

COMMERCIALISM IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS: Who's Calling the Shots?



2006

Copies of the report *Commercialism in Canadian Schools: Who's Calling the Shots?* (2006) can be obtained from the sponsoring organization websites.



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Fédération canadienne des
enseignantes et des enseignants

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Research Team

Bernie Froese-Germain – Canadian Teachers' Federation

Colleen Hawkey – B.C. Teachers' Federation

Alec Larose – Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement

Patricia McAdie – Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

Erika Shaker – Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Cover design: Dirk Van Stralen www3.telus.net/vanstralen

Layout: Nadene Rehnby www.handsonpublications.com

School Commercialism Workgroup Members

Bernie Froese-Germain – Canadian Teachers' Federation

Colleen Hawkey – B.C. Teachers' Federation

Patricia McAdie – Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

Paul McCormick – Nova Scotia Teachers Union

Noreen O'Haire – Canadian Teachers' Federation

Erika Shaker – Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Donna Swiniarski – Alberta Teachers' Association

Tim Yee – Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation

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Introduction

Education, particularly delivered through the school system, has a mix of both public and private benefits. Labaree (1997) identifies three major goals of education: democratic equality, where education is a public good, preparing people for citizenship; social efficiency, also situating education as a public good, preparing people for the work world; and social mobility, viewing education as a private good, giving individuals a competitive edge in the market. It is this last goal that sees parents and students as consumers of education.

Belfield and Levin (2005) note that different types of schools have different mixes of private and public characteristics, from home-schooling being the most private in nature, to private schools, charter schools, and public schools.

In Canada, public education has been an important part of our social programs, programs designed to ensure a just society. In many ways, public education was a precursor to our legacy of public, universal programs. Even before Canada was officially founded, Egerton Ryerson was working to ensure that education became universally accessible – as a right for all regardless of circumstance. “On the importance of education generally we may remark, it is as necessary as the light – it should be as common as water, and as free as air.” (1829)

Over the last couple of decades, however, public education in Canada as in other countries has come under attack. This has, in part, been fuelled by a general push to lessen the role of

government and increase the role of business in all facets of public services. Coupled with this is a general push towards valuing the importance of private decisions and advantage over public rights and goals. Writing in 1995, Barlow and Campbell comment:

Canada today is dramatically different from the Canada of twenty years ago. That change has not been caused primarily by uncontrollable forces beyond our borders, although that has been an important factor. It is the result of such deliberate policy decisions as deregulation, privatization, free trade, monetarism, and their many offspring. (p. 41)

Some have characterized this movement or shift as a corporate takeover, being stimulated by whatever means are at hand, inventing or exaggerating crises to further an agenda towards privatization (Calvert, 1984, Monbiot, 2000). Labaree (1997) notes that the shift towards seeing education more as a private good has had a negative impact on support for our public institutions:

But the biggest problem facing U.S. schools is not the conflict, contradiction, and compromise that arise from trying to keep a balance among educational goals. Instead, the main threat comes from the growing dominance of the social mobility goal over the others. ... We find public schools under attack, not just because they are deemed ineffective but because they are public. After all, if education

“...too many children have been transformed into miniature consumption machines who keep swallowing the corporate message that meaning comes from acquiring and a sense of self-worth from owning. You don’t have one? What a loser.”

— Conlin, 2004

is a private good, then the next step ... is to withdraw public control entirely and move toward a fully privatized system of education. (p. 51)

Robertson (2005) delineates four ways privatization has affected public education.

- Privatization by design, including ideologues who believe that private is better (for example, the Fraser Institute), and privateers who are in it for the money.
- Privatization by stealth, where public education takes on the characteristics of the private system, “acting like the market” (for example, competing for students, for partnerships or sponsorships, and fundraising).
- Privatization by default, arguing that public education has failed and therefore privatization is the solution.
- Privatization from the inside out, highlighting that privatization is not just about market share, but mindshare, not just products, but ideas (for example, curriculum units developed by corporations or others that promote particular products or ways of looking at the world).

Molnar (2004), researching commercialism in education in the U.S., talks of “selling *to* schools, selling *in* schools, and finally, the selling *of* schools and of education as a marketable commodity.” Education in the U.S. has become a part of big business, a source of profits, and schools are the place to capture the loyalty of students, viewed as “consumers in training” (Molnar, 1996). As the CEO of Coca-Cola Enterprises in the U.S. said, “The school system is where you build brand loyalty” (Molnar, 2004).

The push toward privatization is not unique to education. Many parts of our lives are being seen through a private lens. Private interests, according to some, are more important than our collective goals. Labaree (1997) states the “privatizers are only the latest example of a long-standing effort to transform education

into a consumer commodity” (p. 52). Further, he maintains that we need “to demonstrate how this effort has already done considerable damage to both school and society – by undermining learning, reinforcing social stratification, and promoting a futile and wasteful race to attain devalued credentials.”

School commercialism is part of a trend of aggressive marketing to children and youth. In the United States, annual corporate spending on marketing to kids has grown substantially, from \$100 million in 1983 to \$15 billion (U.S.) currently. In addition to commercials, this encompasses increasingly sophisticated and subtle approaches such as covert peer-to-peer marketing (Schor, 2004).

Targeting the youth market is not limited to the U.S. – Canadian children and youth have significant spending power and considerable influence on their parents’ spending patterns. According to the 2005 YTV Tween Report, Canadian kids aged 9 to 14 spent \$2.9 billion of their own money (up from \$1.1 billion in 1995), and influenced at least \$20 billion in purchases by their parents, a factor YTV calls “kidfluence.”

As public schools are increasingly courted by private interests or forced to go outside the confines of an insufficient public funding base in the pursuit of private money, organizations on both sides of the border have begun to monitor the situation. Using media references, the Commercialism in Education Research Unit (CERU), based at Arizona State University, has tracked school commercialism in U.S. schools for nearly a decade.¹

People for Education, an Ontario parent group, has tracked a number of trends in Ontario’s elementary and secondary schools for the past six years, including money raised through fundraising. Their latest report estimates that elementary schools in Ontario raised \$41.5 million in 2004-05. The average per schools is \$10,800, up from \$7,200 in 1998-99. Over half of the schools indicate that this money is being used to purchase basics such as textbooks, computer software and hardware, and classroom supplies (www.peopleforeducation.com).

“Pro-kid marketing means we have a foundation for a wonderful relationship between brands and children. We can all remember brands from our childhood that we remain fond of to this day. Pro-kid marketing does not mean that we have placed ourselves in an austere prison that prohibits interacting with kids. We can play with them. We can run package promotions featuring their favourite things. We can deliver fun as well as great products. We can encourage them to learn about their roles as consumers in society. We can enrich them.”

— Hastings, 2005a

While some teacher organizations have analyzed the implications of commercialism and privatization of education (for example: *Corporate involvement in schools*, British Columbia Teachers' Federation, Spring 2000 and *Commercialism in Ontario schools: A research report*, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, 1995), a national survey to collect data on a range of school commercialism activities in Canadian

elementary and secondary public schools had not, until we conducted this study, been carried out. We need much more information on the extent of privatization in all its forms and disguises in Canada's public schools and hope that the survey we have conducted will play a key role in beginning to expose the full extent of the situation in our schools.

CERU monitors commercial activity in schools in eight categories (see Molnar). In 2005, two supplementary searches were included.

- CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP OF SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES – This consists of corporations paying for or subsidizing school events and/or one-time activities in return for the right to associate their name with the events and activities. It may also include school contests.
- EXCLUSIVE MARKETING AGREEMENTS – These are contractual agreements which “give marketers rights to sell products or services on school or district grounds and to exclude competitors.”
- INCENTIVE PROGRAMS – These programs “provide some sort of reward in the form of a commercial product or service in return for students who achieve an ostensibly academic goal, such as perfect attendance or increased reading.”
- APPROPRIATION OF SPACE – This is described as “the use of school property to promote individual corporations through mechanisms such as naming rights or general advertising.”
- SPONSORED EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS – These are “curriculum materials produced largely by an outside corporate entity for use in public schools.”
- ELECTRONIC MARKETING – This is described as the use of “broadcast, Internet, or related media in schools in order to target students as consumers.”
- PRIVATIZATION – This is defined as the “private management of public schools, and of public charter schools.”
- FUNDRAISING – This includes “direct product sales that return some percentage of revenues to the school or to its parent-teacher organization. It also includes a variety of rewards programs, in which consumers are encouraged to purchase certain products or make purchases from certain retailers in order to obtain donations for a designated school.”
- CHILDREN'S HEALTH (SUPPLEMENTARY SEARCH) – Issues that address the nutritional value of school food offerings and regulations that aim to improve the health of students by regulating what foods can be offered in the cafeterias, canteens, and vending machines.
- COMMERCIALISM (SUPPLEMENTARY SEARCH) – Issues about commercialism in schools that do not qualify for the more specific categories of the report, including references to legislation regulating commercialism in schools and scholarly articles collected from the education press.

“The spread of schoolhouse commercialism is part of a much broader trend, the encroachment of commercial interests into every element of modern culture. What sets it apart is the way it subjects children to its influence. And children are increasingly the prime target audience for corporations seeking to sell.”

— Molnar, 2004, p. 2

Survey Methodology

The main intent of the survey was to examine the nature and extent of commercial activity in Canadian schools, and to determine the degree to which public funding is being replaced by alternative funding sources such as school fundraising.

A pilot test of the survey was conducted by the BCTF in August 2004. In the fall of 2004, the survey was distributed to each school through the teacher federation affiliates of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, the OSSTF and by the FSE. Every public school in Canada received a survey.

