

# Marketing in Schools

Federal law requires every school district to have a local wellness policy. These policies promote healthful school environments by addressing nutrition education, physical activity, school meals, and all foods and drinks at school. Research shows that children and teens who eat smart and move more focus better and have fewer behavior problems. They also have better math, reading, and writing test scores. As educators and administrators, you have the chance to put the policy into practice in a variety of ways. Encourage smart snacks and beverages from home and healthy options for after-school programs, staff meetings and field trips. Support pricing options that sell healthy foods for less. Restrict marketing to students. Promote quality nutrition education.

Simply offering healthy food choices in schools does not mean that students will choose them. It is important to use key marketing concepts to help students make smarter food choices at school. Effective marketing is based on the 4 Ps of the marketing mix which includes **P**roduct(s), **P**lacement, **P**romotion, and **P**rice. This means choosing healthy products, placing them in visible and highly trafficked locations, setting competitive prices and promoting them to students.

**Here, There, Everywhere!** Schools are a good place to market healthy foods since they hold a captive audience and provide the chance to reach most students. But food and beverage marketers know that too! They know that marketing in schools will help children and adolescents link the product with trusted schools and teachers, as well as build brand loyalty, increasing the chance of a lifetime of sales. Look around your school grounds and you will see many signs of marketing:

## **Product**

- Vending machine sales
- Exclusive contracts with soft drink companies (called pouring rights contracts)
- Competitive foods sold in school stores or cafeterias
- Branded fundraisers

## **Price**

- Product sales are often priced lower and so appear to be of 'better value' than healthier options

## **Placement**

- Ads on posters, vending machine, year books, school newspapers, curricula, school buses, scoreboards, computer banners and screensavers
- Ads in gymnasiums, school halls, school clinics, classrooms, cafeterias, and bathroom stalls
- Fast food chains in school cafeterias
- Mention of products, food or restaurant brands in corporate-sponsored educational materials

## **Promotion**

- Ads on in-school TV network, school radio stations or through the PA system
- Food or beverage containers or napkins
- School supplies like book covers, pencils and bookmarks
- Scholarships or sponsorships
- Contests with product prizes
- Educational incentive programs
- Sports equipment or uniforms
- Fundraising nights at fast food restaurants
- Proof of purchase programs
- Free samples, taste-tests, coupons or product giveaways

## **Helpful Websites**

[www.cspinet.org/](http://www.cspinet.org/)  
[www.californiaprojectLEAN.org](http://www.californiaprojectLEAN.org)

**Are there consequences?** Studies show that young children are unable to fight cognitively and psychologically against advertising. They are easily misled because they do not understand the notion of intent to sell and easily believe advertising claims at face value. Marketing also attracts the attention of children and adolescents, and impacts their food choices, food preferences and purchase requests. Poor dietary habits can cause students to have trouble focusing and succeeding in school. However, studies have shown that advertising healthy foods can increase wholesome eating in children as young as 3 to 6 years of age. So act now to create a positive environment in your school that promotes healthy lifestyle practices!

## **Market This!**

### **Fight unhealthy food and beverage marketing in schools**

- Don't market, sell or give away foods, drinks or brands of low nutrition.
- Allow fewer fast food chains in cafeterias and realize that fast food chains are not good sources of "educational materials."
- Teach media literacy with a focus on food marketing. Help students critically evaluate the nature, technique and impact of what they see, hear, and read in print, broadcast, and electronic media.
- Focus more on impacting students' motivation, attitudes and eating behaviors, and not just increasing their knowledge about nutrition.
- Make competitive foods less available to students by not signing exclusive "pouring rights" contracts and reducing snack food sales.
- Stop existing soda contracts but encourage sale of healthy beverages. Reject new soda contract offers or exclusive contracts with beverage vendors.
- Restrict commercial sponsorships and advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages. Do not allow logos or spokes-characters on books, curricula, school supplies, buses, scoreboards, or school property.
- Negotiate with vending machine suppliers to:
  - Get vending agreements allowing only healthy foods and beverages to be sold and marketed.
  - Have only images of healthy foods or non-food images on vending machine exteriors.
- Place healthier items in vending machines at eye level and move less healthy items onto the bottom row.
- Use school events! Give positive, motivating messages, verbal and non-verbal, about healthy eating and physical activity to students, families, staff, administrators, and the community at health fairs, school registration, parent-teacher conferences, PTA meetings, open houses, and staff in-services.

### **Local Wellness Policy Addresses School Marketing in Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland**

Marketing activities will promote healthful behaviors. Vending machine fronts will promote activity or consumption of approved beverages. In addition, nutrition information about meals is to be printed on the school menu that is sent home and on the MCPS Web site.

For more information on local wellness policy...

[www.NCActionForHealthyKids.org](http://www.NCActionForHealthyKids.org)  
[www.nutritionnc.com](http://www.nutritionnc.com)  
[www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com](http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com)

