

Food Marketing

Action Schools! BC

Media Awareness Learning Activity



Food marketing has a strong influence on the food purchasing patterns of youth. This activity will enhance awareness of the ways in which marketing can affect food choices. Students will produce creative ads to encourage their peers and families to eat at least six Food Guide Servings of vegetables and fruit each day.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS



BIG IDEAS

- Healthy choices influence our physical, emotional, and mental well-being.
- Learning about similarities and differences in individuals and groups influences community health.

CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES:

- Investigate and analyze influences on eating habits.
- Identify factors that influence healthy choices and explain their potential health effects.
- Reflect on outcomes of personal healthy-living goals and assess strategies used.
- Explore strategies for promoting the health and well-being of the school and community.

CONTENT

- Factors that influence personal eating choices.
- Sources of health information.



FIRST PEOPLES PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING FOR ALL STUDENTS

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.
- Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL HEALTH CONNECTIONS



RELATIONSHIPS AND ENVIRONMENTS

- Encourage cooperative behaviours among students when creating food packaging, advertisements and/or displays that encourage making half your plate vegetables and fruit every day.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Students learn that marketing techniques typically encourage consumption of foods that are less healthy, but can be used to encourage behaviours that support our health and well-being, through the consumption of more vegetables and fruits.

OUR SCHOOL POLICIES

- Look at school or school district websites for policy information regarding restricting marketing to support the health and well-being of students.

PREPARATION

- Review the *Media Awareness* section (included with this activity).
- Collect food ads or marketing from websites, YouTube, social media, or newspapers and bring to class. Think beyond traditional advertising to new forms of marketing, including adver-games on mobile apps and websites, video game product placement, and social media stories and posts.

IMPLEMENTATION IDEAS

- Gather the students in a circle to begin this inquiry. Circles represent important principles in the First Peoples worldview and belief systems, especially interconnectedness, equality, and continuity. (<http://firstnationspedagogy.ca/circletalks.html>). Begin with the inquiry question: What is marketing? This leads to a second question: **Does marketing control us?**

- Have a guided discussion about how marketing can influence food choices. Use ads from YouTube, websites, magazines, newspapers, and TV for visual awareness.
- Guiding questions:
 - Q:** What are some ways that people can lower the amount of salt they consume?
 - A:** e.g., choose less packaged and processed foods, choose reduced, lower salt, or no salt products, use less ketchup, pickles, olives, soy sauce, relishes and other condiments, etc.
 - Q:** What are some of the locations/venues where you encounter food marketing?
 - A:** e.g., the internet, apps, gaming, clothing, sport events, magazines, billboards, etc.
 - Q:** What are some of the newer forms of marketing?
 - A:** e.g., adver-games on mobile apps and websites (games that are funded by companies to promote their products), sponsored posts on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, peer-led promotions (i.e., promoting hashtags and links for social media users to share) , etc.
 - Q:** What are some different techniques you can spot in marketing?
 - A:** e.g., animation, music, bright colours, celebrities, characters, encouraging children to invite their friends and to share their messages, disguising intent (can you easily identify it's selling a product?), etc.
 - Q:** How do these techniques make you feel about the product?
 - A:** e.g., happy, excited, wanting to belong/be included, think the experience is fun, etc.
 - Q:** Do they make you want to have it?
 - Q:** Why is it good for companies if their marketing makes you want to buy their product?
 - A:** e.g., increased sales and money, brand loyalty (i.e., if you start buying their products as a youth, you are more likely to buy them throughout your life).
- Brainstorm key marketing techniques:
 - Appeal to health and happiness (e.g., it makes you healthier and happier)
 - Appeal to your senses (e.g., it tastes good, looks good, smells good, or feels good)
 - Appeal to your wallet (e.g., it saves you money)
 - Bandwagon (e.g., everybody loves it and wants it)
 - Testimonial (e.g., a famous person says s/he likes it)
 - Comparison (e.g., it is the better choice)
- In small groups, have students use the marketing and advertising techniques they have learned to then create food packaging, marketing and/or displays to encourage other students (and possibly their families) to eat at least six servings of vegetables and fruit every day. Students share their creations with the class and discuss the marketing techniques used. Invite students to use other means to share their ideas (videos, slide shows, audio interviews, etc.) Share the students' work with parents.
- Understanding how marketing and advertising works is one step in supporting students to make informed food choices.

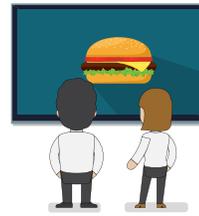
EXTENSION OF LEARNING

- *Food and Drink Marketing Journal* Extension Activity, which can be found at www.actionschoolsbc.ca/resources.
- Share what students created with younger classes to spread awareness.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- Media Smarts – Talking to Kids about Advertising – Tip Sheet (<http://mediasmarts.ca/tipsheet/talking-kids-about-advertising-tip-sheet>)
- University of Calgary – Teacher Background Information Sheets – Media Literacy & Food Marketing (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/foodmarketing/educators-parents>)
- Stop Marketing to Kids Coalition (<http://stopmarketingtokids.ca>)
- Advertising of Food and Beverages to Children: Position of Dietitians of Canada, December 2010 (<https://www.dietitians.ca/Downloads/Public/Advertising-to-Children-position-paper.aspx>)
- BC Ministry of Education – Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools (<http://healthyschoolsbc.ca/program/395/guidelines-for-food-and-beverage-sales-in-bc-schools>)
- Being Me: Promoting Positive Body Image (www.actionschoolsbc.ca/resources)
- Long Live Kids (Long Live Kids (www.longlivekids.ca))

HEALTHY EATING OVERVIEW



MEDIA AWARENESS

This section will explain the efforts of industry to market to children and youth. It will provide some insight into how marketing of unhealthy food and drinks affects the choices of children and youth, and will also speak to the Action Schools! BC resource, *Being Me*.

