

School Commercialism and Adolescent Health

Alex Molnar, PhD

*Education Policy Studies Laboratory, College of Education, Arizona State University, Box 8724][,
Tempe, AZ 85287-24/1, USA*

Increasing rates of childhood obesity have been the subject of growing attention and alarm. As a problem in itself and a general indicator of the health of children, obesity has been the subject of inquiry by researchers and concern among policy makers. In October 2002, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDe) reported that obesity in children has tripled in the last 2 decades. According to 1999-2000 data, 15% of children and teenagers -or 9 million-who were aged 6 to 19 years were overweight, with a body mass index at or about the 95th percentile [1]. The same month in which the CDC released its report, the White House sponsored a conference on "Healthy Schools" at which speakers lamented in creasing rates of malnourishment and obesity among children, whereas health classes are eliminated and vending machines, along with less-than-healthy cafeteria menus, continue to influence students' nutritional choices [2].

A June 2000 study by Wyshak [3] that found physically active girls who drink cola drinks were five times more likely to have suffered bone fractures than girls who do not drink soft drinks. A 2001 study by Ludwig et al [4] confirmed an association between increased soft drink consumption and obesity in school-age children. Obesity-related health problems that generally are seen in adults are showing up increasingly in overweight children. For example, increasing numbers of children are afflicted with type 2 diabetes (commonly known as adult-onset diabetes), sleep apnea, gallbladder disease, and asthma [5]. In September 2002, the British medical journal *The Lancet* editorialized: "The soaring increase in obesity and type 2 diabetes among children is a public-health crisis, plausibly linked to the 'toxic environment' created in large part by the food industry" [6].

E-mail address: alex.molnar@asu.edu

1547-3368/05/\$ see front matter ~ 2005 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

doi: 10.1016/j.admec.2005.02.002

adolescent.theclinics.com

Over the past 2 decades, fast food companies, to increase profits, have encouraged customers to order combination meals (entree, side dish, and drink), larger portion sizes, or both, for a modest additional charge [7]. "Supersized" or "combo meals" mean that a single meal may provide "more calories than most children require for an entire day" [6]. Experts suggest that obese and overweight children are at high risk for becoming obese and overweight adults [8]. A 2002 study by RAND suggested that obesity may constitute a more serious health problem-in terms of chronic health issues and health care expenditures-than smoking or drinking [9].

The data on childhood obesity rates coincide with two other trends in education. Physical education programs are offered less often in schools as a consequence of the failure of funding to keep up with the increasing costs and the pressure on schools to concentrate on the "basics." A second trend is the intensified focus on schools as marketing venues for corporations, particularly those that sell nutritionally dubious products, including salty snacks, fat-laden foods, and sugary soft drinks.

Commercialism in the classroom isn't new. Over the last 2 decades, however, corporations have increased their involvement in education dramatically. Today, almost every large corporation sponsors some type of in-school or school-related marketing program. Such programs range from advertising on school buses, on scoreboards, and in lunchrooms, to the creation of curriculum materials for science, government, history, math, and current events classes. The commercial messages that find their way into schools reflect a wide range of content; however, a substantial proportion of them promotes behaviors that can harm the health and nutrition of young people.

Perhaps the most well-known school-based marketing effort is Channel One, the ad-bearing TV news program for middle and high school students that is laced with ads for candy, fast foods, and soft drinks. Examples of other lesser-known activities that promote behavior that is antithetical to good health and nutrition include a geography unit for third graders-in which students locate major cities according to where Tootsie Rolls are made and sold-and the "Chocolate Dream Machine," a nutrition guide and video that promote Hershey's chocolate to middle and high school students.

Some schoolhouse commercialism activities seek to build goodwill for industries or individual companies; others promote industry views that relate to controversial subjects, such as environmental science. Many, however, seek to influence buying patterns, particularly for products that children and teen-agers buy, such as clothing, athletic shoe brands, and food and drink.

Although the sponsors of corporate materials that are used in classrooms all claim that they contain educational value-and some do-most contain biased, self-serving, or harmful messages [10-12]. The reason for corporate interest in school-age children is clear. Children spend billions of dollars a year and influence the spending of hundreds of billions more. McNeal calculated that children ages 4 to 12 spent \$30 billion in 2002 [13], whereas 12- to 19-year-olds spent \$170 billion [14]. Meanwhile, financially strapped and resource-poor

schools find it difficult to resist corporate-sponsored educational materials and ads, especially when they come with free computers or other needed resources.

The trend toward commercialization of the classroom and niche marketing to children can be expected to grow in coming years as the children of the "baby boomlet" enter school and move through the grades; as children's purchasing power and consumer influence grow; and as other consumer markets become saturated. As James U. McNeal, a professor of marketing at Texas A&M University wrote, "Children are the brightest star of the consumer constellation. . . A company can virtually guarantee itself customers tomorrow if it invests in them as children today" [IS].

