

Merrimack School District
2022-2023 School Year
Guide to Religious and Cultural Observances

Holiday and How it Is Observed	Date(s) Observed
<p><i>Rosh Hashanah – *begins at sundown (Jewish)</i> Holiday with significant work restriction</p> <p>Rosh Hashanah is the start of the Jewish New Year, day of judgment and remembrance; the Jewish calendar celebrates the New Year in the seventh month (Tishrei) as a day of rest and celebration ten days before Yom Kippur.</p> <p>General Practices: Prayer in synagogue in the evening and following day and festive meals.</p> <p>Date Details: Begins at sundown of prior day. Rosh Hashanah is a two-day holiday, but some members of the Jewish faith may only observe the first day.</p>	<p>*Sept. 25-27, 2022</p>
<p><i>Yom Kippur – *begins at sundown (Jewish)</i> Holiday with significant work restriction</p> <p>Yom Kippur is often considered the holiest day of the year for Jews, and the day is dedicated to atonement and abstinence.</p> <p>General Practices: During Yom Kippur, Jews fast from before sundown until after sunset, refrain from work and light a Yahrzeit memorial candle at sundown on the night of Yom Kippur.</p> <p>Date Details: Begins at sundown of prior day.</p>	<p>*October 5, 2022</p>
<p><i>Diwali (Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain)</i> Holiday with significant work restriction</p> <p>Diwali – the Hindu “festival of lights” – is an extremely popular holiday for multiple religions throughout Southern Asia. Diwali extends over five days and celebrates the victory of good over evil. The <i>Times of India</i> described Diwali as “a reaffirmation of hope, a renewed commitment to friendship and goodwill, and a religiously sanctioned celebration of the simple.” Fireworks, oil lamps, and sweets are common, making this a favorite holiday for children. The lamps are lit to help the goddess Lakshmi find her way into people’s homes.</p> <p>General Practices: Lighting oil lamps and candles, setting off fireworks, prayer, gifts and feast.</p> <p>Date Details: Diwali usually falls between mid-October and mid-November.</p>	<p>October 24, 2022</p>

Merrimack School District
2022-2023 School Year
Guide to Religious and Cultural Observances

<p><i>Hanukkah/Chanukah – *begins at sundown (Jewish)</i></p> <p>Hanukkah is the Jewish festival of lights, and lasts for eight days. Hanukkah commemorates the Jewish struggle for religious freedom. The history of the holiday involves a historic military victory in which a Jewish sect called the Maccabees defeated the Syrian Greeks. The celebration commemorates a miracle in which a sacred temple flame burned for eight days on only one day's worth of oil.</p> <p>General Practices: On each of the eight nights of Hanukkah, Jewish families light an additional candle of the menorah candelabrum until all eight candles are lit. Jews celebrate with food and song, as well as exchanging gifts for eight days.</p> <p>Date Details: Hanukkah begins at sundown on the prior day.</p>	<p>*Dec. 19-26, 2022</p>
<p><i>Christmas – *begins at sundown (Christian/Roman Catholic and Protestant) Holiday with significant work restriction</i></p> <p>Christmas is an annual celebration commemorating the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah whose message and self-sacrifice began the Christian religion.</p> <p>General Practices: Many celebrate Christmas by giving gifts, attending church services, decorating Christmas trees, and visiting family.</p> <p>Date Details: Begins at sundown on December 24 annually and continues with all day celebration on December 25.</p>	<p>*December 25 Annually</p>
<p><i>Kwanzaa</i></p> <p>Kwanzaa is a week-long celebration honoring African heritage in African-American culture. Historian and activist Maulana Karenga developed the holiday in the 1960s. It is not a religious holiday, per se, but is a cultural celebration. Kwanzaa has seven core principles: Unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.</p> <p>General Practices: Families celebrating Kwanzaa decorate their households with objects of art, and colorful African cloth known as kente, and many women wear kaftans. Many families display symbols of Kwanzaa that represent the seven core principals including the candle holder (kinara) with seven candles, and the black, red and green flag (pan-African colors). Kwanzaa ceremonies may include drumming, libation, discussion of the principals, candle-lighting rituals and a feast (karamu).</p> <p>Date Details: Kwanzaa is observed every year from Dec. 26 – Jan. 1.</p>	<p>Dec. 26 to Jan. 1 Annually</p>

Merrimack School District
2022-2023 School Year
Guide to Religious and Cultural Observances

