

GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION ABOUT ADVERTISING IN SCHOOLS

Why worry about commercialism in schools?

Schools are a significant target of business marketing. Businesses want the school's purchasing dollar, they want staff and parents to buy their products in and out of school, and most importantly, they want to influence children to either purchase an item themselves or influence their parents to purchase it for them. Marketing to schools covers a wide range of products including supplies, textbooks, food, electronic equipment, building supplies, games, toys, personal hygiene products, cleaning supplies, clothing, entertainment (movies and television), etc. In short, if it is a consumer product, it is likely to be marketed to schools.

How do you determine if advertising or commercialism in the school is acceptable?

Two levels of scrutiny should be used when determining the value of the product versus the influence and effect on children.

Marketing targeted at adults only

Adults have a higher capacity to weight the benefits and drawbacks of a product than do children. When a commercial product or service is going to be used in the school but children will not be exposed to the product or service's marketing, it should be evaluated and scrutinized to determine:

1. Is the product or service really needed?
2. Is it the best product for the intended purpose?
3. Does it have the best value?
4. If the answer to 1, 2, or 3 above is "no", is there an overriding social service or public interest benefit from us the product or service?

Marketing targeted at children

When children are the ultimate marketing target, a higher level of scrutiny and evaluation must occur when determining if that product should be used or sold in the school because children are less able than adults to understand how advertising and commercialism affect them. They cannot make a clear decision based on the four criteria listed above. Therefore, if the case of children being the target of the marketing, the adult (administrator, teacher, staff, parent, or guardian) should determine:



1. If the commercial product or service is used in school, is it likely to influence a child to want that item now or in the future? If no, then the product or service should be scrutinized using the four questions above. If yes, the next questions should be evaluated.
2. Is the use of the commercial product or service necessary for the intended purpose or could a non-commercial alternative be used (i.e. teaching a particular lesson or providing nutritional value as part of a healthy lunch)?
3. Could a substitute item or items be used that would diminish or eliminate the commercial influence?
4. Does use of the commercial product or service have a significant educational benefit that would not otherwise occur (i.e. materials for the study of advertising and media as part of the curriculum)?
5. Have other sources of funding been explored prior to accepting a corporate donation or incentive?
6. Is there an overriding social service or public interest benefit from using the product or service?

In any case, if you are not sure about the decision, ask your supervisor.

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