



St. Helena High School

International Baccalaureate World School

Julie A. Synyard, M.A.
Principal

Benjamin L. Scinto
Vice Principal

1401 Grayson Ave. St. Helena, CA 94574. (P) 707-967-2740, (F) 707-967-2735

Matthew A. Ouimet, President and CEO
Cedar Fair Entertainment Company
One Cedar Point Drive
Sandusky, Ohio 44870

June 18, 2012

Dear Mr. Ouimet:

I am writing to express my disappointment with the decision made by the Executive Management and Board of Directors of Cedar Fair Entertainment Company (CFEC) to disallow the use of accelerometers and stopwatches by Physics students during 'Physics Day' at Great America in Santa Clara, California. As a high school Physics teacher who has brought his Physics classes to Great America for 'Physics Day' for more than a decade (since 2001), I was both angry and disappointed to learn from my students at 'Physics Day' this year that the accelerometers that were both designed and constructed for use on the various rides at Great America would not be allowed to be used during students' ride experiences.

What could be behind such an ill-conceived and short-sighted decision by Cedar Fair Entertainment Company? (Surely the reason can have little to do with insurance liability, as how many people are injured each year from inadvertently dropped accelerometers/stopwatches that are made of lightweight materials like paper and plastic?) Aside from being disappointing for students who were *determined* to apply what they learned about Physics throughout the school year to a real-life large-scale setting, such a decision is quite deceptive—especially when the event is called '*Physics Day*' and is marketed as a day to study Physics at Great America! To add insult to injury, Great America actually provides a Physics Day CD for teachers like me to use to generate assignments to be completed at Great America—most of which require taking measurements of time, position and accelerations experienced by students while on the rides.

Pray tell--what is the point of marketing an event as "Physics Day,"--and then giving a CD to teachers with assignments that are based on gathering measurements on rides at the park when students are not permitted to take such measurements at the park?

Clearly, when one considers that there are other amusement/theme parks within the San Francisco Bay area that offer special days for students similar to 'Physics Day'—then what would be the point of a Physics teacher to continue to take his classes to CFEC's Great America? Unless CFEC reconsiders its short-sighted decision prohibiting use of accelerometers and stopwatches, then rest assured that I will not take any of my future Physics classes to Great America for Physics Day. Furthermore, I will be attending the national convention of the American Association of Physics Teachers in Philadelphia, PA, during Summer, 2012—and will make a point to provide and distribute the response that CFEC provides to this correspondence to the leadership of AAPT (who publishes 'The Physics Teacher' and intimately works with other science organizations like APS).

(continued)

In conclusion, I respectfully request that the Executive Management and Board of Directors of Cedar Fair Entertainment Company reconsider and rescind its decision to prohibit the use of stopwatches and accelerometers on its rides by Physics students during Great America's 'Physics Day.' Your decision already has and will continue to make a dramatic impact on the quality of Physics education received by the next generation of scientists, engineers and informed citizens.

Thank you for your serious consideration of the concerns I have conveyed on behalf of Physics students throughout the Santa Clara Valley and San Francisco Bay area.

Sincerely,



Philip S. Becker, B.S.M.E., M.Ed.
Physics Teacher, Saint Helena High School
Saint Helena, California

(continued)