



**Bridging Cultures Group Inc.**

*When They Build Walls, We Build Bridges*

# Supporting Students and Staff During Ramadan



Guide for Teachers & Staff

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## Overview of Ramadan



### Ramadan in a Nutshell

Muslims observe Ramadan once a year, and each year Ramadan falls 11 days earlier on the Gregorian calendar. Ramadan is one of the 5 pillars of Islam where Muslims who are well and able including children, who have reached puberty (some start younger), must fast from sunrise to sunset. Ramadan is 29 - 30 days long. Ramadan ends with Eid El-Fitr, a celebration that starts with communal services at the mosque or large public space and concludes with family visitations. Muslims believe while fasting, an individual deepens their spirituality through reflection, retrospection, and prayer. They also believe, fasting also helps them develop patience and contentment from worldly things, as well as humbles them, and makes them grateful for all that God has given them.

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*"You can take what some think of as a challenging month to be a month that is rewarding for you, your students, and co-workers when you are culturally responsive to one another's needs"*

*-Dr. Debbie Almontaser*

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## Supporting Students During Ramadan

During the month of Ramadan, it is important to take into consideration the physical and mental affect fasting has on students. Here are some ways teachers can support their Muslim students during Ramadan.

1. It is important to support your Muslim students by educating yourself on Ramadan so you can know what to expect from the students and how to help support them socially and emotionally.
2. In addition to fasting, students attend nightly services with their families in their local mosques. These services end at 11:00pm or later, not allowing quality time for homework. Consider providing students alternative homework deadlines for them to be successful in your class.
3. If a student is groggy or out of it in the morning, it's because they had to wake up at 3:00am to eat a meal and pray before sunrise.
4. Because students are not able to drink or eat for more than 12 hours, gym and other strenuous activities might not be something they would be able to participate in. Provide other alternatives to ensure they do not fail their gym class.
5. During lunch time, it's a good idea to have a classroom available for students fasting so that they aren't stuck in a lunch room with others who are eating. Providing a space with computers, activities, iPads, etc., can help fasting students pass their lunch period with ease.
6. Be mindful when hosting class parties during Ramadan, the students will appreciate your sensitivity.
7. Be mindful about eating or drinking in front of your students.

## Supporting Co-Workers During Ramadan

1. Be mindful when hosting breakfast or lunch meetings with Muslim staff members during Ramadan. Your Muslim staff and colleague/s will appreciate your sensitivity.
2. Be mindful not to ask too many questions about fasting or act surprised to hear that Muslims refrain from water too, as if they will die from dehydration. Please be mindful not to suggest loopholes around fasting. We know you are curious and trying to be helpful, but this could turn uncomfortable or awkward quickly. Your Muslim colleague will appreciate your sensitivity.
3. If you see a Muslim eating during Ramadan, don't be the Ramadan Police. It is best not to ask them too many questions about why they are not fasting. People who are ill, elderly, women menstruating, pregnant, postpartum, or breastfeeding are excused from fasting. So, it may not be something they want to talk about and can be a bit invasive. Please don't make the assumption menstruating women are impure to fast. The reason women are excused at that time of the month, is to replenish their body with food and water. They can participate in Ramadan festivities with their families except fasting.
4. If you are one who typically has a sailor's mouth in the work place; when around your Muslim colleagues during Ramadan, try your best to choose your words wisely out of respect for your Muslim colleagues.
5. If you are an employer, be considerate to your Muslim employees by allowing them to start an hour later or leave an hour earlier in lieu of their lunch break if this does not disrupt their teaching schedule. The lunch hour can be the longest hour of the day since they don't eat. To learn about New York State religious accommodations, read NYS law "[RELIGIOUS RIGHTS in the workplace.](#)"

