

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

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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Religious Observances

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 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 system-wide 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, school-wide 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 2017-2018 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 August 2017 – July 2018

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	Thurs	July 13	Ulambana/Obon	Buddhist	
Day	Mon	Aug 7	Raksha Bandham	Hindu	
Day	Tues	Aug 15	Krishna Janmasthanmi	Hindu	
Day	Thurs	Aug 24	Ganesh Chaturthi	Hindu	
Day	Thurs	Aug 31	Hajj	Islam	
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sept 1</i>	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	<i>Islam</i>	<i>Beginning at sundown; Three day observance; No events after 5:30pm</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Sept 2</i>	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	<i>Islam</i>	<i>No events</i>
Day	Wed	Sept 20	Navratri	Hindu	Ten day observance
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Sept 20</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Beginning at sundown; No events after 5:30pm</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Sept 21</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Two day observance; Schools & Offices Closed 1st day; No events</i>
<i>Day</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sept 22</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Ending at sundown Events after 5:30pm allowed</i>
<i>Afternoon & Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sept 29</i>	<i>Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre)*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Preparations for evening observance begin during afternoon; No events after 5:30pm</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Sept 30</i>	<i>Yom Kippur*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Ending after sundown; Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
Day	Sat	Sept 30	Dussehra	Hindu	Ten day observance
Day	Sun	Oct 1	Ashura	Islam	
Evening	Wed	Oct 4	Sukkot*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day & Evening	Thurs	Oct 5	Sukkot*	Jewish	Two day observance
Day	Fri	Oct 6	Sukkot*	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Evening	Wed	Oct 11	Shemini Atzeret*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Thurs	Oct 12	Shemini Atzeret*	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Evening	Thurs	Oct 12	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Fri	Oct 13	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Ending at sundown

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes
Day & Evening	Thurs	Oct 19	Diwali	Hindu	<i>Five day observance; Third day/night is main observance; No events</i>
Day & Evening	Fri	Oct 20	Hindu New Year	Hindu	<i>Professional Learning Day; Schools Closed for students; No events</i>
Day	Fri	Oct 20	Installation of Guru Granth Sahib	Sikh	
Evening	Fri	Oct 20	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Sat	Oct 21	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Evening	Sat	Oct 21	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Sun	Oct 22	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Day	Wed	Nov 1	All Saints' Day	Christian	
Day	Sat	Nov 4	Guru nanak Devji's Gurburab	Sikh	
Day	Fri	Dec 1	Mawlid-al-Nabi	Islam	Subject to moon sighting
Day	Fri	Dec 8	Bodhi Day	Buddhist	
Evening	Tues	Dec 12	1 st Night of Hanukkah	Jewish	Eight day observance
Day & Evening	Sun	Dec 24	Christmas Eve	Christian	<i>Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
Day & Evening	Mon	Dec 25	Christmas Day	Christian	<i>Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
Day	Tues	Dec 26	Kwanzaa	African American	Seven day observance
Day	Fri	Jan 5	Guru Gobind Singh's Gurburab	Sikh	
Day	Sat	Jan 6	Epiphany/ Orthodox Christmas Eve	Christian	
Day	Sun	Jan 7	Feast of Nativity/ Orthodox Christmas	Orthodox Christian	
Day	Sun	Jan 14	Makar Sankranti	Hindu	
Day	Thurs	Feb 8	Nirvana Day	Buddhist	
Day	Tues	Feb 13	Maha Shivranti	Hindu	
Day	Wed	Feb 14	Ash Wednesday	Christian	
Day	Fri	Feb 16	Lunar New Year	Chinese Korean	<i>Professional Learning Day; Schools Closed for students; No events</i>
Evening	Wed	Feb 28	Purim*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Fri	Mar 2	Holi	Hindu	Two day observance
Day	Wed	Mar 21	Naw-Ruz (New Year)	Baha'i Iranian	
Day	Sun	Mar 25	Ram Navmi	Hindu	