Marketing is much more than advertising. It includes a wide array of tactics companies use to promote their products, such as: attractive packaging, celebrity endorsements, product placements in movies, cartoons or popular TV shows, sponsorship of kids' sports teams and programs, widespread logo placement, and embedding products, brands or logos within games, videogames or websites.¹

Children are uniquely vulnerable to marketing. Before age five, most children cannot distinguish ads from unbiased programming. Those under eight do not understand the intent of marketing messages and believe what they see. By 10 to 12, children understand that ads are designed to sell products, but they are not always able to be critical of these ads. Given that marketers are aiming to capitalize on children's influence on their own food and drink decisions, it is important that children are given the tools to begin to understand the role of marketing, along with recognition of daily examples of marketing in their own lives.

Marketing directed at children is everywhere. Teaching media awareness to children is one method for helping them understand and evaluate the techniques used by marketers to influence their food and beverage choices. The development of these critical thinking skills is the starting point to empowering children with the knowledge they need to make informed choices that support positive mental and physical health and development.

KEY MESSAGES

- Media awareness helps students develop critical thinking skills and the ability to make informed choices in all areas of their lives.
- Marketers spend billions of dollars creating campaigns and advertisements targeted towards children.
- 61% of popular children's websites market unhealthy food and beverages, and as much as 90% of food and beverages marketed on TV are high in salt, fat, sugar or calories.²
- Food and beverage marketing has an impact on the foods children eat, their food preferences and beliefs, rising rates of childhood obesity, and increased risk factors for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer.
- Children influence their parents' spending, have their own money to spend, and will eventually become adult consumers.

1. <http://stopmarketingtokids.ca/what-is-marketing-2/>

2. <http://stopmarketingtokids.ca/the-health-context/>

Why Media Awareness?

We are all exposed to a myriad of media experiences, so much so that it has become part of daily life – and largely goes unnoticed, except subconsciously. Statistics Canada reported that the time spent watching TV is decreasing but the time spent on the internet has risen substantially. As new forms of mobile media are introduced, the potential to have both positive and negative effects on the health of children and youth expands. The opportunities for media to have a positive impact on health include access to new information, improving education for more people especially in remote areas, and providing a platform for more people to communicate with each other on important topics.

Marketing influences children’s food and beverage choices and preferences, and therefore their health and development. Media directed at children is everywhere: TV, websites, sponsorships, product placements (e.g., food in movies, candy at grocery store checkouts), clothing, online games for children, cartoon characters, celebrity endorsements, contests, free toys and clubs.

Many factors influence food choices, including taste, price, availability, family meal patterns, peers, nutrition, and food marketing. Most of the marketed foods and beverages are for products high in fat, sugar and salt, which include candy, pop, fast foods, and salty snacks.

Adapted from: Stop Marketing to Kids Coalition and Media Awareness Network

Promoting Healthy Body Image

Being Me: Promoting Positive Body Image – K to 9 is a resource, available at www.actionschoolsbc.ca/resources, with lessons and activities that are designed to support the development of healthy body image and self-esteem, along with messaging which serves to help prevent disordered eating. It can be beneficial to deliver the lessons from both resources around the same time.

Key Messages

- Consider your values, beliefs, and choice of language about body weight and health.
- Promote healthy activities for every body size.
- Role model positive body image and a healthy lifestyle.
- When you discuss bullying in your classroom, include the topic of teasing individuals for their body weight, shape, or size.
- Teach students how to look at the media and information in it more critically. Often, unrealistic images of beauty are linked with happiness, love, popularity and acceptance.
- Avoid using weight tables or charts and calorie counting in classroom activities. Relying on the number of calories rather than on internal cues of hunger and fullness can lead to over or under eating.

- It is normal for many children to gain weight in advance of a period of rapid growth during puberty. Girls usually have their major growth spurt at 12.5 to 13 years, while boys have theirs at 14 to 14.5 years. Note that these are averages; the rapid growth period varies greatly based on genetics and environmental factors.
- Each person's body is different and we should respect, accept and celebrate these differences.

Recommended Resources

- Stop Marketing to Kids Coalition (www.stopmarketingtokids.ca)
- Dietitians of Canada – Advertising of Food and Beverages to Children: Position of Dietitians of Canada. December 2010 Marketing to children (www.dietitians.ca/marketingtokids)
- Long Live Kids (www.longlivekids.ca)
- Media Smarts (www.mediasmarts.ca)

References

- Stop Marketing to Kids Coalition
- Statistics Canada, 2004
- The Kaiser Family Foundation, *Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds* www.kff.org
- Gantz W, Schwartz N, Angelini JR, Rideout V. *Food for thought: Television Food Advertising to Children in the United States*. A Kaiser Family Foundation Report, 2007