

May 24, 2019

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 2019-2020 school year. It is important that administrators and supervisors share this information with teachers and all staff members who plan student and school activities.

## Religious Observances – Major Holy Days August 2019– July 2020

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 these days and will have an equal number of days to complete make-up work.**

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes
Evening	Sun	Aug 11	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	Muslim	<i>Beginning at sundown; Three day observance; No events after 5:30 pm</i>
Day & Evening	Mon	Aug 12	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	Muslim	<i>No events</i>
Evening	Sun	Sept 29	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	Jewish	<i>Beginning at sundown; no events after 5:30 pm</i>
Day & Evening	Mon	Sept 30	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	Jewish	<i>Two day observance; Schools &amp; Offices Closed 1<sup>st</sup> day; No events</i>
Day	Tues	Oct 1	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	Jewish	<i>Ending at sundown; Events after 5:30 pm allowed</i>
Afternoon & Evening	Tues	Oct 8	<i>Yom Kippur</i>	Jewish	<i>Preparations for evening observance begin during afternoon; No events after 5:30 pm</i>
Day & Evening	Wed	Oct 9	<i>Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre)*</i>	Jewish	<i>Ending after sundown; Schools &amp; Offices Closed; No events</i>
Day & Evening	Sun	Oct 27	<i>Diwali</i>	Hindu	<i>Five day observance; Third day/night is main observance; No events</i>
Day & Evening	Tues	Dec 24	<i>Christmas Eve</i>	Christian	<i>Schools &amp; Offices Closed; No events</i>
Day & Evening	Wed	Dec 25	<i>Christmas Day</i>	Christian	<i>Schools &amp; Offices Closed; No events</i>
Day	Sat	Jan 25	<i>Lunar New Year</i>	Chinese/Korean	<i>No events</i>
Day & Evening	Wed	Mar 25	<i>Hindu New Year</i>	Hindu	<i>No events</i>
Evening	Wed	Apr 8	<i>1<sup>st</sup> Night of Passover †</i>	Jewish	<i>1<sup>st</sup> Seder in evening; First two days holy; No events after 5:30 pm; Dietary restrictions until sundown April 27</i>
Day & Evening	Thurs	Apr 9	<i>Passover</i>	Jewish	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Seder in evening; No events Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 27; No food events</i>
Day & Evening	Fri	Apr 10	<i>Good Friday</i>	Christian	<i>Schools &amp; Offices closed</i>

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes
Day & Evening	Sun	Apr 12	<i>Easter</i>	Christian	<i>No events</i>
Day & Evening	Mon	Apr 13	<i>Easter Monday</i>	Christian	<i>Schools &amp; Offices closed; No events</i>
Evening	Thurs	Apr 23	<i>1<sup>st</sup> night of Ramadan ‡</i>	Muslim	<i>Beginning at sundown; No events after 5:30 pm.</i>
Day & Evening	Fri	Apr 24	<i>1<sup>st</sup> day of Ramadan ‡</i>	Muslim	<i>No events 1<sup>st</sup> day; Lasts for 30 days; No food events; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month</i>
Day & Evening	Sun	May 24 **	<i>Eid Al-Fitr</i>	Muslim	<i>End of Ramadan; No events; Subject to moon sighting</i>
Evening	Thurs	May 28	<i>Shavuot *</i>	Jewish	<i>Beginning sundown; No events after 5:30 pm</i>
Day & Evening	Fri	May 29	<i>Shavuot *</i>	Jewish	<i>Two day observance; No events 1<sup>st</sup> day; Events after 5:30 p.m. allowed</i>

† 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

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## Religious Observances August 2019 – July 2020

