

THE HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM  
10910 Clarksville Pike  
Ellicott City, Maryland 21042

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Series 2016-2017

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Deputy Superintendent  
Religious Observances

TO: All Staff  
FROM: Linda T. Wise  
Deputy Superintendent

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 schools 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, either systemwide 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.

It is important that we remain sensitive to our community members who are observing religious holidays. However, because the HCPSS is unable to accommodate systemwide closures for every religious observance, schoolwide event programming should not be scheduled on the days/evenings of major religious holy day observances, including:

- 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 will not be scheduled (MPSSA state events might be scheduled)
- HCPSS athletic practices will not be mandatory.

The following Religious Observances charts are intended to guide HCPSS leaders in planning for the 2016-2017 school year. It is important that administrators and supervisors share this information with teachers and all staff members who plan student and school activities.

LTW/cdl

## Religious Observances August 2016 – July 2017

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 systemwide 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 **listed in bold italics**:

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes
Day	Tues	Aug 16	Ulambana/Obon	Buddhist	
Day	Thurs	Aug 18	Raksha Bandham	Hindu	
Day	Thurs	Aug 25	Krishna Janmasthanmi	Hindu	
Day	Mon	Sept 5	Ganesh Chaturthi	Hindu	
Day	Sat	Sept 10	Hajj	Islam	
<b>Evening</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>Sept 11</b>	<b>Eid Al-Adha</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<i>Beginning at sundown; Three day observance; No events after 5:30pm</i>
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Sept 12</b>	<b>Eid Al-Adha</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<i>Professional Learning Day; Schools Closed for Students; No events</i>
Day	Sat	Oct 1	Navratri	Hindu	Ten day observance
<b>Evening</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>Oct 2</b>	<b>Rosh Hashanah*</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<i>Beginning at sundown; No events after 5:30pm</i>
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Oct 3</b>	<b>Rosh Hashanah*</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<i>Two day observance; Schools &amp; Offices Closed 1<sup>st</sup> day; No events</i>
<b>Day</b>	<b>Tues</b>	<b>Oct 4</b>	<b>Rosh Hashanah*</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<i>Ending at sundown Events after 5:30pm allowed</i>
Day	Tues	Oct 11	Ashura	Islam	
Day	Tues	Oct 11	Dussehra	Hindu	Ten day observance
<b>Afternoon &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Tues</b>	<b>Oct 11</b>	<b>Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre)*</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<i>Preparations for evening observance begin during afternoon; No events after 5:30pm</i>
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Wed</b>	<b>Oct 12</b>	<b>Yom Kippur*</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<i>Ending after sundown; Schools &amp; Offices Closed; No events</i>
Evening	Sun	Oct 16	Sukkot*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day & Evening	Mon	Oct 17	Sukkot*	Jewish	Two day observance
Day	Tues	Oct 18	Sukkot*	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Thurs	Oct 20	Installation of Guru Granth Sahib	Sikh	
Evening	Sun	Oct 23	Shemini Atzeret*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Mon	Oct 24	Shemini Atzeret*	Jewish	Ending at sundown

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes
Evening	Mon	Oct 24	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Tues	Oct 25	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Ending at sundown
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>Oct 30</b>	<b>Diwali</b>	<b>Hindu</b>	<i>Five day observance; Third day/night is main observance; No events</i>
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Oct 31</b>	<b>Hindu New Year</b>	<b>Hindu</b>	<i>Professional Learning Day; Schools Closed for students; No events</i>
Evening	Sun	Oct 31	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Mon	Nov 1	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Day	Tues	Nov 1	All Saints' Day	Christian	
Evening	Tues	Nov 1	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Wed	Nov 2	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Day	Wed	Nov 14	Guru nanak Devji's Gurpurab	Sikh	
Day	Mon	Dec 8	Bodhi Day	Buddhist	
Day	Mon	Dec 12	Mawlid-al-Nabi	Islam	Subject to moon sighting
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Sat</b>	<b>Dec 24</b>	<b>Christmas Eve</b>	<b>Christian</b>	<i>Schools &amp; Offices Closed; No events</i>
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>Dec 25</b>	<b>Christmas Day</b>	<b>Christian</b>	<i>Schools &amp; Offices Closed; No events</i>
Evening	Sun	Dec 25	1 <sup>st</sup> Night of Hanukkah	Jewish	Eight day observance
Day	Mon	Dec 26	Kwanzaa	African American	Seven day observance
Day	Thurs	Jan 5	Guru Gobind Singh's Gurpurab	Sikh	
Day	Fri	Jan 6	Epiphany/ Orthodox Christmas Eve	Christian	
Day	Sat	Jan 7	Feast of Nativity/ Orthodox Christmas	Orthodox Christian	
Day	Sat	Jan 14	Makar Sankranti	Hindu	
<b>Day</b>	<b>Fri</b>	<b>Jan 27</b>	<b>Lunar New Year Eve</b>	Chinese Korean	<i>Professional Learning Day; Schools Closed for students; No events</i>
Day	Sat	Jan 28	Lunar New Year	Chinese Korean	
Day	Wed	Feb 15	Nirvana Day	Buddhist	
Day	Sat	Feb 25	Maha Shivranti	Hindu	
Day	Wed	Mar 1	Ash Wednesday	Christian	
Evening	Sat	Mar 12	Purim*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Mon	Mar 13	Holi	Hindu	Two day observance
Day	Mon	Mar 20	Naw-Ruz (New Year)	Baha'i Iranian	

