

Accommodation for Religious and Ethnic Observances (File: IMDC)

The Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District serves children from many different religious and ethnic backgrounds. Out of respect for our students' different religious and ethnic traditions, and to ensure fair and sensitive treatment of all students, the District shall:

- At the time of publication of the approved school calendar for a given school year, provide a list of those major religious and ethnic holidays during that school year whose observance may require absence from school or other accommodations, and encourage students and families to notify the Superintendent of any omissions from the list. The Superintendent will notify building principals and staff of these dates prior to Sept 1 each school year;
- Not schedule the first day of the school year on a holiday included in the above list;
- Impose no penalty or detriment on students who participate in observances of their and/or their family's major religious and ethnic holidays and treat any absence related to such observance as without penalty;
- Provide ample and flexible accommodations to allow students to make up subject material, assignments, and assessments within a reasonable time (assuming students will not do schoolwork or study during their absence);
- Avoid whenever possible scheduling test preparation, tests, and introduction of and/or due dates for long-term assignments, when these are within the purview of the District, in consideration of major religious and ethnic holidays;
- Avoid scheduling one-time events (e.g., field trips, athletic events, music or theatre performances, auditions, group photographs, back-to-school functions, and graduation) when possible on major religious and ethnic holidays, keeping in mind that some major religious holidays begin at sundown on the preceding evening (e.g., Jewish and Muslim Holidays);
- Not require students observing major religious or ethnic holidays to participate or face penalties for their non-participation in school-scheduled events, such as in try-outs, athletic contests, or music performances;
- Not prevent coaches and advisors from holding optional athletic practices on major religious and ethnic holidays;
- Not deprive any student absent from school because of a religious or ethnic holiday of any award or of eligibility or opportunity to compete for any award because of such absence;
- Encourage students and families to make their observances known far enough in advance to individual teachers so that they can jointly plan appropriate accommodations prior to the absence or holiday observance.

Legal Reference(s): MGL Chapter 151C, Section 2B

Policy adopted: December 16, 2020