



For Religious and Cultural Observances in the Classroom

Religious and cultural observances are designed to allow students the opportunity to miss school for observances not already designated as school holidays. Regulation 2234 specifies these days.

The regulation states that teachers shall create ungraded lessons or activities **on the observance day** that:

- a. reinforce previously acquired material
- b. engage students in meaningful learning
- c. are not the sole opportunity to engage in lessons or activities on that day

When creating school schedules, teachers shall not schedule the following activities **on the observance day**:

- a. New graded assignments or activities
- b. Tests, quizzes, or other assessments
- c. Field trips, school pictures, guest speakers or assemblies

The regulation also states that on **the class period following the observance day**, teachers and school staff may schedule new graded assignments or activities that have been announced at least one week prior to that day. No other new graded assignments or activities should be due on those days.

When considering the lessons to be presented on observance days, to create an identifying space / to value these days, ask yourself these guiding questions:

- On the observance day, am I planning for the class to work on a concept that will help move a student forward in the class / curriculum?
 - If so, please offer this lesson on another day.
- Am I offering another opportunity for the students to gather this information?
 - If so, this is an appropriate activity.
- Will the student be at a disadvantage by missing class?
 - If so, please offer this lesson on another day.
- Can a student make up the work / activity without an undue burden?
 - If so, this is an appropriate activity.
- Am I making this a meaningful day for students?
 - Please consider that these days should continue to be of value to the students attending school that day.
- Does my lesson plan for the day continue to value and respect the diverse needs of students and staff who are out of school due to this observance?
 - If so, this is an appropriate activity.

- Since our expectation is that this regular school day is treated with a serious, strategic focus on student learning, am I ensuring this is not viewed as a “free” day especially when there is academic work that can be done?
 - Please consider that these days should continue to be of value to the students attending school that day.

Frequently Asked Questions

May I ask my students if they will be celebrating one of the observance days?

No. Teachers shall not survey classes at any time to determine how students identify religiously.

How do I define “new material?”

New material is defined as material/content that has not previously been introduced in class.

How do I define the term “day following?”

In secondary schools with an Odd/Even calendar, the “day following” is considered the next odd or even day. For example, if the observance is on an Odd day, the “day following” is the next Odd day.

How do I define “one week?”

One week = 7 days, includes weekends and holidays.

What does “auditions or try outs that cannot be rescheduled” look like?

There must be another scheduled option if the try out or audition is held on the day of the observance. Staff should offer multiple days for these events; the onus should not be on the student to reschedule the audition or try out.

Can classes be recorded and posted for review on Observance days?

Classes may be recorded and posted, but please keep these points in mind:

- Recordings do not take the place of quality in-person instruction.
- New material should not be introduced on the observance day without offering an additional in-school opportunity to learn it.
- Students out for the observance cannot be required to review a video of the class and submit a reflection or other assignment from the video.
- Remember, while any class can be recorded and posted at any time, we cannot expect students who miss a class for an observance to use the recording as the make-up lesson or work.

What things can teachers do on observance days?

Teachers can:

- Review or revisit content. Teachers should not conduct a full group review, especially prior to an assessment. This creates a missed instructional opportunity for a student. Teachers may allow students to work on a study guide that was provided in advance of

the observance day.

- Conduct Math or Reading Workshops.
- Share the FCPS provided information around the observance.
- Provide time for students to work on long-term projects.
- Allow students to practice concepts already taught.
- Allow students to work on an activity that isn't due the next day.
- Provide extension/enrichment work.
- Allow students to complete missing assignments.
- Allow students to retake quizzes.
- Allow students to finish essays.
- Allow students to re-read course material.
- Allow students to complete enrichment activities.
- Extend science lab time.
- Tutor students.
- Provide a student catch up day for individual student work.
- Allow students to practice previously taught material.
- Long term projects / assignments can be due the following class period as long as they were given one week prior.

Can classrooms where the holiday is not celebrated give tests or present new material?

No. Remember that teachers shall not survey classes at any time to determine how students identify religiously. The purpose of the religious and cultural observances is to acknowledge beyond traditional holidays and honor those who celebrate.

Can teachers have a guest speaker that covers content not being assessed?

No. Language in the regulation prohibits this.

May teachers give an assessment or have a project due the day after Thanksgiving Break, Winter Break or Spring Break?

No. FCPS continues to expect schools to respect the time with families over these breaks for staff and students.

Can I have students give presentations if they will span more than one class period?

Yes, provided these presentations do not provide new material on which students will be assessed.

Can I offer retake opportunities?

Yes, as long as that day is not the only retake opportunity.

Can SEL lessons be done on observance days?

No. No new material presented on these days.