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Back to Commercial-Free Schools

Advertising undermines the educational mission of schools

- Schools aim to foster critical thinking skills in students, urging them to think freely and develop the tools to form their own opinions. Yet, advertising preys on the absence of critical thinking. The goals of educational institutions and advertisers are directly opposed.
- The messages in advertisements may conflict with curricular lessons, undermining learning.

Schools are the wrong place for advertising

- Students and parents may perceive products or services advertised on school property to be endorsed by the school district, giving them increased legitimacy.
- Students are required to attend school – they are a “captive” audience. Unlike other arenas where advertising is pervasive, parents can’t control what their kids see at school.
- Children need a sanctuary from advertising. They are overwhelmed by commercialism everywhere they go. Schools should offer some respite.

Children and teens are uniquely vulnerable to advertising

- Children often do not understand that advertisements are intended to sell products. Advertisements that target children unfairly take advantage of this lack of comprehension.¹
- Adolescents are also more vulnerable to marketing than adults. During the critical developmental period of adolescence, teens are more impulsive and self-conscious than adults. This makes certain advertising tactics particularly effective when aimed at teens.²

Exposure to advertising negatively affects children

- Kids who encounter more advertising and marketing are more likely to develop materialistic values, have lower self-esteem, poor body image, and lower levels of well-being.³
- A national study found that 67.2 percent of district public schools have advertising by corporations that sell junk food.⁴ Junk food advertising is linked to childhood obesity.⁵

Advertising in schools generates little revenue

- In some of the largest school districts in the country, advertising has generated only 0.01 – 0.03 percent of these districts’ budgets.⁶
- The money raised from in-school advertising is not “free” money – it comes at a cost. The cost is the quality of education children receive.

Tell your school district not to allow advertising on school properties. Take action now!

Notes

¹ Wilcox, B., Kunkel, D., Cantor, J., Dowrick, P., Linn, S., & Palmer, E. (2004). *Report of the APA Task Force on Advertising and Children*. American Psychological Association, Retrieved 23 August, 2012, from <http://www.apa.org/pi/cyf/advertisingandchildren.pdf>.

² Pechmann, C., Levine, L., Loughlin, S., & Leslie, F. (2005). "Impulsive and Self-Conscious: Adolescents' Vulnerability to Advertising and Promotion." *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*. 24(2), 202-221. Retrieved 23 August, 2012, from <https://webfiles.uci.edu/llevine/Levine%20articles%20in%20pdf/Pechmann-JPPM%20Fall%2005.pdf>.

³ Molnar, A., Boninger, F., Wilkinson, G., Fogarty, J., & Geary, S. (2010). *Effectively Embedded: Schools and The Machinery of Modern Marketing - The Thirteenth Annual Report on Schoolhouse Commercializing Trends: 2009-2010*. Commercialism in Education Research Unit, National Education Policy Center. Retrieved 23 August, 2012, from <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/Schoolhouse-commercialism-2010>

⁴ Molnar, A., Garcia, D. R., Boninger, F., & Merrill, B. (2006, 1 January). *A National Survey of the Types and Extent of the Marketing of Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value in Schools*. Commercialism in Education Research Unit, Arizona State University. Retrieved 28 August, 2012, from <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/national-survey-types-and-extent-marketing-foods-minimal-nutritional-value-schools>

⁵ Harris, J., Brownell, K., & Bargh, J. (2009) "The Food Marketing Defense Model: Integrating Psychological Research to Protect Youth and Inform Public Policy." *Social Issues and Policy Review*. 3(1), 211-271. Retrieved 23 August, 2012, from <http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/resources/upload/docs/what/advertising/FoodMarketingDefenseModelSIPR12.09.pdf>. See also, Federal Trade Commission. (2008) *Marketing Food to Children and Adolescents: A Review of Industry Expenditures, Activities, and Self-Regulation*. Retrieved 23 August, 2012, from <http://www.ftc.gov/os/2008/07/P064504foodmktngreport.pdf>.

⁶ Ben-Ishai, E. (2012) *School Commercialism: High Costs, Low Revenues*. Public Citizen. Retrieved 23 August, 2012, from http://www.commercialalert.org/PDFs/SchoolCommercialismReport_PC.pdf.