

Outrageous: Florida School Attacks 5-Year-Old Told Prayer Is 'Wrong'

This week Liberty Institute continued to fight for 5-year-old Gabriella Perez, who said a school employee told her not to pray over her meal. The school purportedly apologized to the family after Liberty Institute became involved but now seems to be making unfounded public attacks on the girl and her family.

As a result, Liberty Institute sent the school another letter—this time demanding corrective action—and it is continuing its defense of the young girl and her family.

According to the Perez family, their 5-year-old daughter bowed her head over her food during lunch. A school employee instructed her to stop, and when the young girl told the school official, "But it's good to pray," she was told, "It is not good."

After the story broke, Liberty Institute senior counsel Jeremy Dys and the Perez family met with officials from Carillon Elementary School in Seminole County, Florida. During the meeting, Gabriella re-enacted the prayer and recounted the incident in its entirety to the principal and school attorney. At the request of the school, Gabriella also participated in a lineup, positively identifying the school employee.

That seemed to end the matter. The school purportedly apologized and said it made sure all personnel understood that prayer at meals was a student's legal right. But on April 23, Michael Lawrence, communications director of Seminole County Schools, made derogatory and defamatory statements to the media about Gabriella and her family.

On April 25, Dys sent a letter to school officials, asking that they provide “an unequivocal, public apology for religious discrimination” against Gabriella Perez and that they cease and desist from making “false, misleading, and malicious statements against the Perez family.”