The survey covers six categories:

- advertising
- partnerships and sponsorships
- corporate-sponsored educational (curriculum and classroom) materials
- user fees
- fundraising
- total money raised through all sources identified in the survey

A staff person at each school (principal, teacher, staff representative) was asked to respond to the survey based on the 2003/2004 school year. Background information on the school and school board was also requested.

Summary of Findings

Within the major categories of school commercialism, the survey findings are broken down by school type (Elementary/Secondary); by language (English schools/French schools²); and by region.³

Response Rates

Over 3,100 completed questionnaires were received for an overall response rate of 23 per cent. Rates varied from 36 per cent in the North and 33 per cent in B.C., to 17 per cent in Quebec. 75.4 per cent of responses came from elementary schools, 17.0 per cent from secondary schools.⁴

Advertising in Schools

- Nationally, 32 per cent of schools reported the presence of advertising in or on the school, ranging from 21 per cent in Quebec to 39 per cent in the North.
- Nationally, 8 per cent of all schools reported that advertising space had been sold in the school, ranging from 3 per cent in Quebec to 13 per cent in the Prairie region.
- The reported incidence of advertising is considerably higher in secondary schools than in elementary schools. Twenty eight per cent of elementary schools reported the presence of corporate or business advertising in or on the school and 5 per cent reported that ad-

Response Rate by Region			
	Returns	Total schools	Response rate
North	44	121	36%
B.C.	565	1,705	33%
Prairies	536	3,227	18%
Ontario	1,104	4,812	23%
Quebec	495	2,831	17%
Atlantic	361	1,146	32%
Total	3,105	13,415	23%

Responses by School Type ⁵ and Language			
	Returns	Percentage of sample	Percentage of all Canadian schools ⁶
Elementary ⁷	2,225	75.4%	65.2%
Secondary	508	17.0%	21.9%
English	2,527	81.4%	81.1%
French	578	18.6%	22.1%

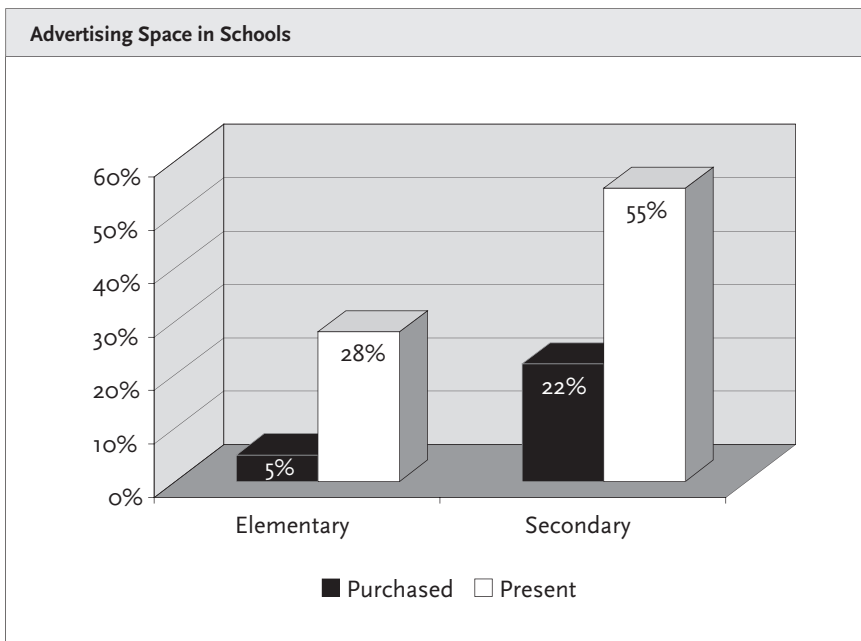
vertising space had been sold in the school. Fifty-five per cent of secondary schools reported the presence of advertising in or on the school and 22 per cent reported that advertising space had been sold in the school.

- English schools reported a higher incidence of advertising than French schools – 34 per cent compared to 24 per cent. The lowest incidence of advertising was found in French schools in Quebec.
- Most advertising in elementary schools was found on school supplies (12 per cent) and in

hallways, cafeterias and other school areas (11 per cent).

- In secondary schools, most advertising was found in school areas such as hallways and cafeterias (32 per cent) and to a lesser extent on school supplies (13 per cent) and team uniforms (8 per cent).
- Coke and Pepsi are the two most prominent corporations in schools, with advertising venues including scoreboards, clocks, beverage machines (selling a range of Coke and Pepsi products, including juice and water), banners, school signs and gym equipment.

Where is the Advertising?			
	Elementary	Secondary	Total
Hallways, cafeterias	11%	32%	15%
Team uniforms	2%	8%	3%
School buses	1%	1%	1%
School supplies	12%	13%	11%
School websites	1%	2%	1%
Other	10%	24%	12%
Any of the above	28%	55%	32%



Partnerships and Sponsorships

- Nationally, 27 per cent of all schools had an exclusive marketing arrangement with soft drink giants Coke or Pepsi – 16 per cent of schools had a contract with Coke, 11 per cent of schools had a contract with Pepsi.
- 5 per cent of Quebec schools reported an exclusive marketing arrangement with Coke or Pepsi while 40 per cent of schools in the Prairie region reported such an arrangement.

Cola Contracts	
B.C.	28%
Prairies	40%
Ontario	30%
Quebec	5%
Atlantic	31%
North ⁸	–
Total	27%

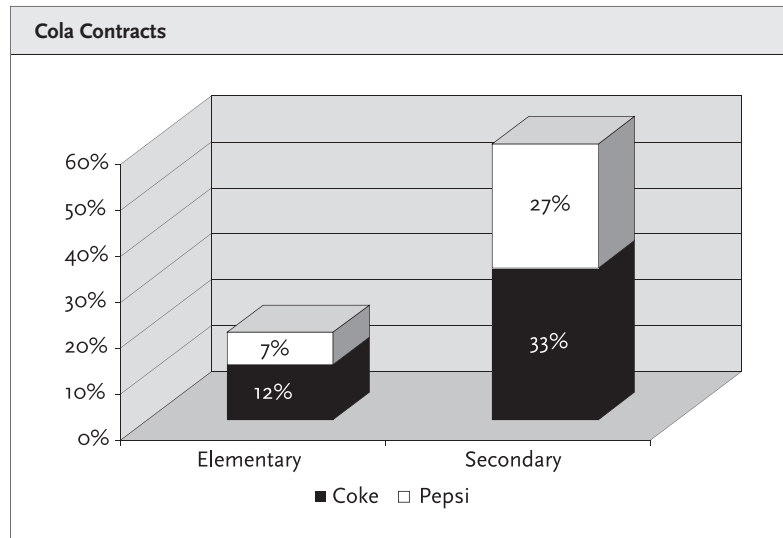
- Exclusive marketing arrangements with Coke and Pepsi are much more common in secondary schools than in elementary schools – 60 per cent of secondary schools compared with 19 per cent of elementary schools.
- There is much less use of exclusive contracts with either Coke or Pepsi in Quebec, in both French and English schools. Outside of Quebec, there are fewer such arrangements in French language schools than in English schools.
- Nationally, 10 per cent of all schools reported an exclusive contract for food services, while 6 per cent of schools reported another type of exclusive contract.
- Schools reporting an exclusive contract for food services ranged from 6 per cent of schools in B.C. and Quebec to 18 per cent of Atlantic region schools.
- Exclusive food contracts are more common at the secondary level than the elementary level – 25 per cent of secondary schools compared with 7 per cent of elementary schools.

Food Service Contracts	
By region	
B.C.	6%
Prairies	7%
Ontario	13%
Quebec	6%
Atlantic	18%
North	–
By school type	
Elementary	7%
Secondary	25%
Total	10%

- 11 per cent of English schools reported an exclusive food contract compared with 6 per cent of French schools.
- Nationally, 18 per cent of all schools reported some type of partnership or sponsorship arrangement with a corporation or business to provide a variety of programs and services including: tutoring services, academic courses, athletic programs, extracurricular activities, technology courses, school staff, or other. These partnerships ranged from 22 per cent of schools in the Prairies and 21 per cent in the Atlantic region, to 16 per cent of schools in Quebec and 15 per cent of schools in Ontario.

Schools Partnered or Sponsored to Provide Programs and Services	
By region	
B.C.	17%
Prairies	22%
Ontario	15%
Quebec	16%
Atlantic	21%
North	–
By school type	
Elementary	15%
Secondary	30%
Total	18%

- 15 per cent of elementary schools and 30 per cent of secondary schools reported a partnership or sponsorship arrangement.
- Overall, there is a slightly higher percentage of sponsorships or partnerships with businesses and corporations in French schools than English schools.



Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Co's exclusivity contracts in schools have come under fire for the questionable nutritional value of their cola products. They have turned to their bottled water labels – Dasani and Aquafina – as a 'healthy' solution. But consider these facts:

- Bottled water is 240 to 10,000 times more expensive than tap water despite 25 per cent of it having originated from municipal systems.
- Bottled water cartels like to suggest that their product is superior to tap water, yet bottled water plants receive government inspections every three to six years – the City of Toronto's water is inspected every four hours.
- Arsenic, mercury and bromides have been found in bottled water.
- Bottled water containers are the fastest growing form of municipal solid waste in Canada.
- The trend of accepting bottled water erodes support for the public system and paves the way for further water privatization.
- Through exclusivity contracts, Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Co are attempting to turn students into life-long consumers and are furthering the corporatization of student space.

To learn more about the bottled water industry and related community campaign tools, visit www.insidethebottle.org.

“A chance to reach 5.4 million kids and over 300,000 educators in the same place at the same time for 10 months of the year every weekday for 7 hours each day.

It’s a big opportunity...

And Teachers and Students ARE reachable.

But, to successfully penetrate schools, you need to understand the environment...Schools are not a typical marketing environment.”