What are the main types of classroom commercialism? At the Education Policy Studies Laboratory, the Commercialism In Education Research Unit (CERU) has been monitoring classroom commercialism by tracking references to the practice in public media for more than a decade. Increases in references to each category were found from 1990 to 2004. Moreover, each category includes practices that potentially undermine children's health: [16]

Sponsorship of programs and activities. Corporations pay for or subsidize school events or one-time activities in return for the right to associate their name with the events and activities. This also may include school contests. These programs frequently are sponsored by, and promote the products of, makers of fast foods, snack foods, and sweets.

Percent change: +146

Exclusive agreements. Agreements between schools and corporations that give corporations the exclusive right to sell and promote their goods or services in the school district (eg, exclusive pouring rights for Pepsi-Cola or Coca-Cola). In return, the district or school receives a percentage of the profits that is derived from the arrangement.

Percent change: +858

Incentive programs. Corporate programs that provide money, goods, or services to a school or school district when its students, parents, or staff engage in a specified activity, such as collecting particular product labels or cash register receipts from particular stores. Among the best known is Pizza Hut's 'Book-It' program, which rewards children who complete quotas of reading with free pizzas.

Percent change: +75

Appropriation of space. The allocation of school space, such as scoreboards, rooftops, bulletin boards, walls, and textbooks, on which corporations may place corporate logos or advertising messages for a wide range of products, including soft drinks and snack foods.

Percent change: +394

Sponsored educational materials. Materials supplied by corporations or trade associations that claim to have an instructional content. The aforementioned Tootsie Roll geography quiz is one example.

Percent change: +1038

Electronic marketing. The provision of electronic programming, equipment, or both in return for the right to advertise to students or their families and community members in the school when they contact the school or district. The advertising on the Channel One program contains a heavy dollop of ads for foods of little nutritional value.

Percent change: +9

Privatization. Management of schools or school programs by private for-profit corporations or other nonpublic entities. Contracting school cafeterias to fast-food franchises may be the most obvious example of such privatization schemes.

Percent change: +2213

Fund-raising. Commercial programs marketed to schools to raise funds for school programs and activities, including door-to-door sales, affinity marketing programs, and similar ventures. Many fund-raising programs rely on the sale of food, including frozen pizzas, candy, and the like. [17]

Percent change: N/A (CERU began tracking fundraising in 1999-2000)

CERU's annual reports have documented the extraordinary reach of commercial activities in schools and classrooms-activities that often are in the service of marketing nutritionally unhealthful products.

Examples abound. In Indianapolis, students are enrolled in what would seem to be an unlikely school-The Lafayette Square Mall. Students attend classes, work at part-time jobs for credit, fulfill a mandatory gym requirement by walking the mall, and get their meals at the mall food court. All this is under a program that is run by America's largest mall developer, the Simon Property Group, which operates 19 alternative public schools in malls for students who are deemed at risk of dropping out. Although supporters offer a benign, even laudatory interpretation of their efforts, psychologist Susan Linn points out the inherent problem in a mall-based school. "Schools are supposed to be good for kids," says Linn, author of *Consuming Kids: The Hostile Takeover of Childhood*. She adds: ". . .if a school embraces a commercial enterprise or commercial values, the school is sanctioning them. . .A mall is full of businesses that want to sell things, and sell things to kids" [18].

In Oregon in 2002, Andrea Boyes, a 15-year-old student, was barred from selling bottled water on the campus of her school, West Salem High, to raise money for the cheerleading squad to which she belonged. The action against Boyes was taken because of an exclusive contract under which only Pepsi Cola products could be sold on school grounds [19,20]. For Gary Boyes, Andrea's father, the incident raised questions about "the actual rights of the contracting parties to inhibit student rights and modify accepted uses of publicly owned properties" (Gary Boyes, personal communication, 2002).

Soft drinks and snack foods are not the only services for which such exclusive agreements exist. Photography firms, for example, sign exclusive agreements with schools in which they require families to use the firm's picture in school yearbooks, and, in return, provide yearbook publication services. A bill that

would have reined in that practice in Connecticut died in the state legislature in 2004 [21]. The lion's share of such agreements, however, revolve around food and beverages. One of the largest such contracts-if not the largest-was signed in 2003 at the Hillsborough County (Fla.) school district: a \$50-million, 12-year pact with Pepsi Bottling Group that ensured that vending machines in the county's 62 middle and high schools would sell only Pepsi product [22]. "I agree that sodas are not the best thing in the world for you, but we have to find every possible resource to educate our children," a school board member told the *St. Petersburg Times*. While noting further the school's "obligation" to provide healthy food and teach about healthy diets, Candy Olson, the board member added: "I don't think the schools have the responsibility of being the food police. And I don't think schools should be expected to turn up their noses" at \$4 million annually [22].

