

May 19, 2020

REVISION

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 2020-2021 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 July 2020– July 2021

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	Thurs	July 30	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	Muslim	<i>Beginning at sundown; Three day observance; No events after 5:30 pm</i>
Day & Evening	Fri	July 31	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	Muslim	<i>No events</i>
Evening	Fri	Sept 18	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	Jewish	<i>Beginning at sundown; no events after 5:30 pm</i>
Day & Evening	Sat	Sept 19	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	Jewish	<i>Two day observance; Schools & Offices Closed 1st day; No events</i>
Day	Sun	Sept 20	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	Jewish	<i>Ending at sundown; Events after 5:30 pm allowed</i>
Afternoon & Evening	Sun	Sept 27	<i>Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre)*</i>	Jewish	<i>Preparations for evening observance begin during afternoon; No events after 5:30 pm</i>
Day & Evening	Mon	Sept 28	<i>Yom Kippur</i>	Jewish	<i>Ending after sundown; Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
Day & Evening	Sat	Nov 14	<i>Diwali</i>	Hindu	<i>Five day observance; Third day/night is main observance; No events</i>
Day & Evening	Thurs	Dec 24	<i>Christmas Eve</i>	Christian	<i>Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
Day & Evening	Fri	Dec 25	<i>Christmas Day</i>	Christian	<i>Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
Day	Fri	Feb 12	<i>Lunar New Year</i>	Chinese/Korean	<i>No events</i>
Evening	Sat	Mar 27	<i>1st Night of Passover ◇</i>	Jewish	<i>1st Seder in evening; First two days holy; No events after 5:30 pm; Dietary restrictions until sundown April 4</i>
Day & Evening	Sun	Mar 28	<i>Passover</i>	Jewish	<i>2nd Seder in evening; No events Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 4; No food events</i>
Day & Evening	Fri	Apr 2	<i>Good Friday</i>	Christian	<i>Schools & Offices closed</i>

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Holy Day	Religion	Notes
Day & Evening	Sun	Apr 4	<i>Easter</i>	Christian	<i>No events</i>
Day & Evening	Mon	Apr 5	<i>Easter Monday</i>	Christian	<i>Schools & Offices closed; No events</i>
Day & Evening	Mon	Apr 12	<i>Hindu New Year</i>	Hindu	<i>No events</i>
Evening	Mon	Apr 12	<i>1st night of Ramadan ‡</i>	Muslim	<i>Beginning at sundown; No events after 5:30 pm.</i>
Day & Evening	Tues	Apr 13	<i>1st day of Ramadan ‡</i>	Muslim	<i>No events 1st day; Lasts for 30 days; No food events; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month</i>
Day & Evening	Thurs	May 13	<i>Eid Al-Fitr **</i>	Muslim	<i>No events; Subject to moon sighting</i>
Evening	Sun	May 16	<i>Shavuot *</i>	Jewish	<i>Beginning sundown; No events after 5:30 pm</i>
Day & Evening	Mon	May 17	<i>Shavuot *</i>	Jewish	<i>Two day observance; No events 1st day; Events after 5:30 p.m. allowed</i>
Evening	Mon	July 19	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	Muslim	<i>Beginning at sundown; Three day observance; No events after 5:30 pm</i>
Day & Evening	Tues	July 20	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	Muslim	<i>No events</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 July 2020 – August 2021

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	Tues	July 28	Hajj	Muslim	
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>July 30</i>	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Beginning at sundown; Three day observance; No events after 5:30pm</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>July 31</i>	<i>Eid Al-Adha</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>No events</i>
Day	Mon	Aug 3	Raksha Bandham	Hindu	
Day	Tues	Aug 11	Krishna Janmasthanmi	Hindu	
Day	Sat	Aug 22	Ganesh Chaturthi	Hindu	
Day	Fri	Aug 28	Ashura	Muslim	Begins evening and ends evening of 29 th
Day	Wed	Sept 2	Ulambana/Obon	Buddhist	Western region- Thurs August 13-15
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sept 18</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Beginning at sundown; no events after 5:30pm</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Sept 19</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Two day observance; Schools & Offices Closed 1st day; No events</i>
<i>Day</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Sept 20</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Ending at sundown; Events after 5:30pm allowed</i>
<i>Afternoon & Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Sept 27</i>	<i>Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre) *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Preparations for evening observance begin during afternoon; No events after 5:30 pm.</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Sept 28</i>	<i>Yom Kippur *</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Ending after sundown; Schools & Offices Closed; No events</i>
Evening	Fri	Oct 2	Sukkot *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day & Evening	Sat	Oct 3	Sukkot *	Jewish	Two day observance

