

The Satanic Temple Unveils New Release Time Religious Instruction Program

Hellions Academy of Independent Learning provides an alternative to Christian RTRI programs that provide off-campus religious instruction to public school students.

SALEM, MA — The Satanic Temple (TST) has announced the launch of a new religious education program, Hellions Academy of Independent Learning (HAIL), as a response to the recent growth of similar Christian Release Time Religious Instruction (RTRI) programs. RTRI programs allow students with parental permission to leave campus for religious instruction for an hour each week. TST's new program is scheduled to launch on November 15th in the Northern York County School District in Pennsylvania.

RTRI was first introduced to public schools in response to the US Supreme Court's 1952 ruling in *Zorach v. Clauson*. SCOTUS found that such programs do not violate the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. The Supreme Court's ruling makes it clear that schools are not obligated to approve RTRI programs, and these groups may not use the public school's facilities or public resources of any kind. If a school approves an RTRI, it may not discriminate among religious groups.

Due to Christian organizations like the Joy El Club and the Lifewise Academy, Christian RTRI programs have expanded rapidly across the country, and they aim to have active programs in every school district that allows them. The Satanic Temple, meanwhile, argues that the groups are being used to exclude non-Christian students and promote Christianity. By presenting these field trips and other activities as only available to Christian students, TST argues that these groups leverage children's social groupings to encourage religious conversion.

"It is sad these programs feel the need to use the peer pressure to gain adherents to their religion," noted TST Director of Campaign Operations Erin Helian. "However one measures a religion, it is not a good look to prey upon children by bribing them with field trips and snacks."

The Satanic Temple's Hellions Academy of Independent Learning aims to fill the gap by providing an alternate RTRI experience to all students, regardless of religious affiliation. The first program in Pennsylvania will be held at a nearby public library by vetted instructors who have completed background checks. During the meetings, students will be presented with various educational arts and crafts, games, and community service projects through which they can learn about Satanic values, such as empathy, compassion, and justice. Currently, TST is looking into further opportunities at other schools that have already approved other RTRI programs.

About The Satanic Temple

The Satanic Temple, subject of the critically-acclaimed documentary *Hail Satan?* and the academic analysis of modern Satanism, *Speak of the Devil*, confronts religious discrimination to secure the separation of church and state and defend the Constitutional rights of its members. In response to Oklahoma and Arkansas placing a Ten Commandments statue on Capitol grounds, TST offered its bronze Baphomet statue to stand alongside the Christian monuments. TST hosts the "After School Satan" club to counter the Evangelical "Good News Clubs" in public schools across the country to promote a plurality of religious viewpoints. The mission of The Satanic Temple is to encourage benevolence and empathy, reject tyrannical authority, advocate practical common sense, oppose injustice, and undertake noble

pursuits for the individual will. For more information about The Satanic Temple, visit <https://thesatanictemple.com/>.