

# Calendar of Cultural, Religious, and Other Observances (School Year 2026–27)

## Statutory Guidance

*In accordance with Public Act 104-0115, the Illinois State Board of Education encourages all schools to be mindful of cultural, religious, and other observances that may affect student participation and attendance when planning major school events. This non-exhaustive calendar is a resource to assist school districts and school leaders in making proactive, equitable scheduling decisions that respect and accommodate the diverse traditions of our students, families, and communities.*

*This list of dates is provided for scheduling guidance only and does not affect a student's right to be excused from attendance because of the observance of a religious holiday pursuant to Section 26-2b of the School Code, regardless of whether the holiday appears on the list.*

## July 2026

**July 4: Independence Day (U.S.)** – A federal holiday commemorating the adoption of the Declaration of Independence

**July 9–July 10: Martyrdom of the Báb (Baha’i Faith)** – Commemorates the 1850 execution of the co-founder of the Baha’i faith, known as “the Báb,” in Tabriz, Persia ♦

**July 9–July 10: Tish’a B’Av (Judaism)** – A 25-hour fast commemorating major historical disasters, primarily the destruction of both the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem ♦ ●

**July 25: Unveiling Day (TST)** – Celebrates religious plurality

**July 26: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Anniversary** – Commemorates the 1990 signing of the landmark civil rights legislation protecting individuals with disabilities

## August 2026

**Aug. 1: Lammas (Wicca)** – A traditional cultural festival celebrated Aug. 1 to mark the first grain harvest of the season. It also marks the midpoint between the summer solstice and autumn equinox.

**Aug. 5: Arba’een (Islam – Shia)** – A major Shia Muslim religious observance marking 40 days after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, on the Day of Ashura

**Aug. 24–Aug. 25 & Aug. 29–Aug. 30: Mawlid al-Nabi (Islam)** – The observance of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. Sunnis start their observance at sundown Aug. 24 and Shias start their observance at sundown Aug. 29. ♦

## Observance Impact Legend

To assist with mindful scheduling, the following flags indicate how an observance may impact student availability or participation:

- ◆ **Evening Observance:** Holiday begins at sundown the evening prior to the date listed. Evening events should be scheduled with caution.
- **Dietary/Fasting:** Observance involves partial or full-day fasting or specific dietary restrictions. Exertion in physical education or food-centric events may need accommodations.
- ▲ **Activity Restriction:** Observance traditionally includes restrictions on work, school attendance, or secular activities.

## September 2026

**Sept. 4: Krishna Janmashtami (Hinduism)** – The observance of the birth anniversary of Lord Krishna, with celebrations including midnight prayers ♦

**Sept. 5: Leil Selichot (Judaism)** – Known as the “Night of Forgiveness,” Leil Selichot marks the start of the penitential prayers in Jewish tradition, preparing spiritually for the High Holidays (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). ♦

**Sept. 7: Labor Day** – A federal holiday honoring the American labor movement

**Sept. 8–Sept. 15: Par Yushan (Jainism)** – The most important annual holy event for Jains, marked by intense study, reflection, and fasting ●

**Sept. 11–Sept. 13: Rosh Hashanah (Judaism)** – The Judaism New Year, a deeply momentous time for prayer, reflection, and repentance ♦ ▲

**Sept. 20–Sept. 21: Yom Kippur (Judaism)** – The Day of Atonement and the holiest day in Judaism, traditionally marked by a 25-hour fast and intensive prayer ♦ ● ▲

**Sept. 23: Mabon (Wicca)** – Festival celebrating the autumnal equinox that represents a time of balance, gratitude, and the second harvest

**Sept. 25–Oct. 2: Sukkot (Judaism)** – The Feast of Tabernacles begins the first day at sundown and concludes the last night at nightfall. ♦ ▲

## October 2026

*(Note: October is broadly recognized as LGBT History Month and National Disability Employment Awareness Month)*

**Oct. 3–Oct. 5: Shemini Atzeret & Simchat Torah (Judaism)** – Shemini Atzeret is the “Eighth Day of Assembly” and Simchat Torah is “Rejoicing in the Torah.” Both are Jewish holidays that mark the completion of the annual Torah reading cycle and the beginning of a new one. ♦

**Oct. 11: National Coming Out Day** – An annual day of awareness supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals

**Oct. 11–Oct. 20: Navratri (Hinduism)** – Navratri is a nine-night Hindu festival dedicated to the worship of the Divine Feminine (Adi Shakti or Goddess Durga) and her nine forms (Navdurga).