Such agreements can act as a sort of conceptual gateway and open schools up to other forms of commercial involvement. A *Tampa Tribune* editorial writer, advocating that cash-strapped Pasco school district sell naming rights and advertising on buses, observed in support of his proposal: "The district already has a contract with Pepsi for exclusive beverage rights in schools. The door has already been open [sic]" [23]. By contrast, an editorial writer for the competing *St. Petersburg Times* penned a commentary that lauded two Pasco County schools for rejecting Pepsi contracts for vending machines that would have operated all day [24]. The differing editorial views illustrate how marketing unhealthful foods in schools is becoming a point of contention in some communities (Fig. 1).

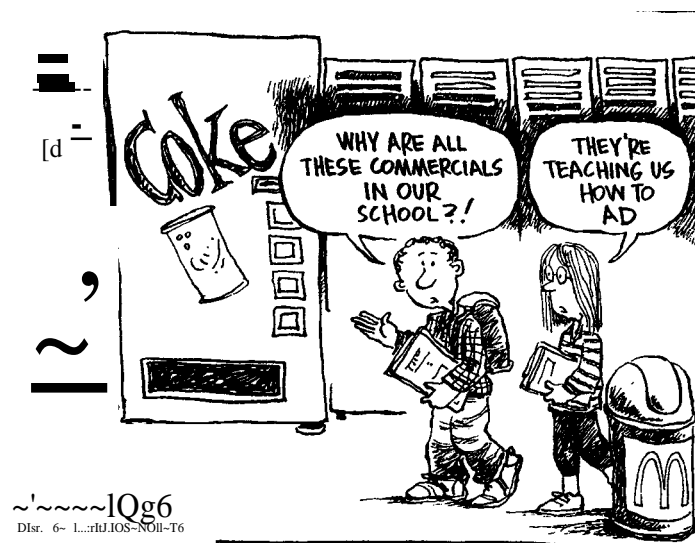


Fig. 1. Cartoon. (Courtesy of Tribune Media Services. Los Angeles, California; with permission.)

Exclusive agreements also may offer opportunities for corruption and distort school priorities and values. That seems to be the case in New York City when Snapple won an exclusive contract to sell beverages in city buildings, including schools, in return for \$40 million to the district for athletics and other activities. New York City Controller William Thompson said Snapple was awarded its bid "through a tainted process with a predetermined outcome that was not the best deal for the city of New York" [25]. Superintendent Joel Klein denied the accusation [25]. *New York Sun* writer, Andrew Wolf, related the account of an unidentified elementary school principal who refused to permit a Snapple vending machine in his school's lunchroom, despite pressure from a Snapple representative. A week after he turned away that representative, the principal was confronted with the delivery of two more machines, and claims that there was a signed contract from the school principal-who had done no such thing. A union representative from the Council of Supervisors and Administrators (CSA) told the *Sun* that "this encounter was not unique," Wolf wrote. He quoted CSA spokesman Richard Relkin: "Not all principals know that they can say no to Snapple. And there are those who know that they can say no, but are too intimidated to do so." Wolf said that the anonymous principal pointed out that in a school such as his, where most children were on the free lunch program and already were provided with milk or juice, outside products posed several problems: pressure to spend money "that some of their parents can't really afford to give them"; conflicts over money brought to school; and the likelihood of too much sugar, even in purportedly healthful drinks [26].

School districts, teachers, and parents have begun to look critically at corporate-sponsored educational materials and other commercial activities in schools (Fig. 2). Parent groups large and small have passed resolutions and policy directives on the subject, among them the National Parent-teacher Association [27] and Parents Advocating School Accountability, based in San Francisco [28]. Local school boards have begun to rein in commercial activities. In Seattle, advertising was restricted severely [29], and in Los Angeles, the school board banned the sale of soft drinks beginning in 2004, citing an epidemic of adolescent obesity in its decision [30]. Several professional organizations have developed voluntary guidelines to help determine which, if any, corporate-sponsored educational materials have merit. These organizations include the National Education Association [31], the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals in Business [32], and the various organizations that have adopted the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools [33].

The American Academy of Pediatrics also published material that is critical of commercial messages in schools that promote unhealthy nutrition and eating habits [34]. In January 2004, the academy issued a statement declaring that soft drinks did not belong in schools and called for pediatricians to take up the fight to remove them [35,36].

Local and statewide bans on soft-drink sales in schools have increased in popularity. As many as 15 states introduced legislation that restricts school vending machine sales, and individual school districts began taking action as well

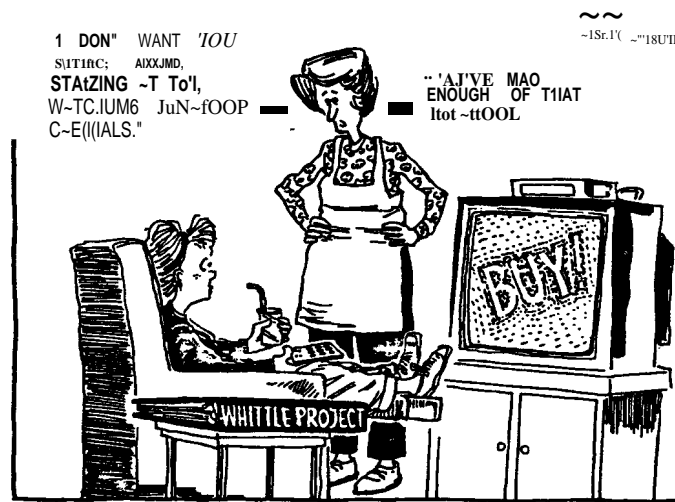


Fig. 2. Cartoon. (Courtesy of Tribune Media Services, Los Angeles, California; with permission.)

