



Council on American-Islamic Relations

Washington State Chapter

9594 First Avenue Northeast, Suite 272, Seattle, Washington 98115

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August 22, 2011

Dear Educator:

On Monday, August 1, 2011, the Muslim community in the state of Washington and around the world began the month-long celebration of Ramadan—the ninth month of the Islamic calendar during which Muslims abstain from food, drink, and intimate relations from dawn to sunset. Fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam and is obligatory for all Muslims who have reached the age of puberty, and who are physically able to abstain from food and drink throughout the daylight hours.

After consulting with Muslim parents in the community, we believe it is important for schools with Muslim students to be aware of the following:

1. Each student has the choice of whether or not to fast (children under the age of puberty are not required to fast);
2. If a student chooses to fast, we ask that an option be provided for the student to visit the library during lunch (the student may choose to go to the cafeteria despite fasting);
3. If the teacher notices a student's work suffer or a student's behavior deteriorate in response to fasting, we ask the school to please notify the parent as soon as possible;
4. If the school is concerned about the physical hardship of fasting, we ask them to contact the parent and speak with the student before signaling alarm. Some students may fast only on weekends, or fast only during school hours as a conditioning process for them to participate in the Muslim holy month, without practicing in the entire fast;
5. Have teachers preemptively prepare for Eid Al-Fitr, the holiday marking the end of Ramadan, and Eid Al-Adha, the holiday marking the end of the Hajj, by not scheduling exams or other assignments which would be difficult for students to miss. If exams or assignments are scheduled during Eid Al-Fitr or Eid Al-Adha, we ask that teachers allow students to make up these assignments prior to or after their absence. Depending on a student's school of thought, a student may celebrate Eid Al-Fitr on August 30 or August 31, 2011, and Eid Al-Adha on or around November 6, 2011.

Thank you for your service, and your efforts to accommodate your Muslim students. CAIR is a national civil rights organization whose mission is to defend the civil and religious rights of Muslims in the United States. CAIR-Washington works with schools regularly to provide cultural competency training for teachers to accommodate Muslim students and parents, and to combat faith-based bullying. Further, CAIR-Washington frequently conducts cultural competency training sessions for local and federal law enforcement agencies, Fortune 500 corporations, educators, law enforcement officials, and a variety of other organizations across the nation.

For more information about Ramadan, please consult the following article:

<http://www.whyyislam.org/submission/five-pillars-of-islam-2/fasting/why-muslims-fast/>. You are also welcome to contact our office for more information, including a copy of *An Educator's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices*. The guide can also be accessed online at http://sun.cair.com/Portals/0/pdf/education_guide.pdf.

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

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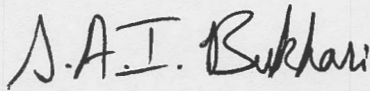
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We also welcome you to invite members of our diverse and dynamic speakers' bureau to conduct a "show & tell" for your class about the month of Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr. We can provide treats to entertain and educate your students about the cultural diversity that exists in the world and in their own classroom.

If you have any questions, please contact our office via email at civilrights@wa.cair.com or via phone at 206.367.4081. We look forward to collaborating with you and your staff.

Sincerely,



S. Arsalan Bukhari
Executive Director



Jennifer Gist
Civil Rights Coordinator

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