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	Fri	Aug 9	Hajj	Muslim	
<b><i>Evening</i></b>	<b><i>Sat</i></b>	<b><i>Aug 10</i></b>	<b><i>Eid Al-Adha</i></b>	<b><i>Muslim</i></b>	Beginning at sundown; Three day observance; No events after 5:30pm
<b><i>Day &amp; Evening</i></b>	<b><i>Sun</i></b>	<b><i>Aug 11</i></b>	<b><i>Eid Al-Adha</i></b>	<b><i>Muslim</i></b>	No events
Day	Fri	Aug 23	Krishna Janmasthanmi	Hindu	
Day	Mon	Sept 2	Ganesh Chaturthi	Hindu	
Day	Tues	Sept 10	Ashura	Muslim	
<b><i>Evening</i></b>	<b><i>Sun</i></b>	<b><i>Sept 29</i></b>	<b><i>Rosh Hashanah *</i></b>	<b><i>Jewish</i></b>	Beginning at sundown; no events after 5:30pm
Day	Sun	Sept 29	Navratri	Hindu	Ten-day observance
<b><i>Day &amp; Evening</i></b>	<b><i>Mon</i></b>	<b><i>Sept 30</i></b>	<b><i>Rosh Hashanah *</i></b>	<b><i>Jewish</i></b>	Two day observance; Schools & Offices Closed 1 <sup>st</sup> day; No events
<b><i>Day</i></b>	<b><i>Tues</i></b>	<b><i>Oct 1</i></b>	<b><i>Rosh Hashanah *</i></b>	<b><i>Jewish</i></b>	Ending at sundown; Events after 5:30pm allowed
Day	Tues	Oct 8	Dussehra	Hindu	Ten-day observance
<b><i>Day &amp; Evening</i></b>	<b><i>Tues</i></b>	<b><i>Oct 8</i></b>	<b><i>Yom Kippur *</i></b>	<b><i>Jewish</i></b>	Ending after sundown; Schools & Offices Closed; No events
<b><i>Afternoon &amp; Evening</i></b>	<b><i>Wed</i></b>	<b><i>Oct 9</i></b>	<b><i>Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre) *</i></b>	<b><i>Jewish</i></b>	Preparations for evening observance begin during afternoon; No events after 5:30pm
Evening	Sun	Oct 13	Sukkot *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day & Evening	Mon	Oct 14	Sukkot *	Jewish	Two day observance
Day	Sun	Oct 20	Sukkot *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Sun	Oct 20	Installation of Guru Granth Sahib	Sikh	

<b>Observance Timeframe</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Religious/Cultural Observance</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Evening	Sun	Oct 20	Shemini Atzeret *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Mon	Oct 21	Shemini Atzeret *	Jewish	
Evening	Tues	Oct 22	Shemini Atzeret *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Evening	Mon	Oct 21	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Tues	Oct 22	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Ending at sundown
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>Oct 27</b>	<b>Diwali</b>	<b>Hindu</b>	Five-day observance; Third day/night is main observance; No events
Evening	Mon	Oct 28	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Tues	Oct 29	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Evening	Tues	Oct 29	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Wed	Oct 30	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Day	Fri	Nov 1	All Saints' Day	Christian	
Day	Sun	Nov 10	Mawlid-al-Nabi	Muslim	Subject to moon sighting
Day	Tues	Nov 12	Guru nanak Devji Gurpurab	Sikh	
Evening	Sun	Dec 22	Hanukkah 1 <sup>st</sup> night	Jewish	Eight-day observance
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Tues</b>	<b>Dec 24</b>	<b>Christmas Eve</b>	<b>Christian</b>	Schools & Offices closed; No events
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Wed</b>	<b>Dec 25</b>	<b>Christmas Day</b>	<b>Christian</b>	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Day	Thurs	Dec 26	Kwanza	African American	Seven-day observance
Day	Fri	Jan 2	Guru Gobind Singh's Gurburab	Sikh	
Day	Thurs	Jan 2	Bodhi Day	Buddhist	
Day	Mon	Jan 6	Epiphany/Orthodox Christmas Eve	Christian	
Day	Tues	Jan 7	Feast of Nativity/Orthodox Christmas	Christian	
Day	Wed	Jan 14	Makar Sankranti	Hindu	
<b>Day</b>	<b>Sat</b>	<b>Jan 25</b>	<b>Lunar New Year</b>	<b>Chinese Korean</b>	No events
Day	Sat	Feb 15	Nirvana Day	Buddhist	
Day	Fri	Feb 21	Maha Shivaratri	Hindu	

