

May 14, 2018

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 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, 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. A student may make up and receive a recorded grade for homework not completed due to the observance of a religious holiday. Students returning from a religious holiday observance will have an equal number of days to complete make-up work.

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 will include:

- 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, school concerts/plays will not be scheduled (MPSSA state events might be scheduled)
- HCPSS athletic practices, school concerts/play rehearsals will not be mandatory.

The following Religious Observances charts are intended to guide HCPSS leaders in planning for the 2018-2019 school year. It is important that administrators and supervisors share this information with teachers and all staff members who plan student and school activities.

KFG/vk

Religious Observances August 2018 – July 2019

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 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 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	Notes
Day	Sun	Aug 19	Hajj	Muslim	
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Aug 20</i>	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	Beginning at sundown; Three day observance; No events after 5:30pm
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Aug 21</i>	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	No events
Day	Mon	Sept 3	Krishna Janmasthanmi	Hindu	
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Sept 9</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	Beginning at sundown; no events after 5:30pm
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Sept 10</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	Two day observance; Schools & Offices Closed 1 st day; No events
<i>Day</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Sept 11</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	Ending at sundown; Events after 5:30pm allowed
Day	Thurs	Sept 13	Ganesh Chaturthi	Hindu	
<i>Afternoon & Evening</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Sept 18</i>	<i>Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre) *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	Preparations for evening observance begin during afternoon; No events after 5:30pm
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Sept 19</i>	<i>Yom Kippur *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	Ending after sundown; Schools & Offices Closed; No events
Day	Thurs	Sept 20	Ashura	Muslim	
Evening	Sun	Sept 23	Sukkot *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day & Evening	Mon	Sept 24	Sukkot *	Jewish	Two day observance
Day	Tues	Sept 25	Sukkot *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Evening	Sun	Sept 30	Shemini Atzeret *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Mon	Oct 1	Shemini Atzeret *	Jewish	
Evening	Tues	Oct 2	Shemini Atzeret *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Evening	Mon	Oct 1	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Tues	Oct 2	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Ending at sundown

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion	Notes
Day	Wed	Oct 10	Navratri	Hindu	Ten-day observance
Day	Thurs	Oct 18	Dussehra	Hindu	Ten-day observance
Day	Sat	Oct 20	Installation of Guru Granth Sahib	Sikh	
Day	Thurs	Nov 1	All Saints' Day	Christian	
Day & Evening	Wed	Nov 7	Diwali	Hindu	Five-day observance; Third day/night is main observance; No events
Evening	Thurs	Nov 8	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Fri	Nov 9	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Evening	Fri	Nov 9	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Sat	Nov 10	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Day	Tues	Nov 20	Mawild-al-Nabi	Muslim	Subject to moon sighting
Day	Fri	Nov 23	Guru nanak Devji Gurpurab	Sikh	
Evening	Sun	Dec 2	Hanukkah 1 st night	Jewish	Eight-day observance
Day & Evening	Mon	Dec 24	Christmas Eve	Christian	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Day & Evening	Tues	Dec 25	Christmas Day	Christian	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Day	Wed	Dec 26	Kwanza	African American	Seven-day observance
Day	Sat	Jan 5	Guru Gobind Singh's Gurpurab	Sikh	
Day	Sun	Jan 6	Epiphany/Orthodox Christmas Eve	Christian	
Day	Mon	Jan 7	Feast of Nativity/Orthodox Christmas	Christian	
Day	Sun	Jan 13	Bodhi Day	Buddhist	
Day	Mon	Jan 14	Makar Sankranti	Hindu	
Day	Tues	Feb 5	Lunar New Year	Chinese Korean	
Day	Fri	Feb 8	Nirvana Day	Buddhist	
Day	Tues	Mar 5	Maha Shivaratri	Hindu	
Day	Wed	Mar 6	Ash Wednesday	Christian	
Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion	Notes

