

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

December 2, 2021

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Monifa B. McKnight, Interim Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Muslim Holidays (10-05-2021-01-C)

During the public comments during the October 5, 2021 meeting, Ms. Samira Hussein shared comments regarding Muslim holidays and observances identified on Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) calendar. During the discussion following public comments, Ms. Hana O’Looney requested the following information:

Question 1

Please provide a list of the dates of the Muslim holidays for this year.

Response

During her testimony, Ms. Hussein referenced various Muslim observances. The observances and corresponding dates follow.

Muslim Days of Observance	Date
Eid al-Adha	July 20, 2021
Islamic New Year	August 9, 2021
Ashura (honoring of Prophet Moses)	August 18, 2021
Mawlid al-Nabi (birthday of Prophet Mohammad)	October 18, 2021
Ramadan	April 2, 2022
Eid al-Fitr	May 2, 2022
Eid al-Adha	July 9, 2022

On October 22, 2021, Mr. C. Douglas Hollis Jr, executive director, Office of Finance and Operations, met with Ms. Hussein and Dr. Imad ad-Dean Ahmad, a local astronomer and contributor to the calendar recognized by the Islamic Society of North America, along with Ms. Kate Chance, faith community liaison for Montgomery County government. They discussed the current calendar, importance of observances, and future calendar efforts. During the discussion, Ms. Hussein and Dr. Ahmad recognized the importance of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr and the accuracy of these two dates on MCPS and county calendars.

Question 2

Why are the Muslim holidays noted incorrectly on MCPS calendar? What can be done to correct these?

Response

Annually, MCPS meets with community stakeholders to develop and gain insight around holidays and observances. Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr are determined by the lunar cycle, and MCPS planned based on the date as known at that time. While Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr incorrectly are printed in the MCPS comprehensive calendar, they are reflected correctly on the MCPS online calendar that is connected to and sourced by the Montgomery County government event and holiday calendar. Additionally, MCPS typically has aligned a professional development day with Eid al-Fitr. This school year it is programmed correctly on May, 2, 2022.

Ms. Hussein referenced a calendar resource (attached) of important Islamic dates that extends through the spring of 2031. Dr. Ahmad is the author of this calendar source and uses it to inform Muslims in the local community as well as contribute to the Islamic Society of North America. MCPS staff will use this additional tool and continue to work with Montgomery County government staff in reaching faith community leaders on an ongoing basis to discuss the calendar and other important topics of interests.

These conversations and the calendar tool will assist staff members to understand the most important Muslim observances and the accurate dates. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Eugenia S. Dawson, chief of finance and operations, via e-mail.

MBM:ESD:CDH:sr

Attachment

Copy to:

Executive Staff

Mr. Hollis

Ms. Webb



Muslim Holidays

By Audrey Shabbas and Sharifa Alkhateeb

Strictly speaking, the only holidays which are considered "religious" are Ramadan, Eid Al-Fitr, and Eid Al-Adha. The Prophet Muhammad recommended some other days as fasting days in addition to Ramadan, and these, too, are observed by many Muslims. The holidays of Laylat Al-Isra wa Al-Miraj and Laylat Al-Qadr are celebrated in various ways throughout the Muslim world, while the Prophet's birthday, Mawlid Al-Nabi, is celebrated according to local custom in some regions and not in others.

Ramadan

Ramadan is the month of fasting, piety, and prayer preceding *Eid Al-Fitr* and the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Ramadan is a month of spiritual and physical purification. Self-discipline in abstaining from food, drink, and marital relations from before sunrise until sunset, combines with a feeling of a common bond with the poor. Anyone in good health is required to fast the entire month, and whoever is sick or on a journey is to fast the number of days missed at a later date. Children below the age of puberty, pregnant women, and the aged are exempt from fasting, although many children do fast along with their families to show they are aspiring to the adult actions of their faith.

Eid Al-Fitr

Eid Al-Fitr is the feast/festival that marks the end of the month of Ramadan fasting, expressing happiness in having completed the fast.

At the beginning of the day each member of the family performs an act of charity for the poor. Once this is completed, the family is ready for a happy holiday.

Special morning prayers are said in congregation and the day is celebrated with visiting family members and friends, making special foods, calling those who are far away, or sending letters and cards. Eid Al-Fitr includes new clothes for everyone, gifts to children from parents and relatives, plays, folktales, games, puppet shows, and trips to amusement parks for children. Children are allowed to stay up late at night.

Eid Al-Adha

Eid Al-Adha ("feast of the sacrifice") commemorates Abraham's obedience to God as shown by his willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael, as well as God's mercy in substituting a lamb for Ishmael. This feast is part of the Hajj, and takes place on the tenth of the month of Dhu Al-Hijja of the Islamic calendar. For those on the Hajj and for many others the

rymaking.

