening; first two days holy; No events after 5:30 pm; Dietary restrictions until sundown</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Apr 23</i>	<i>Passover</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>2nd Seder in evening; No events; Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 30; No food events</i>
Day	Sun	Apr 28	Orthodox Palm Sunday	Orthodox Christian	
Day	Mon	Apr 29	Ridvan	Baha'i	9 th Holy day
Day	Tues	Apr 30	Last day of Passover*	Jewish	Ending at sundown; Dietary restrictions until sundown; No food events
Day	Thurs	May 2	Ridvan	Baha'i	12 th Holy day
Day	Fri	May 3	Orthodox Good Friday	Orthodox Christian	
Day	Sun	May 5	Orthodox Easter	Orthodox Christian	
Evening	Sun	May 5	Yom HaShoah *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Mon	May 6	Yom HaShoah *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Thurs	May 9	Ascension Day	Christian	
Day	Sun	May 19	Pentecost	Christian	
Day	Wed	May 22	Declaration of the Bab	Baha'i	Date may vary; May 22 nd or 23 rd
Day	Thurs	May 23	Visakha Puja (Buddha Day)	Buddhist	Ends evening of May 24 th dates may vary
Day	Wed	May 29	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Begins sundown day before
Day	Mon	Jun 10	Dragon Boat Festival	Chinese	
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Jun 11</i>	<i>Shavuot *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Beginning sundown; No events after 5:30 p.m.</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Jun 12</i>	<i>Shavuot *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Two day observance; No events 1st day; Events after 5:30pm</i>

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion/Culture	Notes
<i>Day</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Jun 13</i>	<i>Shavuot *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Ending at sundown</i>
<i>Day</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>June 17</i>	<i>Eid al-Adha**</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Begins 16th at sunset; Subject to moon sighting</i>
<i>Day and Evening</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>June 19</i>	<i>Juneteenth</i>	<i>African American</i>	<i>Schools and Offices closed</i>

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

*Jewish Holy Days on Board of Rabbis' Avoidance list