**Oct. 12: Indigenous Peoples’ Day** – Honors the histories, cultures, and contributions of Native American peoples

**Oct. 20: Birth of Guru Granth (Sikhism)** – Commemorates the first installation of the Adi Granth, the central holy scripture of Sikhism, on Sept. 1, 1604, at the Golden Temple in Amritsar

**Oct. 31–Nov. 1: Samhain (Wicca)** – Celebration that marks the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter

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## November 2026

**Nov. 8: Diwali (Hindu/Jainism/Sikh)** – The Festival of Lights, a major festival celebrating the spiritual victory of light over darkness ▲

**Nov. 9–Nov. 10: Birth of the Báb (Baha’i Faith)**

**Nov. 10–Nov. 11: Birth of Baha’u’llah (Baha’i Faith)**

**Nov. 20: Transgender Day of Remembrance** – Honors the memory of transgender individuals whose lives were lost in acts of anti-transgender violence

**Nov. 24: Guru Nanak Birthday (Sikhism)**

**Nov. 25: Loy Krathong (Buddhism) – Festival of lights**

**Nov. 26: Thanksgiving Day** – A national holiday dedicated to giving thanks.

**Nov. 27–Nov. 28: Ascension of Abdu’l-Baha (Baha’i Faith)**

## December 2026

**Dec. 3: International Day of Persons with Disabilities** – Promotes the rights and well-being of individuals with disabilities in all spheres of society

**Dec. 4–Dec. 12: Hanukkah (Judaism)** – An eight-day winter festival of lights ◆

**Dec. 8: Bodhi Day (Buddhism)** – Celebration of the day Siddhartha Gautama achieved enlightenment

**Dec. 24–Dec. 25: Christmas Eve & Christmas Day (Christianity)** – A major Christian holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ

**Dec. 25: Sol Invictus (TST)** – Celebration of the sun focusing on the pursuit of knowledge and personal enlightenment

**Dec. 26–Jan. 1: Kwanzaa** – A secular celebration of African American culture, heritage, and community values

## January 2027

**Jan. 1: New Year’s Day** – The first day of the year on the Gregorian calendar

**Jan. 6: Feast of the Epiphany (Christianity)** – Commemorates the Magi’s visit to the infant Jesus

**Jan. 7: Orthodox Christmas (Eastern Orthodox Christian)** – Christmas day celebrated by many Orthodox Christians who follow the Julian calendar ▲

**Jan. 7: Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti Birthday (Sikhism)**

**Jan. 18: Martin Luther King Jr. Day** – A federal holiday honoring the civil rights leader

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## February 2027

(Note: February is universally recognized as Black History Month.)

**Feb. 1–Feb. 2: Imbolc/Candlemas/Brigid (Wicca)** – Celebration marking the beginning of spring and the midpoint between the winter solstice and spring equinox

**Feb. 6: Lunar New Year** – A major festival in many Asian cultures marking the lunisolar new year

**Feb. 7–March 8: Ramadan begins (Islam)** – The holiest month in Islam, observed with daily fasting from dawn to sunset (approximate date; varies by moon sighting) ●

**Feb. 10: Ash Wednesday (Christianity)** – Marks the first day of Lent, a 40-day period prayer, fasting, and repentance leading up to Easter

**Feb. 12: President Abraham Lincoln’s Birthday**

**Feb. 14: Frederick Douglass’ Birthday (observed)** – Commemorates the chosen birthday of the prominent abolitionist

**Feb. 15: Presidents’ Day (also President George Washington’s Birthday)**

**Feb. 15: Lupercalia (TST)** – Celebration of bodily autonomy, sexual liberation, and reproduction

## March 2027

(Note: February is universally recognized as Black History Month.)

**March 1–March 20: Nineteen-Day Fast (Baha’i Faith)** – A period of prayer, meditation, and spiritual rejuvenation

**March 2: 23rd Night of Ramadan (Islam)** ✦

**March 6: 27th Night of Ramadan (Islam)** ✦

**March 8: International Women’s Day – A global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women**

**March 8: Ramadan ends (Islam)** – The holiest month in Islam, observed with daily fasting from dawn to sunset (approximate date; varies by moon sighting) ●

**March 9: Eid al-Fitr (Islam)** – The “Festival of Breaking the Fast,” marking the end of Ramadan (approximate date) ▲

**March 20: Nowruz (Persian New Year)** – Marks the vernal equinox and the beginning of spring

**March 20: Eostara (Wicca)** – Celebration of the spring equinox

**March 22: Holi (Hinduism, Sikhism)** – Celebrates the arrival of spring and the end of winter

**March 22–March 23: Purim (Judaism)** – Celebration that commemorates the saving of the Jewish people

**March 26: Good Friday (Christianity)** – Commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ ●

**March 28: Easter (Western Christianity)** – Celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ

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## April 2027

(Note: April is universally recognized as Autism Acceptance Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month)

**April 2: World Autism Awareness Day** – Highlights the need to help improve the quality of life of those with autism so they can lead full and meaningful lives

**April 14: Vaisakhi (Sikhism, Hinduism)** – A historically and religiously significant festival celebrating the Sikh New Year ▲

**April 20–April 21: First Day of Ridván (Baha’i Faith)** – Commemorates Baha’u’llah’s declaration of his mission ✦

**April 21–29: Passover (Judaism)** – Commemorates the emancipation of the Israelites ✦ ● ▲

**April 28–April 29: Ninth Day of Ridván (Baha’i Faith)** ✦

**April 30: Hexennacht (TST)** – Solemn occasion to honor those who were victims of religious persecution

**April 30: Holy Friday (Eastern Orthodox Christianity)**

## May 2027

(Note: May is universally recognized as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage)

