

Ramadan and the Duty to Accommodate

Ramadan is the holiest month in the Islamic Calendar. During the month of Ramadan, many Muslims around the world abstain from food and water from sunrise to sunset for 29 or 30 consecutive days.

The following offers information about Ramadan, and some tips and considerations for meeting the duty to accommodate under the Ontario Human Rights Code and TDSB's Human Rights Policy (P031).

Important Ramadan Dates

Muslims follow the lunar calendar and, as a result, the timing of Ramadan (9th lunar month) shifts a little bit each year. Muslims are members of diverse communities, and the following dates **can vary by a day or so**, for different communities.

Sundown Monday, March 11, 2024: Ramadan begins. Due to diversity within the Muslim communities, some individuals may begin marking Ramadan, including fasting, a day or two before or after. The Ramadan greetings are "Ramadan Mubarak," "Ramadan Kareem," or "Happy Ramadan."

Friday, April 5, 2024 is Laylat Ul Qadr, or the "Night of Power": This commemorates the day the first verses of the Qu'ran, which is the Islamic scripture, were revealed. Many Muslims spend the night praying.

Monday April 8 or Tuesday, April 9, 2024 is Eid al-Fitr: the end of Ramadan. This is one of the most important Islamic holy days. Please note, individuals will be requesting this day off school or work as a creed/religion accommodation. The Eid greeting is "Eid Mubarak" or "Happy Eid".

What Does it Mean to Fast?

Fasting means Muslims will refrain from eating and drinking from dawn (i.e. the first appearance of light on the horizon) to sunset. Families will have a pre-dawn meal and then an evening meal to break the fast.



Not all Muslims fast. Some may choose not to fast for personal reasons. Others may not fast if they are menstruating, pregnant, breastfeeding, or have health issues. If someone tells you they are not fasting, respect their privacy and do not ask them why. Along with fasting, many Muslims use Ramadan as an opportunity to focus on spiritual growth.

What Responsibilities Do I Have to Accommodate?

The Ontario Human Rights Code (the Code) and therefore the Board's Human Rights Policy provides equal rights and freedoms from discrimination. As an employer and service provider (of education), the TDSB has a duty to accommodate the Code-related needs of students and staff. In the context of Ramadan, this means that the TDSB has an obligation to adjust rules, policies or practices so that Muslim staff and students are not disadvantaged.

Staff or students may request accommodation based on creed/religion. Should someone request an accommodation there is a duty to lead the accommodation dialogue by the Principal or manager.

The TDSB Human Rights Office offers guidance and support surrounding any questions that may arise as staff work to ensure that the human rights of all members of the TDSB community are upheld, including responding to accommodation requests. Please do not hesitate to contact us at humanrightsoffice@tdsb.on.ca.

Supporting Muslim Students and Staff

This is an opportunity to celebrate the diversity that exists within our school communities. Consider how you are bringing culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy into classrooms during Ramadan and beyond.

For many Muslim students, observing Ramadan through fasting brings a great sense of fulfillment and community. However, for some, a long day of fasting can come with its challenges. Here are some tips to support staff and students:

- Invite staff and students who are observing Ramadan to let you know if they need any support or accommodations.
- Those who are fasting tend to have more energy in the early morning. Some helpful considerations are:
 - Offer students less strenuous work in the later part of the day.
 - Late-in-the-day meetings may not be ideal for some Muslim staff, please check-in with your colleagues on scheduling needs.



- Staff and students may need scheduling accommodations for the creed/religion related obligations. Staff who wish to take creed days for holy days can submit their request to People and Culture.
 - There is a duty to provide academic accommodations for important holy days such as Eid al-Fitr. Students celebrating should not be marked down for missing this day. If any tests/assignments are not otherwise re-scheduled please offer students the chance to make-up any tests/assignments.
- Some staff and students will likely need to observe their Dhuhr (midday) prayer in the school or workplace.
 - Staff who need time to pray can reach out to their supervisor with their request.
 - Provide students a quiet and clean place to pray.
 - Please note different sects may have different prayer times.
- Participation in evening activities may conflict with the time for breaking the fast. Be mindful of this when organizing meetings or activities during this month.
 - If there is an evening meeting, please offer a break at the appropriate time to break the fast. Please confirm the appropriate time for the individual(s) who is/are fasting as different practitioners may break fast at different times.
- If you are scheduling team meetings/class activities where you are offering food or drinks, individuals who are fasting may like to take the snack for later.

For Ramadan related accommodations ***you do not need to*** request documentation from an official, such as an Imam.

Ramadan Mubarak to all of those celebrating!

References and Further Reading:

[Human Rights Policy, P031](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Commission: Policy on Preventing Discrimination Based on Creed](#)