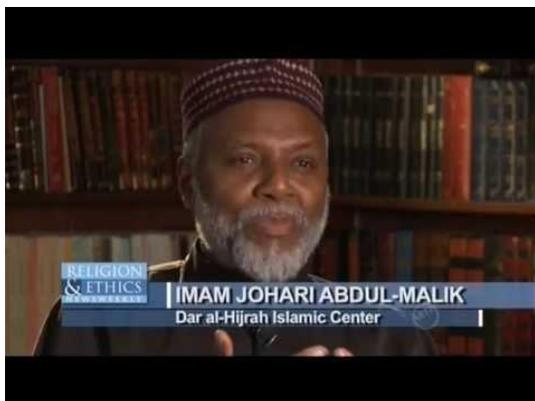
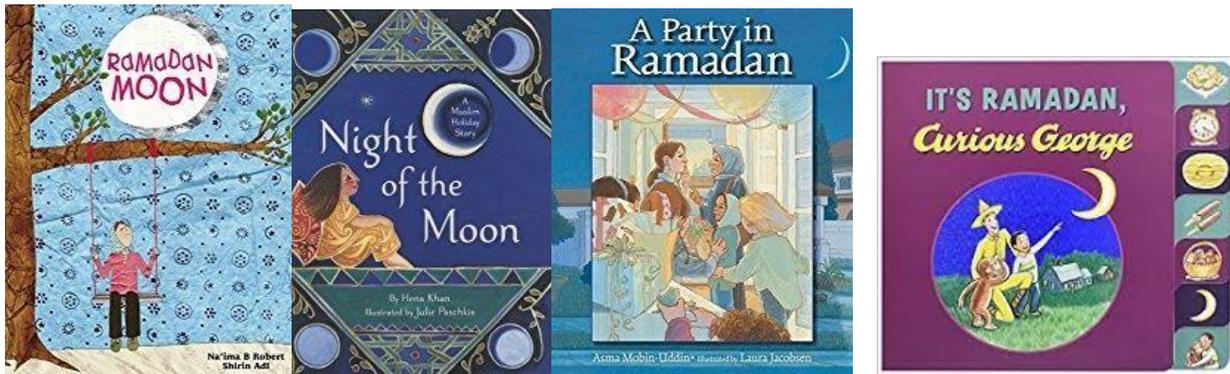
These are tips to consider when interacting with a Muslim observing Ramadan. If you'd like to help make your Muslim friend or colleagues feel more comfortable, some people fast in solidarity, for curiosity and overall health. You can join in the fast and whenever you feel it's become too challenging, you can eat or drink. You could also invite your Muslim colleague for an iftar (breaking of the fast) or join them for an iftar and share the moment with them. There are many iftars to choose from in New York City.

Muslims believe Ramadan is a month of generosity, forgiveness, worship, and patience. Therefore, Muslims all over the world aim to better themselves, increase their faith, and to seek forgiveness from God. They believe it is where rewards are tripled, the opportunity for all individuals to be the best human beings they can be and also the time to give back to the world and those who are in dire need of help.

To wish your Muslim colleagues a happy Ramadan, you may say to them: Ramadan Mubarak, which means Happy Ramadan or Ramadan Kareem, which means Abundant Ramadan.

## Resources

Below are some books and videos to learn about the month of Ramadan.





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### About Us

[Bridgingculturesinc.com](http://Bridgingculturesinc.com)

[Bridging Cultures Group \(BCG\)](#) is a consulting service that specializes in academic support and cultural proficiency that enables people and communities to see themselves a part of a diverse interdependent world across racial, ethnic, and religious lines.

Our vision is to provide tailored academic support, cultural-competency presentations and professional-development programs for the public and private sector.

Bridging Cultures Group (BCG) specializes in translation services for NY Public Schools and cultural diversity training that undoes hurtful stereotypes and misconceptions about Arabs, Muslims, South Asians, and other marginalized groups.

- Cultural Diversity Training
- Academic Support
- K-12 Professional and Leadership Development
- K-12 Translation Services
- Workshops
- Public Speaking

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### Clients