— Paton Publishing

Incentive Programs

- Nationally, 30 per cent of all schools reported having incentive programs. Such programs encourage students, teachers, parents and others in the school community to purchase or use a specific company’s products or services; cash, school materials or equipment are awarded to schools in proportion to the value of store receipts, product labels or coupons collected by the schools.
- Quebec had the lowest involvement of any region in incentive programs, presumably as a result of the government ban on such activities.⁹
- Considerably more elementary schools (36 per cent) than secondary schools (10 per cent) reported being involved in incentive programs.
- 35 per cent of English schools and 6 per cent of French schools reported being involved in incentive programs.
- Campbell’s Labels for Education was the most commonly identified incentive program (reported by 21 per cent of all schools). Grocery store receipt and recycling programs by retailers such as Sobeys, Zehrs and Staples were also reported.

Incentive Programs	
By region	
B.C.	36%
Prairies	36%
Ontario	35%
Quebec	1%
Atlantic	33%
North	–
By school type	
Elementary	36%
Secondary	10%
Total	30%

Corporate-Sponsored Educational Materials

- Nationally, 54 per cent of all schools reported using Scholastic educational materials (for example, Scholastic book order forms are distributed through schools which can earn bonus coupons based on the number of orders placed; coupons can be redeemed for classroom materials and books).
- The majority of elementary schools (64 per cent) reported using Scholastic educational materials.
- English schools (66 per cent) were much more likely than French schools (2 per cent) to have Scholastic materials.
- Nationally, 6 per cent of schools reported participating in Pizza Hut’s “Book It!” program – 8 per cent of elementary schools, none at the secondary level.

Sponsored Educational Materials			
	Elementary	Secondary	Total
Scholastic	64%	17%	54%
Pizza Hut’s “Book It!”	8%	0%	6%
Mr. Christie’s “Smart Cookie”	3%	0%	2%
Other	7%	3%	5%

- Respondents were asked if their school subscribed to magazines designed for in-school mass distribution that market products or services to students and teachers. Nationally, 11 per cent of all schools reported subscribing to “Kidsworld” magazine, while 3 per cent subscribe to “What!” or “Protecting Our Planet.”
- 14 per cent of elementary schools reported subscribing to “Kidsworld” magazine (8 per cent of elementary schools reported “Other”), while 10 per cent of secondary schools receive “What!” magazine.

Sale of Services

- Nationally, 16 per cent of schools reported that their school or board sold services to generate income (for example, by renting out school space or selling curriculum materials).
- This is the regional picture regarding the sale of services to generate income – 24 per cent of Quebec schools; 21 per cent of schools in the Atlantic region; 19 per cent of B.C. schools; 14 per cent of schools in North; 12 per cent of Ontario schools; 8 per cent of Prairie schools.
- 15 per cent of elementary schools and 21 per cent of secondary schools reported selling services to generate revenue.
- 14 per cent of English schools and 23 per cent of French schools reported selling services to generate revenue.
- Schools in Quebec are more likely to sell services to generate income than schools in the rest of Canada.
- The rental of school space was the most common revenue-generating activity. This includes the rental of gyms, classrooms, parking lots, and closed schools to community groups, sports teams, the film industry, day-care and after school program providers.
- A number of schools reported international student tuition fees as a form of revenue, including the establishment of schools abroad. The sale of curriculum materials, including electronic curriculum, was another common response. A handful of schools reported the presence of school district business companies.

User Fees

- Over 79 per cent of schools charge user fees for a variety of services and programs.
- Nationally, school trips top the list of the most common items for which schools charge user fees.
- Secondary schools are more likely to charge user fees for sports teams, school programs and clubs than elementary schools.

User Fees			
	Elementary	Secondary	Total
Supplies	32%	40%	34%
Programs	23%	58%	29%
Trips	68%	74%	67%
Sports teams	14%	70%	24%
Clubs	8%	35%	12%
Other	13%	16%	13%

- Across the country, there were regional variations with regard to user fees.
- Schools charging user fees for supplies ranged from 49 per cent of B.C. schools, to 18 per cent of schools in Ontario.

Youth Culture Inc

Founded in 1993 as a magazine publisher, Youth Culture Inc has a long relationship with schools across Canada and corporations, government organisations and agencies targeting youths.

Youth Culture Group is a media corporation privately owned by Youth Culture Inc. The mandate of the group is to develop media brands and media properties for free circulation to the youth market allowing corporations to communicate, advertise and promote to Canadian youths.

Watch magazine was our first magazine distributed to high schools. Our second magazine venture was Bang (now Bangzone) distributed to elementary and junior high schools. Expanded access to the youth market came through the separate magazines for girls – Verve (vervegirl.com) – and boys Fuel (fuelpowered.com).

Client List

Ban, Secret, Neutrogena, Venus Vibrance, Color Pulse, Lady Speed Stick, Vita Gloss O2, Rogers Wireless Pay As You Go, Rogers Firefly, Powder Room, Panoramic Curl, Nivea for Men, Lever 2000, Clean & Clear, Always, Phiso-Derm, Secret Platinum, Milk 2 Go, Calgon, Midol, Fructis.

www.youthculture.com/profile.html

User Fees						
	North	B.C.	Prairies	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic
Supplies	–	49%	42%	18%	41%	37%
Programs	16%	41%	41%	23%	18%	29%
Trips	41%	76%	70%	75%	39%	63%
Sports teams	34%	21%	34%	19%	20%	34%
Clubs	–	11%	20%	13%	6%	11%
Other	16%	18%	9%	13%	10%	16%

“We do no fundraising at all. At my [child’s] school the parents work one bingo per child registered for the year. You are asked to donate money (I think \$75 to \$100) in lieu of working the bingo. I pay a \$75 school fee at the beginning of the year which covers text book rentals etc and the bingo covers all field trips. We also work a lot of bingos for soccer, dance etc that is done through our community league so it’s an accepted practice here in Alberta. I much prefer this way to selling “stuff”.
forum.canadianparents.ca

- The range for school programs was 41 per cent in both B.C. and the Prairies, to 16 per cent in the North.
- The range for school trips was 76 per cent and 75 per cent for B.C. and Ontario respectively, to 39 per cent in Quebec.
- For sports teams the range was 34 per cent in the Prairies, the Atlantic region and the North, to 19 per cent in Ontario.
- For school clubs the range was 20 per cent in the Prairies, to 6 per cent in Quebec.
- Nationally, 36 per cent of schools reported that their school or board had a charitable tax number.
- This ranges from 8 per cent of schools in Quebec to 32 per cent of schools in the North, 35 per cent of Ontario schools, 41 per cent of B.C. schools, 44 per cent of schools in the Atlantic region, and 53 per cent of schools in the Prairie region.
- 20 per cent of secondary schools reported that their school or board had a charitable tax number, compared with 12 per cent of elementary schools.
- 42 per cent of English schools reported that their school or board had a charitable tax number, compared with 7 per cent of French schools.
- The majority of schools reported that fundraising decisions are primarily made by parent groups and school councils (79 per cent), the principal and other school administrators (76 per cent), and school staff (64 per cent). Students (23 per cent) and school boards were also involved but to a lesser extent (students were more involved at the secondary level than the elementary level); 17 per cent of schools reported that the school board made fundraising decisions.

Fundraising

- Fundraising is common in public schools.
- 73 per cent of all schools reported fundraising for school trips.
- 49 per cent of all schools reported fundraising for library books (including 60 per cent of elementary schools).
- School trips and library books are the most commonly identified items for which elementary schools raise money through fundraising activities
- Athletic programs and school trips are most commonly identified by secondary schools followed by school clubs, technology, and academic programs.

Teachers compensate for a lack of public funding for education in informal ways. According to the 2005 CTF National Teachers’ Poll, 92 per cent of full-time educators contribute some of their own money for classroom materials and class-related activities for their students (mainly food or drinks, school supplies, books), money which will not be reimbursed. Teachers spent an average of \$344 each in the 2004/2005 school year – this works out to just over \$90 million nationally (CTF, 2005a).

- Various types of fundraising activities were reported by schools including donation request letters to parents and local businesses (sometimes in lieu of frequent specific fundraising events).

Fundraising			
	Elementary	Secondary	Total
Academic programs	27%	18%	24%
Athletic programs	40%	69%	44%
Clubs	21%	51%	26%
Library books	60%	16%	49%
Textbooks	12%	4%	10%
School supplies	21%	10%	18%
Trips	77%	69%	73%
Technology	40%	22%	35%
Other	21%	14%	19%

Monies Raised Through All Activities

- Nationally, the average amount of money raised by all schools through fundraising and other activities referenced in the survey including user fees, advertising revenue and partnerships/sponsorships is \$15,705.
- This ranged from \$14,072 for Ontario schools to \$27,700 for schools in the North.

In 2005 Statistics Canada released a study documenting the dramatic decline of school libraries over the years. It found the median expenditure on the physical collection of libraries (including books and magazines) was a mere \$2,000. Even more revealing was the finding that few schools had a full-time teacher-librarian. Those most affected by this sad state of affairs are families unable to supplement their child's learning with books and other resources in the home. It should probably come as no surprise that the majority of elementary schools responding to the national school commercialism survey reported fundraising for library books.

- Nationally, the median amount of money raised by all schools is \$10,000.
- Secondary schools raised larger sums (mean \$38,747; median \$20,000) than elementary schools (mean \$11,038; median \$8,000).
- English schools raised somewhat larger sums (mean \$16,030; median \$10,000) than French schools (mean \$13,456; median \$6,000).
- Schools reported raising sums ranging from a few hundred dollars to, in some cases, several hundred thousand dollars.
- It is estimated that nationally, schools raise over \$200 million.

