



SENT VIA EMAIL, February 1, 2023

Upcoming Islamic Holidays and Religious Accommodations

Dear Educators,

The Washington state chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-WA) is a branch of the nation's largest Muslim civil liberties organization. We are writing to remind you that three major Islamic holidays are approaching for the 2023 school year, some of which extend into the summer. We therefore encourage you to note the following religious observances and holidays in your planning process:

Table with 2 columns: Holiday Name and Dates. Rows include Ramadan (March 22 - April 20 +/- one day), Eid Al-Fitr (April 21 (Sundown to Sundown) +/- one day), and Eid Al-Adha (June 29 (Sundown to Sundown) +/- one day).

*Note: the date may vary by one day depending on the individual's religious school of thought.

Ramadan: In 2023, Ramadan will begin on March 22 (+/- one day) and last 29 to 30 days. There are different ways to observe or practice one's faith during this holy month. Predominantly, Muslims will fast from eating and drinking (yes, even water) starting before sunrise until sunset. Many Muslims also increase their worship and study of the Quran during Ramadan, often attending late night prayers that begin an hour-and-a-half after sunset and last for two hours. Due to late nights, disrupted sleep, and fasting, productivity often decreases. Fun fact: Ramadan is considered a holy month because it's the time that the holy book, the Quran, was first revealed to Prophet Muhammad.

Eid days (Festival days): Eid Al-Fitr signifies the end of the month of Ramadan, a period of religious observance essential to the Islamic faith, and Eid Al-Adha signifies the end of Hajj, Islam's annual holy pilgrimage to Mecca. Both days are commemorated by Muslims worldwide through prayer and celebration per their unique faith traditions.

Recommended School Accommodations: After consulting with local Muslim parents and reviewing federal and state rulings concerning religious accommodation such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Revised Code of Washington 49.60, and 1981 Supreme Court case Church of God v. Amarillo Independent Schools, we urge you to take the following into consideration in your planning:

- OSPI Testing: The testing window for OSPI tests in 2023 includes Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr. Please keep this in mind in your planning.
Exhaustion and Long Days: Students who are fasting will be exhausted. Many families wake up before dawn to have a meal before beginning the fast, and it is a tradition for some to also stay up late praying with their families. Due to the long days experienced by Muslim students during this time, we recommend making assignments for everyone due at 11:59 pm or even later, especially for older students.



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- *Excused Absences:* Teachers can accommodate Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha by not scheduling tests or important assignments on those days. If tests or assignments are scheduled on these days, we ask that teachers allow students to complete them before or after the student's excused holiday absence. Many Muslim employees, students and parents are unaware that excused absences are allowed under federal law for religious holidays. We ask schools to inform their Muslim students, parents, and staff of this option.
- *Respect Individuals:* Some Muslims may not fast at all during Ramadan, or may fast on some days and not others due to age, religious involvement, or health considerations. When planning in-class or extracurricular events during this month, we recommend choosing options that don't involve food/drink or where food/drink are optional. If a student's quality of schoolwork changes during this period, please check in with the student and their family.

Other ideas:

- *Send greetings:* A common greeting is "Ramadan Kareem" or "Ramadan Mubarak," which is an Arabic greeting meaning, "May you have a blessed Ramadan." Let your students, families, and staff know that you recognize the significance of this time and, possibly, that you are willing to make accommodations for them if they may need it.
- *Break room:* Setting up a dedicated break room where Muslim students and staff can pray or take a break between classes would be a considerate gesture.

In addition to supporting Muslim students during Ramadan, you can also support Muslim students at your school by accommodating their need for prayer year-round. One or two daily prayer times will typically occur during school hours, depending on the time of year. More information on supporting Muslim students and staff in schools can be found in our Educator's Guide here: https://cairwa.org/images/main/Resources/Educator_Guide_Updated2021.pdf

We encourage you to acknowledge Islamic holidays to help your Muslim students feel comfortable bringing their whole selves into the classroom. Thank you for your service, and your efforts to accommodate your Muslim students!

If you have any questions or would like further resources, please reach out to me or Deputy Executive Director Amanda Azad at aazad@cair.com.

Sincerely,

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