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Schools OK Ramadan prayers

By CARL CAMPANILE
Education Reporter

Muslim students will be permitted to pray in school during the holy period of Ramadan — with restrictions, Schools Chancellor Harold Levy's office said.

The prayers can't disrupt classes or impinge on the rights of other students, said Levy spokeswoman Margie Feinberg.

Ramadan, which begins at sundown tomorrow, lasts five weeks.

The faithful must pray at noon, as well as later in the day, preferably in a group. They also fast.

"Students want to pray for the religious holiday. We want to accommodate them," Feinberg said, adding that students can ask to have their schedules altered to avoid missing classes.

Feinberg stressed that while school officials can set aside an area for Muslim students to pray, other students cannot be barred from the same area.

The U.S. Supreme Court prohibits officially sponsored prayer in public schools.

School superintendents have contacted the Board of Education's legal department on how to proceed, particularly in light of the World Trade Center disaster and concerns about discrimination against Muslim students.

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