[36]. Conversely, in some states, the trend was reversed. Florida, for example, issued guidelines that barred the sale of soda in schools until 1 hour after the last lunch period of the day. In 2003, the state changed its rules to permit soda sales all day if noncarbonated fruit juices also were available [24].

In Lake County, Florida, near Orlando, the school board voted in December 2003 to limit vending machine sales to water, juice, and sports drinks and gave up a \$5 million, 10-year contract with Pepsi as well; members cited nutritional concerns [36]. Meanwhile, in the Hillsborough district (the one with the \$50-million deal), Principal Tom Rao dismissed as "a reactionary thing" a state bill to ban carbonated drinks and others high in sugar from school vending machines [36].

Philadelphia public schools have banned selling soda in an action that initiated by schools chief executive, Paul G. Vallas, who was unhappy because of poor nutrition and increasing childhood obesity [37]. The district followed through in early 2004; the School Reform Commission voted 3-2 to permit only 100% juice drinks; drinking water without sweeteners, flavors or colors; as well as milk and milk-flavored drinks [38]. In doing so, the district was following a trend that was evident throughout suburban Philadelphia's school districts [39].

Aldermen in Chicago in 2003 introduced a resolution that urged that school district to limit "the sale of minimally nutritious food and beverages" [40] and the Chicago Public Schools subsequently banned soda and junk food from vending machine on orders from CEO Arne Duncan [41]. The DeKalb County (Ga.) school board barred schools from selling soft drinks, candy, and other items during the school day [42]. The Austin, Texas, school district approved a district-wide ban on sodas and food that it considered unhealthy in vending machines,

although under U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) rules, chocolate bars, chips, and sugar-laden pastries were permitted, along with more healthful snacks, such as canned tuna, trail mix, and baked potato chips [43].

In 2003, South Carolina's state Senate Education Committee considered a bill that would bar junk food from schools that did not comply with dietary requirements of the National School Lunch Act. The legislation would eliminate vending machines, fast food, and candy sales of nonnutritive foods that are high in calories, fat, or sugar and only would permit the sale of 100% fruit juices, water, low-fat milk, and other more nutritious offerings on school premises [44]. Under the Competitive Foods Policy of neighboring North Carolina, schools were ordered in 2003 not to sell "competitive foods" (ie, foods that competed with lunchroom offerings) in or within 35 feet of school lunchrooms, unless profits funded school lunch programs; only high schools were permitted to sell sodas, and not during lunch periods; and foods of minimum nutritional value were barred from a la carte lines [45]. California's legislature passed and then-Governor Gray Davis signed the California Childhood Obesity Prevention Act, which took effect on July 1, 2004. The act restricted junk food and candy sales in schools [46]. It limited elementary schools to selling water, milk, or 100% fruit juice and middle schools to selling water; milk; fruit drinks, with at least 50% juice and no added sugar; and sports drinks, such as Gatorade [46,47]. A bill passed the New York Assembly June 1, 2004, which banned candy and soda from school vending machines; it was sent to the state Senate, which had not acted on it by mid-July [48].

New questions have been raised about the relative costs and benefits of vending machines in schools. In Texas, the state Agricultural Commissioner, Susan Combs, conducted a 4-month study of school vending machines in 2003 and concluded that they cost schools' food services \$60 million in sales annually. Combs sought open records information on school district vending contracts, and reported that 52% of the districts that responded had exclusive food and drink vending contracts [49]. The department also issued a statement that called on elementary schools to "prevent students from accessing FMNVs [Foods of minimal nutritional value] on school premises. Such food and beverages may not be sold or given away on school premises. . .during the school day" [50].

In 2004, a study by West Virginia's state Education Department's Office of Child Nutrition found that a state law that requires soda and snack machines to be turned off during breakfast and lunch periods "is seldom enforced." The report recommended that the state school board require counties, not schools, to approve and sign beverage contracts and review them to prohibit aggressive monitoring. The report also recommended that more healthful alternatives to soft drinks, such as milk, juice, and water, be made available at competitive prices [51]. On the heels of the report, a candidate for governor in the state vowed that he would remove junk food from schools, if elected [52].

In 2003, St. Paul, Minnesota schools implemented a rule that required that 75% of beverage and snack vending machine slots be taken up with healthful drinks and snacks [53]. When, in 2004, Central York School District con-

sidered whether to sign an exclusive deal with Pepsi or Coke, the district's athletic director saw as "the only downside" the fact that the district would be able to deal with only one company. School board members, however, took note of increasing obesity concerns as well as efforts elsewhere to remove soda machines [54].

