



Council on American-Islamic Relations
Washington State Chapter
1511 Third Ave., Ste. 701, Seattle, WA 98101
info@cairwa.org | 206.624.0506 | www.cairwa.org

March 12, 2019

SENT VIA EMAIL

RE: Informative Letter on Upcoming Islamic Holidays and Religious Accommodations

Dear Educators,

The Council on American-Islamic Relations, Washington (CAIR-WA) is a branch of the nation’s largest Muslim civil liberties organization. We would like to kindly remind you that three major Islamic holidays are approaching for the 2018-2019 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:

Ramadan	May 5 - June 4, 2019 +/- one day
Eid Al-Fitr	June 4, 2019 +/- one day
Eid Al-Adha	August 11, 2019 +/- one day

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

In 2019, Ramadan will begin on May 5 (+/- one day) and lasts 29 to 30 days, during which Muslims abstain from food and drink from pre-dawn until sunset. Fasting during Ramadan is obligatory for Muslims. Muslims also increase their worship and study of the Qur’an during Ramadan, and often attending late night prayers that begin an hour and a half after sunset and last for two hours. These late nights cause many Muslims to rise later than usual, and some people may appear fatigued due to hunger, thirst and disrupted sleep. For more information about Ramadan, please see “Why Muslims Fast” by www.whyislam.org.

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.

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 while planning for next year:

1. 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.
2. 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 of this option.
3. Consider adding Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha to your school’s calendars.
4. Note that some Muslim students might fast while others might not, depending on their faith-involvement. If a student chooses to fast, we ask that the student be given the option to visit the library during lunch.



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5. If a teacher notices changes in a student's quality of work or behavior during Ramadan, we ask the school to notify the parent(s) and discuss options with them.
6. Welcome Muslim students during Ramadan with "Ramadan Mubarak!" (Moo-baa-rak) or "Ramadan Kareem."

In addition to supporting Muslim students during Ramadan, you can also support Muslim students in your school by accommodating their need for prayer year-round. One or two of which will typically occur during school hours, depending on the time of year. A brief description of prayer in Islam is provided below, please let us know if we can provide additional support.

Islam urges consciousness in an individual's life. To that end, Islam mandates that believers perform five daily prayers. There are specific windows of time where these prayers can be offered. These times shift per the movement of the sun and a person's geographic location. Before prayer, Muslims are required to wash their faces, hands and feet with clean water. This washing is normally performed in a restroom sink. During the act of worship, Muslims stand, bow and touch the forehead to the ground. Worship may be performed in any quiet, dry, clean place. During the prayers, the worshiper will face toward Mecca (generally northeast in the US). Daily prayer is a mandatory religious observance among practicing Muslims. Each prayer lasts approximately five minutes.

Another important aspect of prayer in Islam to keep in mind is Friday Prayers. Friday is the day for congregational worship, called Jumm'ah. The prayer generally takes place at a mosque during the noontime prayer, usually includes an address or sermon, and lasts a total of 45 to 90 minutes. A Muslim employee should be able to complete Friday prayers during an extended lunch break. A Muslim student should be provided with a clean, quiet, and appropriate place to pray on campus during this time.

In the same way that efforts are made to acknowledge Christmas and Hanukkah in schools, we encourage you to acknowledge Islamic holidays to the same extent. Thank you for your service, and your efforts to accommodate your Muslim students. Please do not hesitate to contact our office via e-mail at info@cairwa.org or via phone at 206.624.0506 with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Misasi".

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