**May 1: Beltane (Wicca)** – Festival celebrating the official beginning of summer as well as the midway between the spring equinox and summer solstice

**May 1: Twelfth Day of Ridván (Baha’i Faith)** ✦

**May 2: Orthodox Easter (Eastern Orthodox Christianity)** – Celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ according to the Julian calendar

**May 5: Cinco de Mayo** – Annual observance commemorating the Mexican army’s unexpected victory over the French Empire at the Battle of Puebla in 1862

**May 6: Ascension Day (Catholicism)** – Commemorates the 40th day after Easter where Jesus ascends to heaven in the presence of his apostles

**May 16: Eid al-Adha (Islam)** – The “Festival of Sacrifice,” the second major Islam holiday (approximate date) ▲

**May 17: International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia** – Raises awareness of LGBTQIA+ rights violations

**May 20: Vesak (Buddhism)** – Commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and passing of the Buddha ●

**May 24–May 25: Declaration of the Báb (Baha’i Faith)**

**May 29–May 30: Ascension of Baha’u’llah (Baha’i Faith)**

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**May 31: Memorial Day** – Mourns and honors U.S. military personnel who died in service

## June 2027

*(Note: June is universally recognized as LGBTQIA+ Pride Month)*

**June 10–June 12: Shavuot (Judaism)** – Celebration of the Diaspora ✦

**June 10: Eastern Orthodox Ascension Day (Eastern Orthodox Christianity)** – Commemorates the 40th day after Easter where Jesus ascends to heaven in the presence of his apostles

**June 15: Ashara (Islam)** – 10th day of Muharram and a day of reflection and fasting ✦ ●

**June 19: Juneteenth** – Commemorates when enslaved people in Texas learned of their freedom, more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation

**June 21: Litha/Midsummer (Wicca)** – Celebration of the summer solstice

**June 28: Stonewall Riots Anniversary** – Commemorates the 1969 uprisings that served as a major catalyst for the modern LGBTQIA+ rights movement

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## Appendix A: Accommodation Best Practices for School Leaders

1. **Avoid High-Stakes Testing on Major Observances:** Check the calendar before scheduling standardized tests, final exams, or auditions.
2. **Plan Around Evening Observances:** Avoid scheduling proms, graduations, or major athletic events on the evenings when holidays begin (marked with ◆ ).
3. **Accommodate Fasting Students:** During fasting periods allow students alternative spaces during lunch periods and provide flexibility for strenuous physical education activities (marked with ● ).
4. **Excused Absences and Makeup Work:** Ensure attendance policies seamlessly accommodate religious absences without penalizing the student's grades (marked with ▲ ).
5. **Foster Inclusive Environments:** Recognize that identity-based observances may bring both celebration and heightened vulnerability for students. Ensure support staff and resources are visible. For additional guidance on religious and spiritual accommodations, schools may consult the ISBE [Spiritual, Affiliation Resource Guide](#).

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## Appendix B: Illinois-Based Community & Educational Resources

### Disability Rights & Advocacy

- [Equip for Equality](#): The designated protection and advocacy system for the State of Illinois, providing self-advocacy resources, legal advocacy, and special education rights training for families and self-advocates.
- [Access Living \(Chicago\)](#): A leading force in the disability community, offering peer support, independent living skills training, and systemic advocacy resources that can help educators understand the social model of disability.
- [The Arc of Illinois](#): Committed to empowering persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities through advocacy and education, offering excellent toolkits for inclusive community building.

### LGBTQIA+ Support & Education

- [Illinois Safe Schools Alliance \(A program of PHIMC\)](#): Provides professional development for educators, policy advocacy for districts, and direct support for student-led Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) across the state.
- [Equality Illinois](#): The state's oldest and largest civil rights organization for LGBTQ+ individuals, offering resources on understanding current Illinois laws and protections for LGBTQ+ students.
- [Center on Halsted](#): The Midwest's most comprehensive community center dedicated to securing the health and well-being of LGBTQ people, providing youth programming, community resources, and vocational support.

### Religious & Cultural Communities

- [Muslim Civic Coalition \(Illinois\)](#): Provides highly practical, Illinois-specific resources, including downloadable Ramadan/Eid accommodation letters for K-12 students.
- [Jewish United Fund \(JUF\) of Chicago](#): Offers an extensive network of support, including educational tools for understanding and celebrating the High Holidays.
- [Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago \(Lemont, IL\) / Hindu American Foundation](#): Regional resources providing free lesson plans, fact sheets, and interactive activities for teaching festivals like Diwali and Holi.
- [ISBE Native American and Indigenous Peoples Resource Guide](#): Developed in partnership with the Chicago American Indian Community Collaborative (CAICC) to support educators in teaching tribal sovereignty and history in Illinois.