

ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC OBSERVANCES

POLICY

The Winchester School District serves children from many different religious and ethnic backgrounds. Since the American tradition requires respect for religious diversity and upholds freedom of religion and equality before the law, it shall be the Policy of the Town of Winchester School District, out of respect for family values and our different religious and ethnic traditions, that:

- School calendars distributed to teachers, staff, and families shall include those major religious and ethnic holidays whose observance would require absence from school or other accommodations;
- Teachers shall refrain from teaching difficult to make-up material, scheduling exam preparation, tests, quizzes, homework, and other one-time events (field trips, athletic events, music performances, theater plays, and productions, auditions, and back to school functions), on major non-national religious holidays.
 - Major non-national religious holidays will be identified as two days of Rosh Hashanah, the first day of Yom Kippur, the first day of Passover (which all begin at sundown, the night before) and Good Friday. The Central Office Leadership Team will identify other (if any) major non-national religious holidays. on an on-going basis.
 - Long term assignments will not be due the day after a non-national religious holiday.
 - This policy should not prevent coaches and advisors from holding practices for these events during major non-national religious holidays.
- Students are entitled to miss school, without being penalized, to participate in celebrations of their families' major religious and ethnic holidays;
- All students are entitled to have individual accommodations made to allow them to participate in their family religious or ethnic observances without detriment to their education or grades, including:
 - extensions of due dates on assigned work (at minimum: # days absent + 1)
 - opportunities to make up material missed in class, and
 - reasonable accommodations as may be appropriate.

District policy prohibits discrimination against any student, employee, or other individual because of such individual's religious/ethnic belief or practice, or any absence thereof. Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 151C, Section 2B provides, in part, that:

- **Any pupil absent from school because of a religious or ethnic holiday may not be deprived of any award or of eligibility or opportunity to compete for any award because of such absence;**
- Students whose conscientious observance of a religious or ethnic holiday conflicts with participating in a school-scheduled event such as try-outs, athletic contests, theatricals, or concerts, will not be required to participate nor penalized for their non-participation;
- Any absence because of a religious or ethnic holiday must be recorded in the school register or in any group or class attendance record as an excused absence;
- Such absence must NOT be recorded on any transcript or application or employment form or on any similar form;
- To be entitled to the privileges set forth above, the pupil must present to the principal a written excuse signed by a parent or person standing in place of a parent at least 24hrs. in advance.

**Winchester School Committee
Approved: September 16, 2008**