
CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

The Bangor School Department is committed to honoring the diversity within our schools. This includes religious and cultural diversity. The School Department wishes to ensure that students are free to celebrate important cultural and religious holidays – referenced hereinafter simply as “holidays” - with their families.

A. Calendars and School Schedules

The Bangor School Department seeks to avoid scheduling special events that conflict with holidays. The Bangor School Department recognizes that in a community of diverse beliefs it will likely be impossible to avoid all holidays of significance to all families. The Bangor School Department has limited control over the timing of some school-related events like sports schedules, the start of the school year, assessments, and regional or state-level competitions. Recognizing these limitations, the superintendent or designee shall:

1. Ensure that the dates of frequently observed holidays listed in Regulation IMDC Section A are placed on school master calendars of events and communicated to staff.
2. Ensure principals and teachers will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling large-attendance events to occur on the holidays listed in Regulation IMDC Section A. Examples of such events include but are not limited to field trips, guest speakers, major class exams, standardized testing, picture days, homecoming, prom, graduation, open houses, parent/guardian nights, parent-teacher conferences, concerts, plays, and college-readiness nights.
3. Assist School Department employees in making reasonable efforts to advocate for avoiding scheduling of regional or conference-level sporting events and other competitions on holidays listed in Regulation IMDC Section A, but recognize that this will not be possible in every case.
4. Attempt to reasonably address concerns about conflicts raised by parents/guardians for holidays not listed on Regulation IMDC Section A, recognizing that it may not be possible to avoid all conflict with every holiday observed by a family in the school community.

B. Fasting Holidays

The Bangor School Department recognizes that some religious holidays involve fasting and/or refraining from drink. While this may not place restrictions on regular sedentary school activities, it may present health or experience concerns around food, drink, and exercise. These holidays may or may not be the same holidays that would cause conflicts in attendance addressed in Section A of this policy. Toward these ends, the superintendent or designee shall

1. Provide staff the dates of holidays involving fasting or not drinking listed in Regulation IMDC Section A at the start of each school year.
2. Encourage staff, especially physical education teachers and coaches, to be mindful of and respectful towards potential need to limit strenuous physical activity for students who are fasting or refraining from drink.
3. Encourage staff to avoid scheduling special events involving food or drink or increased physical activity on these days.
4. Allow fasting or non-drinking students an opportunity to request to be in an alternative food-not-present location (e.g. the library) during lunchtime and times food is present in their classrooms.

To maximize the School Department’s ability to be sensitive to issues around fasting and dietary restrictions, we request that parents/guardians notify the student’s teachers, administrators, and



coaches at least three days in advance of the holiday-based fasting or dietary restriction. However, lack of advance notice will not change the efforts described above.

C. Student Absences for Religious Holidays

1. Regardless of whether a religious holiday is listed in Regulation IMDC or not, solely at the discretion of the student and family, a student may choose to be absent from school or a co- or extra-curricular activity for any religious holiday important in their religious or faith practices.
2. Such student absences from school will be considered excused absences upon parental communication to the school.
3. To maximize the educational experience of the student, parents/guardians are asked to notify the student's teachers, administrators, and coaches at least three days in advance of the holiday-based absence. However, lack of advance notice will not change the practices described.
4. Teachers will allow students to turn in any work due during a religious holiday upon their return after the holiday. Teachers will allow students to make up classroom work missed during a religious holiday. Teachers will not require students to take an exam the day they return from a religious holiday (because studying during the holiday is often not possible).
5. Absences for a religious holiday will not jeopardize a student's standing on extra- and co-curricular teams or clubs.

D. School Concerts/Cultural Activities

1. School concerts/cultural activities will be planned to be as inclusive as possible of the range of cultural and religious traditions present in our community.
2. Holiday educational activities should be planned in conjunction with or in support of the educational goals of the school.
3. Acknowledgement of a holiday will emphasize the historical, cultural, educational, and social value of the holiday and the associated religion, and will not be used to endorse any religion or holiday.
4. Discussion of religious holidays shall not be limited to the doctrines or principles of any one religion, sect, or denomination but rather present educational and critical thinking opportunities to better understand their school community and global traditions.
5. Dates of religious and cultural significance may be addressed in various educational contexts including but not limited to: appropriate curricular and instructional choices, television monitors in applicable school buildings, social media posts, student-led programming or activities, and visual rendering displayed in School Department buildings.

E. List of Frequently Observed Religious Holidays

1. The Bangor School Committee will from time to time review the list of frequently observed religious holidays in Regulation IMDC. The committee recognizes that the list of frequently observed holidays in the community may change over time as our population of students changes.
2. At or before the beginning of each school year, the superintendent or designee will identify the dates on which the holidays listed in Regulation IMDC occur. Such determination is encouraged to involve consultation with local community religious leaders to ensure that dates are accurate to address complexities such as holidays that are based on a lunar calendar or that span sunset to sunset.

F. Concerns

1. Anytime that a parent/guardian has a concern that this policy is not being followed, they should follow the standard process for resolving concerns (Policy JFH) by first notifying the teacher and then the principal.
2. Members of the community may also make a request to the superintendent or designee for frequently observed religious holidays in the community that are not listed on Regulation IMDC.



Cross Reference: JFH – Complaints by Students or Parents

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