

# Effective broadcasting of channel one



There is a large debate erupting within our nation's education system.

Corporate America is invading our classrooms and campuses at an alarming rate. Corporate conglomerates such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Nike, and US West are making their presence felt in the hallways, gyms and classrooms from grade schools to colleges. Should these companies be allowed to buy their way into the classroom? The answer is no. Corporate restructuring of our educational systems is not the way to solve our schools' funding problems. Big companies want to get into the classrooms as soon as possible.

Next year, 53 million American children will make up approximately \$250 billion dollars worth of immediate spending (Long, 2000: 1). If the children are properly marketed, this figure would rise exponentially in later years, leading to a lifetime of brand recognition. These children are beginning to associate certain products with the brand names that they see and use at school every day. This will then likely cause these children to continue to buy the same products later in life as well. This lifetime of purchasing power could lead to incalculable profits in future years.

Channel One is a daily newscast that is offered to students around the country. Nearly 40 percent of American schools tune into Channel One everyday (Manning, 1999: 1). A controversial entrepreneur, Chris Whittle, founded this company in 1989. These students are supposedly tuning into this program every day in order to keep up on current events and issues around the world. However, Channel One is now known as the most profitable in-school marketing campaign in the nation. The company gives the schools, which will allot time for students to watch the program, free satellites and television sets.

What it also gives them is two minutes of paid advertising (Stark, 2000; 1).

Nearly all of the 86, 000 schools across the country use some sort of program where the schools receive money or equipment in exchange for proof-of-purchase coupons or receipts (McQueen, 2000: 2). Is our public education system nothing more than an incentive based purchasing program, or are we trying to teach independent thought and creative thinking? Third grade math is being taught by using " Tootsie Rolls. " Classroom business courses are being taught by touring students through McDonald" s facilities.

Coca-Cola and Pepsi are feuding over multi-million dollar contracts that would ensure student consumption of their products first (Manning, 1999: 1). Nike offers free apparel and equipment for sports programs, only if the athletes will become walking billboards, wearing large logos on their jerseys and clothing. US West builds team scoreboards only for schools that will agree to exclusive vending deals. However, there is something else to be said about the commercialism of our nation" s public education system. In standardized testing, our nation" s education system is falling behind the rest of the world.

The government has been lagging on education reform, and fewer dollars are being pumped into most areas of public education. Some would say that commercialism is a great opportunity to put money back into the schools. South Fork Highschool In Marlin County, Florida gave Pepsi the exclusive right to to market and sell its beverages to their students in exchange for \$155, 000 (Stark, 2000: 3). A school that was in dire need of funding

received compensation and Pepsi, in turn, gets to be the sole distributor of beverages to the school.

This is the business exchange. These companies will provide money and services for schools that are lacking proper funding in exchange for what is turning out to be rudimentary corporate brainwashing. This may not be necessarily bad for the students, but it does pose a threat to true consumerism. Another great example of this is The Wal-Mart Corporation. More than 1,800 Teacher of the Year awards are given by Wal-Mart, each teacher receiving \$500 that can be turned around and spend at Wal-Mart to purchase goods and supplies for the class (Long, 2000: 2).

This is where Wal-Mart's investment begins to pay off. When the students see that Wal-Mart has recognized a teacher of theirs, and has in turn given money for the school, then the students will begin to see Wal-Mart as a good company. This may, in-turn, cause sub-conscious purchase intent in the future for these students. While this may seem like a fair trade, money in exchange for consideration, but there is a deeper issue at bay. Should this potential corporate brainwashing be allowed to occur when our children's susceptible minds are at risk?

If this is allowed to happen, then our entire society could be interpreted as being one large marketplace, where commercialism dominates over everything, even basic public education. There are some people who are fighting back against the onslaught of corporate propaganda, and it can make a difference. A group in Seattle, known as the Citizen's Campaign for Commercial-free schools (CCC), has been organizing meetings and "

commercialism walk-throughs" in order to raise public awareness of the situation (Manning, 1999: 3).

In these walk-throughs, groups from the CCC will go and collect as much marketing material in the schools as they can, and send copies of their reports to the appropriate school boards. One schoolboard, with pressure from the CCC and other supporters, issued a resolution stating " We are opposed to exposing schoolchildren to corporate values in an educational environment where they assume that whatever is presented to them carries the approval of the educational establishment (Manning, 1999: 3).

After this resolution was issued, members of the CCC were put on a school-community task force responsible for studying the issue and making policy recommendations. Four states have also begun to limit certain types of advertising and other commercial activity from their public schools:

California, Florida, New York, Maine, and Illinois (McQueen, 2000: 1).

According to the Center for Commercial-Free Public Education in Oakland, the Madison School Board in Wisconsin was the first ever to reject renewal of an existing corporate contract when they cancelled their contract with Coca-Cola after months of public debate (McQueen, 2000: 2).

In closing, it is imperative that this corporate desecration of our education system be stopped now. If this problem is not remedied, then businesses could quite feasibly end up running our public education. People are making a stand, but the results are too far and in-between for any real difference to be seen. Consumerism will eventually take the place of learning as the goal

of our schools, and we will fall further behind in terms of international education standards.