

No Student Left Unsold
The Sixth Annual Report on
Schoolhouse Commercialism Trends
2002-2003

Executive Summary

No Student Left Unsold, the Education Policy Studies Laboratory's 2002-03 report on schoolhouse commercialism trends finds that commercialism remains firmly entrenched in schools. The laboratory's Commercialism in Education Research Unit (CERU) tracked eight categories of schoolhouse commercialism in media references from July 1, 2002-June 30, 2003. All but two of the eight categories have more references this period than the last period (July 1, 2001-June 30, 2002). References were identified by searching news databases using a series of search terms related to schools and commercialism.

Viewed against previous analyses of schoolhouse commercialism trends since 1990 conducted by CERU and its predecessor, the Center of the Analysis of Commercialism in Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the 2002-03 study shows that some categories are rebounding after having declined in past years.

The increase in commercialism in schools is taking place as schools confront tight budgets. Because schools across the country face budget shortfalls, they have taken such steps as holding a fundraising telethon (in Jefferson Parish, LA) and hiring full-time fundraisers (in Grapevine, TX), along with a variety of other cost-cutting and revenue-enhancing strategies.

The eight categories CERU tracks are below. Each category has its number of 2002-03 media references and the percent increase or decrease from 2001-02.

- **Corporate Sponsorship of School Programs and Activities:** 1,206 citations, up 1%.
- **Exclusive Agreements** (Agreements giving marketers exclusive rights to sell a product or a service on school or district grounds): 252 citations, up 65%.
- **Incentive Programs** (The use of commercial products or services as rewards for achieving an academic goal): 354 citations, up 87%.
- **Appropriation of Space** (The selling of naming rights or advertising space on school premises or property): 326 citations, up 196%.
- **Corporately Sponsored Educational Materials:** 310 references, up 313%.
- **Electronic Marketing** (The use of electronic media, including radio, television, and Internet, to target students through schools): 276 references, up 11%.
- **Privatization** (Private management of public schools, public charter schools, and private, for-profit school involvement in voucher programs): 1,570 references, down 15%.
- **Fundraising:** 970 references, up 17%.

The report also finds:

- An increasingly vocal resistance to commercializing activities, reflected both in citizen action and in the introduction of legislation seeking to rein in such activities.

- Foreign newspapers are continuing to report on commercializing activity in their home countries.
- Despite extensive coverage of commercializing activities in the mainstream U.S. press, the education press continues to pay scant attention to the issue. In contrast to 5,188 references to commercialism in popular, business, and advertising and marketing presses, the education press showed only 76 references in the study period.

The report concludes that schoolhouse commercialism is a reflection of larger economic, social, cultural, and political forces. Whether or not schools and their students are subordinated to the market place will depend in large measure on society's understanding of childhood and its assessment of the proper relationship between adults and children.