



MARIN COUNTY

OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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MARY JANE BURKE
MARIN COUNTY
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

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Dear Superintendents:

Over the past several years, we have worked together to demonstrate sensitivity to various groups that make up our larger community. We have committed ourselves and our staffs to making every effort to create an environment in which all of our students feel that the school is supportive of them and their families. Sometimes, in spite of our best efforts, some students feel conflicted about attending school instead of participating in important family religious observances.

As we have done in past years, we wanted you to have a calendar supplied by the Jewish Community Relations Council. Please note that Monday night, September 29, 2008; Tuesday, September 30, 2008; Wednesday night, October 8, 2008; and Thursday, October 9, 2008 are times when virtually all Jewish students and staff members will be attending religious observances. Sensitivity to these days in planning would be in keeping with our longstanding commitment.

While we are all aware that absences for attendance of religious observances are excused by state law, students should not feel they have to choose between the demands of the classroom and the demands of their families. Providing makeup work without undue pressure, avoiding testing, if possible, allowing students to drop the same number of lowest test grades (where that is the practice) as other students are all examples of ways that students can be made to feel they are supported. Students should never be made to feel that their absence is disloyal to the school because it affects the ADA credited to the school by the state.

Please share this information with administrators, teachers and other staff, as appropriate, as a way to remind them of our continuing commitment to supporting students who are absent because of religious observances. None of us would want students to feel any discomfort for exercising their religious beliefs. Thank you and have a wonderful school year.

Sincerely,

MARY JANE BURKE
Marin County Superintendent of Schools

RABBI DOUGLAS KAHN
Executive Director
Jewish Community Relations
Council