Amount of Money Raised		
	Mean	Median
By region		
North	\$27,700	\$15,000
B.C.	\$19,504	\$10,000
Prairies	\$15,166	\$9,000
Ontario	\$14,072	\$10,000
Quebec	\$14,156	\$6,000
Atlantic	\$15,991	\$7,500
All regions	\$15,705	\$10,000
By school type		
Elementary schools	\$11,038	\$8,000
Secondary schools	\$38,747	\$20,000
By language		
English schools	\$16,030	\$10,000
French schools	\$13,456	\$6,000

"Now I am not being hard on the child/parent (whoever is selling me the thing)...it's just this whole fundraising business has become just that, "a business" whereby someone is profiting (a fair bit!) from children/parents selling or doing the work."
forum.canadianparents.ca

"I have done fundraising for schools for the past 15 years. I'm sure I've heard most of them, but here's my suggestion:

Sell bumper stickers that read: 'When schools have everything they need and the military has to do a bake sale to buy more fighter jets, we will know we are doing a good job.'"
forum.canadianparents.ca

Policies on Commercial/ Corporate Involvement

Despite some provincial and territorial departments of education acknowledging commercialism in schools is an “issue” in education finance, very few governments appear to have established policies or guidelines addressing: levels of commercial or corporate involvement in education; advertising; exclusive marketing; private donations; fundraising; or user fees. Many – including Ontario, Alberta, B.C., Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories – have explicitly left these decisions up to individual school boards or districts (although the Northwest Territories and the Yukon have “looked at it,” and in fact the education department in the Yukon has indicated it does intend to “develop something” although representatives from NWT have indicated this is “not a big issue in the North”).

Many of the provinces have left decisions regarding corporate presence and private levels of finance in schools up to the individual school boards.

Some provinces – in particular B.C. and Ontario – have begun to focus on “healthy foods” in schools, and this has provided opportunities to look at exclusive marketing of cola beverages and junk foods to younger students. However, the direction at the policy level appears to focus more on providing healthy foods rather than on commercialism – the targeting

of students and schools through exclusive marketing arrangements between boards, schools and corporations. B.C. set a fall 2005 date for the development of “health promotion guidelines.” In 2004 the Ontario Ministry of Education directed school boards to ensure that all elementary schools restrict the sale of food and beverage items in vending machines to healthy choices and also released guidelines on such healthy choices. As in B.C., the focus is clearly on health and obesity issues which, while critically important, avoids discussion of exclusive marketing arrangements with beverage or food corporations and other forms of school-based commercial activity.

However, there have been some policies adopted by provincial departments of education that facilitate more private involvement in public education. For example, in fall 2004 the Ontario government implemented an accounting change requiring school boards to include school fundraising in their general revenue, along with government grants. This move raised significant concerns that private money was being entrenched in the public system, making it easier for the government to argue that public funding for education could be reduced where it appeared private funding was available.

Within the past few years the B.C. Department of Education has allowed school districts

to explore entrepreneurialism by setting up their own private corporations to engage in business practices outside of day-to-day education activities (although the budgets from these corporations cannot overlap with dedicated education budgets).

Provincial government policies also provide public funding for private education. Provincial governments in B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec finance private schools at a rate of 50 to 60 per cent (Lessard & Brassard, 2005). In 2001 the Conservative government in Ontario implemented a phased-in tax credit for parents of children attending private schools; this was repealed when the provincial Liberals were elected in 2003. This policy remains part of the Conservative party platform.

Regarding school funds, the Manitoba Department of Education & Training has developed two types of policy:

TYPE A school funds include moneys from all fundraising activities of the school, such as walk-a-thons, bike-a-thons, selling candies, etc. door to door, dances, hot dog days, school pictures, bottle drives, car washes, raffles, auctions, etc. As these moneys are raised by the school, or under the auspices of the school, through extra-curricular activities for the sole use of that school, they are not included in the school division's financial statements. Funds from cafeterias and vending machines that are operated by or contracted out by the student council are student council funds. Funds from cafeterias and vending machines that are operated by or contracted out by the school are Type A school funds.

TYPE B school funds include allocations from the school division (per capita grants, budget allocations, specific purpose grants, etc.), vocational revenues (auto shop repairs and service, cosmetology, business ed. initiatives, etc.), and revenues from cafeterias and vending machines that are operated by or contracted out by the school division. These funds are often administered by the school

division on behalf of the school, but in cases where the school administers them they are considered to be Type B school funds and would fall under the guidelines for school funds. These funds are included in the school division's financial statements.

[<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/finance/schfund/schfundpolicy.html>]

Manitoba schools and boards are encouraged to establish policies or guidelines as to “what types of expenditures are allowable or appropriate” as well as proper accounting of the different types of school funds (those that are included in the school division's financial statements and those that are not). However, provincial policy, on the other hand, is designed to categorize and establish proper accounting procedures and liability (including conflict-of-interest) issues for the collection of school funds.

In September 2004 the Newfoundland-Labrador Department of Education published a discussion paper and framework for action on

International Success Stories

- Ireland banned television commercials for candy and fast foods effective January 1, 2005.
- In the United Kingdom, John Reid, the UK health secretary, has said he will call for a ban or restrictions on junk food marketing to children if the corporate marketers don't control themselves by 2007.
- After an ongoing campaign, in 2001 a united front of teachers, students, parents, politicians and the general public managed to oust Youth News Network from Canadian schools.
- Privacy battles in schools [against corporations like Zap Me! And N2H2] prompted U.S. Senators Richard Shelby and Chris Dodd, and Congressman George Miller to introduce the Student Privacy Protection Act, which was enacted into law as a part of the No Child Left Behind law. That law now requires schools to notify parents before a corporation can extract market research from their child in school in the U.S.
- California banned the sale of soda in elementary, middle and junior high schools as of July 2004.

—Excerpted from a list provided by Gary Ruskin, Center for the Study of Commercialism, www.commercialalert.org.

school fees. While the paper did make mention of equity concerns and the “domino effect” (in which fees are charged for programs and supplies that were previously provided for “free”), the Department makes its position clear. While not limiting or interfering in fundraising efforts of individual schools,

Government is responsible for legislation governing the imposition of school fees, while school boards are responsible for developing policies for schools within their jurisdiction which adhere to that legislation. Government, through the Department of Education, has a responsibility to provide a high-quality K-12 public education to all students School boards ... have some flexibility to manage their respective budgets ... taking into account the specific circumstances and needs of individual schools within their jurisdiction. School boards are also responsible for ensuring policies [regarding school fees and other costs related to education] are being implemented.

The focus of the Department’s paper appears to be one of “clarity.” “Enhancements to public education come at a personal cost,” and the key is for “schools to set an appropriate level of co-

curricular programming ... ensure that parents understand the associated costs, and be satisfied that it is affordable for families and the school community as a whole.” The paper concludes with a promise on the part of Government to continue its examination of the issue, to “raise awareness” of the equity factors (and maintain a fund to provide a “top up” for those parents who cannot afford to contribute), and to work with boards in maintaining the “correct balance” between activities and costs.

PEI employs the “board-by-board” decision-making strategy with regard to corporate involvement; however, when the TD Bank put together a package promoting reading (with an unobtrusive logo), the government was more than happy to distribute this material on behalf of the bank (the province-wide distribution mechanism is held by the PEI Department of Education).

New Brunswick has developed a series of policies with regard to school operations which serve as the “minimum” that school districts are expected to follow (if districts and schools wish to adopt a stricter set of policies they are free to do so). Policy 315 (“School/Community Partnerships and Sponsorships”) specifically requires that “arrangements shall not allow for direct marketing strategies in the schools,” and “competitors may not be excluded at the request of the partner/sponsor.” There is, additionally, a set of clauses dealing with the “appropriateness” of the arrangement (“Classrooms shall generally be ‘ad free.’ Name recognition in relation to the partner/sponsor shall be discreet and proper”).

Given the general lack of policy direction in other provincial and territorial jurisdictions, the fact that New Brunswick has not only developed but has made available a long list of guidelines (perhaps as a result of the rather unique relationship between the N.B. Department of Education and its school districts) is somewhat heartening. However, guidelines are just that – guidelines – and as such are open to wide interpretation (particularly with terms such as “discreet and proper”) and application. Other policies relevant

MR. ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, fundraising is now essential to running schools across this province. Parents at Bev Mullins’ school on the Hammonds Plains Road already have raised \$50,000 with every possible kind of sale. Principals rely on revenues from vending machines, advertising on scoreboards, perhaps advertising on the public address system and now posters. My question to the minister is, does your department keep track of the advertising and the fundraising totals going into Nova Scotia schools and, if so, will you provide that information?

MR. MUIR: Mr. Speaker, I’ll have to check. I don’t think that information is kept, because normally fundraising is done within individual schools. They may be submitting reports to the boards, I don’t know. I know in the schools in which I’ve been involved, there was fundraising and the money was always used inside the school and accounted for inside the school.

— Exchange between Education Minister Jamie Muir and NDP MPP William Estabrooks

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/han59-1/house_04sep29.htm

to this survey would include, but not be limited to, “Materials for Distribution in Schools (120),” “Fundraising Involving Door-to-Door and Public Solicitation (708),” and “Contribution of Resources by Parents (132).” Currently there is a bill before the legislature prohibiting fees for mandatory education projects.

Nova Scotia reviewed its policies with regard to advertising in schools and in fact amended the Education Act to allow certain kinds of commercial activities in schools (although “undesirable advertising” would not be acceptable). In 2004 the provincial government conducted a survey of boards to determine for what purpose user fees were being charged. It announced on the first day of the 2005 school year that the practice of charging fees for curricular subjects was prohibited – but did not increase education funding. The issue of fundraising, and the dependence of schools on this as a means of aug-

menting inadequate public financing, is becoming a political issue in that public schools now must account for the additional revenue raised according to general accounting practices.

