

# MARKETING IN SCHOOLS



Increasingly, marketers are infiltrating high schools, elementary schools and even preschools to gain access to a captive audience. There are a number of different ways that corporations market their products in schools. Eighty-two percent of schools have corporate ads.<sup>1</sup> Advertising appears on textbook covers, on school buses, on interior and exterior school walls, gymnasiums, scoreboards, and at athletic events.

## Food Marketing

- 67.2% of students are exposed to corporate advertising for foods of minimal nutritional value or foods high in fat and sugar in their schools.<sup>2</sup>
- Junk food marketing masquerades as education. Ronald McDonald visits schools to promote literacy, character education, and fitness. McDonald's, Coke and Pepsi all have in-school fitness programs.<sup>3</sup>



## Corporate Sponsored Teaching Materials

- A review of seventy-seven corporate-sponsored classroom kits found nearly 80% to be biased or incomplete, "promoting a viewpoint that favors consumption of the sponsor's product or service or a position that favors the company or its economic agenda."<sup>4</sup>
- Materials sent to schools by the American Coal Foundation claim the planet may be helped by increased carbon dioxide while materials from Chevron challenge the existence of global warming.<sup>5</sup>
- Unilever distributes free "Go Green with All" classroom materials encouraging students to urge their parents to save the environment by using the branded detergent.<sup>6</sup>

## Channel One

- In exchange for free video equipment, each day schools show Channel One programs consisting of 10 minutes of "news" and two minutes of ads. Channel One is shown in 11,000 schools to more than 6 million students.<sup>7</sup>
- A full week of teaching time is lost to Channel One every year; one day per year is lost just to the ads.



## BusRadio

- BusRadio forces children to listen to commercial radio broadcasts on school buses around the country. Advertisers include television shows on the CW network, Cingular cell phones, and the Bratz.
- BusRadio -- which boasts that it will "take targeted student marketing to the next level" -- has only a 16% approval rating among moms.<sup>8</sup>

## Marketing in Preschools

- To introduce the 1980's Care Bears to 21<sup>st</sup> century preschoolers, American Greetings hired marketing firm Young Minds Inspired to create a "You're Never Too Young to Care" curriculum, featuring Care Bear posters, coloring books, songs and activity sheets touting their appearance at Toys "R" Us.<sup>9</sup>
- Scholastic partnered with McDonald's to send Ronald's Reading Corners to more than 22,000 preschools and kindergartens. Scholastic has also partnered with Disney and the Cartoon Network to create curricula to promote new media programs to preschool students.<sup>10</sup>

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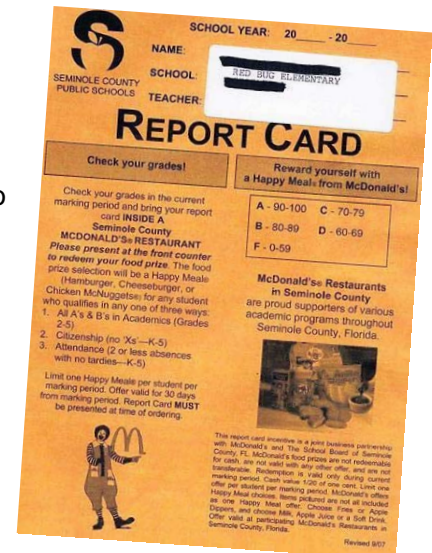


## A Poor Source of Funding

- Nearly 3/4 of schools that participated in income-generating activities with corporations that sell foods of minimal nutritional value and foods high in fat and sugar did not receive any income in 2003-2004.<sup>11</sup>
- Campbell and General Mills each sponsor popular label redemption programs that are surprisingly unprofitable. To earn a \$300 digital camcorder, parents have to buy 27,850 cans of Campbell's soup, about \$33,000 worth. About \$26 worth of soup is required to earn a single colored pencil.<sup>12</sup>

## Reclaiming Schools from Corporate Marketers

- Legislation has been introduced in Massachusetts and Vermont that would eliminate marketing in schools.
- School districts around the country – including Los Angeles and Chicago – have banned the sale of soda and junk food on their premises.
- A campaign by CCFC with nearly two-thousand parent complaints ended McDonald's controversial report card advertising in Seminole County, Florida. Report cards were sent home in branded envelopes promising a free Happy Meal for good grades, behavior, or attendance.<sup>13</sup>



For more information visit [www.commercialfreechildhood.org](http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org).

## Other Resources

- **Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME)**, free of corporate media funding, is a strategic network linking media educators, health advocates, media reformers, independent media makers, community organizers and others. ([www.acmecoalition.org](http://www.acmecoalition.org))
- **Obligation, Inc.** reminds businesses and governments of their responsibility to children and a leader in the fight against Channel One. ([www.obligation.org](http://www.obligation.org))
- **Commercialism in Education Research Unit** conducts research, disseminates information, and helps facilitate dialogue between the education community, policy makers, and the public at large about commercial activities in schools. (<http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/ceru.htm>)

<sup>1</sup> Molnar, A. et al. (2006). A National Survey of the Types and Extent of the Marketing of Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value in Schools. Arizona State University. Commercialism in Education Research Unit (CERU). Available at [http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/CERU/CERU\\_2006\\_Research\\_Writing.htm](http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/CERU/CERU_2006_Research_Writing.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Linn, S. & Novosat, C. (2007), Calories for sale: Food marketing to children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 615, 133-155.

<sup>4</sup> Consumers Union. (1998). Captive Kids: A report on commercial pressure on kids in school. Available at <http://www.consumersunion.org/other/captivekids/summary.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> Kanner, A (2008, Jan/Feb). Today's class brought to you by . . . *Tikkun*, p. 25-26.

<sup>6</sup> Unilever Campaign Turns Kids Into Green Brand Ambassadors. (2007, October 13). *Environmental Leader*. Retrieved August 12, 2008 from <http://www.environmentalleader.com/2007/10/10/unilever-campaign-turns-kids-into-green-brand-ambassadors/>.

<sup>7</sup> FAQ. <http://www.channelone.com/static/faq/>.

<sup>8</sup> Bulik, B. (2008, June 25). Survey reveals moms wary of ads aimed at kids. *Advertising Age*.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas, S.G. (2007). *Buy, buy baby*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, pp. 197-98.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas, S.G., pp. 201-206.

<sup>11</sup> Molnar et al, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Center for Science in the Public Interest (2007). Sweet deals: Scholl fundraising can be healthy and profitable. Available at <http://www.cspinet.org/new/200702141.html>.

<sup>13</sup> CCFC Press Release (2008, Jan 17). Ronald McDonald Report Card Ads Expelled from Seminole County. Available at <http://commercialfreechildhood.org/pressreleases/ronaldmcdonald.htm>.