

# Education



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## Helicopter stunt creates buzz at Patriot High School



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By Jenna Johnson, Preston Williams and Jeremy Borden,

A black helicopter hovering overhead can lead those below to become worried, scared or suspicious. But when a large aircraft positioned itself over a Prince William County high school's football field last Wednesday afternoon, students who had just been released for the day excitedly watched as a stuffed bulldog with a red-bandanna parachute emerged.

The big-eyed pup drifted to the turf, delivering a message from a junior boy to a senior girl: "Fall Fest?"

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As students look to one-up their classmates for the most outrageous way to ask a girl on a date — in this case Patriot High School's version of a homecoming dance — this boy's approach might have set a new standard.

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The helicopter flew in low over the school's grounds, stunning students and setting off a flurry of Twitter messages and photographs before its covert mission was complete.

"He knew it was my senior year, and I've been asked some pretty creative ways before this," said Victoria Burress, 17, a soccer player and kicker for the football team. "Everyone thinks that we like each other, but it's not like that at all. It's just unusual to be that close with a guy and to have him still do something nice for you."

The Washington Post is not naming the boy because it could not verify his involvement by speaking to him or his parents.

It's unclear exactly how the helicopter stunt was planned and even who was in the aircraft, though school officials said the boy's father asked the principal for permission to have a helicopter fly in and drop the stuffed animal. The boy's father is a senior official in air operations at [U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#).

Reports of the incident irked CBP officials when they were made aware of photographs showing the aircraft looming close overhead Patriot students.

"We are aware of reports that a locally based CBP helicopter was used improperly by local CBP personnel Sept. 12," officials said in a statement. "CBP management is looking into the matter and the pilot in command of the aircraft has been relieved and reassigned to administrative duties pending completion of the review of the incident."

There was no mention of who was at the controls or who else might have been in the helicopter. The student's father could not be reached Monday, and the boy's mother declined to comment.

Meanwhile, Patriot High students are still buzzing about the Hollywoodesque feat.

It began as a noise they often hear, as airplanes and helicopters routinely pass overhead on their way to and from nearby [Manassas Regional Airport](#). When school ended last Wednesday and students headed to their cars, they were stopped by the sound of an approaching helicopter and surprised to see it slow down and hover.

"The helicopter got really close to the football field, and I saw something drop," said - DeAndre Spurlock, 16, a junior at Patriot who was in the parking lot that afternoon. "Everyone stopped in the parking lot and watched."

Burress had gone to her car and was trying to make her way back into the building to lift weights, but she was slowed by some of her friends who were in on the act. Suddenly, her guy friend walked toward her, carrying pink roses. Everyone applauded, and the two students walked together to the football field to collect the stuffed animal, which looks like Burress's pet bulldog, Dozer.

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