Such lack of policy (or, at best, policy “flexibility”) stands in contrast to the province of Quebec where legislative action has been taken to limit the exposure of youth to advertising and commercial influence. The Consumer Protection Act “prohibits commercial advertising aimed at children under 13 years of age” (with certain exceptions). This act impacts elementary and secondary schools where younger children attend at the beginning of the first cycle. In response to concern with an increasing corporate presence in schools, in 1997 the Education Act in Quebec was amended to prohibit school boards from receiving, “gifts, legacies, grants or other contributions to which conditions incompatible with the mission of the school are attached, particularly conditions relative to any form of commercial solicitation.”

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the Quebec policy document, “Guidelines for Schools on Advertising and Financial Contributions,” addresses the issue of an increased commercial presence in schools head-on within the context of the Consumer Protection Act and the Education Act (revamped in 1998 to give the governing board of each school the power to seek community involvement in meeting the needs of the school population):

How large a sponsorship or other type of financial contribution can a school accept without there being some kind of expectation that it will give or do something in return? When does a school cross the line between providing students with information and exposing them to advertising? By accepting financial contributions, does a school run the risk of turning into a commercial showcase? (pp. 3-4)

While our survey results clearly indicate that Quebec schools are not commercial-free, it appears this may be the only province where an attempt has been made to limit the effects and

“TWEEN: Not yet a teenager and no longer a child, a tween falls between the ages of 8–14.

Canadian tweens influence \$20 billion in household purchases according to a recent study by YTV.

Access the tween and ultimately their parents:

- *Affiliate your business with a sports program or team.*
- *Appeal to their green streak.*
- *Sponsor programs at school like Student of the Week; Athlete of the Year; Honor Roll.*
- *Email offerings.*
- *Is your product suitable for fundraisers?*
- *What can you learn from the fast food industry? Think incentives, playgrounds, contests, clubs, games.”*

— Alberta Agri-preneur

Heenan-Blaikie’s Advice to Corporate Clients

Learning Points:

1. Make sure you’re aware of local laws and check into the way they’re interpreted by the authorities. When you’re operating in Quebec, look twice as hard, as they have many consumer protection laws – particularly when it comes to kids – that other provinces don’t.
2. Don’t assume that because another company is out there with a program that it “must be legal”. If we had a nickel for every time clients asserted the “Well, so-and-so is doing it” line of authority, we’d be retired.
3. Take a good look at your program terms and conditions when doing any promotional program – particularly programs that are long-term. Are there program termination provisions that will allow you to cancel the program if you’re clubbed from left field by [legislation] like this?

influence of advertising on the most vulnerable segment of its population – children. It is particularly unique that such policy has been legislated, thus limiting the degree to which guidelines about advertising and the “appropriateness” of a commercial presence are left up to the interpretation of the individual board or school.

Additionally, the survey results indicate a significant number of schools or school boards (36 per cent nationally) have a charitable tax number, presumably to facilitate fundraising and donations. This means that when pri-

private monies or goods are donated to schools or boards with charitable status, the donor receives a tax credit. This facilitates the bizarre situation whereby private entities (individuals or corporations) receive public incentives for their private “gifts” to public education. In effect, public money (tax credits) is subsidizing the privatization of public schools – at the same time that schools and boards embark on fundraising campaigns because direct public funding for education is deemed insufficient.

Friday, October 8

I am the principal/teacher of a small school (44 students) in a small, fairly isolated, Metis community.

I live and work in my community by choice. One of the big reasons that I choose to live here is because this is very much a non-consumer/non-commercial school and community. We do not have a store, gas station, restaurant, hotel etc. in our community. In fact the only place that you could spend money here is at the post office if you were to buy stamps. This means that our school will be quite the anomaly for your survey as we are very much out of the consumer loop.

I am very distressed at seeing the corporate agenda enter into the public school environment. My daughter went to school in Winnipeg where there was a McDonald's 50 yards from the front entrance of the school and there were 5 Coke machines in the hallways. I find this intolerable.

We try to keep the corporate agenda out of our school. I hope that this insidious creeping consumerism and commercialization is a major concern for the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

I, personally, would find it impossible to work in a school surrounded with corporate commercialism, which is why I work where I do.

— from a letter appended to a survey

Discussion

The twin issues of commercialism and privatization of K–12 education are a growing concern for Canadian educators and education organizations focused on the need to ensure access to a publicly-funded inclusive education system without commercial or corporate influence. It is in this context that a national survey on school commercialism was conceived.

Among the factors facilitating school commercialism are financial struggles caused by the underfunding of education coupled with rising costs for services and materials and increasing public and government expectations, leaving schools vulnerable to commercial influence. Another factor is what Davidson-Harden and Majhanovich (2004) describe as the interrelated trends of “the intrusion of market discourse into education at all levels” and “a growing tension between contrasting conceptions of education as a tradable commodity and as a social right.”

School commercialism is part of a larger contemporary trend of aggressive marketing to children and youth, a trend that U.S. sociologist Juliet Schor (author of *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*) found is underestimated. In addition to commercials, this trend encompasses increasingly sophisticated and subtle approaches such as covert peer-to-peer marketing campaigns.

One of the most significant and disturbing findings of Schor’s research relates to the psychological and health implications of this commercial onslaught. At a conference in February

2005 (“Public Education: Not for Sale II”), Schor said that increased exposure of children to media such as television, magazines and newspapers, can lead to increased consumer involvement, which in turn results in heightened levels of depression and anxiety and poorer physical health and social connections. In effect, Schor challenges the assumption that one’s quality of life is necessarily enhanced through a consumer lifestyle.

The connection between quality of life and entrenchment in a consumer lifestyle recently took on additional significance. When the Ontario Medical Association drew attention to the possible links between children’s health and advertising with its report *“An Ounce of Prevention or a Ton of Trouble: Is there an epidemic of obesity in children?”*, some marketers responded by arguing that while health was of course important, advertising played a significant role in educating children. With regard to the OMA’s suggestion that governments enact legislation to restrict advertising to children under the age of 13 (as already exists in Quebec and a number of European countries), Margaret Hastings, principal of Kid Pro-spect Marketing, suggested that if a ban merely “shields [children] from reality, it may actually be limiting them, because they will not be as well prepared to make the wise choices they will need to make as adults.” Note the insistence that to shield children from ads is synonymous with shielding children from the “real world,” as if most advertising is somehow

“Oh my God. Oh my heavens. This is unbelievable. This school . . . I can’t believe it. Wow. Wow. Wow. Wow. This is just incredible.”

Charles Austin, principal of Pinecrest Public School in Ottawa, on learning his school was chosen to receive \$150,000 from the Indigo Love of Reading Fund

— Alphonso, 2005

“Sixty-six per cent of 12 to 19 year olds mention products they like in conversation with their peers the day after they try something. Another 20 per cent can’t wait that long and get on the phone immediately to tell their friends.”

— Whitney-Vernon, Fall 2004

anything but the altering of reality in order to promote one product over another – toys and animals may speak, certain products will enhance a child’s popularity or intelligence. In fact, advertising targeting children is arguably more commonly about the *suspension* of reality than the embodiment of it.

Having rejected the possibility of a ban on ads to kids under the age of 13 on the basis that this only protects kids from the “real world,” Hastings explains that the problem is really one of deconstruction. According to Hastings, “marketers can help to teach kids how to cope in a commercial world by ensuring they understand advertising – all of it. How? By communicating in an age appropriate manner, and especially by informing children of portion sizes – right on the package and right in the ad – and by actively promoting media literacy” (Hastings, 2005b). This is called “Kid Intelligence Quotient.” And it means, according to Hastings, that “marketers not only inform kids about how delicious or fun their food is; they also inform kids about the nutrition facts and serving size of their food.” In other words, it’s not that the food may be unhealthy, it’s just that the serving sizes are off. No regulations – certainly not legislation – are necessary. All marketers need to do is respect kids as consumers, as intelligent individuals and as part of a family.

One thing that marketers do already respect – or at least appreciate – about kids is their potential as both present and future consumers

– as individuals, as part of a circle of friends, and as an important person within a family unit. Children and youth today have unprecedented spending power and perhaps more significantly, considerable influence on their parents’ spending patterns, as noted earlier.

The issue of a growing commercial presence in the classroom is often minimized by the claim that since kids are marketed to on a regular basis, why is it worse to target them in the school. In other words, what’s the big deal?

The classroom is an environment like no other. It offers marketers the opportunity to reach an audience required by law to be there, until the age of 16, five days a week, six hours a day, 10 months of the year. It is an environment synonymous with terms like “knowledge” and “information,” where students learn the difference between “right and wrong.” Teachers are remarkably influential authority figures and command a great deal of occupational respect. The school itself is a fundamental part of a community, with a direct line of communication to the surrounding neighbourhood.

In fact, the school is such a powerful environment that some companies have found it to be the most effective place in which to conduct market research on children. Kidsay, an American company that has worked with a long list of companies to target kids internationally – including Canadian kids – explains their choice of location: “Trend Tracker knowledge is gathered on kids’ own turf, in the one place where they spend the most time congregating, socializing, influencing each other, and learning about the world: schools....On-site research, conducted in partnership with principals and teachers – the most informed objective observers of kid behavior – yields an accuracy and depth of knowledge nobody else can offer.”

In other words, the school is a respected location with a comfortable audience that is required to be present and to pay attention. It is a social environment where the target audience – kids – is there to be influenced, by what is taught in the classroom and by each other. It comes with

Given the concerns around growing rates of childhood obesity and diabetes, a recent study of children’s (pediatric) hospitals across North America conducted by the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto is startling. It found that most had junk food vending machines and cafeterias serving menu items such as burgers, fries and chips, and nearly a quarter of the hospitals surveyed had actual fast-food outlets such as McDonald’s in them. The majority also reported relying on profits from junk and fast-food sales to fund research and programs. One of the study’s authors remarked that, “he hopes the research will spark debate within hospitals and in public policy circles, similar to the discussion that has occurred around the quality of food available in public schools.”

