



Buy Me! Buy Me!

THE FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT ON TRENDS IN SCHOOLHOUSE COMMERCIALISM

Executive Summary

Corporate marketing in schools has become so commonplace that administrators and students alike are less troubled than they once were about selling themselves or their schools to the highest bidder. The commercial intrusion in schools, which has been growing for more than a decade, raises serious economic, ethical, and instructional issues for educators, parents and policy makers across the United States.

In its fourth annual report on trends in schoolhouse commercialism, the Commercialism in Education Research Unit (CERU) at Arizona State University determined that commercializing activity in and around schools **has grown nearly 500 percent since 1990**. CERU studied media coverage of eight categories of commercializing activities in the popular press, advertising and marketing press, the business press and education press. This year's report found:

- Sustained “brand-to-brand” combat and cradle-to-grave marketing campaigns now permeate classrooms and school life to such a degree that many students, administrators, and parents accept it as natural and unavoidable. Two high school students from New Jersey auctioned themselves this year to the highest bidder and promised to spend their college years doing promotions for a financial corporation. A teacher at a California high school jumped into a tub of noodle soup and belted out an alternative pop tune as part of a radio promotion.
 - Coverage of commercializing activity and its impact on schools, students, and their communities has been all-but ignored in the education press and its professional audience. Only 381 of more than 35,000 stories dealing with commercializing activity in the past 12 years were generated by the education press.
 - Professional education associations and administrators are becoming more vocal in their support of commercializing activities in schools. The General Accounting Office reports educators have begun joining corporate managers at conferences to learn how to increase revenue from in-school marketing schemes.
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- Fundraising efforts, which used to be limited to activities such as bake sales and students shaking coffee cans on corners, have evolved into big business ventures that underscore differences between the haves and the have-nots in our school systems. In California this year, an upscale high school reaped \$200,000 in one night with a black-tie gala, while students in a neighboring urban school district raised only \$60,000 through a year's worth of activities.

Of the eight categories of commercializing activity that CERU tracks, four areas showed declines in media coverage for the first time this year. The declines suggest two hypothesis: the first is that advertising, marketing, and other commercializing activities are becoming more widely accepted and, thus, less newsworthy; the second is that anti-commercializing movements are beginning to have a noticeable impact. It is too early to determine whether the 2000-2001 figures represent a general downward trend or merely a temporary pause in several categories. However, the downturn in media coverage is a significant change that CERU will monitor in coming years.

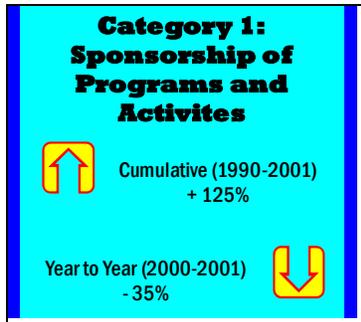
Table 1 reflects the recent downturns in several categories and the overall continued expansion of commercializing activities as reported by the media.

Category	Percent Change 1999-2000 to 2000-2001		1990 -2001	
Privatization	↑	29	4,160	↑
Exclusive Agreements	↑	03	1,432	↑
Educational Materials	↓	(-48)	938	↑
Appropriation of Space	↑	38	782	↑
Incentive Programs	↔	0	231	↑
Sponsorship of Programs	↓	(-35)	125	↑
Electronic Marketing	↓	(-39)	46	↑
Fundraising *	↓	(-34)	n/a*	
	Near-term change		Long-term change	

*CERU only began tracking fundraising as a separate in 1999-2001

Changes in Schoolhouse Commercialism during 2000-2001 by category:

