

Food Marketing in Schools

Not “Cent\$ible” for School Funding

Food and beverage marketing is ubiquitous in U.S. schools. From scoreboards to vending machines, company logos, brand names, and characters can be found across school campuses. Unfortunately, most of the foods marketed in schools are of poor nutritional quality. A national survey found that 67% of schools have advertising for foods that are high in fat and/or sugar.¹ Yet, in the face of financial constraints, some schools worry that limiting unhealthy food marketing will lead to revenue loss. However, many practical and profitable marketing and fundraising strategies are available.

Schools Can Continue Marketing and Selling Healthy Foods.

Schools can allow food and beverage marketing if they swap out unhealthy products for healthier ones. For example, instead of featuring Coca-Cola on the front of a vending machine, feature Dasani water. Instead of depicting Original Lays on a snack rack in the school store, feature Baked Lays.



Districts Typically Receive Minimal

Revenue from Commercial Marketing, particularly compared to districts’ total budgets. Two-thirds of schools that engage in commercial advertising receive no income at all, and only 0.4% of schools generate more than \$50,000.² In addition, more than 82% of schools receive no income from the marketing of products that do not meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s “Smart Snacks in Schools” nutrition standards.³ Nearly 90% of school officials note that school programs and activities would not be reduced if advertisements of unhealthy food ceased.¹

\$150 Million

... that’s the amount of money the food industry spent in 2009 on marketing in schools. Ninety-three percent of those funds were for marketing beverages. In a recent statement, the American Beverage Association applauded efforts to reduce unhealthy food marketing in schools, calling them “common-sense efforts” and a “logical next step.”⁶

Companies Are Working Toward Decreasing Unhealthy Food Marketing in Schools.

Many companies have already agreed to not market food in elementary schools through the Council of Better Business Bureaus’ Children’s Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative.⁴ In addition, over the past decade, beverage companies have worked with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation to remove full-calorie soft drinks from schools.

Practical, Profitable Healthy Fundraising Alternatives Abound. There are many alternatives to unhealthy food marketing to raise revenue. School districts have had success with healthy fundraisers that are easy to implement and profitable, including walk-a-thons; selling plants, personal care products, and holiday cards; and recycling printer cartridges.⁵

Schools Across the Country Are Having Success.

Many schools across the country have switched to healthier marketing and fundraising alternatives without losing revenue. For example, parents and school officials at Williston Junior High School in North Dakota worked with the student council to turn the school's "Candy Cart" into a "Breakfast Cart," stocked with healthier options like "Grip n' Go" milks, 100% juices, and multigrain bars. The school marketed the healthy changes by handing out stickers, flying discs, and pencils as promotional incentives. Sales at the new breakfast cart remained the same as sales with the candy cart, and students now have the opportunity to start the school day with more nutritious options. For more success stories, visit <http://bit.ly/healthyfundraising>.

For More Information, contact the Center for Science in the Public Interest at nutritionpolicy@cspinet.org.

References

¹Molnar A, Garcia DR, Boninger F, Merrill B. *A National Survey of the Types and Extent of the Marketing of Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value in Schools*. Tempe, AZ: Commercialism in Research Unit, 2006.

²Ben-Ishai E. *School Commercialism: High Costs, Low Revenues*. Washington, D.C.: Public Citizen, 2012. Available: www.commercialalert.org/PDFs/SchoolCommercialismReport_PC.pdf.

³U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. *Local School Wellness Policy Implementation under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*. Regulatory Impact Analysis. 51 January 2014.

⁴Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc. *Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative: Program and Core Principles Statement 4th Ed*. Arlington, VA. Available: http://www.bbb.org/Global/Council_113/CFBAI/Enhanced%20Core%20Principles%20Fourth%20Edition%20with%20Appendix%20A.pdf.

⁵Johanson J and Wootan M. *Sweet Deals: School Fundraising Can Be Healthy and Profitable*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2007. Available: www.cspinet.org/

⁶"American Beverage Association Supports First Lady's Announcement On School Wellness." 25 February 2014. Available: www.ameribev.org/news-media/news-releases-statements/more/328/schoolfundraising.pdf.

Don't Bank on BOOK IT!

Pizza Hut's BOOK IT! program promises to "motivate children to read by rewarding their reading accomplishments with praise, recognition and pizza." What they don't mention is that a one-topping personal pan pizza can contain about 620 calories, half a day's worth of saturated fat (11 g), and more than 1,500 mg of sodium.



Westwood Elementary School in Woodstock, IL, found a better way to encourage students to read. They created the "5/10/15 Reading Challenge," which had students find five (5) people to pledge ten (10) dollars for the student to read fifteen (15) minutes per day for a week. For every \$2,000 dollars raised, the principal promised to spend one hour on the building roof reading aloud to students. After a week, the students raised more than \$7,600. (And the Principal spent an entire October morning reading to students from the roof!)