— Picard, 2005

the added bonus of educators – and a principal – influential authority figures who make excellent corporate spokespeople. And, perhaps most importantly, the school legitimizes products, organizations and messages associated with it.

Beyond providing corporate marketers with access to a captive audience of impressionable kids with money to spend in the hopes of developing lifelong brand loyalty, commercialism in schools is an issue that goes to the heart of the democratic foundations and goals of public education. Kuehn (2003) sums up the fundamental problem with school commercialism in this way:

The public schools are an integral part of the institutions of democracy. Democracy requires public space, places where debate and discussion inform decision making. And it requires education that prepares people to participate as critical citizens in that public space. If we are to achieve the democratic ideal of equity, there must be a commons, and it must be accessible for all to participate effectively. Public education is an important part of that commons.

The commons is not “free,” in the sense of not costing anything. It does cost. However, if it is to be open to all of us, we must pay that price collectively rather than individually. When

we all pay through the taxation system, we ensure that ability to pay is not the criterion for ability to play.

Commercialization encloses the commons and puts up fences, with admission only to those who can pay. It privatizes public space. It makes the dollar, not citizenship, the entry point to educational experiences and social and political influence in a democratic society.

While there is much information on commercialism in Canadian elementary and secondary schools, much of it is anecdotal or only available for some regions or provinces. These are just some examples gleaned from the media and other sources over the past few years:

- School fundraising appears to be on an upward trend; in addition, the emergence of school and board charitable foundations, in some cases with their own professional staff, is taking fundraising to a whole new level (in the U.S. there are approximately 5,000 charitable school foundations, according to the National School Foundation Association).
- In addition to charitable foundations, another example of how fundraising is being institutionalized as a revenue source comes from Ontario, which now requires school boards

“Capitalize on our Marketing Plan and satisfy your Socialist heart!”

— Halifax Education Foundation of Nova Scotia

Achieve outstanding reach and response from kids and teachers with a customized in-school program that offers curriculum-based activities, easily implemented by educators.

The benefits:

For the Organization that is the Subject of the Program

Your chosen theme will be explored by students in a custom, curriculum-based program. This is a cost effective, measurable way to build your visibility, fan base, or participation level, while demonstrating a strong commitment to your community.

For the Organization that is the Sponsor of the Program

As the sponsor of a program, your association with the Subject Organization will generate credibility with consumers, raise your profile with students and teachers, and promote an image of corporate citizenship. Distinct from traditional community relations initiatives, this alignment with youth education will optimize your direct support and involvement in community issues.

— www.patonpublishing.com

“If you ask cynics, it’s about marketing, if you ask us, it’s about goodwill.”

— Kevin Groh,
Spokesperson for Wal-Mart
“Adopt-a School” Program

“[Charles] Austin [principal of Pinecrest Public School in Ottawa], acknowledges that companies may have hidden motives for donating money to schools. But ‘how else can we get the resources to our kids to do their very best?’ he asks.”

— Alphonso, 2005

to include school fundraising in their accounting of general revenue. Nova Scotia has enacted similar legislation.

- Independently operated bank machines (ATMs) are being introduced into some schools; money generated from ATM service fees, split with the machine operators, is being used to fund school activities.
- The B.C. government has amended the provincial School Act to allow school boards to set up private companies for business purposes – profits from this entrepreneurial activity can be used for educational programs.
- A McDonald’s-sponsored fitness program (the “Go Active! Olympic Fitness Challenge,” which has the blessing of the Canadian Olympic Committee) has the burger corporation partnered with 445 schools (nearly 150 in Ontario) involving some 50,000 students in nearly every province and territory except Quebec and Newfoundland/Labrador; McDonald’s is offering schools a \$200 credit toward the purchase of gym equipment (to a maximum of \$500 per school) for participating schools (MacGregor, 2005); not surprisingly, fast and junk food companies are quick to blame inactivity for poor fitness and rising obesity levels among children rather than an unhealthy diet (Robertson, 2004).
- There is a growing “trade in international students” in which foreign fee-paying students are being recruited for high schools by school

boards; tuition fees for international students can be high, \$10-\$12,000 per year, enticing for a cash-strapped board; one school board in Montreal reportedly earned \$150,000 from an international program that recruits students from Asia and Europe (Lampert, 2005).

- The private tutoring business is booming with companies such as Sylvan Learning and Kumon catering to parents who want to give their children a head start in an increasingly competitive school environment; Robertson (2005) remarks that a “weakened public education system is just a good climate for business, one that an outfit like Sylvan Learning Systems can exploit.”

Private sector influence is present within the learning environment as well, and while there are a number of thoroughly blatant examples of corporate manipulation of the classroom setting, the more carefully corporate initiatives are crafted to work with and alongside the school, the more likely they are to slip in under the radar, or be justified with the “good outweighing the bad” – or even be considered part of the new corporate social responsibility approach.

Paton Publishing, publisher of *Teach Magazine*, has developed a strategy for interested corporations “deconstructing” the school environment for potential clients. Paton Publishing details the present-day pressures experienced by teachers, principals and schools, and identifies ways in which these pressures *facilitate* op-

Tetra Pak Canada Inc., a leading producer of processing and packaging systems for liquid food, has launched the First Annual “Get Your Creative Juices Going” National Classroom Art Challenge to promote student creativity and environmental awareness.

This exciting art challenge is a curriculum-based initiative that inspires student creativity while teaching the importance of recycling. The challenge? Students create a creative class project using empty Tetra Pak cartons and other recyclable materials. An educational curriculum focusing on waste management and recycling was developed to accompany the challenge and encourage classroom learning....Winning schools will receive computers, Crayola products, books and Microsoft software. The five winning classes will receive backpacks, software and cordless telephones for the students.

— www.tetrapakcreativechallenge.com, as advertised on www.teachmag.com.

opportunities for corporations to “get involved” in education. (It is worth noting that *Teach Magazine* is itself a platform not just for discussion of current topics in education, but for promotion of commercial programs in education as well.) Standardized testing, higher expectations placed on schools and the curriculum, teachers’ time spent fundraising, funding and administrative cutbacks, more work in less time and with fewer resources, the loss of specialists and counsellors – all of these factors can contribute to opportunities for marketers to play an increasing role in schools – within or alongside the classroom.

Understanding the barriers:

1. School Board Gatekeepers
2. Teachers’ resistance/challenges
3. Students’ attitudes and abilities

Increased curriculum expectations:

1. Elimination of Grade 13 = more to learn at each grade level
2. Changing priorities of provincial boards
3. Standardized testing

Increased workload and responsibility:

1. Downsizing + downloading of administrative and vice-principal duties plus cutting back on resources and assistants
2. Balancing time between admin work and lesson planning.
3. Lack of funding means teachers spend a lot of time fundraising

Loss of specialists and counsellors

1. Teachers need to direct student characters as well as their studies
2. Teachers are forced to become role models or search for an appropriate role model

– Paton Publishing

An examination of the literature suggests that certain methods of involvement with the school system are less likely to raise red flags among “gatekeepers” (parents and teachers) than others. Two of these less egregious programs are fundraising and literacy (incidentally, another growing area of interest is study guides – both Twizzler and Rogers have produced their own versions of such guides to “help” students do better in school).

If corporations become more involved with education as a means to improve their image, part of their strategy would be to position themselves as “helping” rather than “taking advantage” of an underfunded, overworked school system. Fundraising is increasing and is taking up more and more time, energy and focus as dependence on additional revenue sources grows – presenting a prime opportunity for corporations to improve their images by helping out the community school. “Literacy” is a laudable goal and still sufficiently amorphous a term that corporations can develop campaigns that assist in “promoting literacy” without actually injecting themselves directly into the school curriculum (although their programs may in fact be used in class).

Some of the more successful corporations in these two areas have been Campbell’s (Labels for Education), Kellogg’s (Education is Tops), Wal-Mart (various fundraising programs), Pizza Hut (Book it!) and Indigo (Love of Reading). Other corporations offer incentive programs based on a percentage of revenue (or points) from products purchased at that store going towards school fundraising (eg, Staples, Sobeys).

It should be noted that, while Campbell’s does encourage students to become involved in all aspects of the Labels for Education program¹⁰, there is no specific curriculum component. However, curriculum units can be downloaded from the Labels for Education website and students can, for example, learn how to add or subtract using Campbell’s product labels.

“Teens are so worried about school and their post-secondary careers that Saturday nights are now about doing homework.... We took this information and developed one of the most successful in-school promotions to date for our Hershey client...the Twizzler Exam Guide; a tear-out in magazines that runs before exams and is filled with tips and help on how to study and do well on exams. In a recent readers’ poll, it received the highest recall of any other special inserts in the magazine. It also ranked very high in value to students.... Twizzler has now shown itself to be a company that understands teens.”