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion	Notes
Day	Fri	Oct 9	Sukkot *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Evening	Fri	Oct 9	Shemini Atzeret *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Evening	Sat	Oct 10	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Evening	Sun	Oct 11	Shemini Atzeret	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Sun	Oct 11	Simchat Torah	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Sat	Oct 17	Navratri	Hindu	Ten-day observance
Evening	Sat	Oct 17	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Sun	Oct 18	Birth of Bab	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Evening	Sun	Oct 18	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown
Day	Mon	Oct 19	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Ending at sundown
Day	Tues	Oct 20	Installation of Guru Granth Sahib	Sikh	
Day	Sun	Oct 25	Dussehra	Hindu	Ten-day observance
Evening	Wed	Oct 28	Mawlid-al-Nabi	Muslim	Subject to moon sighting Ends evening of 29th
Day	Sun	Nov 1	All Saints' Day	Christian	
Day & Evening	Sat	Nov 14	Diwali	Hindu	Five-day observance; third day/night is main observance; No events
Day	Mon	Nov 30	Guru nanak Devji Gurburab	Sikh	
Evening	Thurs	Dec 10	Hanukkah 1 st night	Jewish	Eight-day observance
Day & Evening	Thurs	Dec 24	Christmas Eve	Christian	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Day & Evening	Fri	Dec 25	Christmas Day	Christian	Schools & Offices closed; No events
Day	Sat	Dec 26	Kwanza	African American	Seven-day observance
Day	Wed	Jan 6	Epiphany/Orthodox Christmas Eve	Christian	
Day	Thurs	Jan 7	Feast of Nativity/Orthodox Christmas		
Day	Thurs	Jan 14	Makar Sankranti	Hindu	

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion	Notes
Day	Wed	Jan 20	Guru Gobind Singh's Gurburab	Sikh	
Day	Mon	Feb 15	Nirvana Day	Buddhist	
<i>Day</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Feb 12</i>	<i>Lunar New Year</i>	<i>Chinese Korean</i>	<i>No events</i>
Day	Wed	Feb 17	Ash Wednesday	Christian	
Evening	Thurs	Feb 25	Purim *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown ending evening of February 26th
Day	Sun	Mar 21	Naw-Ruz (New Year)	Baha'I Iranian	
<i>Evening</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Mar 27</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 April 4</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mar 28</i>	<i>Passover</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>2nd Seder in evening; No events Dietary restrictions until sundown Apr 4; No food events</i>
Day	Sun	Mar 28	Palm Sunday	Christian	
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Apr 2</i>	<i>Good Friday</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Schools & Offices closed; No events</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Apr 4</i>	<i>Easter</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>No events</i>
Day	Sun	Apr 4	Last day of Passover*	Jewish	Ending at sundown; Dietary restrictions until sundown; No food events
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Apr 5</i>	<i>Easter Monday</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Schools & Offices closed; No events</i>
Day	Thurs	Apr 8	Visakha Puja (Buddha Day)	Buddhist	
Evening	Thurs	Apr 8	Yom HaShoah *	Jewish	Beginning at sundown
Day	Fri	Apr 9	Yom HaShoah *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Apr 12</i>	<i>Hindu New Year</i>	<i>Hindu</i>	<i>No events</i>
<i>Month</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Apr12</i>	<i>1st night of Ramadan †</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Thirty-day observance; No events after 5:30pm. on first day; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month</i>
<i>Day & Evening</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Apr 13</i>	<i>1st day of Ramadan †</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>No events 1st day; Lasts for 30 days; No food events; Dietary restrictions; Daytime fasting all month</i>

Observance Timeframe	Day	Date	Religious/Cultural Observance	Religion	Notes
Evening	Tues	Apr 20	Ridvan	Baha'i	Beginning at sundown; twelve day observance; 1 st , 9 th , & 12 th days are holy
Day	Sun	Apr 25	Orthodox Palm Sunday	Orthodox Christian	
Day	Wed	Apr 28	Ridvan	Baha'i	9 th day holy
Day	Sat	May 1	Ridvan	Baha'i	12 th day holy
Day	Sun	May 2	Orthodox Easter	Orthodox Christian	
Day	Wed	May 12	<i>Ramadan</i>	Muslim	<i>End of Ramadan</i>
Day & Evening	Wed	May 13	Eid Al-Fitr **	Muslim	<i>Begins the evening before; No events; subject to moon sighting</i>
Day	Thurs	May 13	Ascension Day	Christian	
Evening	Sun	May 16	Shavuot *	Jewish	<i>Beginning sundown; No events after 5:30 p.m.</i>
Day & Evening	Mon	May 17	Shavuot *	Jewish	<i>Two day observance; No events 1st day; Events after 5:30pm</i>
Day	Tues	May 18	Shavuot *	Jewish	Ending at sundown
Day	Sun	May 23	Pentecost	Christian	
Day	Mon	May 24	Declaration of the Bab	Baha'i	
Day	Fri	May 28	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	
Day	Fri	July 9	Martydom of The Bab	Baha'i	Begins evening of July 8
Day	Sat	July 24	Pioneer Day	Mormon	
Day	Wed	Aug 18	Ashura	Muslim	Begins evening and ends evening of Aug. 19
Day	Sat	Aug 21	Raksha Bandham	Hindu	
Day	Sun	Aug 22	Ulambana/Obon	Buddhist	Western region- Fri August 13-15
Day	Sun	Aug 29	Krishna Janmasthanmi	Hindu	

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