

Guidelines for Religious Holidays

The Harvard Public Schools will be open for school on religious holidays with the exception of state or national holidays or established low-attendance days. The School Committee will review this policy of keeping schools open on all religious holidays, if the superintendent, in collaboration with the faculty and administration, determines that overall attendance will render the opening of school impractical or uneconomic.

The right of parents to excuse their children from school attendance for the purposes of religious observance is understood and supported by the district. It is the intent of these guidelines that any student exercising their right under this policy will not incur penalty in their academic studies, school athletics, or extracurricular activities related to the schools.

1. The school's annual calendar will be prepared to include the names and dates of major religious observances.
2. The superintendent will identify and appropriately delineate the major religious observances and dates in collaboration with local clergy and community representatives. This must also include the date, and where applicable, the time observance commences.
3. The approved calendar will be distributed and discussed as part of mandatory school employee training at the start of each school year. To the extent possible this may additionally extend into the district's annual professional development plans.
4. District employees must also review and comply with accommodations for religious observances as provided for in contracts of employment and staff guidelines as well as building handbooks.

Religious Holidays Guidelines – Student Activities

School district employees may not schedule any of the following activities during major religious holidays in accordance with details recorded on the annual calendar.

- A. Major exams, standardized tests, and reviews for same are not permitted. Any concerns about the makeup of work following a religious holiday will be brought to the attention of the teacher and where necessary the building principal.
- B. Tryouts for teams, plays, and other similar activities are not permitted.
- C. Major events such as proms, dances, student elections, music concerts, and plays, etc. are not permitted.

D. All athletic and other extracurricular activities must be scheduled in such a way as to minimize conflict with designated religious holidays. Any activity scheduled to cause a conflict must be reviewed and approved by the superintendent.

Homework assignments and make up privileges associated with observance of religious holidays will be regarded as excused absences and treated the same as the make-up privileges offered to a student who has an excused absence due to illness or other reasons.

Approved: December 13, 2010

Reviewed: May 20, 2013

Amended: September 9, 2019

LEGAL REF.: All Collective Bargaining Agreements 2019-TBD: