

Cincinnati MultiFaith Calendar: Guide for Educators

Goal: Educators will be able to educate themselves on the experiences of their students and gain greater cultural competence.

How Observances Affect Students

This calendar is designed to be used as a guide for teachers in understanding the lives of their students. When a holiday observance conflicts with school, students may feel misunderstood. It is hard for a child to advocate for their own needs when their background is not understood by their peers or the adult in charge of them. In this calendar, we have included information about how holiday observances could affect students. A child may have a harder time taking a test or feeling included when they are fasting, or they could feel unfairly penalized for missing class for a religious observance. This calendar also includes information of traditional greetings for holidays beyond “happy holidays.” Small acknowledgements like this could make a student feel seen and reduce the feeling of alienation. The calendar includes external links chosen by people within those various faith traditions so that teachers know where to look for further information when trying to learn about the backgrounds of their students.

It is important to note, however, that there is immense diversity within each faith tradition. Different families might observe the same holiday in different ways. For example, some Jewish families may take their students out of school to observe Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in synagogue, whereas other families might not observe those holidays at all. Some students might not even be aware of all the holidays listed for their faith tradition, as there is considerable geographic and ethnic/cultural diversity with certain holidays within a tradition. It is important not to assume that a student observes a holiday just because it is listed for their faith tradition. However, there is still value in trying to learn more about their faith tradition as a whole.

Classroom Decoration

Representation is extremely important for inclusion of students who may be the only member of their faith tradition in the room. One of the ways to do this is through including their traditions in classroom decorations, particularly for elementary school classrooms. If there is a class calendar, you can use this digital calendar to include observances for many different faith traditions. There are external links which you can use to find more information about those observances in order to include them in classroom decorations for each season of the year.

Use in Lessons

Accompanying this calendar is a ready-made lesson plan. Feel free to use this lesson with your students, adapt it to the needs of your classroom, or simply use the calendar to support lessons that are already part of your curriculum.