
Citizens' Campaign for Commercial-Free Schools, Seattle, WA

Corporations Lose Battle for Seattle Schools

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Seattle, Washington - After five years of mounting pressure from angry parents, teachers and public, the Seattle School Board voted on Nov. 21 to adopt a district-wide policy that would dramatically reduce commercialism in all 100 public schools. The policy OEsignificantly restricts commercial advertising on or within district operated property, while encouraging corporate support that "maintains the integrity of the learning environment". The accompanying board-adopted procedures prohibit advertising on school property, phase-out the controversial commercial TV program, OEChannel One¹ and prohibit advertising on vending machine facades. The procedures also prohibit logos "for advertising purposes" on district property, materials, supplies and equipment. Parents have strongly objected to corporations taking advantage of a OEcaptiv audience of the 47,000 children in the Seattle Public Schools. Teachers claim that promoting sales of Coke and Pepsi in schools thwarts their efforts to teach good nutrition and critical thinking. Citizens argue that using Seattle public schools to promote for-profit companies is a misuse of public funds.

"The people of Seattle are outraged at marketers encroaching on our schools," says Dr. Brita Butler-Wall, co-founder and Executive Director of the Citizens Campaign for Commercial-Free Schools, the non-profit organization that led the push for a strong policy. "Seattle children need and deserve an education free from corporate influence, and the Seattle School Board has just taken a major step in the right direction."

The Citizens Campaign for Commercial-Free Schools is composed of a broad coalition of local education, labor and community groups. Started by a handful of parents and teachers five years ago, the grassroots organization now has over 1000 individual supporters in Seattle and 65 communities throughout Washington State, including many local elected officials and community leaders.

"The new policy is a complete turn-around from where the Board was five years ago," says Dr. Diane Morrison, Associate Dean for Research at the University of Washington School of Social Work. "Education policy-makers are beginning to realize that commercializing schools causes more problems for children than it solves - in terms of physical, psycho-social, and intellectual development."

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