

**Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood \* Center for Biological Diversity \*  
Climate Change, Sustainability, and Psychology Program of Psychologists for Social Responsibility \*  
Conservation Law Foundation \* Eco-Justice Collaborative \*  
Environmental and Energy Study Institute \* Friends of the Earth \* Greenpeace USA \*  
NC WARN \* Ocean Conservation Research \* Oil Change International \* Public Citizen \*  
Rethinking Schools \* 350.org \* Sierra Club \* Teaching for Change**

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24 May 2011

Richard Robinson  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Scholastic Inc.  
557 Broadway  
New York, NY 10012

Dear Mr. Robinson,

On behalf of our millions of members and activists we are writing to urge Scholastic to stop distributing fossil fuel and other industry propaganda labeled as educational materials in schools. We appreciate your acknowledgment that partnering with the American Coal Foundation (ACF) was a mistake and that you have agreed to stop distributing the 4<sup>th</sup>-grade curriculum “The United States of Energy,” but we remain concerned that teaching materials sponsored by for-profit corporations and industry—including with the US Chamber of Commerce—endanger children’s education.

Scholastic’s sponsored materials teach a captive audience of students only what industry has paid Scholastic to teach. Your InSchool Marketing program’s aim “to promote client objectives” is not education; it is predatory marketing.

In your May 13 statement, you indicate that you will be “undertaking a thorough review of [y]our policy and editorial procedures on sponsored content ...” We believe that this review is much needed. We request that you set a firm date for the completion of this review and that, once completed, you make public your policy on sponsored content. We reiterate our demand that Scholastic abandon its current practice of developing curriculum-for-hire in order “to promote client objectives” and “make a difference by influencing attitudes and behaviors.” This practice turns schools into marketplaces, children into consumers, and is patently unethical. As you conduct this review, we ask that you stop distributing any fossil fuel or other industry funded teaching materials, including the Chamber of Commerce-funded “Shedding Light on Energy.”

With the threat of global warming looming, it is more important than ever that schools teach fully and honestly about coal and other forms of energy. Mining and burning coal threatens public health, imperils species, and causes irreversible environmental harm. Coal mining is dangerous to workers, causes air and water pollution, and negatively affects the health of communities in mining areas. Throughout Appalachia, hundreds of mountains have been leveled to reach coal seams, with terrible effects on the environment and people’s health. Burning coal releases pollutants and toxins like sulfur dioxide and mercury that contribute to asthma and

cancer. Burning coal is the number one stationary source of global warming pollution. Global climate change threatens 35 percent of all species with extinction by 2050 if current emissions are not reduced. The 110 million tons of ash produced annually from coal combustion is toxic, and also threatens public health and the environment. Any curriculum that discusses energy should mention these, and other, impacts of coal use. But the coal-industry curriculum that Scholastic has distributed is one-sided and fails to present any of the negative realities of the coal industry.

We appreciate that Scholastic has removed the ACF materials from its website, but your recent statement misrepresents your work on behalf of the coal industry to minimize it as merely “an 11” x 16” poster map which displays different sources of energy—coal, nuclear, hydroelectric, solar, wind and natural gas ...” In fact, the curriculum features three lessons for children, and an additional take-home “family activity.” And the guide prominently touts “Alignment with National Standards for Grade 4.” Clearly, you promoted these materials to teachers as more than a simple map.

According to the ACF, Scholastic’s biased materials were sent to at least 66,000 elementary teachers throughout the country, and you promoted the materials to an additional 82,000 teachers and made them available at your website for anyone to read and download for use with children. Because these materials will continue to be used in schools, Scholastic must take affirmative measures to reach out to teachers who have — or may have — received your “The United States of Energy” curriculum and explain its inaccuracies, urge that it not be used, and encourage teachers to find more detailed and accurate resources to teach about coal and our country’s energy and environmental challenges. Scholastic has produced the equivalent of a defective product, and must take steps to ensure that this product is no longer used with children.

We look forward to your prompt response outlining the measures you plan to take to address these concerns.

Sincerely,

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