



Recognition of Religious Observances

The District will maintain on its website and social media platforms a calendar that acknowledges major cultural religious observances observed by our diverse student body and community. The calendar includes details on dates and practices and is recommended for those organizing classroom activities and other academic and co-curricular events. Our goal is to bolster the District's commitment to fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging. For inquiries, please contact Dr. John Council at jcouncil@upperdarbysd.org.

The observances listed below reflect the diversity found within our District and local community. They have been carefully chosen to encompass a range of religious and cultural traditions and experiences. The dates may vary depending on region and affiliation. This list will be reviewed and updated consistently, if there is a tradition or experience that you feel should be added, please feel free to contact Dr. Council.

Observance Name	Religion	Description	Date Observed
Gantan-sai	Shinto	Gantan-sai is the annual New Year festival of the Shinto religion.	January 1, 2025
Epiphany/Twelfth Night/Three Kings Day	Christian — Roman Catholic and Protestant	This date is also known as Befana Day; commemorates the revelation of God through Jesus Christ and marks the time the three wise men arrived in Bethlehem and presented gifts to the baby Jesus.	January 6, 2025
Christmas	Eastern Orthodox Christian	Christmas is an annual celebration commemorating the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah whose message and self-sacrifice began the Christian religion.	January 7, 2025
Chinese New Year	Confucian, Taoist, Buddhist	This is the most important of traditional Chinese holidays.	January 29, 2025
Setsubun-sai	Shinto	Setsubun-sai marks the beginning of spring, and is known as the “bean-throwing festival.” The faithful scatter roasted beans to bring good luck to the new season.	February 3, 2025
Magha Puja Day	Buddhist	Magha Puja Day commemorates an important event in the life of the Buddha, in which the four disciples traveled to join the Buddha.	February 13, 2025

Ramadan	Islamic	Ramadan is an occasion to focus on faith through fasting and prayer and is one of the most important Muslim holidays. Ramadan is notable because the Qur'an was first revealed during this month, and Muslims see the Qur'an as the ultimate form of guidance for mankind. The night that the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad is called Lailat ul Oadr, and standing in prayer this one night is thought to eclipse months of worship.	Feb. 28-March 30, 2025
Ash Wednesday	Christian	This is the first day of Lent, the period of 40 days before Easter in which many Christians sacrifice ordinary pleasures to reflect on Christ's sacrifice.	March 5, 2025
Holi	Hindu	Also known as the "Festival of Colors," this holiday can be traced to Hindu scriptures commemorating good over evil. This date is also a celebration of the colorful spring and a farewell to the dull winter.	March 14-15, 2025
Naw Ruz	Baha'i	This is the Baha'i New Year, a traditional celebration in Iran adopted as a holy day associated with Baha'i. It is a celebration of spring and new life.	March 21-22, 2025

Eid al-Fitr	Islamic	Eid al-Fitr means “break the fast” and is the last day of Ramadan, marking the end of a month of fasting. The phrase commonly used by Muslims to wish someone a happy Eid is “Eid Mubarak,” which translates to “Blessed Eid” in Arabic.	March 30-31, 2025
Easter	Christian — Roman Catholic and Protestant	Annual commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.	April 10, 2025
Passover	Jewish	Passover is a week-long observance commemorating the freedom and exodus of the Israelites (Jewish slaves) from Egypt during the reign of the Pharaoh Ramses II (one of three pilgrimage festivals).	April 22-30, 2024 April 12-20, 2025
Palm Sunday	Christian — Roman Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox Christianity	A commemoration of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem as crowds lined his path with palm fronds	April 13, 2025

Vaisakhi	Sikh	Vaisakhi is the Sikh new year festival and commemorates 1699, the year Sikhism was born. Vaisakhi is also a long-established harvest festival.	April 14, 2025
Maundy Thursday	Christian — Roman Catholic and Protestant	Thursday before Easter, commemorates the Last Supper of Jesus with the Apostles.	April 17, 2025
Good Friday	Christian — Roman Catholic and Protestant	Friday before Easter, commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ; among some sects of Christianity and in many countries marks a day of fasting.	April 18, 2025
Holy Friday/Good Friday <i>(Eastern Orthodox Christian)</i>	Eastern Orthodox Christian	Friday before Easter commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ among some sects of Christianity, and in many countries, marks a day of fasting.	April 18, 2025

