

Maryland State School Law requires that public schools be closed on the following days:

- **Thanksgiving Day and the day after**
- **Christmas Eve through January 1**
- **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**
- **Presidents' Day**
- **The Friday before Easter through the Monday after Easter**
- **Memorial Day**
- **Primary and General Election Days**

In addition, the school system may close at other times when the observance of religious practices results in unacceptably high levels of student and/or staff absenteeism. For this reason, the Howard County Public School System is also closed on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

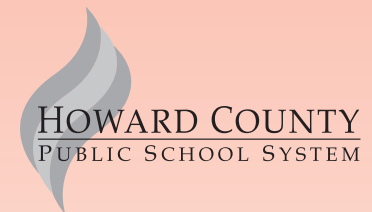
The Howard County Public School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, gender, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation or disability in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs. For more information, contact the Equity Assurance Office of the Howard County Public School System at 10910 Route 108, Ellicott City, MD 21042, or call 410.313.6654.



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A Parents' Guide to **Accommodations for Religious Observance by Students**



Cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity is one of the Howard County Public School System's greatest strengths.

As the Howard County community becomes more diverse, our students and teachers are truly enriched by the many cultures and customs that come together in our classrooms.

The staff and students of the Howard County Public School System represent a number of religious denominations. It would be impractical for the school system to close for the major religious observances of all denominations, therefore special provisions are available for students who wish to participate in traditional and customary observances of their religion on days when schools are open.



Attendance and School Work

A student, who does not attend school in order to observe or participate in religious observance, is considered lawfully absent for the day, or any portion of the day, if the school receives a written request from the student's parents.

- That request should be received by the school before the date of the religious observance. A student may make up work and receive a recorded grade when an excused absence is documented by a note from his or her parent. This includes being given an opportunity to make up any tests that may be missed.
- If a note from the parent explaining the absence is not received by the school within two school days of the student's return, the absence may be coded as unlawful (unexcused).
- If the observance requires a student to leave prior to the end of the school day, the student must sign out according to the school's early dismissal procedures.
- Students who complete the school year with no absences, other than those resulting from religious observance, will not be denied school attendance certificates where such are regularly awarded.

Teachers are to avoid scheduling tests or announcing future tests on major religious holidays if at all possible. Statewide primary test administrations are not scheduled on these religious holidays: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Ramadan, Eid Al-Fitr, Eid Al-Adha, Passover, and Good Friday (Western and Orthodox).

Athletic and Extracurricular Activities

The policies of the Howard County Public School System related to religious observance apply to student participation in athletic practices and games, as well as other extracurricular activities.

Students are excused from attendance at, or participation in, any extracurricular activity when their attendance or participation conflicts with their religious observance. Athletic practices and events are optional for students on any religious holiday.

These provisions are documented in Howard County Board of Education Policies 9010, Attendance, and 3000, Religious Observances, which are available on the school system's website, www.hcpss.org, or through the Public Information Office at 410-313.6682.