

## FOOD MARKETING TO CHILDREN IN SCHOOL



### Food marketing to children works.

Parents know from experience that food ads and marketing affect not only which foods their children ask them to purchase, but also which foods their children are willing to eat.

According to the American Heart Association (AHA), aggressive marketing and advertising of high-calorie, unhealthy foods to children contribute to the childhood obesity epidemic.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of public school students are exposed to some form of food and beverage marketing at school; in 2012, 70% of elementary and middle school students and 90% of high school students attended schools with food marketing.<sup>2</sup>

In 2009, food companies spent \$150 million marketing to children in school.<sup>3</sup>



### Common In-School Food Marketing Approaches:

- ◆ Posters and signs
- ◆ Vending machine exteriors
- ◆ Ads on buses
- ◆ In-school television ads (e.g. Channel One)
- ◆ Ads in school newspapers, yearbooks, and on school radio stations
- ◆ Announcements on the public announcement (PA) system

### Marketed foods typically are of poor nutritional quality.

The overwhelming majority of foods marketed to children are of poor nutritional quality,<sup>4,5</sup> including in schools.

The majority of foods and beverages marketed to students are high in calories, sugar, salt, and fat, and are low in essential nutrients.<sup>6</sup>

Candy and snack food manufacturers, beverage companies, and fast-food restaurants are among the companies that market most heavily in schools.<sup>7,3</sup>

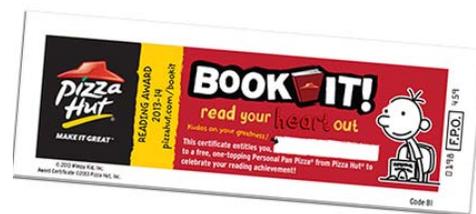
In 2009, beverage companies accounted for more than 90% of marketing expenditures directed at children in schools.<sup>3</sup>

### Marketing in schools undermines school food improvements.

Since 2012, schools have implemented updated meal patterns that are making school meals more wholesome and nutritious, and since 2014, they are improving the nutritional quality of foods sold through vending, a la carte, school stores, fundraisers, and other foods sold outside of the school meal programs.<sup>8</sup>

Yet companies continue to market products that cannot be sold on campus, undermining healthy school food efforts, and students' diets and health.

Although some food and beverage companies have voluntarily agreed to limits on marketing in schools through the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI), CFBAI's school marketing guidelines exclude middle and high schools, and do not apply to many forms of marketing in elementary schools.<sup>9</sup>



# Marketing of low-nutrition foods in schools undermines parents' efforts to feed children a healthy diet, nutrition education efforts, and children's health.

While children are in school, parents are not there to help guide their children's food choices.

Only 20% of public school districts have a policy addressing food and beverage marketing, and only half of those districts explicitly prohibit the marketing of unhealthy food and beverages.<sup>10</sup> Less than 10% of states have policies to limit unhealthy marketing in schools (AL, DC, ME, WV).

## Common In-School Food Marketing Approaches:

Logos, brand names, spokes characters, or product names on or in conjunction with:

- ◆ Corporate-sponsored educational materials, curricula, and supplies
- ◆ Incentive programs that provide food as rewards
- ◆ Coupons, free samples and taste tests
- ◆ Programs that provide schools with supplies when families buy food products
- ◆ Sports uniforms, scoreboards, team sponsorships
- ◆ Food and beverage cups and containers
- ◆ School discount nights at restaurants
- ◆ Scholarships

## School Revenue.

Districts typically receive minimal revenue, particularly compared to districts' total budgets. A national study found that two-thirds of schools that engaged in commercial advertising received no income at all, and only 0.4% of schools generated more than \$50,000.<sup>11</sup>



Schools can still allow food and beverage marketing if they swap out unhealthy products for healthier ones (e.g. instead of featuring the Coca-Cola logo on a scoreboard, feature Diet Coke, or feature baked chips instead of regular chips on a school store display rack).

There are many alternatives to unhealthy food marketing to raise revenue. School districts have had success with non-food fundraisers that are easy to implement and profitable, including selling fruit, jewelry, holiday items, and toys, walk-a- thons, discount cards, and recycling printer cartridges.<sup>12,13</sup>

## Americans support limits on in-school marketing.

In a national survey, two-thirds of adults reported that they oppose marketing of unhealthy food and soda in schools.<sup>14</sup>

For more information, please visit [www.foodmarketing.org](http://www.foodmarketing.org) or contact [nutritionpolicy@cspinet.org](mailto:nutritionpolicy@cspinet.org).

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