

Supporting Students During Ramadan: An Educator's Guide

What Is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar and is considered a sacred time for Muslims around the world. Many anticipate this month with joy, reflection, and spiritual eagerness. Fasting during Ramadan is more than abstaining from food and drink—it is a period of self-reflection, self-discipline, spiritual growth, and renewed connection to faith.

From sunrise to sunset, Muslims who choose to fast abstain from food and drink, including water. In addition to fasting, many increase their worship, prayer, charitable giving, and community engagement. While these are common practices, observance may vary based on personal, cultural, and regional differences.

Some younger students, even if not religiously obligated to fast, may choose to participate in order to feel connected to their family and community. It is important to approach Ramadan as a joyful and meaningful time that nurtures important strengths and values within individuals and communities.

Why Understanding Muslim Students' Identities Matters

A strong sense of belonging is essential for student achievement and well-being. Educators play a vital role in fostering inclusive learning environments by understanding and respecting students' identities, traditions, and lived experiences.

By incorporating this awareness into teaching practices and school culture, educators help Muslim students feel seen, valued, and supported—particularly during Ramadan. A culturally responsive approach enhances engagement, promotes academic success, and strengthens overall well-being.

This guide serves as a starting point for supporting Muslim students during Ramadan and creating an inclusive and affirming educational environment.

Spiritual, Mental, and Physical Benefits of Ramadan

Ramadan can offer many personal benefits, including:

- Promoting inner peace and mindfulness
 - Enhancing mental clarity
 - Encouraging introspection and alignment of body, mind, and spirit
 - Fostering lasting positive lifestyle changes
 - Developing empathy for those experiencing hardship
 - Supporting metabolic reset
 - Initiating natural detoxification processes
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A Typical Day During Ramadan

While individual practices may vary, a typical day may include:

- Waking early for voluntary late-night prayers (Tahajjud)
- Eating a pre-dawn meal known as Suhoor (name may vary by language)
- Performing the obligatory pre-dawn prayer (Fajr)
- Going about daily routines without eating or drinking (including water), while focusing on prayer, self-reflection, charity, and positive conduct
- Breaking the fast at sunset with Iftar (timing may vary slightly depending on Islamic schools of thought and geographical location)
- Attending voluntary evening prayers at the mosque (Taraweeh) beyond the five daily prayers

Energy levels may fluctuate throughout the day, particularly in the late afternoon.

How Educators Can Support Students

General Support

- Check in with students and staff observing Ramadan.
- Recognize that energy levels may be lower due to fasting and altered sleep schedules.
- Anticipate that energy may decline as the day progresses.
- Ensure prayer spaces are accessible and welcoming, as attendance may increase during Ramadan.
- Provide a separate, comfortable space for fasting students during lunch or nutrition breaks, especially in elementary settings.
- Understand that fasting affects students differently.
- Remember that not all Muslim students fast, and not all fasting students will request accommodations.

Increasing Belonging Through Curriculum

Ramadan presents meaningful opportunities for curriculum connections and culturally responsive learning.

Curriculum Connections

- Incorporate culturally relevant texts and diverse perspectives into classroom learning.
- Explore the science of fasting and its physiological effects (connecting to other forms of fasting studied globally).
- Discuss geography and time zones, highlighting how fasting length varies around the world.
- Study moon cycles and the lunar calendar.

Academic and School Accommodations

Flexible Deadlines

Students may have busier evenings and shortened sleep due to night prayers and early mornings. When appropriate:

- Offer flexible due dates.
- Provide additional time for assignments.
- Support students in maintaining high academic standards while recognizing temporary schedule adjustments.

School and Family Events

- Be mindful when planning evening events during Ramadan, as some families may be unable to attend.
- When possible, schedule events outside of Ramadan.
- If scheduling cannot be avoided, communicate with families early and explore possible accommodations.

Physical Activity and DPA Accommodations

Educators should anticipate adjusting physical expectations for fasting students:

- Modify or reduce Daily Physical Activity (DPA) and physical education requirements when necessary.
 - Offer alternative meaningful activities that are less physically demanding.
 - Increase the number of rest breaks.
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Music, Dance, and Media Considerations

Some students may choose to refrain from music, dance, or certain media during Ramadan to focus on spirituality.

- Provide alternative activities where appropriate.
 - Communicate with families about school events that include music, dance, or films so informed decisions can be made.
 - When possible, consider scheduling such events outside of Ramadan.
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Special Days During Ramadan

Friday Prayers (Jumu'ah)

Friday is considered a special congregational prayer day in Islam.

- Ensure prayer spaces are available for students observing Friday prayers.
 - Some students may pray individually at school.
 - Some families may choose to sign students out to attend mosque services, especially during Ramadan.
 - Increased absenteeism on Fridays during Ramadan may occur.
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The Last 10 Days of Ramadan

The final ten days of Ramadan hold special spiritual significance. During this period occurs Laylatul Qadr (the Night of Power), traditionally associated with the revelation of the Qur'an.

During these days:

- Students may increase nighttime worship.
 - Some may spend extended time at the mosque.
 - Energy levels may decrease due to late-night prayers.
 - Absenteeism may increase.
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Jumu'atul Wida (Last Friday of Ramadan)

The last Friday of Ramadan may hold additional significance for many Muslims.

- Increased mosque attendance may result in higher student absenteeism on this day.
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Eid ul-Fitr

Ramadan concludes with a celebratory holiday known as Eid ul-Fitr.

- It is a day of prayer, family gatherings, and community celebration.
 - Major assessments, meetings, or school-wide events should not be scheduled on this day.
 - Students should not be expected to complete assignments or prepare for significant assessments on Eid.
 - Students should feel free to fully participate in the celebration without academic pressure.
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Important Note

The Muslim community is not a monolith. Observance of Ramadan varies widely based on personal belief, culture, family practice, and level of religious commitment.

However, it is essential that educational spaces remain inclusive, proactive, and responsive to the diverse needs of Muslim students. Through thoughtful planning and open communication, schools can ensure that Ramadan is honored with dignity, understanding, and meaningful support.
