Channel One Controversy

Introduction

Channel One TV is a corporate-owned news show beamed by satellite to public schools throughout America. The 12-minute news show (containing two minutes of commercials) is produced by professional journalists and shown on closed-circuit televisions to a captive audience of students and teachers each school day. At various times since its creation in 1990, the show has been broadcast to an audience of up to 12 million students and 200,000 to 300,000 teachers, which comprised a third of the students and teachers in America. Currently, the program is beamed to six million students in 8,000 middle schools and high schools across America.

Channel One has been controversial since its introduction into the school system. The controversies have involved the news program's introduction of commercials into the school day, the pop culture features in the program and the loss of instruction time during the school day.

Even more troubling are researchers' findings concerning the heightened sense of materialism that was being nurtured in the students (Shaker, 2000). Greenberg and Brand (1993) found that students who regularly watched Channel One were more likely to agree that:

Money is everything

A nice car is more important than school

Designer labels make a difference

I want what I see advertised

Wealthy people are happier than the poor

In other words, the Channel One news program affects students more intensely than other TV programs. In the course of viewing the program over the six years spent in junior high and high school, the teenagers' basic view of advertising is altered so that they view commercials more favorably and incorporate a greater sense of materialism into their value systems when compared with students who do not have the Channel One news program in their classrooms.