In the face of some claims that more healthful options to soda and candy do not sell, a 2002 study by the Utah Health Department and University of Utah found that when more nutritious options were offered in vending machines at three Utah middle schools, they "sold fairly well against the candy and soft drink machines" [55]. In Rosemont High School in Minnesota, however, administrators reported that when soda vending machines were replaced with fruit juice and water machines, monthly revenue dropped by 10% to 15% [53].

Bringing in more healthful products sounds, for the most part, like a positive development. At times, however, more healthful options seem to give school districts political cover for not rejecting less healthful ones. In Georgia, for example, the Cherokee County school board in 2004 rejected a plan that would have limited the sale of soft drinks by permitting them only in the gymnasium or cafeteria areas. In deciding not to change its current policy, which permitted sweet drinks and fatty foods, the district's superintendent, Frank Petruzielo, said that the board reasoned it was enough that vending machines already offered more nutritious products, such as low-fat pretzels, fruit leather snacks, and trail mix [56].

In addition to sparking criticism from health authorities, occasionally, exclusive drink contracts draw opposition from competing businesses. A Syracuse, New York-based maker of sports drinks, American Quality Beverages (AQB), in 2003 sued the Fulton, New York school district and alleged that its 10-year, \$500,000 contract with Coke circumvented a competitive bidding process that the firm had won to sell Z'lektra sports drinks in area schools; the agreement was voided as a result of the Coke deal [57]. New York's Commissioner of Education, Richard P. Mills, issued a statement in March 2004 that reiterated the importance of competitive bidding under New York's education laws [58]. The AQB lawsuit is still pending (Ross Getman, Esq, attorney for AQB, personal communication, 2004).

School districts often resist giving up the contracts, fearing that the loss of funds will hamper their operations further, and sometimes join campaigns to turn back bans on soda in schools. "[S]imply banning soft drinks will have little impact on the problem" of obesity, the executive director of the National Association of State Boards of Education complained in a letter to the editor of *Education Week* in the fall of 2003, adding later: "We also should not ignore the unintended consequences of restricting schools' freedom to create business partnerships at a time when cuts in school budgets make every dollar count" [59].

In 2003, the school board in Seattle, Washington agreed to limits on an exclusive agreement with Coca-Cola, but stopped short of an outright ban on soft drink sales [60] in a deal that was worth approximately \$390,000 a year [61]. The board required Coke to reserve three slots in each vending machine for water and

100% fruit juice, and added a clause that allowed it to cancel the new 5-year agreement, and required that middle school vending machines be turned off until after school each day [60]. The partial measure did not satisfy George Washington University law professor, John Banzhaf III, a tobacco lawsuit expert and activist, who said that he was interested in aiding any Seattle lawyer who wanted to pursue lawsuit against the district [60].

Banzhaf, dismissing the three-slot requirement, told an interviewer: "I wonder what proponents of this view would say if someone suggested that the school could also make money by having vending machines in the school which would sell other lawful products like *Playboy*, *Playgirl*, and *Hustler* magazines? Would that proposal be acceptable if three slots were reserved for *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News*?" [62]. Seattle attorney Dwight Van Winkle said that a lawsuit would be grounded in the premise that "I don't think the School Board has any authority to be offering children up for sale to Coca-Cola" [62]. The lawsuit threat did not deter the board, which renewed the contract [63]. More recently, however, a November 2003 election changed the make-up of the board, which went on to implement much stronger policies against commercialism [64].

Often, though, exclusive agreements seem to divide the loyalties of school boards, who are charged with protecting student health, and of students themselves. A study in the *Journal of School Health* that was published in February 2004 zeroed in on the internal contradictions in the thinking of school board members. On the one hand, board members who responded to an attitude survey spoke in support of "providing healthy food options, establishing minimum nutrition standards for fast foods, and limiting and monitoring food and soda advertisements in their districts" [65]. At the same time, however, "of those who knew they had an exclusive beverage vendor contract, just 31% did not agree with awarding such a contract, and 26% wholly supported it," the researchers wrote. "Thus, many board members remain uncommitted on this issue, presumably either from lack of familiarity with the issue, or lack of priority where it is concerned" [65].

Students sometimes fight for their right to soda pop as well. In 2003, Caleb Powers, a Free State High School student in Lawrence, Kentucky complained at a school board meeting at which elimination of soda sales was being considered, "It's not really the board's place to come in and say, 'You can't have this.'" [66]. The board deferred a decision, initially, but ultimately, spurred on by hopes of gaining \$1 million to \$3 million a year [67], decided to seek bids on an exclusive contract-albeit one with limitations on hours and offering juices, waters, and other drinks besides soda [68]. The soda ban in Austin, Texas prompted high school senior, Greg Lesson, who drank a Sprite a day, to complain about students' lack of choice: "Would they rather us be upset and drink healthy or drink sodas and be happy?" [43].