<p><i>Lunar New Year – (Confucian, Taoist, Buddhist)</i> <i>Holiday with significant work restriction</i> <i>(Also known as Chinese New Year)</i></p> <p>The Lunar New Year is the most important of traditional Chinese and other Southeast Asian holidays and is very important in the Buddhist tradition.</p> <p>General Practices: Families gather together to spend the evening preparing boiled dumplings and festive meals and giving out symbolically decorated “good luck” red envelopes with gift money. This custom is centered on children, but red envelopes are also exchanged between friends, relatives and colleagues.</p> <p>Date Details: Corresponds to the New Moon in Aquarius, which can fall from late January to mid-February</p>	<p>January 22, 2023</p>
<p><i>Good Friday/Holy Friday (Christian-Roman Catholic and Protestant)</i></p> <p>Good Friday is the Friday Before Easter. It commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ; among some sects of Christianity and in many countries Good Friday marks a day of fasting.</p> <p>General Practices: Prayer, fasting, and services throughout the day in some Christian denominations.</p> <p>Date Details: Always falls on the Friday before Easter Sunday.</p>	<p>April 7, 2023</p>
<p><i>Easter (Christian/Roman Catholic and Protestant)</i> <i>Holiday with significant work restriction</i></p> <p>Easter is an annual commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.</p> <p>General Practices: Church services, celebratory meals, family gatherings, distribution of colored eggs, baskets and chocolate bunnies. It is a celebration of renewal.</p> <p>Date Details: Easter Sunday is determined by the Gregorian calendar (Gregorian calendar regulates ceremonial cycle of the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches).</p>	<p>April 9, 2023</p>

Merrimack School District
2022-2023 School Year
Guide to Religious and Cultural Observances

<p>Pesach/Passover – *begins at sundown (Jewish) Holiday with significant work restriction</p> <p>Pesach is an eight-day observance commemorating the freedom and exodus of the Israelites (Jewish slaves) from Egypt during the reign of the Pharaoh Ramses II (one of three pilgrimage festivals).</p> <p>General Practices: Family gatherings, ritualized meals called Seders on the first two nights on which the Haggadah (a recounting of the escape to freedom) is read, lighting of Yahrzeit memorial candle at sundown on the last night of Passover.</p> <p>Date Details: Begins at sundown of the prior day.</p>	<p>*April 5-12, 2023</p>
<p>Holy Friday/Good Friday (Eastern Orthodox Christian)</p> <p>Holy Friday is the Friday before Easter. It commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ; among some sects of Christianity and in many countries marks a day of fasting.</p> <p>General Practices: Prayer, fasting, confession, and church services as well as the wrapping or dying of eggs (often red) in preparation for Easter Sunday.</p> <p>Date Details: Orthodox Good Friday is determined by the Julian calendar which regulates ceremonial cycle of the Eastern Orthodox Christian churches.</p>	<p>April 14, 2023</p>
<p>Ramadan – *begins at sundown (Islamic)</p> <p>Ramadan is the month on the Muslim calendar in which teenage and adult Muslims are obligated to fast. Fasting requires Muslims to refrain from consuming food and drinking liquids during daylight hours. This is a time for self-reflection and to focus on faith through fasting and prayer and is a time of great significance for Muslims. Ramadan is also revered because the Qur'an (Muslim Holy Book) was first revealed during this month, and Muslims see the Qur'an as God's words.</p> <p>General Practices: Daily fasting is required during the entire month of Ramadan. Muslims refrain from food and beverages from sunrise to sunset. Worshipers break the fasting each night with prayer, reading of the Qur'an, and a meal called the "iftar". In addition, many Muslims also attend night prayers at Mosques. Muslims also believe that their good actions bring a greater reward during this month than any other time of the year. It is customary to many Muslims to give charity to the poor, spend more time in prayer and worship, refrain from bad habits.</p> <p>Date Details: Dates are determined by the lunar calendar. Lunar calendars can vary based on region and practice. The observed date marks the beginning of a 29 to 30-day observation.</p>	<p>*Mar. 22-Apr. 20, 2023</p>

**Merrimack School District
2022-2023 School Year
Guide to Religious and Cultural Observances**

<p>Eid al-Fitr – *begins at sundown (Islamic) Holiday with significant work restriction</p> <p>Eid al-Fitr means “break the fast” and is a major Muslim holiday. It is the last day of Ramadan, marking the end of a month of fasting.</p> <p>General Practices: An important part of the observance is a morning prayer service at the mosque. The celebration often includes exchanging gifts, giving a monetary gift to the children call “Eidi”, enjoying feasts and getting together with family and friends.</p> <p>Date Details: Dates are determined by the lunar calendar. Lunar calendars can vary based on region and practice. Eid al Fitr is observed on the day immediately following the month-long observance of Ramadan. It is a three-day celebration in the Muslim world but is only observed on the first day in North America.</p>	<p>*April 22, 2023</p>
<p>Juneteenth</p> <p>Juneteenth, was named a federal holiday on June 17, 2021, after first being recognized as a state holiday in Texas in 1979 and adopted by other states thereafter. This day marks the official end of slavery in the United States of America and is sometimes referred to as this country’s “second Independence Day”.</p> <p>General Practices: Communities around the country have traditionally celebrated with prayer services, music, barbecues, and other events.</p>	<p>June 19 Annually</p>

Source Documents:

University of Missouri, Division of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity

Winchester Multicultural Network, Winchester, Massachusetts