



Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

November 17, 2016

Joel Mengerink, Superintendent
Elida Local Schools
4380 Sunnydale Ave.
Elida, OH 45807

Dear Superintendent Mengerink,

We are writing to alert you to significant problems with the commercial in-school network Channel One News that is currently shown in Elida Local Schools. We urge your office and the Elida Board of Education to conduct a thorough review of the costs and benefits of showing Channel One and to suspend the use of the network until such a review is complete. We think that the Board of Education will determine that your students are best served by terminating the use of Channel One in Elida classrooms.

Channel One News is a daily 12-minute program that includes news, feature stories, and two minutes of commercials targeted specifically at students. No other company generates revenue by compelling a captive audience of students to watch television commercials during taxpayer-funded class time. In Elida, we understand some students are tested on Channel One's broadcasts and required to take notes. For advertisers, the benefits are obvious. As Channel One's founder, Joel Babbitt, once remarked, "The advertiser gets kids who cannot go to the bathroom, cannot change the station, who cannot listen to their mother yell in the background, who cannot be playing Nintendo."

Marketing is inappropriate in a school setting, where it exploits a captive audience of students, and where the product or service advertised appears to have the endorsement of the school or faculty. Advertising teaches children to be materialistic, that the things we own will make us happy. Schools should strive to teach students critical thinking, but advertising teaches unquestioned brand loyalty.

To make matters worse, the educational content of Channel One is minimal. One analysis found that only 20% of Channel One's coverage was about recent political, social, or cultural events; the other 80% was devoted to sports, weather, natural disasters, features and profiles, and self-promotion of Channel One.¹

Research also shows that Channel One commercials are particularly effective. A study in the journal *Pediatrics* found that students were more likely to remember Channel One's commercial than its news.² And a study in the *Journal of Communication* found that children attending schools with Channel One were more materialistic than students from schools without it.³

¹ Hoynes, W. (May/June 1997). News for a captive audience: An analysis of Channel One. *Extra!*, 11-17.

² Austin, E.W., Chen, Y.C., Pinkleton, B.E., & Johnson, J.Q. (2006). Benefits and costs of channel one in a middle school setting and the role of media literacy training. *Pediatrics*, 117(3), 423-433.

³ Greenberg, B.S. & Brand, J.E. (1993). Television news and advertising in schools: The "Channel One" controversy. *Journal of Communication*, 43(1), 143-151.

A 2014 study published in the Journal of Children and Media found that Channel One newscasts presented a “Trojan horse of persuasion,” as its messages are presented in the context of professional news, with the tacit approval of authority figures, in an educational context. The study concluded that “the potential of Channel One News to engage youth has been compromised due to the commercial emphasis of the newscast.”⁴

We encourage you to consider that showing Channel One News is not an optimal use of taxpayer-funded class time. Schools are contractually obligated to show Channel One’s 12-minute broadcasts on at least 90% of school days.⁵ Students in schools that honor their contract will spend 32 hours per year watching Channel One, losing more than a full week of instructional time. One full day of instructional time is lost each year just to Channel One’s commercials.

Given increasing financial pressure on schools and the need for educators to maximize their time with students, it is clear that this time would be better spent on other activities. For instance, when Bartlett High School in Shelby County, Tennessee eliminated Channel One broadcasts, the school was able to increase the number of credits that students could earn each year.⁶

In 2006, a broad coalition of advocates for education and public health—including American Family Association, Center for Science in the Public Interest, Consumers Union, Eagle Forum, Global Exchange and the National PTA—signed a letter opposing Channel One.⁷

We urge your office to conduct a review of the costs and benefits of Channel One, and we expect you will determine that Elida students are best served by terminating the use of Channel One in classrooms.

Sincerely,



David Monahan
Campaign Manager
Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

cc: Members, Board of Education, Elida Local Schools

⁴ David K. Scott, Mike Chanslor & Jennifer Dixon (2014) Analysis of Televised Adolescent Classroom News in the United States, Journal of Children and Media, 8:4, 457-473, DOI: 10.1080/17482798.2014.904807.

⁵ Channel One Terms and Conditions of Network Participation. Available at <http://help.channelone.com/pdfs/12-07-07/2008-Link-LeftNav&Contact-Terms.pdf>.

⁶ <http://www.obligation.org/2011-01-18-academics-meant-more-to-bartlett-hs-than-channel-one-news>.

⁷ Children’s Advocates Ask Companies Not to Advertise on BusRadio or Channel One. Available at <http://www.commercialalert.org/issues/education/busradio/childrens-advocates-ask-companies-not-to-advertise-on-busradio-and-channel-one>.