For its part, Coke responded in 2003 with new "model guidelines" that ended the use of the soft drink maker's logos on textbooks and curriculum materials and vowed to provide water, juices, and other drinks along with sodas where it sold soft drinks in schools [69]. "The company and its bottlers are fighting to keep

their presence in schools, amid criticism that soft drinks contribute to obesity among young people," observed the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* [70]. Centerville, Ohio pediatrician and school board member, David Roer, whose school district has banned all soft drinks and replaced them in vending machines with water, milk, and juice, responded that the guidelines were "a good start from Coke but the ultimate goal would be to get rid of carbonated beverages and provide more nutritious products" [71].

While soda purveyors fight to retain their access to student consumers and school administrators fear the loss of revenues, other marketers have found an opportunity. Roy Warren, the chief executive officer of Bravo Foods International Corp., a marketer of dairy products through vending machines, told securities analysts in a conference call August 12, 2003, that the company saw "new opportunities to diversify" as school districts began phasing out soft drinks "and looking for more nutritionally fortified products. . ." [72]. Dairy industry groups offered schools modest rebates (typically \$1000 per machine) for installing milk vending machines [73]. Switch Beverage Co., a maker of carbonated 100% fruit juice that is based in Richmond, Virginia, persuaded the USDA to declare it permissible in schools during meal times under the USDA's restrictions that bar "foods of minimal nutritional value" during school lunches. Switch also developed contract agreements that are similar to those of soda companies that reward schools for stocking its products [74].

The growth of school commercialism raises fundamental issues of public policy, curriculum content, the proper relationship of educators to the students who are entrusted to them, and the values that the schools embody. On the one hand, public health authorities and educators generally have long considered schools to be venues for teaching students and their parents important information about health and healthy nutrition. Yet, at the same time, schools have become enlisted in commercial programs, some of which convey contradictory messages, particularly where health and nutrition are concerned.

The CDC's School Health Policies and Programs Study 2000 found that of schools surveyed, 80.7% offered baked goods that were not low in fat for sale to students in school lunch programs, whereas only 22% offered fruits and vegetables and 49% offered low-fat baked goods. The same study found that 76.4% sold chocolate candy, whereas only 12% sold fruit or vegetable juice [75].

Summary

As recently as 15 years ago, a tacit, national community standard existed between the private and public sector around the purpose of public education and the role of schools as laboratories of citizenship, free of commercial pressures. The growing commercialization of the classroom is only part of a larger change in thinking about, funding, and reforming public education in America. Schoolhouse commercialism is a reflection of larger economic, social, cultural, and political forces. Whether schools and their students are subordinated to the

market place will depend in large measure on how we understand childhood and the proper relationship between adults and the children for whom we are responsible.

Despite increased opposition, commercialism in schools is so pervasive that it remains difficult for many people to see. It blends seamlessly with the marketing maelstrom that defines contemporary American culture. In a world in which many parents spend their leisure hours patrolling shopping malls, who arrive home from work exhausted with a bag of fast food under each arm for dinner, whose credit cards always have a balance, and who spend long hours trying to earn the money to pay for the possessions they covet, it may be naïve to think they would be alert to the dangers of marketing to their children in schools. Yet the evidence suggests that parents and ordinary citizens are much more concerned about the corporate exploitation of children in school than the professional educators to whom those children are entrusted. CERU research has, for example, consistently shown that education publications rarely address the issue of school commercialism [16].

Pedagogically, marketing in schools is destructive. Who should students take more seriously—a health and nutrition teacher who encourages them to eat a balanced diet that is low in fat, sugar, and salt or a principal who promotes an exclusive agreement with a bottling company that includes bonuses if students meet certain consumption goals? The curriculum is supposed to represent the essence of a school's purpose. Nevertheless, it is not hard to imagine the "official" nutrition lesson being overwhelmed by the "real world" example that is provided by the principal. In the "real world," short-term financial gain trumps the long-term health and well-being of students. This is the lesson with which the students likely will walk away.

References

- [1] Obesity on the rise, new data show. Press release, National Center for Health Statistics. Oct. 8, 2002. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/releases/02news/obesityonrise.htm>. Accessed October 18, 2002.
- [2] Tirozzi G. Challenges facing our schools. Presented at the the White House Healthy Schools Summit. Washington, DC, October 7, 2002.
- [3] Wyshak G. Teenaged girls, carbonated beverage consumption, and bone fractures. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 2000;154(6):542-3.
- [4] Ludwig DS, Peterson KE, Gortmaker SL. Relation between consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks and childhood obesity: a prospective, observational analysis. *Lancet* 2001;357:505-8.
- [5] Obesity-related ills on the rise in kids. Available at: <http://www.msnbc.com/news/1746276.asp>. Accessed December 5, 2004.
- [6] Selling to-and selling out---<children. *Lancet* 2002;360(9338):959.
- [7] From wallet to waistline. The hidden costs of super sizing. The National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity. Available at: <http://www.cspinet.org/lw2w.pdf>. Accessed April 15, 2004.
- [8] Growing up. .and out: American kids heavier than ever. Available at: <http://www.msnbc.com/news/543213.asp>. Accessed December 5, 2004.
- [9] Sturm R. The effects of obesity, smoking, and problem drinking on chronic medical problems and health care costs. *Health Aff* 2002;21(2):245-53.