— Whitney-Vernon, Summer 2003

Conclusion

The national survey results raise a number of issues for public education of relying on private funding sources (McAdie, 2002):

- **INEQUITY** – School communities have varying degrees of capacity to fundraise and otherwise attract outside funding. Wealthier neighbourhoods and schools can and do raise more money, thus increasing inequities in the educational experience of children from high and low income families.
- **COMPETITION FOR FUNDING** – Relying on private donors may create competition among programs and schools, as different institutions go after the same sources of funds. Such competition may take time and energy away from more positive approaches to supporting public education.
- **TARGETED FUNDING** – Relying on private sources, through fundraising or corporate donations, may allow those private sources, rather than schools and school boards, to influence decisions on programs. Some schools or programs may be deemed more “worthy” of support, at the discretion of private interests.
- **STRINGS ATTACHED TO FUNDING** – Some private donors may attach strings to their funding for public education. Private corporations or organizations may require advertising (for example, naming rights) or the use of specific curriculum or other materials in order to access funding.
- **WHAT IS – AND IS NOT – FUNDED** – An increasing number of items are being defined as “frills,” outside of government funding. Playground equipment, field trips, and even some classroom and learning resources are seen as non-essential. Children from wealthier families and in wealthier neighbourhoods will have better access to a richer variety of experiences, experiences that have a positive impact on a child’s education.
- **INSTABILITY OF FUNDING** – Funding dependent on private sources is not stable. Many sources of such funding do not make commitments to provide the resources over any extended period. As parents and corporations go through challenging economic conditions, they may not be as willing or able to support public education to the same extent as in previous years.
- **LACK OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY CONTROL** – Who ensures that the curriculum/classroom materials being provided to schools by corporate sources are unbiased, complete, and accurate?

In some cases, there are child health issues (including diabetes and surging rates of obesity among children) and ethical issues. Molnar (2003b) says that “the growth of commercialism may bring some new resources to public schools, yet it does so at the cost of undermining the very lessons they seek to teach the students in their care – lessons on topics ranging from good health to good citizenship.”

The survey results raise fundamental questions about the implications of commercialism and privatization for our students, teachers, schools and public education as a whole. What is the role of public education in our democracy? What role should private interests including corporations play in public education? These are questions that we must address in our efforts to ensure a high quality, accessible and equitable public education system. As Robertson (2005) states, we cannot leave it to others to take over the agenda – by design, by stealth, by default, or from the inside out.

It is hoped that the survey data, detailed and examined in this report, can be used to establish a baseline to expose and track ongoing trends in school commercialism, identify emerging trends, increase public awareness, inform policy development at different levels (particularly the school board and ministry levels), and impress upon governments the need for adequate and sustained public funding of our schools.

Notes

- ¹ CERU's mandate is summed up on its website: "CERU is guided by the belief that mixing commercial activities with public education raises fundamental issues of public policy, curriculum content, the proper relationship of educators to the students entrusted to them, and the values that the schools embody." (see <http://asu.edu/educ/epsl/ceru.htm>)
- ² The survey did not ask for the school's language of instruction. Therefore, the results have been divided by teacher federation. For the purposes of these results, French language schools are those within three federations – AEFNB, AEFO, and FSE.
- ³ See Appendix 4 for definitions of regions.
- ⁴ See Appendix 3 for response rate by teacher federation.
- ⁵ Elementary includes middle schools; Other schools include schools with all grades, schools devoted to special education and adult education; French includes responses from three teacher federations: AEFNB, AEFO, and FSE.
- ⁶ Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2005.
- ⁷ We were not able to determine school type for all responses. Therefore, the numbers do not add to the total in the sample. Percentages are for valid responses.
- ⁸ Because of the small number of schools in the North, the cell size for the vast majority of questions is too small to report. Where appropriate, data are included in the body of the report. All data from the North are included in the national total.
- ⁹ See pages 17-18 for a fuller discussion.
- ¹⁰ "A successful collection drive calls for goal-oriented thinking, good organization and cooperation. Students can get involved at all levels of the collection drive. Besides collecting labels you can include students in sorting, counting and bundling labels. It's a terrific opportunity to learn the benefits of cooperation and team effort." (Campbell's Label for Education website www.labelsforeducation.ca)

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Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Ad Space Sold	
North	–
BC	9.2%
Prairies	12.7%
Ontario	7.7%
Quebec	3.0%
Atlantic	9.4%
Elementary	5.3%
Secondary	22.0%
French	3.5%
English	9.3%
Canada	8.2%

Table 2: Ads Present							
	Hallways, cafeteria	Uniforms	Buses	Supplies	Website	Other	Any of above
North	–	11.4%	0.0%	15.9%	0.0%	15.9%	38.6%
BC	19.3%	1.9%	1.4%	12.2%	1.1%	14.2%	37.0%
Prairies	18.5%	3.4%	1.9%	10.3%	1.5%	15.1%	37.9%
Ontario	13.9%	2.6%	1.0%	12.2%	0.8%	10.1%	31.0%
Quebec	8.1%	1.0%	0.8%	7.9%	1.2%	8.3%	21.4%
Atlantic	16.6%	8.9%	2.2%	11.1%	2.2%	11.1%	34.6%
Elementary	11.2%	2.1%	1.4%	11.6%	1.2%	9.5%	28.1%
Secondary	32.3%	8.3%	1.4%	12.5%	1.8%	23.6%	54.8%
French	9.5%	2.4%	–	8.8%	1.2%	8.8%	23.5%
English	16.2%	3.4%	1.5%	11.6%	1.2%	12.3%	34.3%
Canada	14.9%	3.2%	1.3%	11.1%	1.2%	11.6%	32.3%

Table 3: Cola Contracts		
	Coke	Pepsi
North	–	–
BC	14.7%	12.9%
Prairies	25.7%	14.4%
Ontario	19.1%	11.1%
Quebec	3.4%	2.0%
Atlantic	15.8%	15.5%
Elementary	12.4%	7.0%
Secondary	32.9%	26.8%
French	5.2%	2.4%
English	19.0%	12.9%
Canada	16.4%	10.9%

Table 4: Food and Other Contracts		
	Food	Other
North	–	–
BC	5.5%	9.7%
Prairies	6.5%	3.2%
Ontario	13.2%	6.4%
Quebec	6.1%	4.0%
Atlantic	17.5%	5.3%
Elementary	6.9%	5.4%
Secondary	25.4%	9.1%
French	6.2%	5.0%
English	10.7%	6.1%
Canada	9.9%	5.9%

Table 5: Sponsorships or Partnerships							
	Tutoring	Academic courses	Athletic programs	Extracurricular	Technology courses	Staff	Other
North	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
BC	1.4%	1.6%	3.5%	4.4%	2.1%	0.4%	7.3%
Prairies	–	1.7%	4.9%	4.1%	3.0%	0.0%	11.2%
Ontario	1.4%	2.2%	2.4%	4.3%	2.5%	0.5%	6.1%
Quebec	–	–	3.4%	6.3%	1.2%	0.0%	7.1%
Atlantic	1.4%	–	8.0%	7.2%	1.7%	–	8.3%
Elementary	1.2%	1.2%	2.0%	4.6%	1.2%	0.2%	7.9%
Secondary	1.4%	3.4%	13.3%	8.3%	7.3%	–	8.9%
French	1.6%	0.9%	4.2%	7.6%	0.9%	–	8.5%
English	1.1%	1.7%	3.9%	4.4%	2.5%	0.3%	7.5%
Canada	1.2%	1.5%	3.9%	5.0%	2.2%	0.3%	7.7%

Table 6: Incentive Programs				
	Yes	Campbell's	Recycling	Grocery receipts
North	–	–	–	–
BC	35.9%	25.0%	5.1%	5.8%
Prairies	36.4%	30.0%	5.4%	3.0%
Ontario	35.2%	22.8%	7.9%	12.2%
Quebec	1.4%	0.0%	–	–
Atlantic	32.7%	22.2%	5.0%	17.2%
Elementary	35.6%	25.1%	6.5%	10.2%
Secondary	9.5%	4.0%	2.8%	1.8%
French	5.5%	2.6%	1.2%	1.2%
English	35.0%	24.6%	6.4%	9.6%
Canada	29.5%	20.5%	5.4%	8.0%

Table 7: School or Staff Receive Incentives	
	Yes
North	–
BC	18.1%
Prairies	17.4%
Ontario	17.4%
Quebec	1.0%
Atlantic	13.0%
Elementary	16.9%
Secondary	6.5%
French	2.8%
English	16.9%
Canada	14.2%

Table 8: Sponsored Educational Materials				
	Scholastic	Pizza Hut	Mr. Christie	Other
North	68.2%	–	0.0%	–
BC	66.9%	7.4%	1.4%	8.5%
Prairies	64.0%	9.3%	3.2%	5.4%
Ontario	60.9%	8.3%	1.5%	5.3%
Quebec	9.1%	–	0.0%	3.6%
Atlantic	61.2%	2.8%	5.5%	3.0%
Elementary	64.4%	8.0%	2.6%	6.6%
Secondary	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	2.8%
French	1.7%	–	0.0%	4.8%
English	66.4%	7.7%	2.5%	5.5%
Canada	54.4%	6.3%	2.0%	5.4%

Table 9: Subscribe to Magazines				
	What!	Kidsworld	POP	Other
North	–	–	–	–
BC	2.3%	9.9%	1.6%	11.0%
Prairies	2.8%	13.4%	3.2%	6.0%
Ontario	2.3%	13.9%	3.4%	11.0%
Quebec	6.7%	–	–	6.3%
Atlantic	4.7%	16.9%	3.0%	4.7%
Elementary	2.0%	14.0%	3.2%	7.8%
Secondary	10.3%	1.4%	–	14.1%
French	5.7%	0.0%	0.0%	9.2%
English	2.8%	13.7%	3.0%	8.4%
Canada	3.3%	11.2%	2.5%	8.6%

	Yes
North	13.6%
BC	18.8%
Prairies	8.0%
Ontario	12.4%
Quebec	24.2%
Atlantic	20.5%
Elementary	15.0%
Secondary	21.2%
French	23.0%
English	14.0%
Canada	15.7%

