

IN-SCHOOL MARKETING TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH



- Childhood obesity is a major public health problem in the United States (US), yet US children are targeted as never before with marketing for foods high in sugar, fat, salt, and calories.¹
- There is strong evidence that marketing of foods and beverages to children influences their preferences, requests, purchases and diets.²
- Food accounts for over half (54.5 percent) of total requests made by children, representing snack foods (23.9 percent), candy (16.8 percent), cereal (6.8 percent), fast foods (3.6 percent), and fruit and vegetables (3.4 percent).³
- Growth in new food products targeted to kids has been huge, from 52 products in 1994 to nearly 500 in 2005.⁴
- Eighty to 97 percent of the food products aimed at children and teenagers are of “poor nutritional quality.”⁵
- Studies suggest that food advertising and marketing is associated with more favorable attitudes, preferences, and behaviors among children toward the advertised food product.⁶
- From 1992-1997 the amount spent marketing to children shot from \$6.2 billion to \$12 billion. Today marketers spend at least \$15 billion a year targeting children.⁷ And, the food industry spends an estimated \$10 billion per year marketing foods and beverages to children and youth in America.⁸
- Each year the purchase influence of children increases with age: \$15 billion for 3-5 year olds, \$45 billion for 6-8 year olds, \$65 billion for 9-11 year olds, \$80 billion for 12-14 year olds, and \$90 billion for 15-17 year olds.⁹
- Children determine parental spending in two ways: direct and indirect influence. Direct influence describes children’s requests, hints, and demands. Indirect influence, which accounted for as much as \$300 billion of the nearly \$500 billion in 1997 household spending determined by children, is when parents know and buy the products and brands that their children prefer without being asked or told.¹⁰
- Advertising and marketing less healthful food products to students and using food as a reward can encourage over-consumption and relatively unhealthy dietary choices.¹¹
- Marketing to children in schools is especially problematic because in schools children are a captive audience and are asked to believe that what they are taught in school will be in their best interest.¹²
- Candy and snack food manufacturers, soft drink bottlers, and fast food restaurants, are among the companies that market most heavily in schools.¹³
- Among California high schools:¹⁴
 - Nearly 72 percent allow advertising for fast food and beverages on campus, while only 13 percent prohibit such advertising.
 - The most common fast food or beverage advertisements are on vending machines (48 percent), scoreboards or signs (31 percent), and posters (23 percent).

CAPTIVE KIDS: SELLING OBESITY AT SCHOOLS

An ACTION GUIDE to Stop the Marketing of Unhealthy Foods and Beverages at School

- Channel One, in more than 12,000 schools, regularly shows ads for soda, candy, fast food, and chips to eight million students nationwide.¹⁵
- A review of 77 corporate-sponsored classroom kits and materials found nearly 80 percent 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.”¹⁶
- Marketing exploits children’s developmental vulnerabilities.
 - Until the age of about eight children do not understand advertising’s persuasive intent.¹⁷
 - Very young children can’t distinguish between commercials and program content. Even older children sometimes fail to recognize product placement as advertising.¹⁸
 - Marketers often use older children’s desire to fit in with their peers and a tendency to rebel against authority figures as selling points for their products.¹⁹

03/06

1Linn, Susan E. (2004). Food Marketing to Children in the Context of a Marketing Maelstrom. *Journal of Public Health Policy: Public Health Advocacy Institute Special Section, Legal Approaches to the Obesity Epidemic*, 25 Numbers 3/4: 24-35.

2 “Food Marketing to Children and Youth: Threat or Opportunity?” The National Academies Press, (Washington, DC), Institute of Medicine National Academies of Science, 2006.

3 Kraak, Vivica and Pelletier, David L. (1998). The Influence of Commercialism on the Food Purchasing Behavior of Children and Teenage Youth. *Family Economics and Nutrition Review*, 11(3): 15-24.

4 “Food Marketing to Children and Youth: Threat or Opportunity?” The National Academies Press, (Washington, DC), Institute of Medicine National Academies of Science, 2006.

5 “Food Marketing to Children and Youth: Threat or Opportunity?” The National Academies Press, (Washington, DC), Institute of Medicine National Academies of Science, 2006.

6 American Public Health Association. (2003). Food Marketing and Advertising Directed at Children and Adolescents: Implications for Overweight. Policy Statement. Association News. Available at <http://www.apha.org/legislative/policy/2003/2003-017.pdf>

7 Ogdan, C.L., Flegal, K.M., Carroll, M.D. & Johnson, C.L. (2002). Prevalence and trends in overweight among US children and adolescents, 1999-2000. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 288: 1728-32.

8 “Food Marketing to Children and Youth: Threat or Opportunity?” The National Academies Press, (Washington, DC), Institute of Medicine National Academies of Science, 2006.

9 Kraak, Vivica and Pelletier, David L. (1998). The Influence of Commercialism on the Food Purchasing Behavior of Children and Teenage Youth. *Family Economics and Nutrition Review*, 11(3): 15-24.

10 McNeal, James U. (1998, April). Tapping the Three Kids’ Market. *American Demographics*, 20 (4).

11 US Department of Health and Human Services. Health Resources and Services Administration. Maternal and Child Health Bureau. Health, Mental Health, and Safety Guidelines for Schools. Available at <http://www.nationalguidelines.org/guideline.cfm?guideNum=5-10>

12 Molnar, Alex. (2003, June). School Commercialism, Student Health, and the Pressure To Do More With Less. Commercialism in Education Research Unit (CERU). Education Policy Studies Laboratory. College of Education. Division of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Arizona State University.

13 Molnar, Alex. (2003, June). School Commercialism, Student Health, and the Pressure To Do More With Less. Commercialism in Education Research Unit (CERU). Education Policy Studies Laboratory. College of Education. Division of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Arizona State University.

14 Craypo, L., Purcell, A., Samuels, S., and Agron P., Fast Food Sales on High School Campuses: Results from the 2000 California High School Fast Food Survey,” *Journal of School Health*, 2002, 72(2): 78-82.

15 Reid, L. and Gedissman, A. (2000, November). Required TV program in schools encourages poor lifestyle choices. AAP News. American Academy of Pediatrics Available at: <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/reid1100.htm>

16 Consumers Union. (1998), *Captive Kids: a report on commercial pressure on kids in school*. Washington, DC: Consumers Union 3.

17 US Department of Health and Human Services. (2001). Overweight and obesity: A major public health issue. *Prevention Report*, 16.

18 Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. (2004). *Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health in the Balance*. Washington DC: Institute of Medicine.

19 Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood, *Marketing to Children: An Overview*, www.commercialfreechildhood.org

CAPTIVE KIDS: SELLING OBESITY AT SCHOOLS

An ACTION GUIDE to Stop the Marketing of Unhealthy Foods and Beverages at School