Evening	Wed	Mar 20	Purim *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Thurs	Mar 21	Holi	Hindu	Two day observance
Day	Thurs	Mar 21	Naw-Ruz (New Year)	Baha'i Iranian	
Day & Evening	Sat	Apr 6	Hindu New Year	Hindu	
Day	Sun	Apr 14	Ram Navmi	Hindu	
Day	Sun	Apr 14	Palm Sunday	Christian	
Day & Evening	Fri	Apr 19	Good Friday	Christian	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Evening	Fri	Apr 19	1st Night of Passover †	Jewish	1 st Seder in evening; First two days holy; No events after 5:30pm; Dietary restrictions until sundown April 27
Day & Evening	Sat	Apr 20	Passover	Jewish	2 nd Seder in evening; No events Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 27; No food events
Evening	Sat	Apr 20	Ridvan	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown; twelve day observance
Day	Sun	Apr 21	Ridvan	Baha'i	1 st day holy
Day	Sun	Apr 21	Orthodox Palm Sunday	Orthodox Christian	
Day & Evening	Sun	Apr 21	Easter	Christian	State mandate holiday; No events
Day & Evening	Mon	Apr 22	Easter Monday	Christian	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Evening	Thurs	Apr 25	Passover *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown; Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 27; No food events
Day & Evening	Fri	Apr 26	Passover *	Jewish	Last 2 days holy; Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 27; No food events
Day	Sat	Apr 27	Last day of Passover*	Jewish	Ending at sundown; Dietary restrictions until sundown; No food events
Day	Sun	Apr 28	Orthodox Easter	Orthodox Christian	
Day	Mon	Apr 29	Ridvan	Baha'i	9 th day holy
Evening	Wed	May 1	Yom HaShoah *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Thurs	May 2	Yom HaShoah *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Thurs	May 2	Ridvan	Baha'i	12 th day holy
Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes

Month	Sun	May 5 – June 4	Ramadan ‡	Muslim	Thirty day observance; No events 1 st day; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month
Day	Sat	May 18	Visakha Puja (Buddha Day)	Buddhist	
Day	Wed	May 22	Declaration of the Bab	Baha'i	
Day	Wed	May 29	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	
Day	Thurs	May 30	Ascension Day	Christian	
Day & Evening	Tues	June 4 **	Eid Al-Fitr	Muslim	End of Ramadan; No events; Subject to moon sighting
Evening	Sat	June 8	Shavout *	Jewish	Beginning sundown; No events after 5:30pm
Day & Evening	Sun	June 9	Shavout *	Jewish	Tow day observance; No events 1 st day; Events after 5:30pm
Day	Sun	June 9	Pentecost	Christian	
Day	Mon	June 10	Shavout *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Sat	July 13	Ulambana/Obon	Buddhist	
Day	Wed	July 24	Pioneer day	Mormon	
Day	Thurs	Aug 15	Raksha Bandham	Hindu	

† 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 2018 – July 2019

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 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. Note – this Major Holy Days list is provided as a programming reference guide and is a subset of the Religious Observances list. Additionally, **Please note that students observing the holidays in bold italics should be excused from homework during their observance of the days and be allowed to make up the homework at a later date. Any student observing the holidays not in bold italic shall work with staff to make arrangements for making up work.**

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes
Evening	Mon	Aug 20	Eid Al-Adha	Muslim	Beginning at sundown; Three day observance; No events after 5:30pm
Day & Evening	Tues	Aug 21	Eid Al-Adha	Muslim	No events
Evening	Sun	Sept 9	Rosh Hashanah *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown; no events after 5:30pm
Day & Evening	Mon	Sept 10	Rosh Hashanah *	Jewish	Two day observance; Schools & Offices Closed 1 st day; No events
Day	Tues	Sept 11	Rosh Hashanah *	Jewish	Ending at sundown; Events after 5:30pm allowed
Afternoon & Evening	Tues	Sept 18	Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre) *	Jewish	Preparations for evening observance begin during afternoon; No events after 5:30pm
Day & Evening	Wed	Sept 19	Yom Kippur *	Jewish	Ending after sundown; Schools & Offices Closed; No events
Day & Evening	Wed	Nov 7	Diwali	Hindu	Five day observance
Day & Evening	Mon	Dec 24	Christmas Eve	Christian	Schools & Offices Closed; No events
Day & Evening	Tues	Dec 25	Christmas Day	Christian	Schools & Offices Closed; No events
Day	Tues	Feb 5	Lunar New Year	Chinese/Korean	Ending at sundown
Day & Evening	Fri	Apr 19	Good Friday	Christian	Schools & Offices Closed; No events
Evening	Fri	Apr 19	1 st Night of Passover †	Jewish	1 st Seder in evening; First two days holy; No events after 5:30pm; Dietary restrictions until sundown April 27
Day & Evening	Sat	Apr 20	Passover	Jewish	2 nd Seder in evening; No events Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 27; No food events
Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes

Day & Evening	Sun	Apr 21	Easter	Christian	State mandate holiday; No events
Day & Evening	Mon	Apr 22	Easter Monday	Christian	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Month	Sun	May 5 – June 4	Ramadan †	Muslim	Thirty day observance; No events 1 st day; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month
Day & Evening	Tues	June 4 **	Eid Al-Fitr	Muslim	End of Ramadan; No events; Subject to moon sighting
Evening	Sat	June 8	Shavout *	Jewish	Beginning sundown; No events after 5:30pm
Day & Evening	Sun	June 9	Shavout *	Jewish	Two day observance; No events 1 st day; Events after 5:30pm