

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Religious/Cultural Observances for
School Year 2024-2025

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 and other extracurricular competitions (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 2024-2025 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/cf

Religious/Cultural Observances August 2024 – August 2025

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/Year	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion/Culture	Notes
Day	Sun	Aug 18, 2024	Ullambana	Buddhist	Date may vary
Day	Mon	Aug 19, 2024	Raksha Bandhan	Hindu	Date may vary
Day	Mon	Aug 26, 2024	Krishna Janmashtami	Hindu	Date may vary
Day	Sat	Sept 7, 2024	Ganesh Chaturthi	Hindu	
Evening	Sun	Sept 15, 2024	Mawlid-al-Nabi	Muslim	Subject to moon sighting; ends evening of 16th
Day & Evening	Tues	Sept 17, 2024	Mid-Autumn Festival	Chinese	Equivalent to Thanksgiving
Evening	Wed	Oct 2, 2024	Rosh Hashanah	Jewish	Events must end by 5:30 pm.
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Oct 3, 2024</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Two day observance; Schools & Office Closed</i>
Day	Thurs	Oct 3, 2024	Navratri	Hindu	Dates may vary; Nine-day observance
<i>Day</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Oct 4, 2024</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Ending at sundown; no events until 5:30</i>
<i>Afternoon & Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Oct 11, 2024</i>	<i>Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre)*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Preparations for evening observance begin during afternoon; events must end by 5:30 pm</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Oct 12, 2024</i>	<i>Yom Kippur*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Ending at sundown; No events</i>
Day	Sat	Oct 12, 2024	Dussehra	Hindu	Dates may vary
Day & Evening	Mon	Oct 14, 2024	Indigenous Peoples' Day	varied	
Evening	Wed	Oct 16, 2024	Sukkot*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date/Year	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion/ Culture	Notes
Day & Evening	Thurs	Oct 17, 2024	Sukkot*	Jewish	Two-day observance
Day	Sun	Oct 20, 2024	Installation of Guru Granth Sahib	Sikh	
Evening	Wed	Oct 23, 2024	Shemini Atzeret*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Evening	Wed	Oct 23, 2024	Sukkot*	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day & Evening	Thurs	Oct 24, 2024	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Fri	Oct 25, 2024	Shemini Atzeret*	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Fri	Oct 25, 2024	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Fri	Nov 1, 2024	All Saints Day	Christian	
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Nov 1, 2024</i>	<i>Diwali</i>	<i>Hindu</i>	<i>Five-day observance; third day/night is main observance; No events</i>
Evening	Sat	Nov 2, 2024	Birth of Báb	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day & Evening	Sun	Nov 3, 2024	Birth of Báb	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Evening	Sun	Nov 3, 2024	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day & Evening	Mon	Nov 4, 2024	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Day	Fri	Nov 15, 2024	Guru nanak Devji Gurburab	Sikh	
Day	Sun	Dec 8, 2024	Bodhi Day	Buddhist	
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Dec 24, 2024</i>	<i>Christmas Eve</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Schools and Offices closed; No events</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Dec 25, 2024</i>	<i>Christmas Day</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Schools & Offices closed; No events</i>
Evening	Wed	Dec 25, 2024	Hanukkah 1 st night	Jewish	Eight-day observance
Day	Thurs	Dec 26, 2024	Kwanzaa	African American	Seven-day observance
Day	Mon	Jan 6, 2025	Epiphany/Orthodox Christmas Eve	Christian	
Day	Mon	Jan 6, 2025	Guru Gobind Singh's Gurburab	Sikh	
Day	Tue	Jan 7, 2025	Feast of Nativity/Orthodox Christmas	Christian	
Day	Tue	Jan 14, 2025	Makar Sankranti	Hindu	
<i>Day</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Jan 29, 2025</i>	<i>Lunar New Year</i>	<i>Chinese/ Korean</i>	<i>No events</i>
Day	Sat	Feb 15, 2025	Nirvana Day	Buddhist	
Day	Wed	Feb 26, 2025	Maha Shivaratri	Hindu	

