



## Religious Holidays and Observances

MSD Washington Township Schools

2021-2022 Academic Year

The Washington Township School community includes students and employees of different religions, faiths, and beliefs. This guiding document lists major religious observances that are representative of MSDWT students and staff as well as considerations to think about in efforts to promote identity safe schools.

### BAHÁÍ

The Bahá'í faith is one of the youngest world's major religions and focuses on the unification of humanity. People should work together for the common benefit of the human race. The Báb was the herald of the Baha'i faith and prepared people for the coming of the Manifestation of God.

- **Nov. 6, 2021:** the birth anniversary of the Báb
- **Nov. 7, 2021:** the birth anniversary of prophet/founder Baha'u'llah
- **Mar. 2-20, 2022:** Nineteen day fast from sunrise to sunset with time set aside for prayer and meditation
- **Mar. 21, 2022: Naw-Rúz** -New Year's Day. This also marks the end of a *19 day fast which will begin approximately March 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021*. Practitioners fast and celebrate during the evening of **March 21, 2022**. Dates may vary due to lunar calendar.
- **Apr. 20** (First Day), **Apr. 28** (Nineth Day), **May 1** (Twelth Day), **2022:** Festival of Ridván is the annual Baha'i festival that commemorates the 12 days when Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Baha'i Faith, publicly proclaimed His mission as God's messenger.
- **May 23, 2022:** Declaration of the Báb
- **May 29, 2022:** Ascension of Baha'u'llah

### **Considerations:**

*If planning school activities, assignments, or assessments, keep in mind that students who practice the Bahá'í faith may be absent on major holidays, and may be fasting sunrise to sunset for 19 days in March (if the student is old enough). Offering to take tests in the morning before school to avoid fatigue that fasting can cause would be a considerate adaptation. Feast and Holy days begin at sunset on day before full day provided above.*

## BUDDHISM

Buddhism focuses on personal spiritual development. It was founded by the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama. Practitioners follow many different forms of Buddhism, but all traditions are characterized by the tenets of nonviolence, lack of dogma, and tolerance of differences.

- **Dec. 8, 2021: Bodhi Day** - the celebration of when Prince Gautama took his place under the Bodhi tree, vowing to remain there until he attained supreme enlightenment.
- **May 15, 2022: Visakha Puja (Buddha Day)** - The most significant holiday in Buddhism. This holiday celebrates the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha.

### **Considerations:**

*Students who practice Buddhism may be absent during major holidays.*

## CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is the world's largest religion and emphasizes the teachings of Jesus Christ.

- **Dec. 25, 2021: Christmas** – commemorates the birth of Jesus
- **Mar. 2, 2022: Ash Wednesday** – The first of the 40-day season of **Lent** (*Mar. 2-Apr. 14, 2022*) during which time observers reflect, worship, and prepare for the Holy Week and Easter.
- **Apr. 15, 2022: Good Friday** – commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus
- **Apr. 17, 2022: Easter** – celebrates the resurrection of Jesus

### **Considerations:**

*Students who practice Christianity may be absent on major holidays and evenings for worship. They may have a cross made of ashes on their forehead in observance of Ash Wednesday and observe dietary restrictions during Lent.*

## HINDUISM

Hinduism is a religion originating from India with nearly one billion adherents. It has been called the oldest religion in the world and is referred to as a dharma, or a way of life. Hinduism encompasses beliefs pertaining to karma and Vedas, which form the earliest records of Hindu scripture.

- **Oct. 15, 2021: Dussehra** – A celebration of the victory of good over evil and begins the seasonal preparation for Diwali.
- **Nov. 4, 2021: Diwali** – Known as the Festival of Light, Diwali is a five day celebration with largest observances typically held on the 3 day. Diwali celebrates a spiritual victory of light over darkness.
- **Mar. 19, 2022: Holi Day** – A spring celebration also known as the festival of love or the festival of colors.

### **Considerations:**

*If planning school activities, assignments, or assessments, keep in mind that students who practice Hinduism may be absent on major holidays.*

## ISLAM

Islam means submission to the will of God, Allah. Muslims are individuals who are faithful to Islam.

- **July 17-22, 2021: Hajj** – Dates of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.
- **July 19-23, 2021: Eid al-Adha** – Marks the culmination of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and commemorates God's test of Ibrahim to sacrifice his son.
- **Aug. 10, 2021: First of Muharram/Islamic New Year**
- **Aug. 19, 2021: Ashura** – Observed by both Shia and Sunni Muslims. Sunni Muslims commemorate God saving Moses from the Egyptians and Shia Muslims may fast to observe a day of mourning.
- **Oct. 19, 2021: Mawlid al-Nabi** - Celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday.
- **Apr. 2-May 2, 2022: Ramadan** – A holy month of contemplation, self-restraint, devotion, and spiritual rejuvenation which includes daily fasting from dawn to sunset.
  - *Work with students to determine the best plan for their success during the instructional day (i.e., alternative lunch destination, activity requirements in physical education, etc.)*
  - *Think about activities, celebrations, or events and how to be inclusive if food or beverages are involved*
  - *Talk to your students and gain a pulse of how they are feeling*
  - *Fasting across all religions demonstrates a profound commitment, which is hard work. Students may appreciate your encouragement.*

- **May 3, 2022: Eid al-Fitr** – Celebration and culmination of the Ramadan fast.

