

Ramadan and the Duty to Accommodate

In 2022, the beginning of April marks the first week of Ramadan - one of the holiest months in the Islamic Calendar. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims around the world abstain from food and water from sunrise to sunset for 29-30 consecutive days.

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

When does Ramadan start and end?

Muslims follow the lunar calendar and, as a result, the timing of Ramadan (9th lunar month) shifts a little bit each year. This year, the evening of April 02 will signal the beginning of Ramadan. Due to the diversity within the Muslim community, some individuals may begin marking Ramadan, including fasting, a day before or after their peers.

What does it mean to fast?

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. Muslims are encouraged to focus on improving qualities of good character and trying to assist those less fortunate through acts of charity.

How will Ramadan impact my teaching? What should I consider in supporting Muslim students or who may be fasting?

Days and months of significance are great opportunities to celebrate the diversity that exists within our school communities. Consider how you are bringing culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy into classrooms you share with students 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 while trying to keep up with day to day responsibilities can come with its challenges. Invite students who are observing Ramadan through fasting to let you know if they need any support or accommodations.

Whether learning virtually or in-person, students who are fasting tend to have more energy in the early morning. Consider planning the day in a way that offers students less strenuous work in the later part of the day.

For virtual school, consider how you can offer instructions and learning material which require minimal adult support. Caregivers who may have typically supported students through their online learning may now be focussed on the additional work of preparing for evening meals and prayers.

Some students will choose to observe their [Dhuhr](#) (midday) prayer in the afternoon and so a space and time should be provided to accommodate them.

How will Ramadan impact my Muslim coworkers/staff? How can I be an ally to any Muslims that I work with who are fasting?

Fasting while working can be challenging. Some Muslims stay up later for nightly prayers and wake up before sunrise for a meal before their fast (suhur); therefore, they may become fatigued towards the later part of the working day. If you are a supervisor, offer your staff flexibility in their work schedule where possible.

Consider that late-in-the-day meetings may not be ideal for your Muslim coworkers as people who are fasting tend to have more energy in the early morning. Participation in evening activities may conflict with preparations for breaking the fast. Be mindful of this when organizing meetings or activities during this month.

Avoid scheduling team meetings with food or drinks during Ramadan.

The end of Ramadan – Eid

Eid al-Fitr is celebrated at the end of Ramadan and is one of the most significant Islamic holidays. In 2022, Muslims who mark Eid will celebrate on either May 2nd or 3rd.

Ensure that summatives, major assessments, field trips, and important staff meetings are not scheduled on either day.

What responsibilities do I have under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* to accommodate someone who is observing Ramadan?

The Ontario *Human Rights Code* provides equal rights, opportunities, and freedoms from discrimination for every person in Ontario. As a service provider and employer, the TDSB has a legal 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. This is called the **duty to accommodate**.

Staff or students may request accommodation or indicate that they cannot meet an expectation because of their religious observance. Even if a request has not been made, if you are in a position of authority or leadership and you have reason to believe someone may need an accommodation, there is a duty to let them know about their right to be accommodated and invite them to share their needs with you if they wish to do so.

Avoid making assumptions about needs - make sure you speak to individuals and include them in the planning.

The TDSB Human Rights office is here to offer support or answer any questions that may arise as you 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.

How do I greet someone observing Ramadan?

You can say the following to greet someone observing Ramadan: “Ramadan Mubarak,” “Ramadan Kareem,” or “Happy Ramadan.”

Ramadan Mubarak to all of those celebrating!

References and Further Reading

[Ontario Human Rights Commission: The Duty to Accommodate](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Commission: Fact Sheet on Religious Rights](#)

TDSB Equity resources on [Honouring the Multiplicities of Muslim Identities](#)

Graphics below shared with permission from artist Huda Fahmy:

www.hudafahmy.com

Accommodating Muslim Students During Ramadan

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR EDUCATORS



IF THEY DO FAST, PROVIDE A SAFE SPACE FOR THEM TO BE DURING LUNCH.



Happy Ramadan!

ACKNOWLEDGE THE MONTH OF RAMADAN IS COMING UP.

(TIP: MAKE SURE THE STUDENT(S) IN YOUR CLASS ARE ACTUALLY MUSLIM DO NOT ASSUME THEY ARE B/C THEY'RE ARAB OR BROWN)



IF STUDENTS ARE YOUNG, REACH OUT TO PARENTS TO WISH THEM A HAPPY RAMADAN & SEE IF THEIR KIDS ARE PLANNING TO FAST.



GYM CLASS WILL BE CHALLENGING. DON'T REQUIRE THEM TO RUN THE MILE IF THEY'RE FASTING.



LITTLE HELP... (UNLESS THEY WANT TO)



LOW IMPACT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS GOOD.



KEEP IN MIND THAT OUTDOOR GYM IS EVEN MORE CHALLENGING. IT'S HOT. (REMEMBER: NOT EVEN WATER)



STANDARDIZED TESTING AND TESTING IN GENERAL CAN BE CHALLENGING DURING RAMADAN.

TALK TO THE STUDENT AND SEE WHAT THEY'RE COMFORTABLE WITH.

YOU CAN TALK TO ME NOW, OR SPEAK TO ME IN PRIVATE. WE'LL WORK SOMETHING OUT TOGETHER.



TRY TO ACCOMMODATE IF POSSIBLE. MAKE IT EARLY DURING THE DAY WHEN THEY'RE MORE ALERT/LESS LETHARGIC.



FOR VARIOUS REASONS, SOME MUSLIM STUDENTS WON'T FAST.

MISS! LOOK! SHE'S BEEN FAKIN' THIS WHOLE TIME!



PLEASE BE UNDERSTANDING AND COMPASSIONATE. MANY MUSLIMS PERFORM NIGHTLY PRAYERS (TARAWEEH) & MAY BE SLEEPING LATER THAN USUAL.



DON'T ASK WHY.

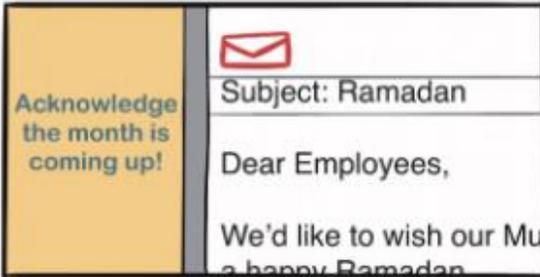
THANK YOU TO ALL EDUCATORS WHO CONTINUE TO MAKE THEIR CLASSROOMS AN INCLUSIVE AND SAFE SPACE.



IT COULD BE DUE TO

- HEALTH ISSUES (Heart icon)
- PERIOD/PREGNANCY (Blood drop and pregnant woman icon)
- DISABILITY (Wheelchair icon, labeled 'VISIBLE OR NOT')





Or simply ask what works best for them.



Educate yourself

DID YOU KNOW THAT?
Ramadan is ABOUT **30** DAYS LONG

Muslims don't eat or drink from approximately sunup to sundown (though not all Muslims can fast)

-6:00 am **Fast / Drink** -7:30 pm

Sick, Personal Programs/Training, Disability

And many spend the nights in prayer

Alahu Akbar!

Now you know!



Offer to see if your office matches donations as Muslims give a lot to charity in Ramadan

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