

Ramadan 2024 information for Massachusetts schools

Ramadan is a month-long period of fasting, reflection, and prayer for Muslims. This is a sacred time, the holiest month in the Islamic year. The timing is based on the lunar calendar, so the dates are different every year. For 2024, Ramadan is expected to start on **Monday, March 11** (subject to the citing of the new moon) and end on **Tuesday, April 9**.

With certain exceptions, Muslims who have reached puberty may fast, abstaining from both food and liquids, from dawn to sunset. They will break their fast at an evening meal (called an *iftar*), often shared with family and friends.

In addition to fasting, a Muslim family's schedule may be different during Ramadan. Families may gather for their evening *iftar* at their mosques or with others. It is common for parents and children to stay up later than usual as special prayers (called *Taraweh*) and services often continue late into the night. In the morning, families start their days before sunrise, when they eat a pre-dawn meal before a day of fasting. As a result, students may be tired/sleepy during the school day, especially during morning classes and during the first few days of Ramadan. While students adjust to their new routine, this could affect their overall participation in class.



WHAT RAMADAN COULD LOOK LIKE FOR YOUR STUDENTS

4AM WAKE UP TO EAT BREAKFAST	6AM WAKE UP FOR SCHOOL	8AM SCHOOL	11AM RUNNING AROUND IN GYM
12PM WATCHING FRIENDS EAT LUNCH	3PM ATHLETICS BEGINS	5PM HOMEWORK	7PM BREAK FAST

Some students may even participate in Taraweh prayers which can last late into the evening. They can be hungry, dehydrated, tired and less energetic but spiritually fulfilled.



Courtesy of Ceylan Rowe. Used with permission.

Not every Muslim family celebrates Ramadan or observes it in the same way. But we hope this general information will help schools recognize their Muslim students' needs and respond appropriately to parents' requests for accommodations. We highly recommend the video [Teacher's guide to student success during Ramadan](#).

Elementary/grammar school students. Most Muslim students will not yet be fasting at this age. However, they may tire more easily as the school day wears on, due to a change in their bedtimes. Some students may want to avoid exercise and sports, choosing to rest instead, especially as the weather becomes warmer.

Some of your Muslim students may already take prayer breaks, while others may start asking for time to pray during Ramadan. Most likely, this would be for the early afternoon prayer time (called *Zuhr* or *Dhurhr*) and perhaps for the late afternoon prayer time (called *Asr*). Prayer breaks only take 5 – 10 minutes. Students should be allowed to pray in a clean and quiet area.

Middle school & high school. Older Muslim students may be more actively involved in observing Ramadan, fasting¹ from sunrise to sunset and sleeping less at night. Here are several ways that a school can be sensitive to their needs, although parents may have suggestions of their own.

- Prayer times: As with younger students, more Muslim students may request prayer breaks. See the section above for details.
- Alternate space at lunchtime: Students who are fasting may appreciate spending their lunch hour in a quiet space where they can rest while their classmates eat.
- Exams & projects: It will help if exams can be scheduled for midday, rather than first thing in the morning or later in the day, when students are becoming tired from lack of food and drink. If possible, take-home exams will allow students to complete their work in the evening after they have eaten. As for projects, it will help to avoid Friday deadlines and instead allow students to complete projects over the weekend.
- Physical education/sports: Teachers and coaches should not penalize their Muslim students if they aren't as active or performing as well while fasting, especially as the weather gets warmer. Some parents may request that their children be excused.
- Food break at sunset: Students taking late afternoon classes or participating in other events should be allowed to eat, either by bringing food into the classroom or by taking a quick break.

Celebrating the end of Ramadan: Eid al-Fitr. The festival of Eid al-Fitr (the Feast of Fast Breaking) is one of two major Islamic holidays. In 2024, it is expected to begin on **Wednesday, April 10.**² Muslims celebrate Eid al-Fitr for one to three days. It is quite likely that your Muslim students will ask to be excused from school on April 10 and perhaps also April 11 and April 12.

¹ Please do NOT assume that your Muslim students are fasting, or question them about it. Your students may fast for the entire day, for part of the day, or not at all. Girls who are menstruating do not fast, and students with health issues may not be able to fast.

² Like the start of Ramadan, the holiday starts when the new moon is seen.