Easter	(Eastern Orthodox Christian)	Annual commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ	April 20, 2025
Yom HaSho'ah	Jewish	Holocaust Remembrance Day; a day to remember the lives and names of Jewish victims and activists of the Holocaust.	April 24-25, 2025
Purim	Jewish	Purim commemorates the time when the Jews were living in Persia and were saved by the courage of a young Jewish woman called Esther.	March 23-24, 2024 March 13-14, 2025
Buddha Day/Visakha Puja	Buddhist	This holiday is traditionally known as Buddha's birthday. It is the major Buddhist festival, commemorating the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha.	May 5, 2025

Ascension of the Baha'ullah	Baha'i	<p>Commemorates the death of the founder of the Baha'i faith. Baha'llah died on May 29, 1892.</p> <p><i>General practices:</i> Devotional programs and reading from the scriptures.</p>	May 29, 2025
Eid al-Adha	Islamic	<p>An Islamic festival of sacrifice that commemorates the faith of Abraham; also a memorial to the dead. One of two major festivals; the other being Eid al-Fitr.</p>	June 6, 2025 - June 10, 2025
Shavuot	Jewish	<p>Commemorates receipt of the Torah on Mount Sinai (two of three pilgrimage festivals).</p> <p><i>General practices:</i> Evening of devotional programs and studying the Torah, lighting of Yahrzeit memorial candle at sundown on the second night of Shavuot.</p>	<p><i>Date details:</i> Begins at sundown</p> <p>June 11-13, 2024</p> <p>June 1-3, 2025</p>
Tisha B'Av	Jewish	<p>Commemorates a series of Jewish tragedies including the destruction of the first and second temples in Jerusalem.</p> <p><i>General practices:</i> Fasting and mourning.</p> <p><i>Date details:</i> Begins at sundown on first day, fast deferred because of the Sabbath.</p> <p><i>Recommended accommodations:</i> Plan limited activities after a fast.</p>	<p>Aug. 12-13, 2024</p> <p>Aug. 2-3, 2025</p>

Raksha Bandhan	Hindu	The Rakhi festivity falls in the holy month of Shravan; The origin and history of Rakhi can be dated back to the mythological Pauranic times.	August 19, 2024
Krishna Janmashtami	Hindu	This two-day festival celebrates the birth of Krishna, a widely-worshiped Hindu god. Krishna is considered to be a warrior, hero, teacher and philosopher.	August 26, 2024
Navaratri	Hindu	Navaratri is one of the greatest Hindu festivals, and celebrates the triumph of good over evil. During this time, Hindus worship Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati.	October 2-12, 2024
Rosh Hashanah	Jewish	Start of the Jewish New Year, day of judgment and remembrance; the Jewish calendar celebrates the New Year in the seventh month (Tishrei) as a day of rest and celebration ten days before Yom Kippur.	October 2-4, 2024
Yom Kippur	Jewish	Yom Kippur is often considered the holiest day of the year for Jews, and the day is dedicated to atonement and abstinence.	October 11-12, 2024
Sukkot	Jewish	A week-long celebration which begins with the building of Sukkah for sleep and meals. Sukkot is named for the huts	October 16-23, 2024

		Moses and the Israelites lived in as they wandered the desert before reaching the promised land.).	
Shemini Atzeret	Jewish	Also known as Atzereth, this is a fall festival, which includes a memorial service for the dead and features prayers for rain in Israel.	October 23-25, 2024
Simchat Torah	Jewish	Simchat Torah marks the completion of the annual cycle of the reading of the Torah in the synagogue and the beginning of the new cycle.	October 24-25, 2024
Diwali	Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain	Diwali, the Hindu “festival of lights,” is an extremely popular holiday for multiple religions throughout southern Asia. Diwali extends over five days and celebrates the victory of good over evil. The Times of India described Diwali as “a reaffirmation of hope, a renewed commitment to friendship and goodwill, and a religiously sanctioned celebration of the simple.” Fireworks, oil lamps, and sweets are common, making this a favorite holiday for children. The lamps are lit to help the goddess Lakshmi find her way into people’s homes.	November 1, 2024
Birth of Bahá’u’lláh	Baha’i	This holiday celebrates the birthday of Bahá’u’lláh, one of the Baha’I faith’s most important figures. For Bahá’is, the Birth of	November 3, 2024

