
Equity and InnovationReligious/Cultural Observances for
School Year 2025-2026

To: All Staff
From: Caroline Waker, Ph.D., Chief of Equity and Innovation

HCPSS respects and values all religious observances for students, staff, and families in Howard County. The HCPSS School Year Calendar lists many dates of interest, including religious and cultural observances. It supports the instructional program and must comply with Maryland law and regulations (the Annotated Code of MD and COMAR). State law mandates the 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 educational interests or operational needs. To close school systemwide 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.

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 systemwide closures for every religious observance. However, school staff should accommodate those observing the holidays. Therefore, schoolwide event programming should not be scheduled on the days/evenings of major religious holy day observances. Programming 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 may be scheduled)

HCPSS athletic practices, school concerts/play rehearsals are permitted to be scheduled, but will not be mandatory.

The following Religious Observances chart is intended to guide HCPSS leaders in planning for the 2025- 2026 school year. It is important that administrators and supervisors share this information with teachers and all staff members who plan student and school activities.

CW/cf

Religious/Cultural Observances August 2025 – August 2026

HCPSS respects the value of all religious observances for students, staff, and families in Howard County.

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 italics shall work with staff to make arrangements for making up work.**

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date/Year	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion/Culture	Notes
Day	Fri	8/8/2025	Raksha Bandhan	Hindu	Date may vary
Day	Fri	8/15/2025	Krishna Janmashtami	Hindu	Date may vary
Day	Thurs	8/21/2025	Paryushan	Jain	
Day	Tue	8/26/2025	Ganesh Chaturthi	Hindu	
Evening	Thurs	9/4/2025	Mawlid-al-Nabi	Muslim	Subject to moon sighting; ends evening of the 5th.
Day	Sat	9/6/2025	Ullambana	Buddhist	Date may vary
Day	Mon	9/22/2025	Navratri	Hindu	Dates may vary; Nine-day observance.
Evening	Mon	9/22/2025	Rosh Hashanah	Jewish	Events must end by 5:30 pm.
Day & Evening	Tue	9/23/2025	Rosh Hashanah*	Jewish	No events. Two-day observance: Schools & Offices Closed 9/23/25
Day & Evening	Wed	9/24/2025	Rosh Hashanah*	Jewish	Ending at sundown; no events until 6:30 pm.
Day	Wed	10/1/2025	Dussehra/Vijaya Dashami	Hindu	Dates may vary
Afternoon & Evening	Wed	10/1/2025	Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre)*	Jewish	Preparations for evening observance begin during the afternoon; events must end by 5:30 pm.
Day & Evening	Thurs	10/2/2025	Yom Kippur*	Jewish	No events. Schools & Offices closed
Day & Evening	Mon	10/6/2025	Mid-Autumn Festival	Chinese	

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

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date/Year	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion/Culture	Notes
Evening	Mon	10/6/2025	Sukkot*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day & Evening	Tue & Wed	10/7 & 8/2025	Sukkot*	Jewish	Two-day observance
Evening	Mon	10/13/2025	Shemini Atzeret*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day & Evening	Mon	10/13/2025	Indigenous Peoples' Day	varied	
Day & Evening	Tue	10/14/2025	Shemini Atzeret*	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day & Evening	Wed	10/15/2025	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day & Evening	Mon	10/20/2025	Diwali	Hindu	No events. Five-day observance; third day/night is main observance. <i>Schools & Offices closed</i>
Evening	Tues	10/21/2025	Birth of Báb	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day & Evening	Wed	10/22/2025	Birth of Báb	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Evening	Wed	10/22/2025	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day & Evening	Thurs	10/23/2025	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Day	Thurs	10/23/2025	Installation of Guru Granth Sahib	Sikh	
Day	Sat	11/1/2025	All Saints Day	Christian	
Day	Wed	11/5/2025	Guru Nanak Devji Gurpurab	Sikh	
Day	Mon	12/8/2025	Bodhi Day	Buddhist	
Begins Evening of 12/14/25	Sun	12/14/2025	Hanukkah 1st night	Jewish	Eight-day observance (evening of 12/14 through 12/22/25); not work restricted.
Day & Evening	Wed	12/24/2025	Christmas Eve	Christian	No events. Schools & Offices closed; State mandated holiday
Day & Evening	Thurs	12/25/2025	Christmas Day	Christian	No events. Schools & Offices closed; State mandated holiday
Day	Fri	12/26/2025	Kwanzaa	African American	Seven-day observance
Day	Sat	12/27/2025	Guru Gobind Singh's Gurpurab	Sikh	
Day	Tues	1/6/2026	Epiphany/Orthodox Christmas Eve	Christian	
Day	Wed	1/7/2026	Feast of Nativity/Orthodox Christmas	Christian	

