

Jewish Community Relations Council School Committee

August, 2011

Dear Principal,

We are writing in the spirit of cooperation in hopes of solving a problem that Jewish students often face: being penalized academically or in terms of extracurricular activities because of a necessary absence due to religious observance. Recent years' efforts to avoid this conflict have been very greatly appreciated. We thank you in advance for consideration in supporting our requests for these students again this year.

The Jewish calendar is based on a lunar cycle, and for this reason, holidays do not occur on the same date or even the same month year to year. All students understand that it is their responsibility to make up all work missed on a day when they are absent from school for religious observance. However, to avoid difficulties in make-ups (both for students and teachers), we have written a letter and enclosed a calendar that the Jewish students can give to their individual teachers. The letter asks for their consideration in not planning exams on the days when most Jewish students will not be in school, or the following day, if the holiday involves a full day in the synagogue or with family that precludes study. This year, this accommodation applies to the following dates:

This year, Jewish children observing Rosh HaShannah in synagogue and/or with family **will be absent Wednesday evening Sept. 28, Thursday, Sept. 29 and Friday, Sept. 30.** Yom Kippur and Passover happen to fall on weekends this year, so children should not have to miss school days.

Please avoid scheduling exams/long-term assignments to be due on these dates, Wednesday, Sept. 28, Thursday and Friday, Sept 29 and 30.

Please avoid scheduling performances, travel games, Parents Night, or other school events after school on the above dates and on the preceding evenings, since Jewish observance begins in the evening preceding a holy day, corresponding this coming year to Wednesday evening, Sept 28, Thursday, Sept. 29; Friday evening, October 7; Saturday (day), October 8; and Friday evening, April 6.

In addition to these holidays, a child of a more ritually observant tradition may celebrate other Festivals in the Jewish calendar including Sukkot, Simchat Torah and Shavuot: (Please see calendar for dates and for brief explanations of the holidays.)

We appreciate your support in reminding faculty of these dates and requests, and in taking our children's religious needs into consideration in avoiding these dates in scheduling special events or activities.

Enclosed is a letter to the teachers and a Jewish calendar with brief explanations of the holidays, including a note describing additional Orthodox observances. We realize that Jewish students are a minority in our public schools, but if it is possible to accommodate our requests, we would deeply appreciate it. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

If you require additional information concerning Jewish holidays and observance pertinent to your considerations, please contact one of Rabbi's below.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Rob Cabelli
Beth Israel Synagogue
252-8431

Rabbi Batsheva Meiri
Congregation Beth Ha Tephila
253-4911

Rabbi Shaya Susskind
The Chabad House
505-0746

And the Jewish Community Relations Council School Committee