	Supplies	Programs	Trips	Teams	Clubs	Other
North	–	15.9%	40.9%	34.1%	–	15.9%
BC	49.0%	40.7%	75.9%	21.4%	11.3%	18.1%
Prairies	42.0%	41.2%	70.3%	33.8%	20.1%	9.1%
Ontario	18.0%	22.5%	75.3%	19.3%	12.7%	13.3%
Quebec	41.2%	18.4%	39.4%	19.6%	6.1%	10.3%
Atlantic	37.1%	29.1%	62.6%	34.1%	10.8%	15.5%
Elementary	32.0%	22.9%	67.8%	13.8%	7.9%	13.3%
Secondary	40.1%	58.3%	74.2%	69.6%	34.5%	15.5%
French	33.4%	16.4%	37.0%	18.0%	6.1%	10.9%
English	33.6%	31.9%	73.7%	25.6%	13.9%	13.8%
Canada	33.6%	29.0%	66.9%	24.2%	12.4%	13.3%

	Academic	Athletic	Clubs	Library books	Textbooks	Supplies	Trips	Technology	Other
North	20.5%	59.1%	34.1%	18.2%	–	–	72.7%	20.5%	–
BC	30.8%	49.7%	27.8%	66.5%	12.4%	21.9%	84.1%	56.8%	21.6%
Prairies	21.1%	53.5%	34.1%	42.5%	4.9%	11.4%	77.2%	31.9%	19.0%
Ontario	28.4%	46.6%	27.0%	55.5%	14.8%	20.4%	79.1%	35.0%	18.5%
Quebec	6.9%	13.5%	5.7%	23.0%	3.8%	11.1%	40.2%	8.9%	20.4%
Atlantic	25.5%	55.7%	31.6%	54.0%	4.7%	26.3%	78.7%	44.9%	19.4%
Elementary	26.6%	39.5%	20.6%	60.3%	11.6%	21.1%	77.1%	40.4%	20.9%
Secondary	18.3%	69.4%	50.6%	16.3%	4.4%	10.3%	69.0%	21.6%	13.9%
French	4.2%	16.4%	6.4%	18.9%	4.0%	12.3%	41.7%	6.9%	22.0%
English	28.1%	50.7%	30.0%	56.4%	10.8%	19.5%	80.6%	41.7%	18.8%
Canada	23.7%	44.3%	25.6%	49.4%	9.5%	18.2%	73.3%	35.2%	19.4%

Table 13: Charitable Tax Number	
	Yes
North	31.8%
BC	40.5%
Prairies	52.6%
Ontario	34.8%
Quebec	8.1%
Atlantic	44.0%
Elementary	11.7%
Secondary	20.2%
French	7.3%
English	42.2%
Canada	35.7%

Table 14: Who Makes Decisions About Fundraising							
	Parents/ School council	Principal/ Admin	Pr. Govt	Sch Brd	Staff	Students	Other
North	52.3%	77.3%	–	20.5%	54.5%	36.4%	–
BC	92.9%	75.4%	4.4%	15.2%	79.1%	34.2%	4.1%
Prairies	73.3%	81.3%	3.2%	28.2%	70.3%	33.2%	3.7%
Ontario	83.2%	84.3%	2.6%	17.6%	63.4%	18.4%	2.0%
Quebec	63.6%	44.4%	1.4%	5.3%	43.2%	8.9%	15.8%
Atlantic	76.7%	87.8%	4.4%	13.6%	62.6%	18.6%	3.0%
Elementary	86.6%	77.3%	2.9%	14.8%	66.2%	17.2%	4.6%
Secondary	61.3%	81.3%	4.8%	24.6%	61.7%	40.9%	7.1%
French	65.2%	51.4%	–	5.7%	44.1%	7.8%	12.6%
English	82.1%	81.8%	3.6%	19.1%	68.6%	26.0%	3.3%
Canada	78.9%	76.1%	3.1%	16.6%	64.0%	22.6%	5.1%

Table 15: Amount of Money Raised				
	Mean	Median	Min	Max
North	\$27,700	\$15,000	\$500	\$100,000
BC	\$19,504	\$10,000	\$100	\$500,000
Prairies	\$15,166	\$9,000	\$200	\$300,000
Ontario	\$14,072	\$10,000	\$180	\$250,000
Quebec	\$14,156	\$6,000	\$300	\$200,000
Atlantic	\$15,991	\$7,500	\$200	\$240,000
Elementary	\$11,038	\$8,000	\$180	\$240,000
Secondary	\$38,747	\$20,000	\$250	\$500,000
French	\$13,456	\$6,000	\$200	\$250,000
English	\$16,030	\$10,000	\$100	\$500,000
Canada	\$15,705	\$10,000	\$100	\$500,000

Appendix 2: Survey



Commercialism in Canadian Schools – A National Survey

Please take about 15 minutes to provide feedback on the extent to which commercial activities described in the cover letter are taking place in your area. Be assured that your confidentiality will be safeguarded; all school and community information will be used for statistical purposes only.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Erika Shaker, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, erikas@policyalternatives.ca, tel: 613-563-1341; or Bernie Froese-Germain, Canadian Teachers' Federation, bfroe@ctf-fce.ca, tel: 613-232-1505, toll free: 1-866-283-1505.

Section A: Advertising

1. Has advertising space been sold in your school?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

2. Is there corporate or business advertising on any of the following in or on your school? If so, with whom? (Check all that apply)

Specify corp'n/business

- Hallways, cafeteria, etc. with: _____
- Team uniformswith: _____
- School buseswith: _____
- School supplies.....with: _____
(e.g., agendas, book covers, mouse pads)
- School web site.....with: _____
- Otherwith: _____
(please specify)
- No corporate or business advertising in our school.

Section B: Partnerships & Sponsorships

3. Does your school have an **exclusive** marketing arrangement with any of the following?

- Coke
- Pepsi
- Food _____
(please specify)
- Other _____
(please specify)
- Don't know
- No; we do not have an exclusive arrangement.

4. Which of the following, if any, are sponsored by or partnered with a corporation or business at your school? (Check and specify all that apply)

Specify corp'n/business

- Tutoring serviceswith: _____
- Academic courses.....with: _____
- Athletic programswith: _____
- Extracurricularwith: _____
- Technology courses.....with: _____
- Staff.....with: _____
- Other.....with: _____
(please specify)
- Don't know
- None; we have no sponsorships or partnerships.

5. Does your school participate in program(s) such as *Campbell's Labels for Education, Staples Recycle for Education*?

- Yes
- No If "No", go to Q. 9
- Don't know If "Don't know", go to Q. 9

6. If "Yes" to Q. 5 above, please describe.

7. Have your school or individual staff members in your school received incentives, bonuses, prizes, etc. as a result of the arrangement you describe in Q. 6 above?

	School	Staff Member
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. If you answered "Yes" to Q. 7 above, please describe the type of incentive(s) received.

Section C: Curriculum & Classroom Supplements

9. Does your school subscribe to any of the following sponsored educational materials?
(Check all that apply)

- Scholastic learning materials
- Pizza Hut's "Book It!" program
- Mr. Christie's "Smart Cookie" program
- Other _____
(please specify)
- Don't know
- No; we have no such materials.

10. Does your school subscribe to magazines designed for in-school mass distribution (i.e., not library subscription magazines) that market products or services to students and teachers? (Check all that apply)

- What!*
- Kidsworld*
- Protecting Our Planet (POP)*
- Other _____
(please specify)
- Don't know
- No; we have no such subscriptions.

17. Please provide **your best estimate** of the dollar amount raised in the 2003-04 school year through the types of activities referenced in this survey.

\$ _____
(best estimate of **dollar** amount)

Don't know

18. Approximately what percentage is the amount in Q. 17 above of **your school's** operating budget?

% _____
(best estimate of **percentage**)

Don't know

19. Is your school or board involved in any other activities or alternative funding sources not captured in this survey (e.g., donation request letters to parents)?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

20. If you answered "Yes" to Q. 19 above, please use this space to provide details.
(Attach a separate sheet if necessary)

Section E: Policy & Background

21. Does your school or board have a policy on corporate-sponsored curriculum materials, education-business partnerships or any other form of corporate involvement in education?

- Yes *If "Yes", please append a copy with your returned questionnaire.*
- No
- Don't know

22. Please provide the following background information **about your school**. This data will be used for making urban/rural, size and other comparisons in the analysis.

City / Town _____
Province _____
Postal code _____
Board / District _____
School name _____
School grade levels _____
Student head count _____

Please mail your completed questionnaire by November 15, 2004 to:
Bernie Froese-Germain, Canadian Teachers' Federation,
2490 Don Reid Dr., Ottawa, Ontario, K1H 1E1

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Appendix 3: Response Rate

Response Rate by Teacher Organization			
Teacher organization	Responses	Total schools	Response rate
BCTF	565	1,705	33.1%
ATA	137	1,782	7.7%
STF	262	755	34.7%
MTS	137	690	19.9%
AEFO	120	388	30.9%
ETFO	461	2,514	18.3%
OECTA	409	1,333	30.7%
OSSTF	114	577	19.8%
QPAT	69	358	19.3%
FSE	426	2,473	17.2%
NBTA	98	232	42.2%
AEFNB	32	98	32.7%
NSTU	115	438	26.3%
PEITF	58	71	81.7%
NLTA	58	307	18.9%
NWTTA	18	49	36.7%
YTA	16	28	57.1%
FNT	10	44	22.7%

Appendix 4: Regional Classifications and Acronyms

British Columbia	BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF)
Prairies	Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS)
Ontario	Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO) Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)
Quebec	Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT) Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement (FSE)
Atlantic	New Brunswick Teachers' Association (NBTA) Association des enseignantes et des enseignants francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick (AEFNB) Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU) PEI Teachers' Federation (PEITF) Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA)
North	Northwest Territories Teachers' Association (NWTTA) Yukon Teachers' Association (YTA) Federation of Nunavut Teachers (FNT)