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Day	Wed	1/14/2026	Makar Sankranti/Lohri/Pongal	Hindu	Dates may vary; Nine-day observance.
Day	Sun	2/15/2026	Nirvana Day	Buddhist	
Day	Sun	2/15/2026	Maha Shivaratri	Hindu	
Day	Tues	2/17/2026	Lunar New Year	Chinese/ Korean/ Vietnamese	No events. Schools & Offices closed
Month	Tues	2/17/2026	1st night of Ramadan ‡	Muslim	2/17 or 2/18 (dependent on moon sighting) Start of Ramadan. No events 1st evening. People observing the fast refrain from eating and drinking from sunrise to sunset for the 30 days of Ramadan. Be mindful of any food related activities during Ramadan when people observing the fast could not participate in.
Day & Evening	Wed	2/18/2026	1st Day of Ramadan ‡	Muslim	No events 1st day; lasts for 30 days; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month.
Day	Wed	2/18/2026	Ash Wednesday	Christian	
Evening	Mon	3/2/2026	Purim*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown, ending evening of March 3rd.
Day & Evening	Tues	3/3/2026	Holi	Hindu	Begins evening of March 2nd, ending evening of March 3rd.
Day & Evening	Thurs	3/19/2026	Ugadi/ Gudi Padwa Hindu New Year	Hindu	No events.
Day & Evening	Thurs/ Fri	3/20/2026	Eid ul Fitr**	Muslim	No events or tests. Begins the evening before (Thurs, 3/19/26); Subject to moon sighting.
Day	Sat	3/21/2026	Naw-Ruz (New Year)	Baha'i, Iranian	Begins evening of 19th
Day & Evening	Sun	3/29/2026	Palm Sunday	Christian	
Day	Tues	3/31/2026	Mahavir Jayanti	Jain	

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Observance Timeframe	Day	Date/Year	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion/ Culture	Notes
Evening	Wed	4/1/2026	1st Night of Passover ◇	Jewish	1st Seder in evening; first two days holy; events must end by 5:00 pm ; Dietary restrictions all week (no leavening). No food events (Schools closed – Spring Break)
Day & Evening	Thu	4/2/2026	Passover	Jewish	2nd Seder in evening; no events; Dietary restrictions (no leavening) until sundown Apr 9; No food events from 5 p.m. on 4/1, through sundown on 4/9. (Schools closed – Spring Break)
Day & Evening	Fri	4/3/2026	Good Friday	Christian	No events. Schools and Offices closed; State mandated holiday
Day & Evening	Fri	4/3/2026	2nd full day of Passover	Jewish	(Schools and Offices closed)
Day	Sun	4/5/2026	Qingming	Chinese/ Vietnamese	Tomb Sweeping Day Festival; respect paid to deceased families/ancestors.
Day & Evening	Sun	4/5/2026	Easter	Christian	No events
Day	Sun	4/5/2026	Orthodox Palm Sunday	Orthodox Christian	
Day	Mon	4/6/2026	Easter Monday	Christian	No events. Schools and Offices closed; State mandated holiday
Day	Thu	4/9/2026	Last day of Passover*	Jewish	Ending at sundown; Dietary restrictions until sundown; No food events.
Day	Fri	4/10/2026	Orthodox Good Friday	Orthodox Christian	
Day	Sun	4/12/2026	Orthodox Easter	Orthodox Christian	
Day	Mon	4/13/2026	Vaisakhi	Sikh	Usually celebrated on April 13 or 14.
Evening	Tue	4/14/2026	Yom HaShoah*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown; usually communal service that evening.
Day	Wed	4/15/2026	Yom HaShoah*	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day & Evening	Mon	4/20/2026	Ridvan	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown; twelve-day observance; 1st, 9th, 12th days are holy.

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Observance Timeframe	Day	Date/Year	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion/ Culture	Notes
Day	Tues	4/28/2026	Ridvan	Baha'i	9th Holy day
Day	Fri	5/1/2026	Ridvan	Baha'i	12th Holy day
Day	Fri	5/1/2026	Visakha Puja (Buddha Day)	Buddhist	Ends evening on May 2 dates may vary.
Day	Thurs	5/14/2026	Ascension Day	Christian	
Evening	Thu	5/21/2026	Shavuot*	Jewish	<i>Beginning at sundown; events must end by 7:00 pm.</i>
Day & Evening	Fri	5/22/2026	Shavuot*	Jewish	No events
Day	Sat	5/23/2026	Shavuot*	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Sat	5/23/2026	Declaration of the Bab	Baha'i	Date may vary; May 22nd or 23rd.
Day	Sun	5/24/2026	Pentecost	Christian	
Evening	Tues	5/26/2026	Eid al-Adha**	Muslim	Begins 26th at sunset; ends on 28th at sunset; events must end by 7:00 p.m. on 5/26. Subject to moon sighting.
Day & Evening	Wed	5/27/2026	Eid al-Adha**	Muslim	No events. Schools & Offices closed
Day	Thurs	5/28/2026	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Begins sundown 5/28/26, ends next day.
Day & Evening	Fri	6/19/2026	Juneteenth	African American	No events. Schools & Offices closed
Day	Fri	6/19/2026	Dragon Boat Festival/Dano	Chinese/ Korean/ Vietnamese	

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