		Bahá'u'lláh is a Holy Day celebrating the rebirth of the world through the love of God, just as Christmas is for Christians.	
Feast of the Immaculate Conception The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception,	Christian; Roman Catholic – Holy Day of Obligation	<p>Also called Immaculate Conception Day, celebrates the sinless lifespan and Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, celebrated on December 8, nine months before the feast of the Nativity of Mary, celebrated on September 8. It is one of the most important Marian feasts in the liturgical calendar of the Roman Catholic Church celebrated worldwide.</p> <p>By Pontifical decree, it is the patronal feast day of Argentina, Brazil, Italy, Korea, Nicaragua, Paraguay, the Philippines, Spain, the United States, and Uruguay. By royal decree, it is designated as the day honoring the patroness of Portugal. It is celebrated by the Roman Catholic Church and some select Protestant Christian denominations. (Read more and learn further details by visiting this link.)</p>	Dec. 8, 2024 Dec. 8, 2025
Hanukkah/Chanukah	Jewish	Hanukkah is the Jewish festival of lights and lasts for eight days. Hanukkah commemorates the Jewish struggle for religious freedom. The history of the holiday involves a historic military victory in which a Jewish sect called the Maccabees defeated the Syrian Greeks. The celebration commemorates a miracle in which a sacred temple flame burned for eight days on only one day's worth of oil.	December 25, 2024 through January 2, 2024

Christmas	Christian	Christmas is an annual celebration commemorating the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah whose message and self-sacrifice began the Christian religion.	December 25, 2024
Kwanzaa	African American Pan African	As an African American and Pan-African holiday celebrated by millions throughout the world African community, Kwanzaa brings a cultural message which speaks to the best of what it means to be African and human in the fullest sense. Given the profound significance Kwanzaa has for African Americans and indeed, the world African community, it is imperative that an authoritative source and site be made available to give an accurate and expansive account of its origins, concepts, values, symbols and practice. Dr. Maulana Karenga marked Kwanzaa as a cultural holiday, not a religious holiday, because he wanted all Africans across all faiths to be able to celebrate the holiday.	December 26, 2024-January 1, 2025

District and Building Implementation Considerations:

Training and Sensitivity: UDSD teachers and staff will be trained on cultural sensitivity and religious diversity through our equity training. This will help them better understand the needs of students and colleagues from different religious backgrounds and ensure a supportive environment for all.

Community Engagement: The Assistant Superintendent for Recruitment, Retention, and Culture will engage with local religious organizations and community leaders to understand the significance of different holidays and explore ways to support students and families in observing them.

Inclusivity in Curriculum: All District Curriculum will be culturally inclusive and carefully reviewed by District Administration prior to Board approval.

Accommodations: UDSD will accommodate students who wish to observe religious holidays. The District attendance policy already provides for excused absences for religious reasons. Families must still notify the school of the reason for an absence. The District will also consider flexible scheduling for exams or assignments and provide alternative activities for missed instruction.

Communication and Awareness: UDSD will raise awareness about the significance of cultural and religious observances and the importance of respecting diverse beliefs.

Continuous Evaluation and Improvement: The Office of Recruitment, Retention, and Culture will regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the school district's policies and practices regarding the observance of religious holidays. Solicit feedback from students, parents, and staff to identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments.

Resources:

Considerations for Inclusive Holidays and Observances: Tools and Strategies. Anti-Defamation League ADL. [Considerations for Inclusive Holidays and Observances](#)

Calendar of Observances 2024. Anti-Defamation League ADL. <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-02/calendar-of-observances-2024.pdf>

NCCJ Interfaith Calendar. National Conference for Community and Justice. <https://www.nccjriad.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Interfaith-Calendar-2021-FINAL-REVIS-ED-1.pdf>

Holy Days and Observances. [https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/calendar-religious-holidays-and-observances/holy-days-definitions/index#Feast of Mary](https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/calendar-religious-holidays-and-observances/holy-days-definitions/index#Feast_of_Mary)

Inclusion Diversity & Equity. <https://diversity.missouri.edu/guide-to-religions/dates-practices-accomodations/>

Teaching Strategies. Learning for Justice. <https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/teaching-strategies>