- [10] Harty S. Hucksters in the classroom: a review of industry propaganda in schools. Washington DC: Center for Study of Responsive Law; 1979.
- [11] Consumers Union. Captive kids: commercial pressures on kids at school. Yonkers (NY): Consumers Union Education Services; 1995.
- [12] Consumers Union Education Services. Selling America's kids: commercial pressures on kids of the '90s. Available at: <http://www.asu.edu/educ/epsVCERUIDocuments/1999phil.html>. Accessed December 5, 2005.
- [13] Schor JB. Born to buy. New York: Scribner; 2004.
- [14] Teens spent \$170 million in 2002. Available at: <http://www.teenresearch.comIPRview.cfm?edit-id=152>. Accessed December 5, 2005.
- [15] McNea J. Tapping the three kids' markets. *Am Demogr* 1998;20:37-41.
- [16] Molnar A. Virtually everywhere: marketing to children in America's schools: the seventh annual report on trends in schoolhouse commercialism, Year 2003-2004. Tempe (AZ): Arizona State University, Education Policy Studies Laboratory, Commercialism in Education Research Unit; 2004.
- [17] Factsheet. Foods and beverages sold outside of school meal programs. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/shpps/factsheets/foods_sold_outside_school.htm. Accessed December 5, 2005.
- [18] Berdik C. Your all-mall mater. *The Boston Globe* May 30, 2004;D2.
- [19] Associated Press. Can't hold water. *American Marketing Assn. Marketing News* November 25, 2002;6.
- [20] Associated Press. Pepsi pours cold water on girl's project. *Seattle Times* November 4, 2002;B2.
- [21] Dixon K. Stem-cell research, business tax among dozens of bills killed. *Connecticut Post* (Bridgeport CT); May 6, 2004.
- [22] Mabe L. Pepsi high. *St. Petersburg Times* August 31, 2003;ID.
- [23] Yelverton W. Financial pinches in schools call for creative thinking. *Tampa Tribune, Pasco Section* August 17, 2003;B2.
- [24] Deny sweet tooth craving for easy cash for schools. *St. Petersburg Times/Pasco Times* January 27, 2004;2.
- [25] Pressman G. New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein interview, *WNBC TV News Forum* (transcript) March 21, 2004.
- [26] Wolf A. I'd like to buy the world a...Snapple? *The New York Sun* November 21, 2003;9.
- [27] Available at: <http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/CERU/Guidelines/CERU-0408-235-RGDL.pdf>. Accessed December 5, 2004.
- [28] Available at: <http://pasaorg.tripod.com/nutrition/nutrition.html>. Accessed December 5, 2004.
- [29] Available at: <http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/CERU/Guidelines/CERU-0409-243-RGDL.doc>. Accessed December 5, 2004.
- [30] DiMassa CM, Hayasaki E. LA schools set to can soda sales. *Los Angeles Times* August 25, 2002; I.
- [31] Available at: <http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/CERU/Guidelines/CERU-9505-109-GDL.doc>. Accessed December 5, 2004.
- [32] Available at: <http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/CERU/Guidelines/CERU-9801-112-GDL.doc>. Accessed December 5, 2004.
- [33] Available at: http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/CERU/Guidelines/CERU_Guidelines.htm. Accessed December 5, 2004.
- [34] Reid L, Gedissman A. Required TV program in schools encourages poor lifestyle choices. Available at: <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/reid/IOO.htm>. Accessed December 5, 2004.
- [35] American Academy of Pediatrics. Committee on School Health. Policy statement: Soft drinks in schools. Available at: <http://aapolicy.aapublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;113/11152>. Accessed December 5, 2004.
- [36] Thompson SH. Bubble trouble. *Tampa Tribune* March 16, 2004;1.
- [37] Philadelphia public schools to can sales of soda. *Philadelphia Inquirer* July 9, 2003.
- [38] Bradley A. Philadelphia schools ban sale of sodas to students. *Education Week, News in Brief* February 11, 2004.