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes
Day	Sun	Mar 25	Palm Sunday	Christian	
Day & Evening	Fri	Mar 30	Good Friday	Christian	<i>Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
Evening	Fri	Mar 30	1st Night of Passover†	Jewish	<i>1st Seder in evening; First two days holy; No events after 5:30pm; Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 7; No food events</i>
Day & Evening	Sat	Mar 31	Passover	Jewish	<i>2nd Seder in evening; No events Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 7; No food events</i>
Day	Sun	Apr 1	Orthodox Palm Sunday	Orthodox Christian	
Day & Evening	Sun	Apr 1	Easter	Christian	<i>State mandated holiday; No events</i>
Day	Mon	Apr 2	Easter Monday	Christian	<i>Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
Evening	Thurs	Apr 5	Passover*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown; Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 7; No food events
Day & Evening	Fri	Apr 6	Passover*	Jewish	Last 2 days holy; Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 7; No food events
Day	Sat	Apr 7	Last day of Passover*	Jewish	Ending at sundown; Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 7; No food events
Day	Sun	Apr 8	Orthodox Easter	Orthodox Christian	
Evening	Wed	Apr 11	Yom HaShoah*	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Thurs	Apr 12	Yom HaShoah*	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Evening	Fri	Apr 20	Ridvan	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Sat	Apr 21	Ridvan	Baha'i	Twelve day observance; 1 st , 9 th & 12 th days holy
Day	Sun	Apr 29	Ridvan	Baha'i	9 th day (holy day)
Day	Sun	Apr 29	Visakha Puja (Buddha Day)	Buddhist	
Day	Wed	May 2	Ridvan	Baha'i	12 th day (holy day)
Day	Thurs	May 10	Ascension Day	Christian	
Evening	Tues	May 15**	1st night of Ramadan	Islam	<i>Beginning at sundown; No events after 5:30pm</i>
Day & Evening	Wed	May 16**	1st day of Ramadan‡	Islam	<i>No events 1st day; Lasts for 30 days; No food events; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month</i>
Month	Wed	May 16 – June 15	Ramadan‡	Islam	Thirty day observance; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month
Evening	Sat	May 19	Shavuot*	Jewish	<i>Beginning at sundown; No events after 5:30pm</i>
Day & Evening	Sun	May 20	Shavuot*	Jewish	<i>Two day observance; No events 1st day; Events after 5:30pm allowed</i>

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes
Day	Sun	May 20	Pentecost	Christian	
Day	Mon	May 21	Shavuot*	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Thurs	May 24	Declaration of the Bab	Baha'i	
Day	Tues	May 29	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	
Day & Evening	Fri	June 15**	Eid Al-Fitr	Islam	<i>End of Ramadan; No events; Subject to moon sighting</i>
Day	Tues	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

Religious Observances - *Major Holy Days* August 2017 – July 2018

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***. Note – this Major Holy Days list is provided as a programming reference guide and is a subset of the Religious Observances list.

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sept 1</i>	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	<i>Islam</i>	<i>Beginning at sundown; Three day observance; No events after 5:30pm</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Sept 2</i>	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	<i>Islam</i>	<i>No events</i>
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Sept 20</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Beginning at sundown; No events after 5:30pm</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Sept 21</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Two day observance; Schools & Offices Closed 1st day; No events</i>
<i>Day</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sept 22</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Ending at sundown Events after 5:30pm allowed</i>
<i>Afternoon & Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sept 29</i>	<i>Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre)*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Preparations for evening observance begin during afternoon; No events after 5:30pm</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Sept 30</i>	<i>Yom Kippur*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Ending after sundown; Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Oct 19</i>	<i>Diwali</i>	<i>Hindu</i>	<i>Five day observance; Third day/night is main observance; No events</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Oct 20</i>	<i>Hindu New Year</i>	<i>Hindu</i>	<i>Professional Learning Day; Schools Closed for students; No events</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Dec 24</i>	<i>Christmas Eve</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Dec 25</i>	<i>Christmas Day</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
<i>Day</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Feb 16</i>	<i>Lunar New Year</i>	Chinese Korean	<i>Professional Learning Day; Schools Closed for students; No events</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Mar 30</i>	<i>Good Friday</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Mar 30</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 Apr 7; No food events</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Mar 31</i>	<i>Passover</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>2nd Seder in evening; No events Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 7; No food events</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Apr 1</i>	<i>Easter</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>State mandated holiday; No events</i>
<i>Day</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Apr 2</i>	<i>Easter Monday</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>May 15**</i>	<i>1st night of Ramadan</i>	<i>Islam</i>	<i>Beginning at sundown; No events after 5:30pm</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>May 16**</i>	<i>1st day of Ramadan‡</i>	<i>Islam</i>	<i>No events 1st day; Lasts for 30 days; No food events; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month</i>
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>May 19</i>	<i>Shavuot*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Beginning at sundown; No events after 5:30pm</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>May 20</i>	<i>Shavuot*</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Two day observance; No events 1st day; Events after 5:30pm allowed</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>June 15**</i>	<i>Eid Al-Fitr</i>	<i>Islam</i>	<i>End of Ramadan; No events; Subject to moon sighting</i>