

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.

Below you will find information about Ramadan along with 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 Islamic or Hirji calendar which is based on the lunar calendar. As a result, the timing of Ramadan (9th lunar month) shifts a little bit each year. Since Muslim communities are diverse, the dates may vary by a day or so depending on the community. In the Islamic calendar, each day begins at sunset and ends at sunset the following day.

Ramadan Starts at Sunset on either Friday, February 28th or Saturday, March 1st, 2025

The start of Ramadan can vary within Muslim communities due to their diversity, with some individuals starting their fast and observances a day or two earlier or later. Common Ramadan greetings include "Ramadan Mubarak," "Ramadan Kareem" or "Happy Ramadan."

Laylat ul Qadr or the "Night of Power" Starts at Sunset on either Wednesday, March 26th or Thursday, March 27th, 2025

This commemorates the night the first verses of the Qu'ran, the Islamic scripture, were revealed. Many Muslims spend the night praying. Of note, the exact date of Laylat al-Qadr is not known, which is why Muslims observe extra devotion during the last ten days of Ramadan in hopes of witnessing this blessed night.

Eid al-Fitr Starts at Sunset on either Saturday, March 29th, Sunday, March 30th or Monday, March 31st

Eid al-Fitr marks 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. You would not mark down a student for missing any academic assessments on this day (i.e. should a student's Eid al-Fitr fall on Monday March 31st, 2025 or another school day). If your school has a large Muslim student population, please consider if it is practical to schedule major assessments/events on this day. 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 (OHRC) and the Board's Human Rights Policy, P031, provides equal rights and freedoms from discrimination. As an employer and service provider (of education), 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 based on creed/religion. Should someone request an accommodation there is a duty to lead the accommodation dialogue by the Principal, manager or staff from People and Culture may assist.

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 staff and 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 include:
 - Offering students less strenuous work in the later part of the day.
 - Late-in-the-day meetings may not be ideal for Muslim staff, please check-in with your colleagues on scheduling needs.
- Staff and students may need scheduling accommodations for creed/religion related obligations. Please consider the following:
 - 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) and Asr (afternoon) prayer in the school or workplace. Please consider the following:
 - 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. Please consider the following:
 - 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 a team meeting/class activity where you are offering food or drinks, individuals who are fasting may like to take the snack home for later.

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

Ramadan Mubarak!

References and Further Reading

[Human Rights Policy, P031](#)

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