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date/Year	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion/ Culture	Notes
<i>Month</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Feb 28, 2025</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>Sat</i>	<i>Mar 1, 2025</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	Wed	Mar 5, 2025	Ash Wednesday	Christian	
Day & Evening	Fri	Mar 14, 2025	Holi	Hindu	Begins evening of March 14 th , ending evening of March 15 th .
Evening	Thurs	Mar 13, 2025	Purim*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown ending evening of March 14 th .
Day	Thurs	Mar 20, 2025	Naw-Ruz (New Year)	Baha'i, Iranian	Begins evening of 19 th
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Mar 29, 2025</i>	<i>Hindu New Year</i>	<i>Hindu</i>	<i>No events</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mar 30, 2025</i>	<i>Eid Al-Fitr**</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Begins the evening before; No events; subject to moon sighting</i>
Day	Fri	Apr 4, 2025	Qingming	Chinese	Tomb Sweeping Day Festival; respect paid to deceased families/ancestors
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Apr 12, 2025</i>	<i>1st Night of Passover ◇</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>1st Seder in evening; first two days holy; events must end by 6:00 pm; Dietary restrictions until sundown</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Apr 13, 2025</i>	<i>Passover</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>2nd Seder in evening; no events; Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 13; No food events</i>
Day	Sun	Apr 13, 2025	Orthodox Palm Sunday	Orthodox Christian	
Day & Evening	Sun	Apr 13, 2025	Palm Sunday	Christian	
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Apr 14, 2025</i>	<i>2nd full day of Passover</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>No testing on this date</i>
Day	Mon	Apr 14, 2025	Vaisakhi	Sikh	Usually celebrated on April 13 or 14
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Apr 18, 2025</i>	<i>Good Friday</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Schools & Offices closed; No events</i>

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date/Year	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion/ Culture	Notes
Day	Fri	Apr 18, 2025	Orthodox Good Friday	Orthodox Christian	
Day & Evening	Sun	Apr 20, 2025	Easter	Christian	No events
Day	Sun	Apr 20, 2025	Last day of Passover*	Jewish	Ending at sundown; Dietary restrictions until sundown; No food events
Day & Evening	Sun	Apr 20, 2025	Ridvan	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown; twelve day observance; 1 st , 9 th , 12 th days are holy
Day	Sun	Apr 20, 2025	Orthodox Easter	Orthodox Christian	
Day	Mon	Apr 21, 2025	Easter Monday	Christian	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Evening	Wed	Apr 23, 2025	Yom HaShoah*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Thurs	Apr 24, 2025	Yom HaShoah*	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Tue	Apr 29, 2025	Ridvan	Baha'i	9 th Holy day
Day	Fri	May 2, 2025	Ridvan	Baha'i	12 th Holy day
Day	Mon	May12, 2025	Visakha Puja (Buddha Day)	Buddhist	Ends evening on May 13 th dates may vary
Day	Thurs	May22, 2025	Declaration of the Bab	Baha'i	Date may vary; May 22 nd or 23 rd
Day	Tues	May27, 2025	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Begins sundown, ends next day
Day	Thurs	May29, 2025	Ascension Day	Christian	
Day	Sat	May31, 2025	Dragon Boat Festival	Chinese	
Day & Evening	Sun	Jun 1, 2025	Shavuot*	Jewish	Beginning sundown; events must end by 7:00 pm
Day & Evening	Mon	Jun 2, 2025	Shavuot*	Jewish	no events
Day	Tue	Jun 3, 2025	Shavuot*	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Evening	Fri	Jun 6, 2025	Eid al-Adha**	Muslim	Begins 6th at sunset; ends on 8th at sunset; events must end by 7:00 p.m. Subject to moon sighting
Day & Evening	Sat	Jun 7, 2025	Eid al-Adha**	Muslim	No events
Day	Sun	Jun 8, 2025	Pentecost	Christian	
Day & Evening	Thurs	Jun 19, 2025	Juneteenth	African American	Schools and offices closed

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