<b>Observance Timeframe</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Religious/Cultural Observance</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Day	Wed	Feb 26	Ash Wednesday	Christian	
Day	Mon	Mar 9	Holi	Hindu	Two day observance
Evening	Mon	Mar 9	Purim *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown ending evening of March 10 <sup>th</sup> .
Day	Fri	Mar 20	Naw-Ruz (New Year)	Baha'i Iranian	
<b><i>Day &amp; Evening</i></b>	<b><i>Wed</i></b>	<b><i>Mar 25</i></b>	<b><i>Hindu New Year</i></b>	<b><i>Hindu</i></b>	No events
Day	Thurs	Apr 2	Ram Navmi	Hindu	
Day	Sun	Apr 5	Palm Sunday	Christian	
<b><i>Evening</i></b>	<b><i>Wed</i></b>	<b><i>Apr 8</i></b>	<b><i>1<sup>st</sup> Night of Passover †</i></b>	<b><i>Jewish</i></b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Seder in evening; First two days holy; No events after 5:30pm; Dietary restrictions until sundown April 16
<b><i>Day &amp; Evening</i></b>	<b><i>Thur</i></b>	<b><i>Apr 9</i></b>	<b><i>Passover</i></b>	<b><i>Jewish</i></b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Seder in evening; No events Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 27; No food events
<b><i>Day &amp; Evening</i></b>	<b><i>Fri</i></b>	<b><i>Apr 10</i></b>	<b><i>Good Friday</i></b>	<b><i>Christian</i></b>	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Day	Sun	Apr 12	Orthodox Palm Sunday	Orthodox Christian	
<b><i>Day &amp; Evening</i></b>	<b><i>Sun</i></b>	<b><i>Apr 12</i></b>	<b><i>Easter</i></b>	<b><i>Christian</i></b>	No events
<b><i>Day &amp; Evening</i></b>	<b><i>Mon</i></b>	<b><i>Apr 13</i></b>	<b><i>Easter Monday</i></b>	<b><i>Christian</i></b>	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Day & Evening	Mon	Apr 13	Vaisakhi	Sikh	
Day & Evening	Wed	Apr 15	Passover *	Jewish	Last 2 days holy; Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 16; No food events
Day	Thurs	Apr 16	Last day of Passover*	Jewish	Ending at sundown; Dietary restrictions until sundown; No food events
Day	Sun	Apr 19	Orthodox Easter	Orthodox Christian	
Evening	Sun	Apr 19	Ridvan	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown; twelve day observance
Day	Mon	Apr 20	Ridvan	Baha'i	1 <sup>st</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> , and 12 <sup>th</sup> day are holy
Evening	Mon	Apr 20	Yom HaShoah *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes
Day	Tues	Apr 21	Yom HaShoah *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Month	Thurs	Apr 23- May 23	Ramadan ‡	Muslim	Thirty day observance; No events after 5:30pm. on first day; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month
Day	Tues	Apr 28	Ridvan	Baha'i	9 <sup>th</sup> day holy
Day	Fri	May 1	Ridvan	Baha'i	12 <sup>th</sup> day holy
Day	Thurs	May 7	Visakha Puja (Buddha Day)	Buddhist	
Day	Thurs	May 21	Ascension Day	Christian	
Day	Sat	May 23	Declaration of the Bab	Baha'i	
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>May 24</b> <b>**</b>	<b>Eid Al-Fitr</b>	<b>Muslim</b>	End of Ramadan; No events; Subject to moon sighting
Day	Fri	May 28	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	
<b>Evening</b>	<b>Thurs</b>	<b>May 28</b>	<b>Shavuot *</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	Beginning sundown; No events after 5:30pm
<b>Day &amp; Evening</b>	<b>Fri</b>	<b>May 29</b>	<b>Shavuot *</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	Two day observance; No events 1 <sup>st</sup> day; Events after 5:30pm
Day	Sat	May 30	Shavuot *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Sun	May 31	Pentecost	Christian	
Day	Thurs	July 9	Martydom of The Bab	Baha'i	
Day	Mon	July 13	Ulambana/Obon	Buddhist	Western region – Thus. August 13-15
Day	Fri	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

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