

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

P.O. BOX 750 • MADISON, WI 53701 • (608) 256-8900 • WWW.FFRF.ORG

October 21, 2025

**SENT VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL: [kburton@caddoschools.org](mailto:kburton@caddoschools.org)**

Keith S. Burton  
Superintendent  
Caddo Parish Public Schools  
1961 Midway Ave.  
Shreveport, LA 71108

Re: Unconstitutional Bible distribution at Herndon Magnet School

Dear Superintendent Burton:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) regarding a constitutional violation reported at Herndon Magnet School. As Caddo Parish Public Schools may recall from our past letters, FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with about 42,000 members across the country, including members in Louisiana. Our purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church, and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

A concerned family member reports that on September 26, 2025 Herndon Magnet School permitted Gideons International to distribute Bibles to students on school grounds during the school day. Gideons International is “an evangelical association that equips and mobilizes Christian business and professional men, along with their wives, to share God’s word.”<sup>1</sup> Our complainant shared a post that appears to be from Herndon Magnet School’s official Facebook page and says, “We were so thankful to be visited by the Gideon Ministry this morning! They spoke with our 5th graders and offered each student the opportunity to receive a Youth New Testament Bible.” Pictures attached to the post show Gideon International representatives in what appears to be a performance hall in the school. Please see the enclosed screenshot. The post no longer appears on the Herndon Magnet School Facebook page.

We are also informed that the official Herndon Magnet School Facebook page promoted the religious See You at the Pole prayer event on September 24, 2025. The post said that students and staff gathered for the prayer event. Please see the enclosed screenshots. We understand that past years’ SYATP events have been organized by staff members. Please see the enclosed screenshot from 2022.

School-sponsored Bible distributions are unconstitutional. We ask that Caddo Parish Public Schools refrain from allowing Gideon International to distribute Bibles and other religious literature to students in the future. We also ask that the District investigate its schools’ social

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<sup>1</sup> <https://gideons.org/>.

media, delete the post promoting See You at the Pole, and counsel its staff to refrain from promoting religious messages or events on official District social media accounts.

It is inappropriate and unconstitutional for Caddo Parish Public Schools to allow outside groups to distribute religious materials to students. The District cannot allow its schools to be used as recruiting grounds for religious missions. Public schools may not show favoritism toward nor coerce belief or participation in religion. *Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290 (2000); *Lee v. Weisman*, 505 U.S. 577 (1992); *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38 (1985); *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97 (1967); *Sch. Dist. of Abington Twp. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963); *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962); *McCullum v. Bd. of Educ.*, 333 U.S. 203 (1948). As the Supreme Court recently affirmed, “The First Amendment mandates government neutrality between religions.” *Cath. Charities Bureau, Inc. v. Wis. Lab. & Indus. Rev. Comm’n*, 605 U.S. 238, 241 (2025).

By allowing Gideons International to distribute Bibles to students, Caddo Parish Public Schools displays blatant favoritism for religion over nonreligion and Christianity above all other faiths. Further, it appears that the school itself hosted and promoted the Bible distribution. When school staff encourage young students to take Bibles, they run the risk of unconstitutionally coercing students to take, read, and reflect upon religious literature.

School districts may not favor religion by promoting religious events or encouraging worship through official social media channels. A District social media page promoting Christianity and Christian prayer also sends the message about favoring Christianity to students and community members.

The Supreme Court has been “particularly vigilant in monitoring compliance with the Establishment Clause in elementary and secondary schools.” *Van Orden v. Perry*, 545 U.S. 677, 679 (2005) (quoting *Edwards v. Aguillard*, 482 U.S. 578, 583–84 (1987)). Bible distributions at schools also violate a parent’s right to “direct the [religious] upbringing of their children.” *Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57, 65 (2000) (plurality opinion); see also *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, 145 S. Ct. 2332, 2351 (2025) (parents have “a right to teach religion in the confines of one’s own home.”); *Pierce v. Soc’y of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925). Additionally, there are “limits on the government’s ability to interfere with a students’ religious upbringing in the public school setting.” *Mahmoud*, 145 S. Ct. 2351. Here, Caddo Parish Public Schools violated parents’ trust by allowing an outside group to distribute Bibles to students on school property during the school day. This not only violates students’ First Amendment rights, it violates parents’ constitutional rights to direct their children’s religious or nonreligious upbringing.

Further, this Bible distribution and social media promotion needlessly marginalized all students and families who do not practice Christianity. Thirty-eight percent of the American population is non-Christian, including the almost 30 percent who are nonreligious.<sup>2</sup> More than half of Generation Z (those born after 1996) is non-Christian, including 43 percent who are nonreligious.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center (2024), <http://bit.ly/3W6Cl3m>.