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes
Day	Wed	Apr 5	Ram Navmi	Hindu	
Day	Sun	Apr 9	Palm Sunday	Christian	
Day	Sun	Apr 9	Orthodox Palm Sunday	Orthodox Christian	
<b>Evening</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Apr 10</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Night of Passover†</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> Seder in evening; First two days holy; No events after 5:30pm; Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 18; No food events</i>
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Tues</b>	<b>Apr 11</b>	<b>Passover</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Seder in evening; No events Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 18; No food events</i>
Day	Thurs	Apr 13	Vaisakhi	Sikh	
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Fri</b>	<b>Apr 14</b>	<b>Good Friday</b>	<b>Christian</b>	<i>Schools &amp; Offices Closed; No events</i>
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>Apr 16</b>	<b>Easter</b>	<b>Christian</b>	<i>State mandated holiday; No events</i>
<b>Day</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Apr 17</b>	<b>Easter Monday</b>	<b>Christian</b>	<i>Schools &amp; Offices Closed; No events</i>
Day	Sun	Apr 16	Orthodox Easter	Orthodox Christian	
Evening	Sun	Apr 16	Passover*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown; Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 18; No food events
Day & Evening	Mon	Apr 17	Passover*	Jewish	Last 2 days holy; Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 18; No food events
Day	Tues	Apr 18	Last day of Passover*	Jewish	Ending at sundown; Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 18; No food events
Evening	Wed	Apr 19	Ridvan	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Thurs	Apr 20	Ridvan	Baha'i	Twelve day observance; 1 <sup>st</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> & 12 <sup>th</sup> days holy
Evening	Sun	Apr 23	Yom HaShoah*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Mon	Apr 24	Yom HaShoah*	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Fri	Apr 28	Ridvan	Baha'i	9 <sup>th</sup> day (holy day)
Day	Mon	May 1	Ridvan	Baha'i	12 <sup>th</sup> day (holy day)
Day	Wed	May 10	Visakha Puja (Buddha Day)	Buddhist	
Day	Tues	May 23	Declaration of the Bab	Baha'i	
Day	Thurs	May 25	Ascension Day	Christian	
<b>Evening</b>	<b>Fri</b>	<b>May 26**</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> night of Ramadan</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<i>Beginning at sundown; No events after 5:30pm</i>
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Sat</b>	<b>May 27**</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> day of Ramadan‡</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<i>No events 1<sup>st</sup> day; Lasts for 30 days; No food events; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month</i>
Month	Sat	May 27 – June 25	Ramadan‡	Islam	Thirty day observance; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes
Day	Sun	May 28	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	
<b>Evening</b>	<b>Tues</b>	<b>May 30</b>	<b>Shavuot*</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<i>Beginning at sundown; No events after 5:30pm</i>
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Wed</b>	<b>May 31</b>	<b>Shavuot*</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<i>Two day observance; No events 1<sup>st</sup> day; Events after 5:30pm allowed</i>
Day	Thurs	June 1	Shavuot*	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Sun	June 4	Pentecost	Christian	
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>June 25**</b>	<b>Eid Al-Fitr</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<i>End of Ramadan; No events; Subject to moon sighting</i>
Day	Mon	July 24	Pioneer Day	Mormon	

†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