

Youth Advocacy Pilot Project: Marketing in Schools

State law prohibits advertising of certain foods and beverages that do not meet the minimal nutritional value standards. Items that are prohibited include soda, candy and some other junk food.

UNE researchers have found that this law is not enforced in most high schools in Maine. Even where the letter of the law is met, students are still confronted daily with advertising for food and beverages that are full of sugar and fat (e.g. sports drinks, ice cream).

Students can work to ensure their school complies with state law by participating in an advocacy project, focused on the following actions:

1. Students should first identify the types, locations and amount of advertising of food and beverages in their schools. Items should be classified as “meeting state law” or “not meeting state law.” Students can photograph these items as examples for a presentation.
2. Inform school administrators of illegal advertising
3. Work with administrators to develop a plan for advertisement removal; this may include informing vendors of the illegal advertising and requesting it be changed (e.g. an illegal score board advertising can be changed by the company to an item that is allowed), taking the item out all together, or covering up with artwork or some other creative solution.
4. Review the school wellness policy and be sure that enforcement of the state law on junk food advertising is part of the policy with a person/position clearly identified to enforce the law.

The following resources are available for students interested in this opportunity:

- Fact sheets/reports on the impact of marketing on youth obesity
- Research in Maine about junk food and beverage marketing in schools
- Examples (pictures) of food/beverage marketing in Maine schools
- A tool to identify and assess junk food and beverage marketing in schools
- Technical assistance on identifying healthy foods and beverages
- Model school policies
- Small stipends to (\$100 for 10 schools) to help with project.

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