

Minimizing children's exposure to the marketing and promotion of sugar-sweetened beverages, most notably soda, is a critical action in promoting healthy eating. Many advocates are working to get soda out of schools and other children's environments, but even when the soda is gone, soft drink companies have other tactics aimed at building brand loyalty among children. Juices, sports drinks, and flavored waters, paired with prominent logos of soda companies can all work to build brand awareness and loyalty in children.

When discussing why stricter regulation of soda companies is needed to limit marketing to children, particularly in schools and other children's environments, here are some talking points which will help support your argument when writing letters to newspaper editors and op-ed columns, or pitching a story to a journalist:

Soda companies will work to build brand loyalty as long as their products are sold on campuses

Beverages such as flavored water, sports drinks, and juices with soda company logos are products that companies are increasingly using to build brand loyalty in children. Additionally, vending machines with company logos allow constant brand exposure at school, where children spend much of their time. Kids are a captive audience, and allowing these products in schools turns our kids into young consumers. We need to give our kids a fair chance at health by getting these products and companies out of our schools.

Giving kids a fair chance at health

Children can only respond to the environments that we, as adults, create for them. Every child deserves to grow up in a world that supports their health, both in schools and in the neighborhoods they live in.

Schools are for teaching children to be healthy—not for building brand loyalty

Exposure to product marketing is inappropriate in institutions meant for learning. Schools are meant to educate students in the broadest sense: to prepare them to be healthy, contributing citizens of society by teaching life skills. That includes learning to think for themselves without the constant influence of product placement and brand promotion.

Children should not have to subsidize their education with pocket change

Schools' reliance on the revenues generated from student purchases of beverages on campus is inappropriate for both the students and the schools. While the lack of adequate funding for schools is a fact, it is not OK for schools' to seek funding by turning children in young consumers and jeopardizing their health.

If children are provided with more nutritional snack and beverage options, they will do better in school

School achievement is connected to a child's diet. If children are well-nourished, they will be more alert and enthusiastic in the classroom. Students will benefit, and so will schools as achievements tests go up.

Key Points

1. Remember to focus on what minimizing children's exposure to unhealthy food and beverage marketing *will* achieve rather than its limitations in remedying the complicated problem of poor nutrition and obesity.
2. The primary argument against eliminating vending machines in schools is the fear of lost revenue. To counter this argument, make the case that it is unfair to exploit students as an alternative to tougher policy decisions about school revenues.
3. Take advantage of the controversy the soda bans generate to make the case for the school's responsibility to protect students' health. Emphasize the value of protecting children's health, and the importance of fueling children's school achievement with nourishing food and drink that strengthens and prepares their minds and bodies for learning.