

## Protecting Florida's Public School Students

This pamphlet reflects the most common state/church complaints the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) has received from Florida families since the Central Florida Freethought Community (CFFC) was founded in 2012. Its purpose is to educate citizen activists about how to help protect the rights of conscience of Florida public school students.

FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 23,000 members across the country including 1,100 members in Florida. The purposes of the FFRF are to promote the constitutional principle of separation of state and church and to educate the public on matters relating to non-theism.

Each year FFRF receives and addresses thousands of state/church violations from around the nation, more than half of which involve public schools.

### Freedom From Religion Foundation

PO Box 750, Madison, Wisconsin 53701

## CENTRAL FLORIDA FREETHOUGHT COMMUNITY

For the Separation of State and Church



### Our Vision

Secular local government which neither promotes nor denigrates any religion.

### Our Mission

To be an effective advocate for state/church separation by uniting local freethinkers in practical activism.

### Our Goals

- ◇ Informed and involved members
- ◇ An engaged local media
- ◇ Public support for secular values

### Want to help?

[www.cflfreethought.org/support](http://www.cflfreethought.org/support)

PO Box 621123, Oviedo, Florida 32732  
Voice: 321-804-3373  
Web/Facebook/Meetup/Twitter  
**cflfreethought**



CENTRAL FLORIDA  
FREETHOUGHT  
COMMUNITY

*PRESENTS*

## *THE MOST COMMON STATE/CHURCH VIOLATIONS IN FLORIDA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS*

*PREPARED IN  
COOPERATION WITH*

FREEDOM  
FROM RELIGION  
*foundation*

*Excerpted from the FFRF/CFFC Joint Memo  
to Florida School Districts; August 13, 2015.*

[www.tinyurl.com/dirtydozenFL](http://www.tinyurl.com/dirtydozenFL)

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Schools may not invite anyone to give any type of prayer, invocation, or benediction at any public school event. Even student-led prayer at a school event is impermissible.

### # 1 Prayer at School-Sponsored Events

School teachers/coaches/administrators/volunteers may not lead students in prayer, encourage students to pray, schedule or participate in student-initiated prayer, or otherwise endorse religion to students while acting in their government roles. This includes a coach's silent participation in prayer. Students remain free to pray on their own. Staff advisors for noncurricular clubs such as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes cannot be anything other than chaperones.

School programming, including graduations, testing, choir recitals, award ceremonies, and plays should not occur in churches. Budget or other considerations cannot trump students' rights.

### # 2 Staff Organization, Endorsement/Promotion of, Participation in Prayer or Other Religious Activities

Schools may not offer religious groups or individuals unique access to school property to befriend and proselytize to students. Clubs and athletic teams cannot appoint or employ a chaplain or seek out a spiritual leader for the team. Renaming a religious figure a "life coach" or other title to "get around" the law does not pass muster. Schools may not allow pastors, religious youth groups, or churches onto school grounds during the school day (e.g., in the lunch room) to talk with students.

### # 3 School Events or Graduation Exercises at Churches

Schools may not grant a fee waiver or lower rental rate to a church or religious organization. Churches may not use school property in any way during non-rental hours—including advertising on campus, storing equipment, or parking vehicles,

### # 4 School Organization, Endorsement/Promotion of Baccalaureate Services

Baccalaureate programs are religious services that include prayer and worship. Schools and staff may not plan, design, or supervise baccalaureate programs. This includes the use of public school time, newsletters, equipment, email, or other resources to advertise, announce, or invite students and their parents to baccalaureates.

### # 5 Giving Religious Counselors, Chaplains, Pastors Access to Students

Compelling a student to stand or recite the pledge and salute the flag infringes upon a student's First Amendment rights. Schools cannot punish students for exercising this right.

### # 6 Teaching Religious Doctrine Including "Intelligent Design"

Teaching creationism or intelligent design in a public school is unlawful. Schools cannot prohibit the teaching of evolution. Schools may not read a disclaimer before teaching evolution. Schools cannot offer "balanced treatment for creation science and evolution science."

### # 7 Different Rental Rates for Religious Organizations of School Property

Schools may not display religious iconography such as the Ten Commandments, religious messages, or pictures of Jesus.

### # 8 Distribution of Bibles or Religious Literature on School Property

It is unconstitutional for schools to permit either direct or passive distribution of bibles or religious literature as part of the public school day.

### # 9 Forcing Students to Stand for or Recite The Pledge of Allegiance

### # 10 Disallowing Atheist or Other Non-Believer Student Organizations

Schools cannot deny an atheist or non-believer club the same rights as other noncurricular student clubs. Schools may not privilege religious clubs over other clubs.

### # 11 Religious Displays or Messages by Teachers or on School Property

### # 12 Voluntariness and Student Vote

Schools cannot use voluntariness or a student vote to excuse state/church violations.

**If you see something, say something! Report violations at [www.ffrf.org/legal/report](http://www.ffrf.org/legal/report)**