Sponsorship of Programs and Activities



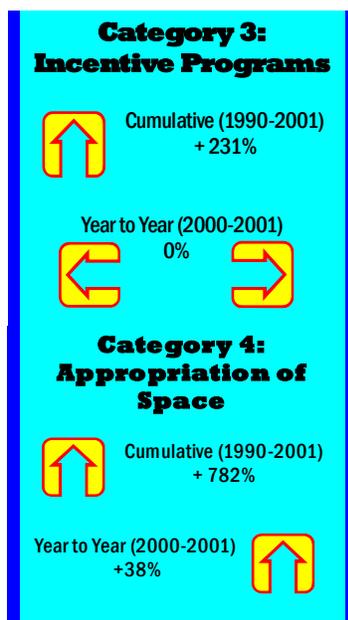
Sponsored programs and activities have dominated media coverage of School commercialism for more than a decade. This category is far and away the largest, accounting for 12,616 media hits since 1990 – nearly 2,000 more than the next nearest category, privatization. However, this year, for the first time, media coverage of sponsored programs and activities registered a decline – a significant decline of nearly 35 percent – compared to 1999-2000. The number of media hits in this category this year was the lowest (752) since 1995, indicating, perhaps, a shift in corporate commercial strategy.

Exclusive Agreements



Beginning in 1996, the issue of exclusive agreements between corporations and schools attracted widespread media interest. Overall, since 1990, media coverage of exclusive agreements has grown faster than any other category of commercialism except privatization. This was one of only three categories that continued to grow last year, in part, no doubt, because of media coverage about a growing backlash against exclusive agreements.

Incentive Programs



Media stories related to incentive programs have increased 231 percent since 1990, accounting for 4 percent of all coverage of commercialism during that period – roughly the same percentage of coverage as the media devoted to both appropriation of space and exclusive agreements. While the number of stories remained virtually unchanged last year, incentive programs grew increasingly creative and often attracted both prominent coverage and excited student interest.

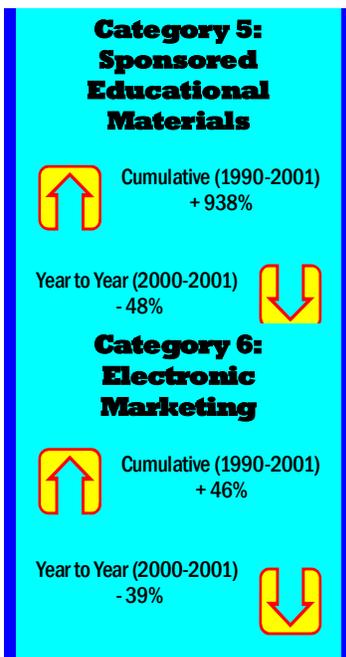
Appropriation of Space

No single category studied experienced a greater year-to-year jump in media attention in 2000-2001 than did appropriation of space. CERU defines appropriation of space as any allocation

of school space on which corporations place corporate logos or advertising messages. The category includes use of school facilities for commercial activities and advertisements placed on scoreboards, rooftops, bulletin boards, walls, and textbooks.

Sponsored Educational Materials

Media coverage of sponsored educational materials declined sharply in 2000-2001 and the category still only accounts for about 2 percent of all stories dealing with commercialism. Despite a 48 percent decline in media citations during the past year, this category, like all others, has shown a steady increase in attention since 1990. Overall since 1990, coverage of sponsored educational materials increased 938 percent – the third-fastest growth rate of all eight categories.



Electronic Marketing

Electronic marketing ranks third behind privatization and sponsored programs in the number of media hits since 1990. The category accounts for 12 percent of the overall coverage of commercialism and has grown by 46 percent since 1990. Last year, coverage of electronic marketing dropped 39 percent – the second largest drop in any category. However, there is more than little anecdotal evidence to indicate electronic marketing tactics in education are about to explode.



Privatization



Management of public schools, especially charter schools, by private, for-profit corporations or other non-public entities, emerged this year as the category with the highest number of media citations. Overall, the category has grown 4,160 percent since 1990 with steady gains in all four areas of the media examined – popular press, education journals, the business media, and advertising/marketing publications.

Fundraising



This category was added to the trends report in 1999-2000. School fundraising used to mean bake sales or car washes, kids going door-to-door with candy bars, or shaking coffee cans for coins on street corners. These days, fundraising has become big business. CERU considers any program or activity conducted to raise money for school operations or extracurricular activity to be fundraising.

The trends in this year's report underscore the need for a serious, systematic look at the impact commercialism is having on the nature of teaching and learning in schools as well as on the ability of American schools to achieve high levels of academic performance.
