



## Response to After School Satan Clubs – Support for Equal Access

This is in response to questions that CEF of Tidewater has received regarding a Satan Club created by an atheistic group named the Satanic Temple. They are a group that believes in Scientism (not Satan worship) and they are starting an After School Satan Club (“ASSC”) at B. M. Williams Primary School in Chesapeake.

Child Evangelism Fellowship® (CEF®) operates its *Good News Club*® ministry in partnership with local churches. Good News Clubs are held during non-instructional time on school grounds, and children only attend them with a parent’s permission. We appreciate and commend school districts for supporting equal access for all groups. This practice best reflects freedom of speech and religion. Also, the decision about which, if any, after school clubs a child may attend is left in the hands of parents, who choose what they deem best for their children. The result is a school that better reflects its local community.

Because Good News Clubs can’t be shut down legally, opponents have been known to use a ploy to alarm parents and school boards, with the hope that a school board will react by shutting down its forum for all clubs, especially the *Good News Club*. Here’s how the trap works: the Satanic Temple has gone to a school where there is a *Good News Club* and requested that the school allow its club and to distribute permission slips for the club to parents. It admittedly has had no intention of teaching children about Satan but has wanted instead to raise hysteria in the hopes of shutting down any Christian club’s access. Its own website advertises the fact that it will ONLY meet at schools with religious clubs: “The After School Satan Clubs meet at select public schools where Good News Clubs and other religious clubs meet.”<sup>1</sup> This trolling technique is observable in its practice such as done in Chesapeake and earlier this year in Moline, IL. In fact, it clearly states on its website that it does not want any religious clubs in school.<sup>2</sup>

While we have concerns about the way the Satanic Temple goes about its ASSC and do not agree with its ideology, we support equal access to all groups with genuine beliefs. Parents and guardians should be allowed to choose any club that they would prefer for their child to attend. CEF communications representative Lydia Kaiser says, “Restricting any optional club activities is a loss to First Amendment liberties and penalizes children who need wholesome, extra-curricular activities. CEF encourages school boards to not be intimidated, to not restrict any clubs, and to let the parents decide what their children attend. Clubs with good programming will flourish and those without good programming will not.”

CEF is an international, nonprofit, Christian ministry teaching the Bible to children since 1937. CEF has 400 offices in the USA and is organized in most nations of the world, with over 3,500 paid staff and hundreds of thousands of volunteers. CEF trains volunteer teachers from area churches to lead Good News Clubs. Pre-COVID restrictions, CEF had over 6,000 after-school Good News Clubs in the USA with almost 5,000 clubs located on school property. A survey of those principals found they saw positive changes in children’s behavior as a result of the character traits the clubs taught.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from <https://thesatanictemple.com/pages/after-school-satan>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, see question 9 at the bottom of the page.