



The Eanes school district in Austin, Texas, has earned tens of thousands of dollars selling ad space on its buses.

# Should Kids See Ads at School?

**TV COMMERCIALS.** Online pop-up ads. Roadside billboards. Sometimes school may feel like one of the few places you're able to escape advertising messages. Or is it?

Faced with budget cuts, a growing number of districts nationwide are allowing companies to place ads on school property, including lunchrooms, gyms, parking lots, and buses. The arrangement can benefit both parties. Schools earn

money because businesses pay them to advertise on campus. Businesses, meanwhile, are able to reach potential new customers: you and your friends.

People in favor of allowing ads on school grounds say it's a great way for districts to bring in extra money without having to raise taxes in the community. The funds can be used for everything from paying teachers' salaries to buying musical instruments. Plus, supporters say,

kids already see ads almost everywhere they look. What's the harm in seeing them at school as well?

But opponents say allowing ads on school grounds isn't the answer to shrinking budgets. Exposing students to products that appear to be endorsed by school officials is problematic, they argue, especially when the ads are for things like sugary cereals or fast food.

Should ads be allowed on school grounds? Two experts weigh in.

**YES** Most students are surrounded by ads from the moment they wake up until the moment they go to sleep: that McDonald's billboard you pass on the way to school or your best friend's T-shirt with *American Eagle* written across the front, for example. In fact, marketing experts estimate that the average person sees about 5,000 to 10,000 ads every day. All of them are designed to get you to buy or use a product.

Yet most of these ads don't bring a single dollar to your school. And that's something we should change.

In the United States, advertising is a multibillion-dollar industry. What if your school district could translate some of that financial power to its budget? Many schools nationwide are facing steep budget cuts and are in desperate need of money to pay for everything from teachers' salaries to new laptops.

I work at a firm that handles marketing for school districts across Texas, and we are very careful to choose only family-appropriate advertisers, such as local restaurants or sporting goods stores. We help place messaging on the outside of school buses, district websites, and school athletic venues. The ads are primarily targeted to adults—parents, teachers, and other members of the community—not to kids.

Over the past 11 years, we've raised millions of dollars for Texas schools. That money has helped pay for new computers, textbooks, supplies, and so much more. At the same time, local businesses are able to reach new customers. It's a true win-win.

Advertising is highly profitable and is here to stay. Why not capture some of that market and put those dollars to work where they're needed most—at school?

**Ads can help schools raise millions of dollars for new laptops, textbooks, and supplies.**

—CYNTHIA CALVERT

Owner and founder, Steep Creek Media

**NO** Advertising is everywhere: the internet, billboards, stores, on TV, and in movies. Sometimes ads are hard to detect. Especially online, ads are often disguised as entertainment, like when your favorite YouTuber or social media celebrity talks about a cool new product. Those stars act like they're your friends, but they're really getting paid by brands to sell you stuff.

School should be a place where no one is trying to sell you anything. You're in school to learn about the world and how you can make your own special contribution to it. But marketers want only one thing: your money. In order to get it, they make ads saying that buying the right things will make you beautiful, popular, and happy. But they want what's best for them, not for you.

Until recently, most people have agreed that schools should not have advertising. But some marketers are trying to sneak in, because they know they can make a lot of money selling things to kids.

They know that you and your friends are open-minded and excited to learn, so they want to teach you to buy their products. They know that if you hear at school that a brand or a product is good, you'll probably believe it. And they know that unlike TV or online, you can't just change the channel or go to the next video.

A lot of school districts have very tight budgets, and sometimes companies offer to pay for things like music, sports, or science equipment. That's great. But schools shouldn't accept financial assistance if it means companies would place ads where students can see them.

Let's keep marketing out of schools so you can focus on what really matters: learning.

**Kids are in school to learn, not to help companies make money.**

—DAVID MONAHAN

Campaign manager, Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

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**WRITE ABOUT IT!** What do you think? Should kids see ads at school? Write a one-page argument essay explaining your answer, using facts from the article as supporting evidence.