Other Special Days

Laylat Al-Baraa has been translated as "the night of repentance." (*Laylat* means night). It is the night when forgiveness is granted to those who repent. Muslims believe it is a night when God is setting the coming year's course for each person. It is therefore a time when

Primary Source

Ashura: A Day of Days

Ashura is the tenth day of the month of Muharram, first month of the lunar year, the day whereon the martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Husain ibn Ali at Kerbala is commemorated. The Shi'ite sect have adopted this day as a special day of mourning for the redemptive suffering of Husain. Other events said to have taken place on the tenth of Muharram are: that God bestowed repentance upon Adam; Noah's ark came to rest on Mount Judi; Abraham, Moses, and Jesus were born; Abraham was saved from the fire; Jonah's people were released from torment; Job's affliction was ended; Jacob's sight was restored; Joseph was rescued from the well; Solomon was given his kingdom; Zacharias' prayer for a son was answered; and Moses gained victory over the magicians.

Zakariah Ibn Muhammad Qazwini
(A.D. 1203-1283, Iran). *Ajai'ib Al-Makhlugat*

day begins with the sacrifice of an animal in commemoration of the Angel Gabriel's substitution of a lamb as Abraham's sacrificial obligation. One-third of the meat is given to the poor, with the remainder shared with neighbors and family members.

This holiday is then celebrated in much the same way as Eid Al-Fitr — with good food, gifts for children, and general mer-

one asks for God's blessings as well as for any specific request. It is the fifteenth of the month of Sha'ban (the eighth lunar month).

Yom Arafat falls on the ninth of Dhu Al-Hijja, when people on the Hajj are assembled for the "standing" at the plain of Arafat (near Makkah) during the Hajj. Muslims around the world



gather at their local mosques for prayer in spiritual solidarity with those at Arafat.

Ashura is celebrated on the ninth and tenth of the month Muharram. The word *ashura* means "ten" and is a time of fasting, reflection, and meditation. Jews of the city of Medina fasted on the tenth day in remembrance of their salvation from the Pharaoh, and the Prophet Muhammad pledged he would fast for two days instead of one in this same remembrance, fasting on the ninth and on the tenth. For many Muslims there is joy in commemorating all of the wonderful events traditions say occurred on this day, including: Noah's ark came to rest, and the Prophet Abraham was born. Among Shiite Muslims, it is a day of special sorrow commemorating the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson Hussain and his followers at the battle of Kerbala in Islam's first century.

Laylat Al-Isra wa Al-Miraj ("the night journey and ascension") commemorates the journey of the Prophet Muhammad from Makkah to Jerusalem, his ascension into the seven heavens, and his return in the same night. These events acknowledge that all the Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) have one and the same God as their source. In this night, Muslims believe, the Prophet was instructed to establish the five daily prayers in their current form. On this night, Muslims believe, Muhammad prayed together with Abraham, Moses, and Jesus in the area of the Al-Aqsa mosque. The rock from which he is believed to have ascended to heaven to speak with God is the one seen inside the Dome of the Rock. *Isra wa Al-Miraj* as it is sometimes called is celebrated on the twenty-seventh of Rajab, seventh month of the Islamic calendar.

Laylat Al-Qadr ("the night of power")

falls on one of the last ten days of Ramadan on an odd numbered day (such as the twenty-third, twenty-fifth or twenty-seventh). In the Qur'an this night is said to be better than one thousand months and on this night the prayers of the sincere Muslim are certain to be answered.

Mawlid Al-Nabi is the Prophet Muhammad's birthday. It occurs on the twelfth of Rabi Al-Awal of the Islamic calendar. Speeches are given about the life of the Prophet and dinners are held. This occasion was not celebrated in the early times of Islam and is therefore unevenly celebrated today, with great and festive celebrations in many Muslim countries (i.e. Egypt and Turkey) and none in others (i.e. Saudi Arabia).

The First of Muharram marks the new year. The date fluctuates (in the Gregorian calendar) from year to year as it is based on the Islamic lunar calendar.

Important Islamic Dates Hijra (1442-1452)

	New Year	Ashura	Mawlid	Ramadan 1	al-Fitr	al-Adha
1442	08/20/20	08/29/20	10/29/20	04/13/21	05/13/21	07/20/21
1443	08/09/21	08/18/21	10/18/21	04/02/22	05/02/22	07/09/22
1444	07/30/22	08/08/22	10/08/22	03/23/23	04/21/23	06/28/23
1445	07/19/23	07/28/23	09/27/23	03/11/24	04/10/24	06/16/24
1446	07/07/24	07/16/24	09/15/24	03/01/25	03/30/25	06/06/25
1447	06/26/25	07/05/25	09/04/25	02/18/26	03/20/26	05/27/26
1448	06/16/26	06/25/26	08/25/26	02/08/27	03/08/27	05/16/27
1449	06/06/27	06/15/27	08/14/27	01/28/28	02/26/28	05/06/28
1450	05/25/28	06/05/28	08/03/28	01/16/29	02/14/29	04/24/29
1451	05/14/29	05/23/29	07/23/29	01/05/30	02/04/30	04/13/30
1452	05/03/30	05/12/30	07/13/30	12/26/30	01/24/31	04/02/31