

# **Guidelines for Teachers**

## **for managing student absences for religious observance:**

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***Discrimination based on religion is illegal, harmful, and creates liability and disruption for schools.***

- 1) ***Do not force, demand or expect attendance.***
- 2) ***Be ready to accommodate any student at the standard required for the most devout, regardless of the individual's actual level of piety, which is not yours to judge.***
- 3) ***No homework, tests or critical work on observance days or immediately afterward.***
- 4) ***Provide reasonable opportunity for observant students to make up the work, in advance or afterwards, and don't make it an obstacle course to do so.***
- 5) ***Avoid field trips or other special privileged events on the holiday.***
- 6) ***Don't discuss a student's religion publicly, unless it's appropriate to the lesson and is truly voluntary.***
- 7) ***Seek guidance from available religious leaders or organizations for further info.***
- 8) ***Be aware & reasonable within the law with your staff about their observances.***
- 9) ***Be consistent and fair with all religious/cultural groups in accommodating their rightful religious practices. Be respectful of their right to choose their own religion.***
- 10) ***Do not rely on your standard calendar to determine the date of religious holidays.***
  - ***Time and date of religious holidays may vary considerably between years.***
  - ***Some run more than one day.***
  - ***Some run over periods not matched to the standard 12 AM to midnight "day".***
  - ***They may be celebrated differently by denominations of the same religion.***

Be very aware that religious practices vary widely within every religious group, between families and cultural groups, and even between members of families. Don't seek to convert their beliefs and practices in any way, which would be patently illegal for a public institution. It is offensive to argue with religious authorities over what they have responsibility to determine.

The cooperation a school gives its students and their families is a big determinant of their support for the needs of the school. It's a two-way street and schools should be encouraged to celebrate local diversity. This pays big dividends and is a terrific educational device as well.

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Additional Resources: [Public Schools & Religious Communities; A First Amendment Guide.](#) from the First Amendment Center (1207 18<sup>th</sup> Ave. South, Nashville, TN 37212.)



# Some Holiday & Festival Dates to Watch for in the 2007-8 School Year:

**Note:** This is not an exhaustive list. Consult religious authorities and organizations in your area for more.

## AUGUST

- 1 Fast of Repose of Virgin Mary (through 14) **O**  
Lammas or Lughnasadh **W/P**  
6 Transfiguration of our Lord **RC, P, O**  
10 Isra Wa Me'raj **M**  
Lailat al Miraj **M**  
15 Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary **RC, (P)**  
Dormition of the Theotokos **O**  
21 Ullambana **BU**  
27 Nisf Sha'baan **M**  
28 Lailat al Bara'ah **M**  
Rakshabandhan **H**

## SEPTEMBER

- 1 Installation of Guru Granth Sahib (First Parkash) **SI**  
Orthodox Church new year **O**  
3 Janma Ashtami (Krishna Janmashtami) **H**  
8 Nativity of Mary **RC, (P)**  
Paryushana Parva begins **JN**  
12 Ghambar Paitishahem (through Sep 16) **Z**  
13 Ramadan begins (through Oct. 12) **M**  
Rosh Hashana (through Sept 14) **J**  
14 Exaltation of the Life Giving Cross **O**  
Holy Cross Day **RC, (P)**  
15 Ganesha Chaturthi **H**  
Dasa Laxana begins **JN**  
22 Death of Guru Nanak Dev Ji **SI**  
Yom Kippur **J**  
23 Mabon, Alban Elued, Haustblot / Harvest **W/P**  
25 Dasa Laxana end (Anant Chaturdashi) **JN**  
27 Sukkot (through Oct 3) **J**  
29 St. Michael and All Angels **RC, (P)**

## OCTOBER

- 4 Shemini Atzeret **J**  
St Francis Day **RC, P**  
5 Simhat Torah **J**  
7 World Communion Sunday **(P)**  
12 Ghambar Ayathrem **Z**  
Navaratri (Dusserah) (through Oct. 20) **H**  
Vijaya Dashami **H**  
Eid al Fitr - Culmination of Ramadan **M**  
20 Birth of the Bab **BA**  
Guru Granth Sahib installation **SI**  
28 Milvian Bridge Day **C**  
31 All Hallows Eve **RC, P**  
Reformation Day **P**  
Samhuinn (Samhain) , Vetrnaetr / Winter Nights **W/P**

## NOVEMBER

- 1 All Saints' Day **C**  
2 All Souls' Day **RC, (P)**  
5 Birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji **SI**  
9 Diwali (Deepawali) **H, JN**  
Mahavira Nirvana Celebration **JN**  
10 Jain New Year (Vir Samvat 5) **JN**  
12 Birth of Baha'u'llah **BA**  
22 Thanksgiving **IF**  
24 Martyrdom Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji **SI**  
25 Christ the King **RC, (P)**  
26 Day of Covenant **BA**  
30 St. Andrew's Day **C**

## DECEMBER

- 2 Advent begins (Sundays: 2, 9, 16, 23) **RC, P**  
5 Hanukkah begins (8 days) **J**  
6 St. Nicholas Day **C**  
8 Bodhi Day (Rohatsu) **BU**

