



Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

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Dear Superintendent,

We are writing to urge you not to sign on with BusRadio, a new commercial private radio network that is being marketed to Massachusetts school districts. BusRadio is offering to equip school buses to play specially designed BusRadio broadcasts. In return, students will be forced to listen to ads, corporate-sponsored contests, and promotions for BusRadio's commercial website.

CCFC
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In its sales pitch to school administrators, BusRadio claims it will make buses safer while downplaying the amount of advertising in its broadcasts¹. Its appeal to advertisers, however, has a different emphasis.² BusRadio boasts that it will take "take targeted student marketing to the next level"³ and provide companies with a "captive audience" who, unlike listeners to commercial radio, are unable to change the station during ads.⁴

BusRadio broadcasts will feature eight minutes of advertisements and two minutes of sponsored contests per hour.⁵ In addition, BusRadio is offering advertisers the option to sponsor entire blocks of programming or provide a celebrity disc jockey (who can then promote a brand, movie, or music).⁶ Because it is not monitored by the Federal Communications Commission, BusRadio can play music that they are being paid to promote.⁷ BusRadio broadcasts will also promote BusRadio's website which will feature even more advertising. Students will also be able to download music on the website and purchase items from the BusRadio store. BusRadio is also promoting its website as a place to conduct market research with children, and it appears as if the site will be used to collect student's personal information.⁸

In short, BusRadio is designed to use school busses to bombard children with advertising. Given how much marketing children are already exposed to, it is unconscionable that advertisers are attempting to invade one more aspect of children's lives.

¹ At a meeting of the Barnstable School Committee on March 21, 2006, Stephen Connolly of BusRadio claimed that advertising comprises 6% of its programming. In fact, BusRadio has scheduled 8 minutes of advertisements per hour (13.3%) and these ads are only one of the many ways that BusRadio will be used to market to students.

<http://www.barnstable.k12.ma.us/schoolcom/min032106.htm>

² BusRadio maintains two separate websites: www.busradio.org for school districts and www.busradio.net for potential advertisers. All BusRadio websites cited in this letter were accessed June 1, 2006.

³ <http://www.busradio.net/about/concept/>

⁴ <http://www.busradio.net/about/casestudies/>

⁵ <http://www.busradio.org/>

⁶ <http://www.busradio.net/advertising/sponsorships/>

⁷ A. Soule (March 31-April 6, 2006). Bus Radio targets a captive – and raucous – audience. *Boston Business Review*. Available at http://busradio.net/files/03-31-06_BBJ.pdf

⁸ <http://www.busradio.net/advertising/opportunities/>



Products advertised on a school bus will come with the implicit message that the school endorses the product. But the products advertised may run counter to the lessons schools want to teach their students. For instance, on its website, BusRadio notes that it “gave The WB Network the flexibility to run commercials for their shows the day they were to air. To take full advantage of the BusRadio network, The WB ran more ads during student’s ride home after school so they could reinforce the message to watch that night.”⁹ Should the last message in a school day be one that encourages students to watch TV?

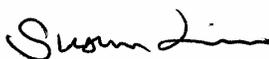
Taxpayer dollars and services should not be used to turn students into captive audiences for commercial messages or to provide “advertisers with a unique and effective way to reach the highly sought after teen and tween market.”¹⁰ We urge you to tell BusRadio that your students are not for sale.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter with you.

Sincerely,



Alvin F. Poussaint, MD



Susan Linn, EdD

⁹ <http://www.busradio.net/about/casestudies/>

¹⁰ <http://www.busradio.net/about/concept/>