

Fast Food Presentation – School Version Section II – Lesson Plan How Junk Food Marketing Makes You “Spend the Cheese”

Overview

The junk food industry has a \$10 billion budget for advertising (compared to the 5-A-Day fruit and vegetable campaign at \$2 million) which gives them enormous power over the food purchasing choices of youth today. Given that you respond to such advertising by eating junk food more frequently and in larger quantities, it is no wonder that about 13% of adolescents in California are overweight, putting them at risk for further complications, such as diabetes and heart disease. This lesson outlines the marketing strategies that junk food companies use to entice youth.

Purpose

Youth will be able to identify the marketing strategies used by the junk food industry.

What to Do

Slide II-1 – Introduce the section by asking following questions:

- If one group is using another group, what does that imply is happening to the other group? (The other group is being controlled, consumed, or taken advantage of.)
- What type of qualities does one have that allows them to be manipulated or controlled? (Vulnerable, unable to provide for themselves.)
- What are some steps that a person takes in order to get cred that they might not otherwise get? (You need to be flashy and visible in order to market yourself and gain popularity.)

Slide II-2 – Complete this quiz.

If you want to be recognized as a major player, you need to advertise yourself. Let’s see how many junk food companies have succeeded in getting you to recognize their product and remember their advertisements.

- Ask students to raise their hands if they know the answers to the questions on the slide. (Explain that their knowing so many of the answers means that the fast food industry has been successful in getting them to recognize and think about their product, thereby making it easier to get rich off their patronage.)

Slide II-3 – Discuss the meaning of all this by asking the following question:

This all really means asserting power over another person or group, profiting at another’s expense.

- In the case of fast food, who is in control and who is being played? (Fast food companies are exploiting the general public and especially kids.)

Slide II-4 – Discuss the strategies that fast food companies use to exploit youth by asking and discussing the following questions about how it takes money to make money:

- What is the main thing you need if you want to control or exploit other people? (Money, manipulation strategies.)
- How much money do you think junk food companies spend on advertising? (\$10 billion in 2006.)

- Do you think the fact that the fruit and vegetable campaign only has \$2 million in funding impacts their relative power over your food purchasing decisions?

Slides II-5 & II-6 – Strategies

- How does food look when you see it in advertisements? (Tasty, fresh.)
- Why does it look this way? (They choose the best quality fries, or paint the food, or use plastic instead of food?)

Slide II-7 -- Strategies

- What techniques do companies use to target kids specifically? (Free toys, contests, kids' clubs.)

Slide II-8 – Strategies

- How do fast food companies use technology to their advantage? (Radio/TV/Internet advertising, web sites have games, etc.)

Slides II-9& II-10 -- Review the Frosted Flakes' and McDonald's ads by asking the following questions:

- Who is in this ad? (Father and daughter in FF; family with newborn child in McD)
- Where are they? (On the front porch in FF; at hospital where child is delivered in McD)
- What story does it tell? (Bonding between father and daughter in FF; special family moment in McD.)
- How does it make you feel about the food? (The food is comforting, good for family.)

Slide II-11 – Discuss the industry's incentive in misleading people by asking the following questions:

- What do the companies get out of manipulating people this way? (Money.)
- Does your school sell fast food? How did that happen? (With their budget, they are able to hire some good talent in advertising and research and development. They often form partnerships with schools and other programs that are desperate for funding.)
- Does marketing always have to be a bad thing? (No; companies could spend money encouraging people to be healthy which would save a lot of money on both an individual and national level for hospital and medical care.)
- Do you feel like you are being played? How do you feel about it?

Slide II-12 – Summarize

Nothing positive is in store for you when you get controlled by these companies. Studies show that kids respond to the onslaught of ads by eating junk food more frequently and in larger quantities.

- The government recognizes that cigarette companies are socially irresponsible when they market to kids, but what's the difference between cancer-causing cigarettes and heart attack, diabetes, and high blood pressure-causing foods?

Slide II-13 – Summarize

Rather than giving in to the advances of these corporations, however tempting it may seem to consume artificially manufactured flavors, empower yourself to think before supporting these companies.