

An Open Letter to Vestavia Hills Citizens

In 1991, our School board entered into a contract with the controversial Channel One company.

Channel One loaned our middle and high school TV equipment in exchange for the promise that the schools would show a daily, 12-minute TV show, loaded with commercial content, at least 90% of all school days. Channel One was created by an advertising executive. Its main purpose is to get advertising for Hollywood movies, junk-food and other products to a captive audience of impressionable schoolchildren.

In 2000, over 90% of our high school teachers said they did not have time and would not make time for Channel One in the school day. Channel One and their commercials were removed from VHHS. Bravo for our high school teachers and administrators. Unfortunately, our Pizitz Middle School continues to waste school time and tax money by showing Channel One commercials.

On August 30 and September 4, Channel One ran an ad introducing students to Pepsi Blue, a new high-sugar soft drink. This is outrageous enough but it gets worse. The minute-long commercial also promotes the new CD from a band called Sev. This CD has a parental warning label. Is it a good use of school time to be encouraging our middle school students to drink more soft drinks and to buy this obscenity-laced CD? You can go to obligation.org/pizitz.html for more examples of what our middle school students are watching on TV.

Homewood and Mountain Brook school boards never fell for this "free TV" deal. No Hoover schools have Channel One. Shelby County's school board voted 5-0 in 1999 to kick Channel One out.

Our State Board of Education has a resolution on the books from 1991 that says a school board "violates the public trust" if they bring commercials into the classroom.

The Southern Baptist Convention in 1999 overwhelmingly passed a resolution that urged the removal of Channel One from all classrooms. The National Council of Teachers of English opposes "the intrusion of commercial advertising, such as Channel One, in the classroom." The Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics passed a resolution in 2000 opposing the showing of commercials in Alabama classrooms. The NEA and the Eagle Forum oppose Channel One. When did you ever see these two groups agree on something?

Focus on the Family encourages parents to work for the removal of Channel One from their children's schools. The Birmingham News editorially encourages school systems to remove Channel One.

Our Vestavia Hills School Board and Superintendent have no problem with children watching commercials during school. They need to hear from you. After all, you own the schools. They are wasting your money.

Here are the published email addresses of our school board members and our Superintendent. George Elliott (gbjt68@bellsouth.net) is our school board president. Tell him you want the waste of school time and tax money to end. Tell him you want the Board to remove Channel One immediately. The other Board members are Karen Odle (odlek@bellsouth.net), Kay Wilburn (kwilburn@feldhyde.com) Sharon Lovell (lovellins@aol.com) and David Woodruff (dwoodruff@energen.com). Dr. Jamie Blair (jblair@vestavia.k12.al.us) is our superintendent. The mailing address and location of the School Board is 1204 Montgomery Hwy, VH, 35216. The phone number is 402-5100.

Channel One turns our classrooms into a circus. This is an embarrassment to our community. Channel One undermines public support for our fine school system.

Please mark September 25 on your calendar. The School Board has allowed me to speak for ten minutes *against* Channel One. The cards are stacked against me. I need the community to turn out and remind this School Board and Superintendent that our children are not for sale. The meeting is at 6:00pm. Please take a moment to help make our middle school better.

Much Obligated,
Jim Metrock