<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center (2024), <http://bit.ly/48Drzce>.

To respect students' and parents' constitutional rights, Caddo Parish Public Schools must cease allowing the Gideons International and any other organizations to distribute Bibles or other religious literature to students. The District must also ensure that its official social media is not being used to promote religious events. Please respond in writing with the steps Caddo Parish Public Schools is taking to address this matter so that we may inform the family member who contacted us. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charlotte R. Gude".

Charlotte R. Gude  
*Patrick O'Reiley Legal Fellow*  
*Freedom From Religion Foundation*

Enclosure



**Herndon Magnet School**

1d · 🛠️

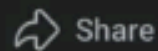


We were so thankful to be visited by the Gideon Ministry this morning! They spoke with our 5th graders and offered each student the opportunity to receive a Youth New Testament Bible. What a special way to start the day! 🙏📖✨



117

9 comments 3 shares





**Herndon Magnet School**

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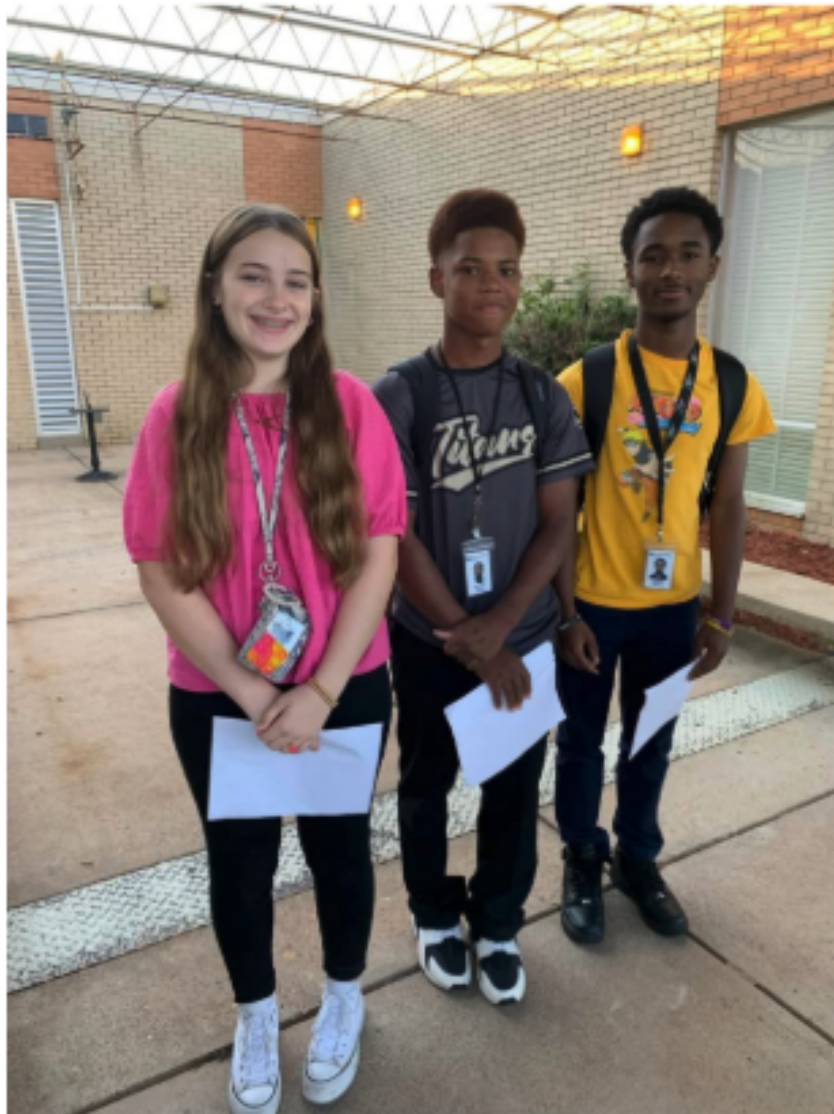
This morning our students and staff gathered for See You at the Pole, joining thousands across the nation in prayer for our school, community, and country. What a powerful way to start the day—seeing young people come together in faith and unity!





Herndon Magnet School

Sep 28, 2022 · 🌐



This morning, students participated in See You at the Pole, a global day of student-led prayer. Eighth grade students Justin Dupree, Ava Miller, and Josh Morris led our students in prayer for our school, our leaders, and our country. We want to thank Mrs. Cortney Young from Trinity Heights Baptist Church for opening the meeting, Mrs. Kellie Carlisle for organizing the event, and all of our students and staff members who attended See You at the Pole this morning.