**Considerations:**

*Keep in mind that students who practice Islam may be absent on Eid ul-Adha and Eid al-Fitr. However, Ashura, Mawlid al-Nabi, and the Islamic New Year are more regional and community-wide morning prayers are not tied to those holidays, therefore they may not warrant an absence from school or work. An exception should be accommodated for Shia students specifically who request to take Ashura off. Don't forget to consider students who may be fasting also...keep time of day tasks that are required in mind when planning. Muslim holidays begin at sunset on day prior to the date provided above.*

**JAINISM**

Jainism is a religion from India that emphasizes the concern for the welfare of every being and the health of the universe itself. Jains believe that animals and plants, as well as human beings, contain a living soul. Thus, all souls should be valued and viewed with the utmost respect.

- **Sept. 4-11, 2021: Paryushan Parva** - The holiest period of the year for the Shvetambara sect and signifies human emergence into a new world of spiritual refinement.
- **Apr. 14, 2022: Mahavira Jayanti** - A festival honoring Lord Mahavira on the founder's birthday.

**Considerations:**

*If planning afterschool activities, you may want to keep the major holidays in mind for students who practice Jainism.*

**JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES**

Jehovah's Witnesses are members of a Christian based religious movement. They reject the sinful values of the secular world. Jehovah Witness do not celebrate Christmas or Easter with the belief that Jesus did not ask his followers to mark his birthday.

**Considerations:**

- *Children are instructed to withdraw from secular, school celebrations*
- *Refrain from birthday festivities*
- *Music selections played in the classroom (secular)*
- *Refrain from patriotic activities*

## JUDAISM

Judaism is an ancient monotheistic religion. The Torah, Midrash, and Talmud are the central texts of the Jewish faith. Jewish holidays begin at sundown of the previous day. In addition to an abstinence from work, people of the Jewish faith may observe some of these holidays with fasting, family gatherings, prayer, and attendance at synagogues.

- **Sept. 6-8, 2021: Rosh Hashanah** – The beginning of the Jewish New Year and first of the High Holy Days, which marks the beginning of a ten-day period of penitence and spiritual renewal.
- **Sept. 16, 2021: Yom Kippur** – The second of the High Holy Days, known as the Day of Atonement, is a time of introspection and prayer and ends the ten-day period of penitence. Observers fast and once ended often break the fast with family and friends.
- **Nov. 28-Dec. 6 2021: Hanukkah**- The Festival of Lights commemorates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem.
- **Apr. 15-23, 2022: Pesach (Passover)** – An eight-day observance celebrating Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

### **Considerations:**

*If planning school activities, assignments, or assessments, keep in mind that students and staff who practice Judaism **may be absent on major holidays** Consider NOT scheduling big assignments or tests to be those days. Students and staff are typically present during Hanukkah.*

## SIKHISM

Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and is a monotheistic religion. There are 20 million Sikhs in the world, most of whom live in the Punjab province of India. Sikhism emphasizes the importance of leading a good life: living honestly and working hard, treating everyone equally, serving others, generosity, and making God a priority.

- **Nov. 19, 2021** -Marks the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, founder of the Sikh faith
- **Mar. 19, 2022: Hola Mohalla**- A festival that includes prayer as well as mock battles and martial arts competitions.
- **April 14, 2022: Sikh New Year's Day**

### **Considerations:**

*If planning school activities, assignments, or assessments, keep in mind that students and staff who practice Sikhism may be absent on major holidays.*

**Note:** This is a working, resourceful document. We recognize that needs continuously change with our growing diversity. Thus, if you have any questions or further considerations, please contact Dr. Erica Buchanan-Rivera, Director of Equity and Inclusion at [ebuchananrivera@msdwt.k12.in.us](mailto:ebuchananrivera@msdwt.k12.in.us).

Please see next page for a chronological listing of holidays for the 2020-21 school year.

## 2021-2022 Holidays/Observances

*July 17-22	Hajj	Islam
* July 19-23	Eid al-Adha	Islam
Aug. 10	First of Muharram	Islam
*Aug. 19	Ashura	Islam
*Sept. 4-11	Paryushana Parva	Jainism
*Sept. 6-8	Rosh Hashanah	Judaism
*Sept. 16	Yom Kippur	Judaism
Oct. 15	Dussehra	Hinduism
*Oct. 19	Mawlid al-Nabi	Islam
Nov. 4	Diwali	Hinduism
Nov. 6	Birth of the Báb	Baha'i
Nov. 7	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i
Nov. 19	birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji	Sikhism
*Nov.28-Dec. 6	Hanukkah	Judaism
Dec. 8	Bodhi Day	Buddhism
Dec. 25	Christmas	Christianity
Mar. 2	Ash Wednesday	Christianity
Mar. 2-20	Nineteen Day Fast	Baha'i
Mar. 19	Holi Day	Hinduism
Mar. 19	Hola Mohalla	Sikhism
Mar. 21	Naw-Rúz	Baha'i
*Apr. 2-May 2	Ramadan	Islam
Apr. 14	Sikh New Year	Sikhism
Apr. 14	Mahavira Jayanti	Jainism
*Apr. 15-23	Pesach/Passover	Judaism
Apr. 15	Good Friday	Christianity
Apr. 17	Easter	Christianity
Apr. 21	First Day of Ridván	Baha'i
Apr. 29	Ninth Day of Ridván	Baha'i
May 2	Twelfth Day of Ridván	Baha'i
*May 3	Eid al Fitr	Islam
May 8	Visakha Puja	Buddhism
May 2	Declaration of the Báb	Baha'i
May 29	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i

\*Observances begin the preceding day at sunset