- Immaculate Conception **RC**  
9 Maternity of St. Anne **O**  
12 Feast day - Our Lady of Guadalupe **RC**  
18 Hajj begins **M**  
Waqf al Arafa **M**  
20 Eld al Adha **M**  
22 Yule, Alban Arthuan, Jol (Winter Solstice) **W/P**  
25 Christmas **RC, LD, P**  
Sadeh **Z**  
26 Kwanzaa (through Jan.1) (*cultural for African-Americans*)  
St Stephen's Day **RC, (P)**  
Zarathosht Diso (Death of Prophet Zarathushtra) **Z**  
27 St Stephen's Day **O**  
28 Holy Innocents **RC, P**  
31 Ghambar Maidyarem ends (through Jan. 4) **Z**  
Watch Night **C**

## **2008**

### JANUARY

- 1 Feast of St Basil **O**  
Gantan-sai (New Years) **SH**  
Mary, Mother of God **RC**  
5 Birth of Guru Gobind Singh Ji **SI**  
Twelfth Night **(P)**  
Vigil of the Epiphany **RC**  
6 Epiphany **C**  
Theophany **O**  
7 Feast of the Nativity **O**  
10 Muharram (Islamic New Year) **M**  
13 Baptism of the Lord Jesus **RC, (P)**  
Maghi **SI**  
Vasanta Panchami **H**  
14 Makara Sankranti **H**  
18 Week of Prayer Christian Unity (thr. Jan 25) **C**  
19 Ashura **M**  
20 World Religion Day **BA**  
21 Vivekenanda Jayanti **H**  
22 Tu B'shvat **J**  
22-25 Mahayana Buddhist New Year **BU**

### FEBRUARY

- 1 St Brigid of Kildare **C (Celtic)**  
2 Brigid / Imbolc / Oimelc / Candlemas **W/P**  
Presentation of Jesus in the Temple -  
Candlemas **RC, (P)**  
3 Four Chaplains Day **IF**  
Setsubun-sai **SH**  
Transfiguration Sunday **P**  
5 Shrove Tuesday **RC, (P)**  
6 Ash Wednesday (Beginning of Lent) **C**  
7 Lunar New Year/Tet **BU, (Chinese/Vietnamese cultural)**  
14 St Valentine's Day **RC, P, O**  
15 Parinirvana Day (Chinese) **BU**  
17 Triodion begins **O**  
21 Holi **H**

### MARCH

- 1 St David of Wales **RC, (P)**  
2 Meatfare Sunday **O**  
Nineteen Day Fast (through 20) **BA**  
6 Mahashivaratri (Shivarat) **H**  
10 Great Lent begins (Clean Monday) **O**  
11 Guanyin's Birthday **BU**  
14 Hola Mohalla **SI**  
New Year, Nanakshahi Calendar **SI**  
16 Orthodox Sunday **O**  
Palm/Passion Sunday **C**

- Rama Navami (Ramayana Reading thr. Mar 25) **H**  
St Patrick's Day **RC, P**  
20 Mahavira Jayanti (Mahavira's Birthday), **JN**  
Maundy Thursday **RC, P**  
Mawlid an Nabi (Prophet Mohammad's birthday) **M**  
Ostara, Alban Eiler, Eostre (Vernal Equinox) **W/P**  
21 Good Friday **C**  
Hanuman Jayanthi **H**  
Magha Puja Day **BU**  
Nav Ruz, Naw Ruz, Norooz (The New Day) **Z, BA**  
Purim **J**  
23 Easter **RC, P, LD**  
25 Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary **O**  
Rama Navami (end) **H**  
26 Khordad Sal (Birth of Prophet Zaranushtra) **Z**  
31 Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary **RC**

### APRIL

- 6 Founding of the Mormon Church **LD**  
14 Baisakhi (Vaisakhi) Creation of Khalsa **SI**  
18 Birth Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji **SI**  
19 Lazarus Saturday **O**  
The Lord's Evening Meal **JW**  
20 Palm Sunday **O**  
Pesach (Passover) First 2 days especially.(through 27) **J**  
Theravada Buddhist New Year (through 23) **BU**  
21 Ridvan (through May 2) **BA**  
23 St. George's Day **RC, (P)**  
25 Holy Friday **O**  
27 Easter/Pascha **O**  
29 Ninth Day of Ridvan **BA**  
30 Ghambar Maidyozarem (through May 4) **Z**  
St. James the Great Day **O**

### MAY

- 1 Beltane or May Day **W/P**  
2 Birth Guru Arjan Dev Ji **SI**  
Twelfth Day of Ridvan **BA**  
Yom HaSho'ah **J**  
4 Ascension of Christ **C**  
5 Cinco de Mayo (*Mexican cultural*)  
6 Vaisakhi **H**  
11 Pentecost/Whitsunday **RC, P**  
18 Trinity Sunday **C**  
20 Buddha Day - Visakha Puja **BU**  
Buddha's Birthday (Wesak in Theravada) **BU**  
23 Declaration of the Bab **BA**  
25 Corpus Christi **RC**  
29 Ascension of Baha'u'llah **BA**  
30 Sacred Heart of Jesus **RC**

### JUNE

- 5 Ascension of Jesus **O**  
6 Anniversary of Attack on Akal Takhat **SI**  
9 Shavuot (through June 10) **J**  
15 Pentecost **O**  
16 Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji **SI**  
19 Juneteenth (*African-American cultural*)  
20 Litha, Alban Heruin, Midsumarsblot **WP**  
21 First Nations Day **N**  
22 All Saints **O**  
New Church Day **SW**  
24 Nativity of St. John the Baptist **RC, (P)**  
29 Feast Day of Saints Peter and Paul **RC, (P)**  
Ghambar Maidyoshem (through July 3) **Z**