- [39] Hardy D. Philadelphia schools express wariness against soda deals. *Philadelphia Inquirer* January 22, 2004.
- [40] Spielman F, Grossman KN. Alderman look at reducing snack food in schools. *Chicago Sun-Times* October 2,2003;11.
- [41] Associated Press. Chicago bans soda pop in schools. April 21, 2004.
- [42] Sansbury J. DeKalb education notebook: no soda allowed in school machines. Available at: <http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/dekalb/0104/01ednotebook.html>. Accessed December 5, 2004.
- [43] Martinez M. Because it's good for you. *Austin American-Statesman* August 20, 2003;B1.
- [44] Bruce A. What's for lunch? *The Post and Courier* (Charleston, S.c.) August 12, 2003;1C.
- [45] Kinnin C. District eyes \$29,000 'windfall.' Available at: <http://dailysoutherner.com/articles/2003/11/11news/news2.txt>. Accessed December 5, 2004.
- [46] Stewart G. No more junk food to be sold on Tustin school campuses. *The Orange County Register/The Tustin News*; November 27,2003.
- [47] Associated Press. Assembly restricts soda sales at schools. *San Diego Union Tribune*; August 22, 2004:A5.
- [48] Santora M. Taking candy from pupils? School vending bill says yes. *The New York Times* June 2, 2004;B4.
- [49] Zuniga J. School vending machines criticized. *Houston Chronicle* August 28, 2003;A34.
- [50] Grafe J. Feds, state go sour on sweets in classrooms. *Gazette Enterprise* (Guadalupe County, Texas). October 19, 2003.
- [51] Barker A. Nearly 100 schools selling soft drinks to kids. *Associated Press* March 11,2004.
- [52] Bundy J. Richie Robb calls himself "Republican with results." *Associated Press* March 13, 2004.
- [53] Draper N. Schools amending vending choices. *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, Minn.) October 10, 2003;1A.
- [54] Weiler M. Central ponders contract for soda. *The York (Pa.) Dispatch*; January 28, 2004.
- [55] Phillips V. Put good foods in machines. *Deseret Morning News* August 20,2003;C1.
- [56] Stepp D. Schools' vending snacks spared; Cherokee board sees need of cash. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* February 6, 2004;C10.
- [57] Doran E. Build a better slingshot. *The Post-Standard* (Syracuse, N.Y.); October 30,2003.
- [58] American Quality Beverges. Soda in schools-new state ruling. (Press release). Available at: http://www.asu.edu/educ/epsllCER_U/Community%20Corner/CERU-0404-204-RCC.doc. Accessed December 5, 2004.
- [59] Welburn B. Vending ban is no cure for childhood obesity [letter]. *Education Week* November 5, 2003.
- [60] Vinh T. Soft drinks limited for middle-schoolers. *Seattle Times* July 18, 2003;B1.
- [61] Ervin K. Legal experts warn Seattle School Board against renewing Coke contract. *Seattle Times* July 2, 2003.
- [62] Bach D. Legal threat bubbling beneath soda contract. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* July 17, 2003;B 1.
- [63] Vail K. Despite threat, Seattle keeps its sodas. *Am Sch Board J* 2003;190(9):14-6.
- [64] Seattle School Board. Seattle school board approves comprehensive suite of nutrition policies. News release. Available: <http://www.seattleschools.org/larealnews/x40903nr.xml>. Accessed December 5, 2004.
- [65] Brown KM, Akintobi TH, Pitt S, et al. California school board members' perceptions offactors influencing school nutrition policy. *J Sch Health* 2004;74(2):52-8.
- [66] Carpenter T. Lawrence students stand up for soft drink sales. *Lawrence (Kan.) Journal-World*; October 14, 2003.
- [67] Carpenter T. Lawrence, Kan, school district mulls cola company contract. *Lawrence (Kan.) Journal-World*; November 23,2003.
- [68] Carpenter T. District puts soda choice up for bids. *Lawrence (Kan.) Journal-World*; November 25, 2003.

- [69] Coca-Cola Inc. Your power to choose: model guidelines for school beverage partnerships. Available at: <http://www.asu.edu/educ/epsI/CERU/Community%20Corner/CERU-0311-180-RCC.pdf>. Accessed December 5, 2004.
- [70] Leith S. Coke reworks pitch in schools. Atlanta Journal-Constitution November 15, 2003:1A.
- [71] Terhune C. Coke's guidelines for soft drinks in schools face some criticism. The Wall Street Journal November 17, 2003.
- [72] Q2 2003 Bravo Foods Int'l Corp. earnings conference call. Transcript distributed by CCBN Inc. August 12, 2003.
- [73] Ullmer K. Centerville, dairy group get together. Dayton Daily News December 25, 2003:Z2-1.
- [74] Model schools switch from soda to juice without losing funding fizz. Press release for Switch Beverage Co. Distributed by Business Wire. April 24, 2004.
- [75] Centers for Disease Control. School Health Policies and Programs Study 2000. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/shpps/factsheets/pdfOO/overview.pdf>. Accessed December 5, 2004.

Unlike free speech, commercial speech does not enjoy the same protections under the First Amendment of the Constitution.⁹⁰ Advertisements can be restricted or even banned if there is a significant public health risk. Cigarette advertising and alcohol advertising would seem to fall squarely into this category, and ads for junk food could easily be restricted.⁹¹ 84. Molnar A. School commercialism and adolescent health. *Adolesc Med Clin*. 2005;16:447-461, ix.